

Volunteer report by Elizaveta Aleksandrova
European Solidarity Corps volunteer at Kindergruppe Butterbrot
from September 2022 to August 2023

I volunteered for a year in Kindergruppe Butterbrot. My main responsibilities included helping in the kitchen, taking care of the kids and assisting teachers with basic daily tasks and activities. During this time, I've learned more about childcare work and really improved my multi-language skills (I had to speak German, English, Spanish or Russian depending on the situation and people I was surrounded with).



Before my volunteering I used to be really introverted and shy but coming to a completely new for me country and being surrounded by new people helped me to open up, find new friends and made me feel more comfortable with being in charge of my own life. Before the start of my project, I was sure that I would spend my volunteering year alone, without my friends and my family. But by taking part in the project, I got more friends than I've ever had before. I believe that the best thing about my European Solidarity Corps volunteering experience was being introduced to other volunteers whose presence made my time in Vienna unforgettable. We had our own traditions (e.g. gathering all together in a dorm on a weekend when one of us would cook a traditional meal from their home country), we

traveled a lot across Austria and to other places nearby, we celebrated holidays together, introduced our languages to each other and had lots of fun by just playing board games and watching films in a great company.

Coming to Vienna, Austria was a life changing experience for me. Vienna was a kind of "love from a first sight" situation for me. I fell for Vienna's interculturality, views, art and language. It's hard to be bored here, there is always something going on, there are cultural and social events you can take part in, lots of places to visit and people to meet. Even though it was undeniably scary to come to a new county on your own and not knowing how some things work in that new environment (e.g. Austrian medical system), having a team from Grenzenlos helping you when you need it the most made it much easier for me. I knew that I didn't need to worry about my documents or about potential doctor appointments, I could just enjoy my life and be sure that there are people I can rely on.

I would recommend participating in an ESC volunteering project because not only do you get to take part in an important social project, learn or improve a language, meet new people, and discover new places but also you learn so much more about yourself by putting yourself into a new environment that you'd never learn by staying at home. I cannot even imagine what my life would be like now if I didn't apply for this project.

