

ESC Project Outcome
" Make a Change"
@ INEX Slovakia

February
till December 2020

Mathilda
v.d. Zwaag

The parties involved during
the ESC project:



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Me, myself and I

Hi lovely few readers! It is me, Mathilda. Some of you have maybe been following my Instagram monthly updates. If not, let me introduce myself more properly. I am half Dutch and half Finnish. I enjoy to challenge myself, learn from others and explore the world.

As a (just) graduate in Global Project & Change Management not knowing what direction to go in life I stumbled upon the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). Through the ESC platform I found INEX Slovakia. The idea to broaden and improve my skills and at the same time to live abroad sounded like music to my ears. A chance to learn the perks of a new country, its culture, and people.



The kick-off of the project

In February my adventure started with opening five doors in order to enter the apartment which I called home right away. A bright future awaited us, which meant many activities such as leading camps, doing one-day volunteering, and organising tea meetings. This I did together with the lovely INEX staff and two other great volunteers, Lea and Borja. Let me introduce you to INEX Slovakia, it is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation who offers extraordinary experiences, personal development and meaningful leisure time for young people through international volunteer activities and non-formal education.

In short the project is about various activities organising events, attending diverse set of trainings, leading a camp, administrative work, and creating a workshop of your own preference.

Unfortunately, the corona pandemic came along which meant we had to be creative and adapt to the situation. Instead of twice having a two-week long camp, we had one weekend volunteering camp. With this kind of attitude and strength the activities can continue :)



The team




The first time meeting the team was during a typical Slovak lunch at Bratislava Flagship. The impression of the team was open and friendly. From that day, I knew that it will be a great working environment. Together with the two other volunteers, Borja and Lea, we completed the team. Each one of them has taught me a valuable lesson. I am grateful for these amazing people who have inspired me.

The Activities

One of the first few things learned is how to create social media content to promote tea meetings, camps, and other events. It is a fun process where various tools can be used such as Photoshop. I enjoyed practicing my Photoshop skills. Not only I created visual content. Also, written pieces needed to be established to support the visuals. I learned to keep in mind who the audience is and what message you want to bring across. As a Dutch person, I can be quite direct in writing a message. I learned how to be nicer by starting with a simple hi! instead of going straight to the point.



INEX BINGO

Went on an international camp (If not check out the next picture)	Played Secret Friend	Joined at least two tea meetings	
Went abroad	Learned a new skill	Try to learn a new language	Know how to make a campfire

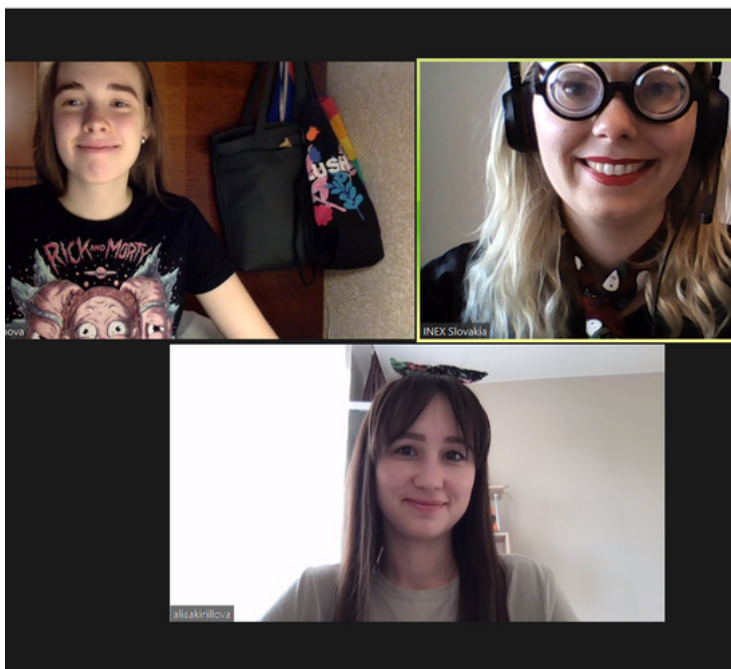
We were lucky that we could do a weekend workcamp. Together with Kika, we lead a camp in Licartovce/Obisovce. The volunteering camp was about renovating and building the castle. For us, it meant to do the preparation for the workers who build the walls further. Our local partner was amazing who inspired and motivated us through sharing stories :)

Regarding practicing my leadership skills, I had to have an open mind to adapt and be flexible for changes within the camp. This includes communication among the people involved. It felt good to lead a camp and with the help of an inspirational local partner and co-leader, we made it work. The work was fulfilling and is valuable process in order to build up the castle from the ground.



Huh, two castles?

The other camp was a virtual camp about comic strips and movie analyses. I could share my knowledge of movie and comic analyses and organise it by myself. Before carrying out the camp it had to be created from A-Z which is quite demanding work. I had to think about the little details such as if I had the correct links for other platforms and structure the most informative content for the camp. A huge lesson learned is that you cannot force participants to join the Zoom meetings, I tried to remind them through several communication channels. However, I had to stay optimistic and positive and focus my energy on the participants who are participating and enjoying it. I felt grateful and rewarded that I could organise something by myself and explain my passion to others. As you can see on our smiles we enjoyed it a lot!

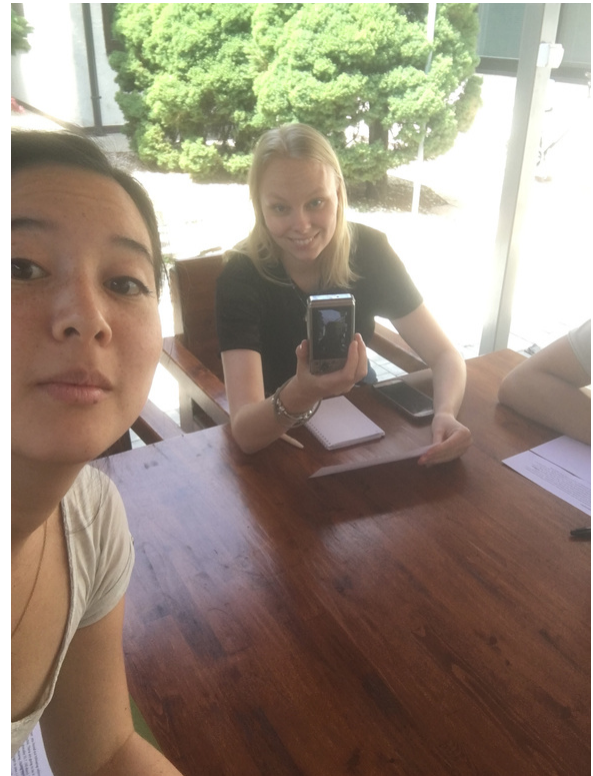


Fake it until you make it, haha

Another activity was the tea meetings. We had plenty of different kinds of tea meetings, on- and off-line meetings. A few examples: the mystery of the brain, slow fashion, and Belarus. These tea meetings were organised by us, the ESC volunteers and in collaboration with the keynote speakers. The most popular ones among the volunteers were the trash picking events, where we could be outdoors and clean the surroundings of the beautiful Bratislava. At tea meetings you can have a lot of fun and find treasures. The tea meeting which I enjoyed the most was the welcome party for us, where we could introduce ourselves and our countries. This was the first tea meeting and it felt that I became a member of the Inex Family.



My mini-project was to create vlogs for my sending organisation SIW and it was also used for INEX Slovakia. The idea of the vlogs is to gain an insight into an ESC volunteering life, the activities I do, how I live, and a tour around the city. Creating footage for the vlogs has been a step out of my comfort zone to put myself in a humble position. This to inspire others to follow my footsteps to do a volunteering project. Nonetheless, I got support from my coach on how to shoot footage and get the know-how of what is important when shooting content.



Inex-Messenger, the workshop that we were allowed to create ourselves. Put all our creativity and knowledge together and tadaa you will have your workshop. It was not as easy as I thought. First, you have to do some research on a topic you prefer. Then you have to structure the knowledge and think of how to create interaction with the audience. As of last, you have to test it and adapt it to the changes. The topic I chose was Cultural Awareness because it is a topic close to my heart. I grew up with two different cultures and I wanted to create awareness that people come from different backgrounds. In total, I gave four workshops. Three of them were online and one was face to face at my camp. I could see the difference between online and real life. It is much easier to create interaction with the audience when you are face to face, you can adapt more to the situation.



Cultural Intelligence Test

Knowledge= requiring knowledge of culture and of the principles of in between - cultural interaction

Mindfulness= To observe and interpret cross-cultural situations

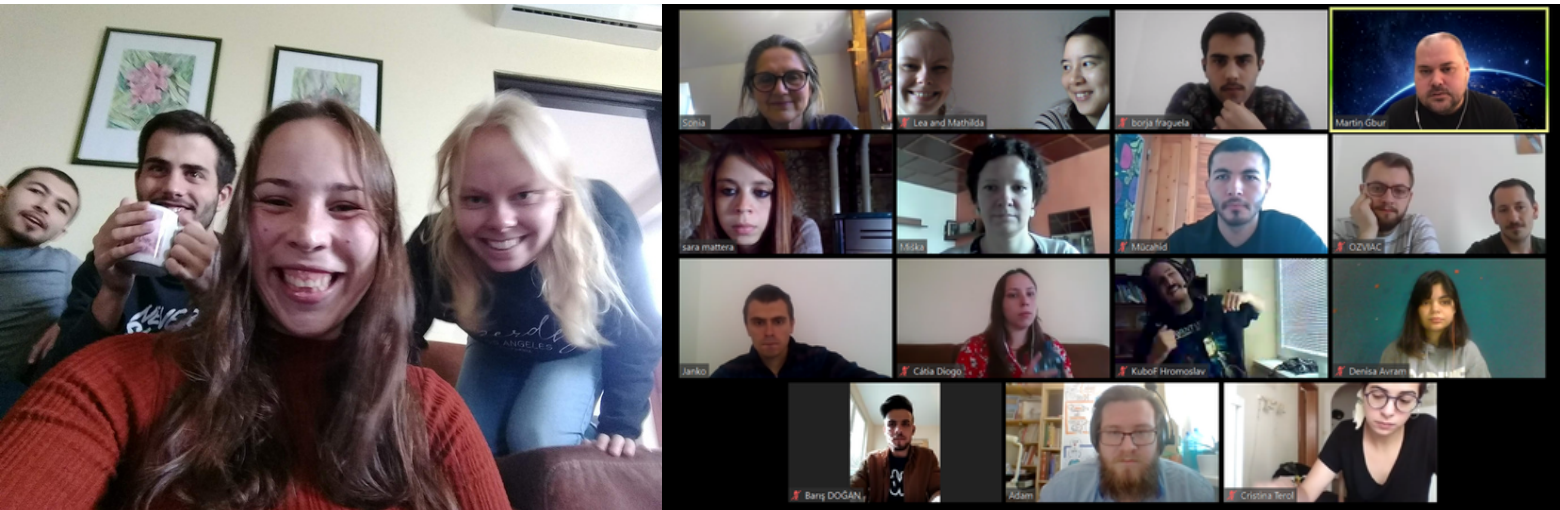
Skills=required to adapt behaviour to act appropriately and successfully in range of situations.

One of the first things I noticed when I came to Bratislava that there are many homeless people living on the streets. At INEX, we also help other organisations out. During the office hours, we had the opportunity to volunteer at Malteszky Rad. We prepacked the cutlery in bags or we would fill the lunch bags with food products to the homeless people. It is good to be outside and give a little time for the people who need our support the most by simply giving a warm meal.



Trainings

↖ @ Cátia's place



At my time here I did several trainings, we had the leadership training to become a camp leader, and the on arrival & midterm training.

The on arrival and midterm training were organised by Iuventa. These mandatory trainings are organised for ESC volunteers in Slovakia. Due to Corona they were held online through Zoom. The on-arrival training is to get to know each others projects and activities within their organisations. Also, we learned more about the European Solidarity Corps, our rights as volunteers and got more insights of Slovakia.

At the Midterm training, we met the same trainers and volunteers again. The idea of the last training is to update each other about our projects and evaluate on what we have learned. The training was helpful to better understand what things have been accomplished in such a short time frame. It was good to share it with the other volunteers. Also, we discussed what went well and what could be improved within projects. Overall, the trainings were of good value to the project.

The training to become a (camp) leader was helpful to be a prepared leader to go to a camp. We were lucky that Monika gave the sessions in real-life, and that made it easier to follow the interactive training. The training was divided into two parts. In the first part of the training, we divined the camp vocabulary, we were being taught the history of INEX and workcamps, The second part was about the financial book, how to cook for a bigger group and we had to do two exams to pass for the leadership training. It felt like good preparation for the actual volunteering camp.

The training was closed with an evaluation meeting which is named Potaborka. At this meeting, we did a few games, shared our experiences, lessons learned, and filled in for the last time the paper of the leadership competencies. It was good, to sum up and reflect on all the things learned during the training but also at the camp.



Travel

Travelling, yes even I had the chance to travel before and during the pandemic. I went to Brno for a day trip and visited my parents in Austria. Austria became the meeting spot to see my parents because they were not allowed to enter Slovakia. However, my dad got the opportunity to visit me in Bratislava and to have some quality time together. Due to the lovely pandemic, I got to travel in Slovakia and visited many places like Zohor, Banská Štiavnica, Prievidza, Bojnice, Čičmany, Trenčín, Ličartovce, Košice, Liptovský Mikuláš, Žilina, Trnava, Nitra, and Pezinok. Fortunately, I did this together with friends and I even went on a trip with my friend from the Netherlands and explored a bit more of Slovakia.



Wösendorf an der Wachau, Austria



Brno

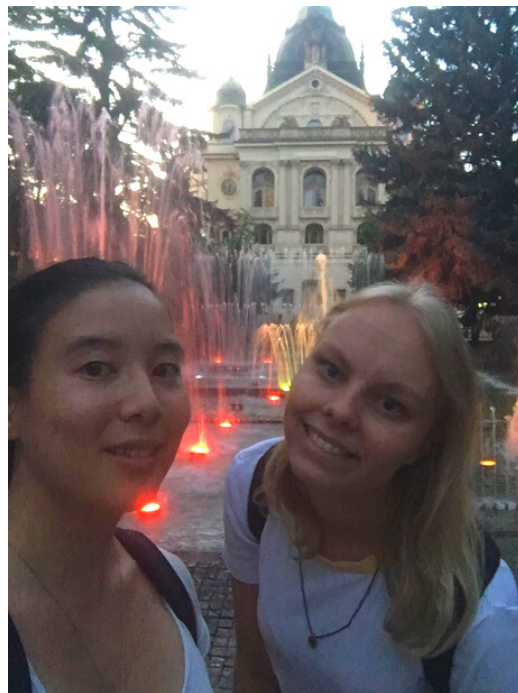


Sooo many places visited

Not enough pictures yet...



Čičmany



Košice



Trenčín



Žilina



Liptovský Mountain
(High Tatras)



Stayed a night at the Pezinok castle

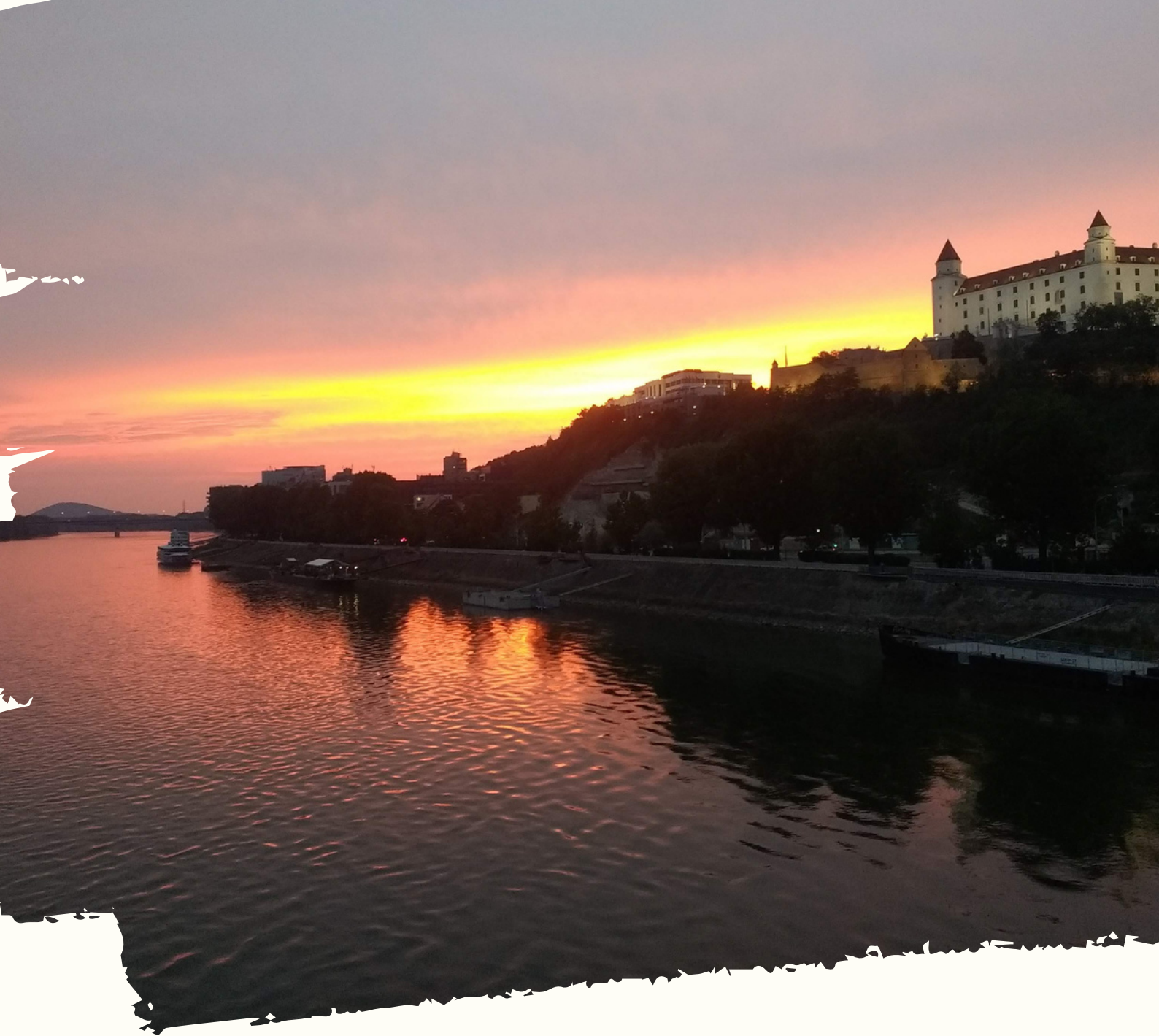
Future

What will the future bring? You will never know before you did the unexpected. Many roads can lead to my dream job. However, there is no best road on how to achieve my dream carrier. I am glad that I chose to do a volunteering project here in Bratislava and to discover other skills and capacities. One thing I know for sure is that I want to work in a non-governmental organisation, foundation, or maybe at a social enterprise.

The plans will be to stay in the Netherlands for a while before I would like to go and live abroad again. I am looking forward to seeing my family, friends, and celebrate Christmas. Being honest, eleven months is quite long to stay away from home. Let's see where faith and destiny will bring me :)

For once giving © to Lea Savanphom





Thank you.....

INEX Slovakia, SIW, volunteers, every single person met a long the journey, and not to forget my dear lovely readers