

Volunteer report by Elena Benigni
European solidarity corps volunteer at Kulturhaus Brotfabrik
from 1/9/2023 to 30/6/2024

Hello, my name is Elena Benigni, and I did my ESC volunteering year in Vienna, at Kulturhaus Brotfabrik and Stand 129. I started the experience in September and it has been amazing from the beginning. I really liked the project because it opened me up to the world of participatory arts. At Kulturhaus Brotfabrik, I had the opportunity to help organize events involving a diverse community through the arts. In particular, the project focuses on local residents, individuals from migrant backgrounds, and people facing educational disadvantages. It aims to make artistic expression accessible to all, regardless of religion, political position, or ethnicity.

During the ESC program I was also involved in the implementation of two European projects. The Creative Europe "UNMASC!" is a transnational (Austria-Serbia-Kosovo) art research project which focuses on promoting gender justice through theater by creating counter-narratives to misogynistic, patriarchal, hetero-normative values and role expectations by showcasing positive models of gender identification.

The Solidarity Project RE-FRAME Debut Film Festival is dedicated to screening debut short films by up-and-coming FLINTA (female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, agender) filmmakers to provide a stage for creative experimentation and non-traditional narrative techniques.

These experiences have allowed me to develop personal, interpersonal, social and civic skills. I gained strong cognitive skills and the ability to learn also through the life experiences of others. I acquired the ability to deal with uncertainty and complexity and show empathy, in addition to the attitude to transform ideas into actions that have a social value. With creativity, innovation, and critical thinking, I worked collaboratively in multicultural environments. Finally, with openness and curiosity, I expanded my knowledge of how ideas and emotions are creatively expressed in local, European, and global cultures through arts and traditions of all kinds.

I have developed a deep understanding of intercultural dynamics, transnational phenomena, and the possibilities of building inclusive spaces and communities that celebrate and enhance the differences through cultural exchange with an eye toward the future, which are essential elements for the success of international initiatives in the arts and sociocultural sphere.

During the volunteering year you will be able to meet a lot of people. As you can see from the pictures, I was very lucky. In the luggage I'll put all the good stuff that happened to me this year, I'll keep close to my heart all the moments with my friends and the project itself.

My advice to the next volunteers is: live it all, live it without fears, there's nothing you can lose.

