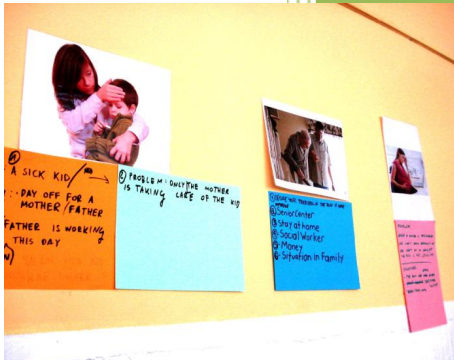


INEX MESSENGER

2014



María del Mar Cerrillo Valverde



Youth
in Action



About INEX Slovakia



INEX Slovakia is a non-profit organization founded in 1993. It's a youth organization, its aim is to associate young people no matter what their nationality, political, religious orientation is. INEX provides an opportunity for young people of different national and cultural backgrounds to live and work together; facilitate personal growth and a personal responsibility. INEX does it through youth mobility and activities of non-formal education. Moreover, INEX offers volunteering possibilities to Slovak youngsters abroad and to young people from abroad in Slovakia. Main aim of volunteering activities is to provide help to the local community or to any project necessary (social, environmental, renovation, cultural, etc.). Young volunteers can spend their free time valuably, can meet other people coming from different cultures, learn from each other and enjoy their lives differently. It's a way to

make the people more tolerant and open-minded and it's the best medicine against the racism and to promote the international understanding. One of these activities are the International summer workcamps.

During the summer we organized workcamps in Slovakia where we host big amount of international volunteers from all around the world on various community projects. As we consider workcamps as a method of non-formal education, we prepare study part for the volunteers on various current topics. This year we followed the European Year of Reconciling work and family life.

About me

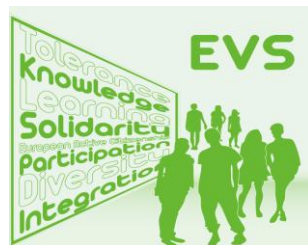


I'm Maria del Mar, I come from Spain and I'm 25 years old. I have been living in four different countries in my life and I love the international exchanges. I was living

in Morocco for 6 years (during my adolescence) and there I had my first experience like volunteer: I worked in an orphanage with children, then I came back to Spain and I started the university in my home town, there I continued being volunteer and I was private teacher for children with less opportunities, after that I went to France to finish my degree with the Erasmus program. I studied economics but I didn't know what I really liked and the economic crisis makes the things harder but I heard about the European Voluntary Service program and I decided to try it. I was selected in different projects but I decided to bet on INEX because I identify with the aim of the organization and I love the project INEX Messenger.

About European Voluntary Service (EVS)

EVS is an international volunteer program funded by the European Commission. It enables all young people resident in Europe, aged



between 17 and 30 years, to become a volunteer in an organization in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America for a period ranging from 2 to 12 months.

Each project has at least three partners: a volunteer, a sending organization and a host organization and at least one of the organizations has to be from a European country.



The project has to take place in a country other than where the volunteers live, is non-profit-making and unpaid and lasts for a limited period (maximum 12 months). The Commission provides an amount of the reimbursement of travel expenses and complete coverage of the costs of food and accommodation for the international volunteer.

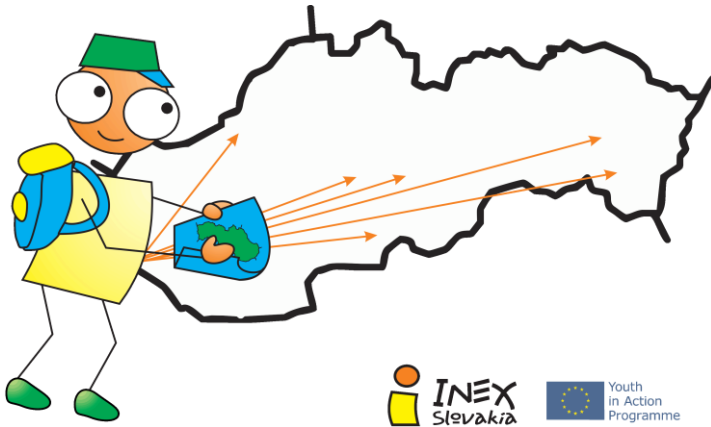
The field of the volunteering is quite varied: environment, arts and culture, social activities with

children, young or elderly people, heritage or sports and leisure activities.

Thanks to the multicultural dimension and its non-formal approach, it's an opportunity to come into contact with cultures different from your own and to acquire new skills and abilities useful for your personal and professional growth.

About project: INEX Messenger

The INEX Messenger is a volunteer from abroad who comes to Slovakia in June. The volunteer spends the month of June preparing the workshop, learning some Slovak language (very necessary for the travels) and getting used to Slovakia. Then, during the summer this volunteer becomes “messenger” around the workcamps organized by INEX organization doing the workshop about the topic of the year. In this case, this year we followed the European Year of Reconciling work and family life.



About the topic: 'Reconciling work and family life'



2014 Year of **Reconciling Work and Family Life** in Europe

European Commission wants to attract attention on this topic and generate debate because everybody agree that the family is the most important, but sometimes our workday or ours obligations with our work don't allow us

to go with our child to the doctor, to pick up our child to the school, or to visit our oldest relatives during the day. Unfortunately, these situations are increasing for the families who are living in Europe, especially since the women work also outside home.

Research shows that employees with higher levels of work-family conflict suffer more often stress and depression or other psychological problems as workers with a better work-life balance.

In this sense, the year offer an opportunity to focus on how the labour market is organised, what policies exist and how to achieve a good work life balance and a decent quality of life but also, it's a good moment to ask ourselves if we can contribute by ourselves with this cause.

The plan and the real workshop

I arrived to Bratislava the first days of June and my coordinator explained me everything about the project and my tasks on it. I had to create an interactive and interesting workshop whose duration was around one hour about Reconciling work and family life and do it on the workcamps organized by INEX around Slovakia.



I had whole month of June to do it because the workcamp season started in July for me. The first of all was getting as much information as possible about the topic and its importance and situation in Europe. I was reading from different sources of information and they had a point in common: The topic is becoming more and more important owing to the demographic change, that is, each year there are more elderly people that need to be care and less young people who can take care of

them. Therefore, after this research my conclusion was that my main goal has to be making aware the volunteers about the importance of the balance between work and family life for the quality of life of the society in general: children, workers, disabled people, caregiver, etc. so once I knew what I wanted to achieve, the next step would be find the answer to the question: How could I get it?

I was researching about dynamics in group to make it more interactive and after consider all the options I thought that the role game was the perfect option.

Finally, the first draft that I considered looked like that:

1. Energizer and introduction about me, EVS, INEX messenger and the workshop.
2. Theoretical part: about the topic.
3. Team building game.
4. Role game in teams.
5. Discussion.

Energizer and introduction:

It was a “must” start the workshop with an energizer game because in general the volunteers are tired after work and I wanted that they heard me, so the energizer was necessary to wake them up and to put us in the right situation to start with the workshop. At the beginning I started with the flamingo and penguins energizer because the symbol of this topic is a penguin but sometimes we didn't have enough space for it and sometimes I had to change the energizer. One of these times I tried with the snake energizer and it was a success so I tried to continue with this energizer in all the next workshops.

The first part of the workshop was one introduction about me, I explained why I'm here, what is the EVS program and INEX Messenger because sometimes they didn't know.

Theoretical part:

Of course, after my introduction I explained about the workshop, the topic, its importance, what is a European Year, why we chose this topic and why they choose the penguin like symbol of this topic. I tried to make them realize that there are a lot of situations in our real life where we have a conflict between the work and the family life and what can it suppose in our life.

After this theoretical part, we make a game to build teams and we continue with the practical part of the workshop: the role game.

Team building game:

We had to make some teams because the role game it supposed to be in groups so we played a game with the professions. Volunteers were first asked to disperse around the room, then, they had to choose one paper without see what was written there. In each paper they had a different profession (clown, model, photographer

or policeman). Afterwards, they had to see the profession that they had in their paper and imitate it, then find out who were imitating the same job than them and joining them.

In this way, we had random teams, depends on the size of the group we could have until four teams.

Role game:

Once we had the teams we have to make the role game. I was thinking about how I could show the volunteers the complication of the situations with conflict between family and work, how I could get sure that they understood the importance of the topic and a role game looked like the perfect option. For 15 minutes they became mothers, fathers or boss and they had to find a solution for one specific situation.

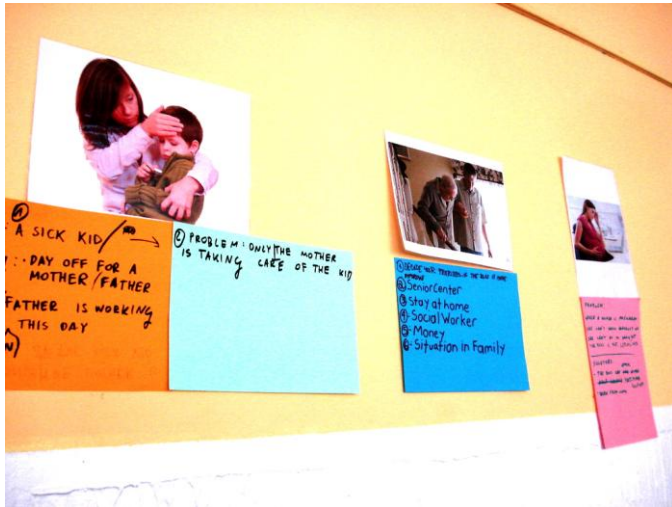
I wanted to make the role game more original than usual so I thought make it with pictures and colourful papers. I print some pictures which reflected some situations of

the real life where work and family had a conflict. I handed out one picture per team and they had to identify the conflict, to negotiate the solution and find one or more solutions in 15 minutes. They had to write these solutions in a colorful paper with a marker in big letters and then, we stuck the pictures and the situations with the colorful papers on the wall. Everybody had to read the situations and solutions of the others teams and we started a discussion.

The pictures that I chose were:

1. A woman with an advanced pregnancy working in the office.
2. A man helping an elderly man to go downstairs (probably they are son and father).
3. A father feeding his baby with a nursery bottle.

4. A mother taking care of her son because he is sick.



The idea was fine but in one of the first workcamps, I realized that I had to write something more specific than just a picture because could be hard to identify the problem: for some people was normal to see a woman finding only a few days from giving birth working in the office. So after that, I decided to add the pictures for a description about the situations.

Also, I realized that sometimes I didn't have a wall where I could stick the papers so I decided to change it: each team had to choose a representative and this person would tell to the other people what situation they had and which solutions they found.

So finally, I put the changes on the workshop. I wrote some descriptions about situations of the real life and I handed out one description per team. Each team had different numbers of members depends on the description (sometimes there were three characters, sometimes four or sometimes only two) and it depended on the size of the group in the workcamp.

The descriptions that I wrote were:

1. Silvia has just waked up and her son Tomas is sick with fever in the bed. She has to work but also takes care of Tomas. He calls her boss to ask for this day off but they are in the middle of an important project and he can't allow the absence of Silvia at this time.

2. Alexandra is a single mother who has just moved to a different city and she hasn't friends or family there. Her workday is until 5pm but her daughter Anna finishes the school at 4pm so Alexandra can't pick up her daughter to the school.
3. Florian is the single child of a couple. Florian works full time in a big company but currently his parents are elderly and they need that someone stays with them during the day because they need help doing the most basic things: go downstairs, take a shower, etc. The problem is that Florian can't afford to hire a social worker to take care of them.
4. Sarah has been unemployed for almost a year and is looking hard for a job. Ten days ago she went for an interview for her dream job – it was exactly what she was looking for! Everything went well and she was offered the position. The company asked her to have a meeting with Mr. Wladstock, the personnel officer in order to sign

her contract. She had already discussed her duties and other job-related issues at the interview. Just as Sarah was about to sign the contract, Mr. Wladstock said that a condition of the job was that she signs a declaration that she will not have a baby for the next two years.

In this game they had to put face to face with some situations that probably they will live in the future when they decide to create a family and I tried to make them realize that they can contribute with this cause like citizens, workers or entrepreneurs.

Discussion:

At the end of the role game, some people asked me about the right solution in each situation but there isn't a right solution, all the solutions can be right if with them you can solve the problem. The solutions were varied: some of them need the help of the boss, of the government, of your relatives or simply you need more flexibility in your work, sometimes the people used their

imagination and they wrote non real solutions like to win the lottery. At the end, when you see all the solutions you could realize that sometimes you don't need more time or more money to solve this problems, you need only that someone wants to help you: can be your boss allowing you a flexible workday, can be a friend taking care of your child during one day or can be the government with a regulation that avoid some situations of discrimination at job. I hope after the workshop they realized that they can contribute like workers, entrepreneurs or citizens to increase the quality of life of the society because sometimes a little effort for you can avoid a big problem for someone.

During this discussion I had to moderate the discussion with some questions: What do they think about the situations? Was somebody surprised for these situations? Are these situations real on theirs countries? Were the solutions realistic? Does somebody want to add something to the solutions of other teams?

At the end of the discussion, I showed them a graphic map with the work-life balance index in the majority of countries of Europe and they could see which countries are more developed in this area.

My summer plan



I spent the month of June learning some Slovak language (I wanted to survive travelling around Slovakia) and making

the workshop. At the end of June I could do the workshop in a weekend workcamp in Nova Bosaca, I was happy with the result: The volunteers were interesting in the topic and the discussion was interesting and funny at the same time. Of course, there were some mistakes but in general, it was fine.

After this first experience, I came back to Bratislava and I spent some days in the office improving the workshop and preparing everything for the workcamp where I would be leader: Barlička 2.

The 9th of July I went to Presporkovo, a nice workcamp with children in Bratislava and we had the workshop at ten o'clock in the morning, while I was doing the workshop in this workcamp I realized that I had to write something more specific than just a picture to put the volunteers in the right situation to solve the problem because could be hard to identify the problem: for some people was normal to see a woman finding only a few days from giving birth working in the office. So after that, I decided replace the pictures for a description about the situations.

Five days later I went to Obisovce, in the east part of Slovakia, they were helping out in the reconstruction of a castle. They gave me a welcome with a very tasteful dinner and after that, we played some games, one of

them was a name game because it was really useful for me owing that they were 11 volunteers and I have a really bad memory.

We were sleeping on the floor, only with our sleeping mats and sleeping bags so after their work and my journey some of us were tired and already sleeping at ten o'clock. The day after, our alarm clocks were sound since seven o'clock: The breakfast was waiting for us. One hour later we had to walk direction to the castle because at 8'30 our work started and we had to spend 30 minutes walking until arrive to the castle. The road from our accommodation to the castle was really nice. We were working on the castle until 15:30, we had lunch there and we cooked around the bonfire. After work, 30 minutes walking to arrive to our accommodation and we had some free time to take a shower and have a rest.

After dinner we had the workshop but the volunteers were really tired and they asked me to do the workshop shorter, I tried to do everything but more quickly and it

was a mistake of mine. I can say that it wasn't the best workshop during my summer.

The following day early in the morning I left Obisovce and I had to go to a teenager workcamp: Banska Stiavnica. The journey from Obisovce to Banska Stiavnica was a little bit complicated because of the changes and the delays but finally I arrived to Banska Stiavnica safe and sound and the leaders were waiting for me on the bus stop.

The teenagers were cooking all the day and preparing the feast of cultures, I arrived just in time to join them. Firstly they did a presentation about their countries and after that we could try their tasteful dishes: the best was a fondue with chocolate and bananas that cooked a boy from Canada.

After that, we had session of cinema with popcorn: Despicable me! We slept and the next day we were working on the Calvary, a very nice building on the top of a hill. We had lunch on the scout house, we had a little

bit rest and we had the workshop. I was afraid of this group because I didn't know if the topic would be boring or not interesting for them so I made the workshop with special conditions as well as I had a plan B just in case.

I thought to make only three teams and I asked the leaders to help me: In each group we had one leader or me helping out the



teenagers with the role game. As I supposed, the teenagers were bored with the topic so I decided to skip the final discussion and I replaced the discussion for a funny game: “One minute to win”.

After the workshop we went together to the tea house and the day after early I left Banska Stiavnica and I came back to Bratislava. My family came to Slovakia and I had one week off.

The 26th of July I went to Presov, eastern part of Slovakia, together with my co-leader for a workcamp with elderly people, I gave up my nomadic life and for two weeks I felt in Barlička like at home. It was the first time that I spent so long time in the same workcamp and I could enjoy others things that you don't have when only spend two days with the same people: I could meet the people deeper (volunteers and clients) and the work was formidable. After two weeks and some drops we left Barlička with more friends and more histories to tell to our grandchildren. Seven hours of train were waiting for us until arrive to Bratislava.

I spent the weekend in Bratislava with some volunteers from Barlička and afterwards I went to another workcamp: Puchov. They were repairing and cleaning the amphitheatre, some fences and other parts of Puchov. I arrived to Puchov with delay, like usual, and one of the leaders was waiting for me on the train station. We went to the accommodation, I left my backpack and I had rest, during this time I met the

volunteers who stayed on the centre and later, during the dinner, I met the rest of the volunteers. I remember perfectly that this day the dinner was prepared for the Italian volunteers: Spaguetti alla carbonara, delicious!

The following day we had to work painting some fences but it was raining and we couldn't work. Instead of work, one of the policemen of Puchov invited us to a house in the countryside and we were playing jungle speed and other games with some children, we were to the mountain to collect mushrooms and finally, we ate an amazing goulash cooked by the policeman and his wife and we were singing while we took coffee. After that we returned to our centre and we had the workshop. The next day I left Puchov and I went to Barlička again.

I arrived to Barlička around 4pm and they had finished the work with the young people so I met all the volunteers at the same time. During the first 30 minutes I had an strange feeling because was strange for me to see another people sleeping in ours beds, eating in our

table, living in our room but after these 30 minutes I felt comfortable again. We were preparing the activities for the next day, we had dinner and we had cinema with popcorn: This time was the turn of Harry Potter.

The following day we were playing an special treasure hunt with the clients and it was really nice. The volunteers in this workcamp were varied and I really liked it, I enjoyed the diversity. I left the workcamp early in the morning and I came back to Bratislava.

I spent almost two weeks in Bratislava, I back to the office, trying to adapt to the routine but one day I went to Integra centre to make the workshop with another group of international volunteers that were working with disabled people and it was like a break in my routine. During this day I realized that I would miss INEX messenger, maybe we need to have this kind of experience at least one summer in our life.

Conclusion

Now that the period like INEX Messenger has finished I can make balance about the experience and I have to say that this project has given me more than I expected when I read the information about the project and I decided to apply for it.

I have learned about behaviour of the groups, how the people change when they have to make a decision alone or together with another people, such as important is to know work in group, the respect, the collaboration, the tolerance in the cohabitation as well as I have learned about me, I became nomadic with everything that it supposes, I have learned about how is my behaviour when I have to start a different life every two days, in a different place and to get used to the new situation and the new people who surround very quickly me as well as to a new work: sometimes it was manual, sometimes it was social. I was over my limits and I became stronger.

My conclusion when I read the evaluation sheet where the volunteers had to evaluate the workshop is that it's impossible to please everybody but usually the volunteers recognized the worth of the workshop because they had to think about some situations that they had never thought before so my aim was achieved.

I think the project would become better if instead of one INEX messenger they have two INEX messengers because sometimes I missed another person next to me, especially during the longest journeys and the first month, when I was thinking about the workshop and what to do on it. When you share the same situation with another person you feel this support and everything becomes easier, anyway, when you are alone like INEX messenger you become more independent.

HELPING A LOCAL COMMUNITY



SHARE

ADVENTURE

INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE



FUN

PRACTICING LANGUAGES



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

