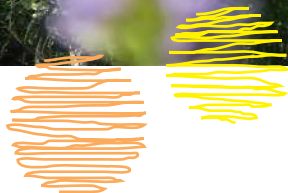


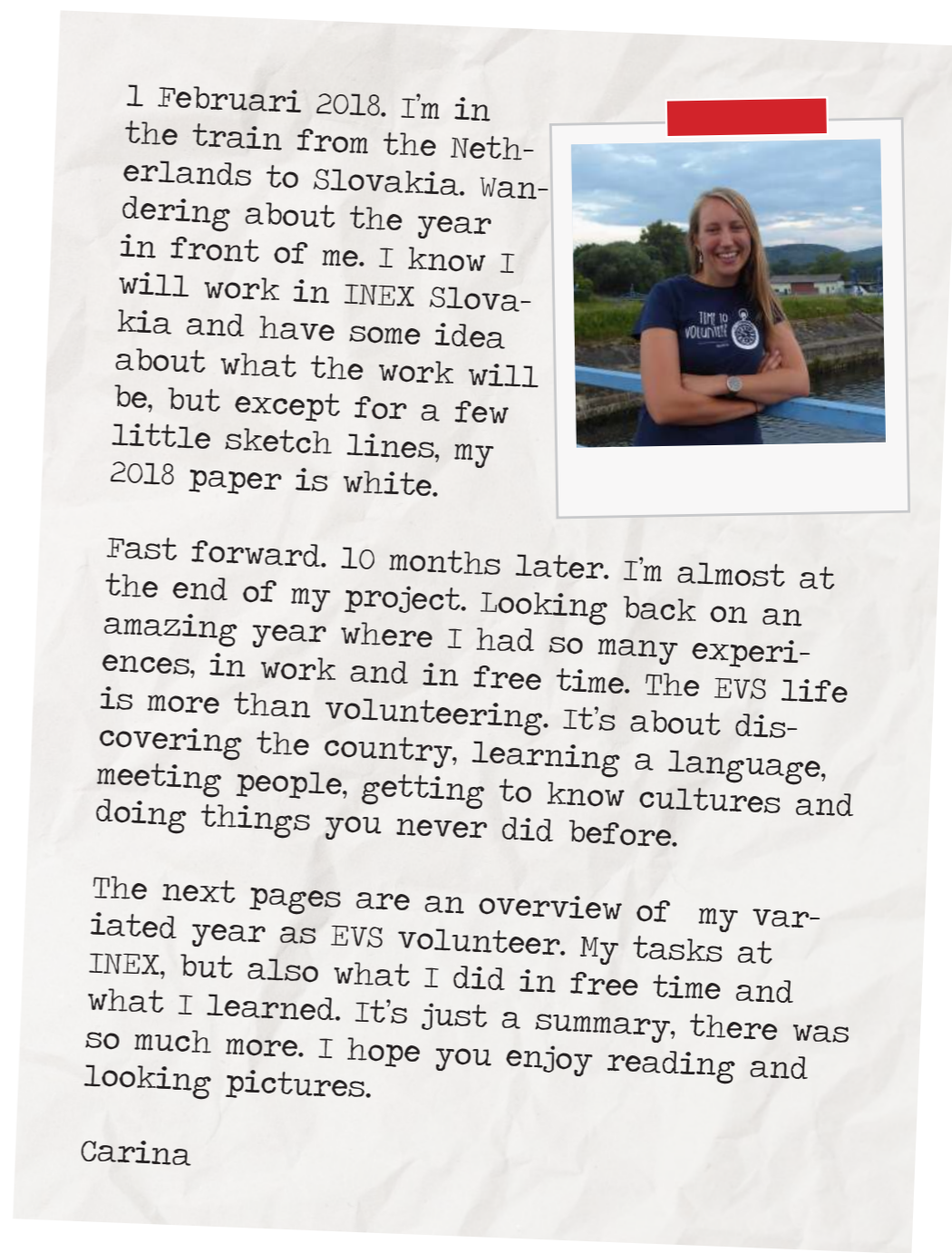
Don't  
dream it,  
be it

European Voluntary Service | INEX Slovakia



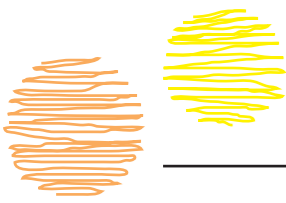
Carina den Otter | 2018

# This is the story of a Dutch girl, volunteering in INEX Slovakia, Bratislava



European Voluntary Service (EVS)  
INEX Slovakia, Bratislava  
1 February - 31 December 2018

I took part in the EVS project 'Don't dream it, be it'.  
The project is supported by the following organizations:



# Travelling to...

After a long journey in the international train, I arrived in Vienna. There I tried to buy a ticket at the kiosk to train station Bratislava Petr... Petrr... Petrezalka. Not knowing that I would have to pronounce this difficult word many more times, since it's the name of the neighbourhood where I would live for the next 11 months.

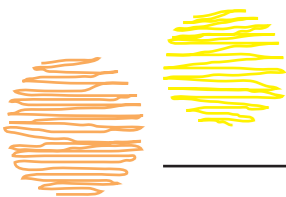
When I arrived, two people were waiting for me on the train station. One of them is Maud, the other EVS'er with who I will live and work together. The first few days, we didn't have to work yet. We met our new colleagues in Flagship restaurant and tried Slovak food and drinks. Also we discovered the city and Maud's mentor Svetlana showed us around in our living neighbourhood Petržalka.



# Bratislava!



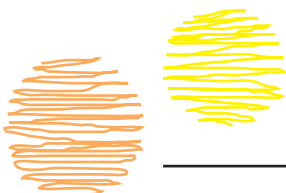
The first weeks, Maud and me joined a lot of events and discovered Bratislava. We did a city game and two free walking tours. We learned about Bratislava and took many pictures. After a year, I still like the city and stop sometimes to make a photo or just to stare at the Danube river. The city felt home really soon, and 'home' got more and more meaning during the year.



# INEX Slovakia



INEX stands for International EXchanges. But the organization does more than that. It motivates young people to develop themselves by organizing volunteering activities and non-formal education. As EVS volunteers we worked mostly in the office. Also we had many events and we went as camp leaders on workcamps in summer.



Colleagues are trying the questions of our European Quiz

Preparing tea meetings

Preparing activities for trainings, like games or call to action

Slovak lesson



Creating social media content

Creating posters

Uploading and updating workcamps on the webpage

## Office work

Preparing presentations

Packing materials for promo events

Promoting workcamps

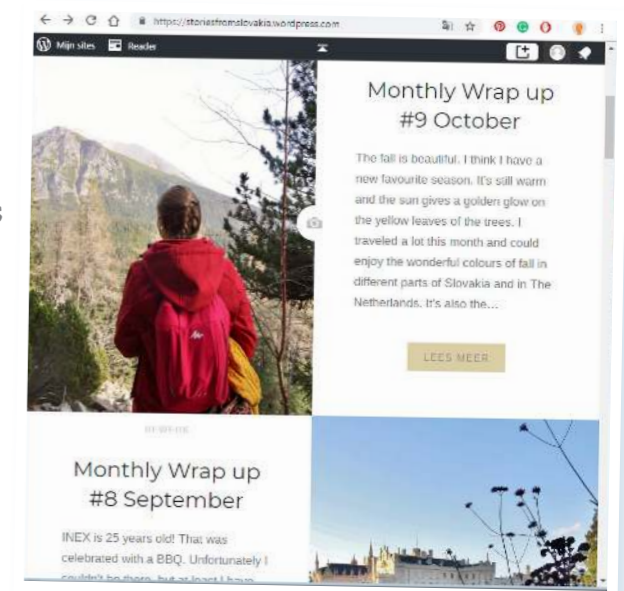
Taking pictures on events and share them on social media

Designing documents



Creating promo materials

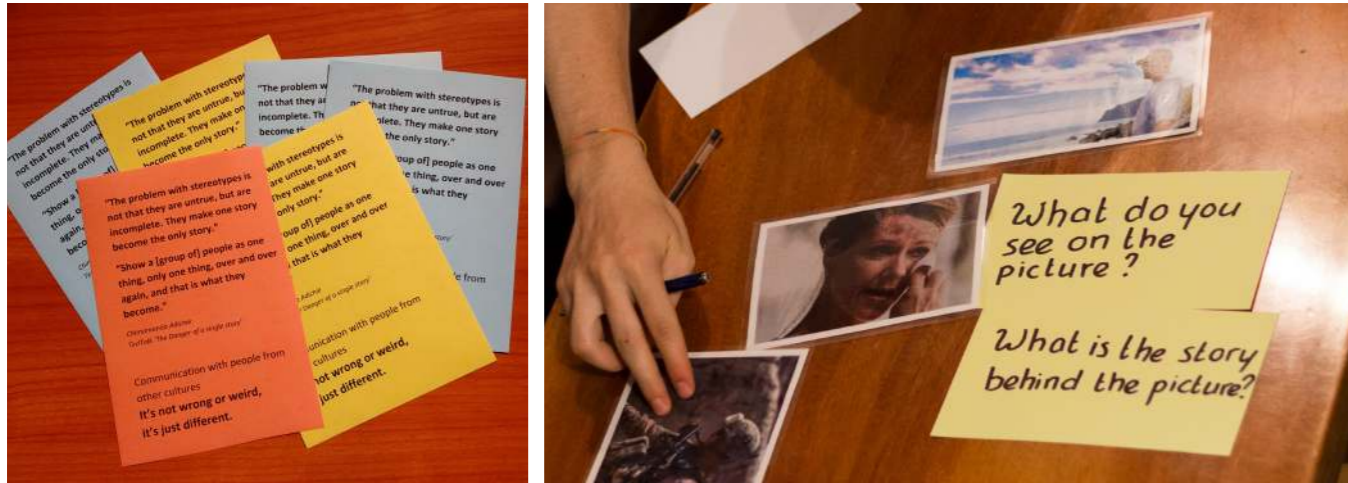
Preparing workcamps



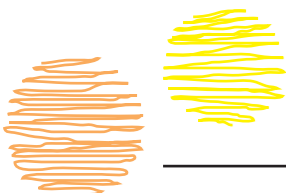
Writing outcomes of EVS and messenger

Writing a blog

# Cultural Diversity Workshop



I created a workshop about cultural diversity and gave it during a training, on two workcamps and on a high school. It's to let people realize that there is more behind people and cultures than we in first place see. It took some time before I found a good point of view and before I was confident in giving the workshop. But looking back it was a nice project and I'm happy that some people became aware of something, thanks to the workshop.



# Promotion



Many times this year we put on our INEX t-shirts, took the role up banner, flyers, sweets and badges with us and stepped in the bus to an event to promote our organization. We had some funny moments with people who were afraid as soon they heard we don't speak Slovak. But luckily we had also many nice conversations, interested people and people who came for a sweet but went away with new possibilities where they had never thought of before.

# 1-day volunteering



**1)** On Valentines Day 14 February, I got to know the clients of Integra, a centre for people with disabilities in Bratislava. The first time was a bit uncomfortable, mostly because I didn't know how to communicate without speaking Slovak. But later in the year we went with them to the ZOO and Devin Castle, and I really liked these trips. It's cool to see what a big adventure it is to go in the bus to some place.

**2)** Washing windows, together with the employees of some companies who took part in the volunteering day 'Naše mesto' - our city. **3)** Playing games with children during 'Máta pre mamu', a mother day family event. The first super hot day of the year. **4)** Another volunteering event for company employees. This time in our own office building. We cleaned up the stockhouse and garden.

# Tea Meetings



During the year we 'travelled' to many countries during the tea meetings. The year started with presentations about The Netherlands and France. Preparing this presentation was our first task of this EVS year. The following tea meetings, we usually invited someone to speak about a country where he or she had been. But my favourites where the quiz nights we organized: Big European Quiz Night and Big World Quiz Night.



# Zlatna na Ostrove

June. Together with my co-leader Maťa we drive from Bratislava to our workcamp in the South of Slovakia. I see the landscape becoming more and more flat. I feel like I'm in The Netherlands. But no, it's Zlatna na Ostrove. This is the place where I would have my workcamp. A farm. The surrounding makes me super happy. But do I look forward to the camp? Mwah. I am afraid that leading a group for two weeks would cost me a lot of energy. Luckily I was wrong. The group was amazing and I totally enjoyed every moment of the camp. The smooth teamwork with my co-leader was great. The camp gave me confidence in my leadership skills. We had to do a lot: planning activities, deal with continue changing circumstances, groceries, communication with different people and parties, motivate volunteers, et cetera. Probably it taught me even more than I realize.



# Slatinka



July. Slatinka was the camp of new experiences. For example working with concrete, cleaning the forest or cutting high grass with some tool which name I don't know. Before we could take a shower with a plant watering can under the blue sky, we had to heat water with a fire. We had dry toilets and for the laundry and dishes we used the water pump. Everything was more slow. I loved the outdoor lifestyle and peaceful atmosphere and beautiful nature around the village. In October I came back for a weekend workcamp and we planted apple trees.

# INEX Team



With the INEX office we had some nice teambuilding moments during the year. One of the first was my birthday in April. A surprise picnic in the park, organized by my lovely EVS-colleagues. Another nice moment was the 'Halusky'-party where we learned to cook this Slovak national dish.



# Languages

## Slovak

We had Slovak lessons, around once a week. After a year in this country I cannot really say that I'm able to speak or understand the language, but the basics that we learned make the life easier. I can for example buy tickets, mainly understand the menu in restaurants or have a really basic conversation if necessary.

## English

Before I started this year, I knew that I could speak English, but I was afraid that I wasn't able to express myself. After a year, I feel totally comfortable to speak in this language. My vocabulary expanded a lot, and if I still don't know a word I'm able to describe it or say the sentence in a different way.

# Trainings



Part of the EVS program are the on-arrival and mid-term training. It was great to get to know other EVS'ers and hear about their projects and organizations. It was nice to see other parts of Slovakia. And the midterm training helped me in reflecting on the project and making new plans.

With INEX I had two trainingweekends for campladers. Especially the second training was a good preparation for the camps. In addition, I enjoyed to learn about and experience non-formal education methods.



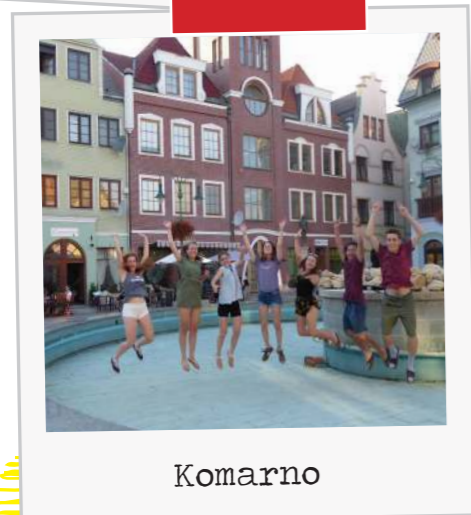
# Travelling in Slovakia...



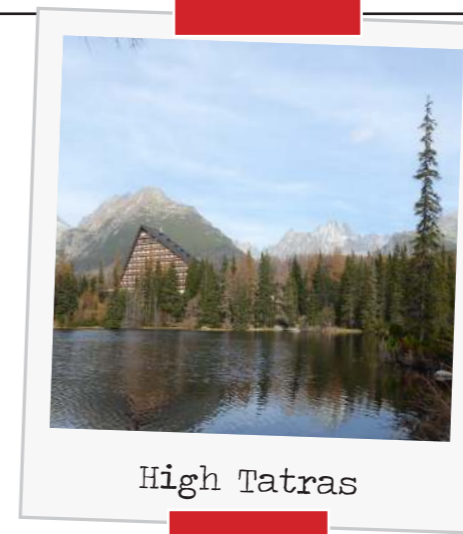
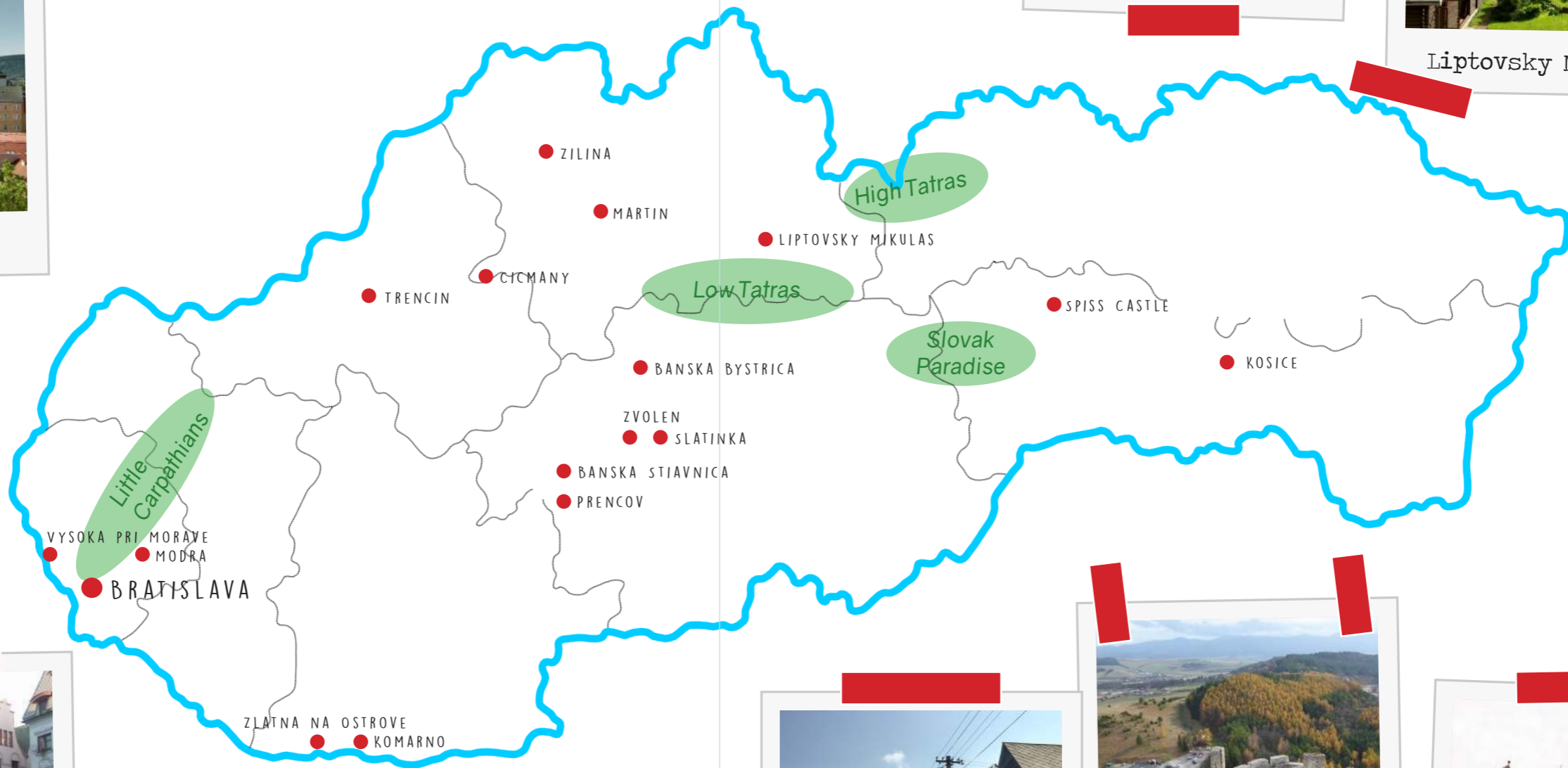
Trencin



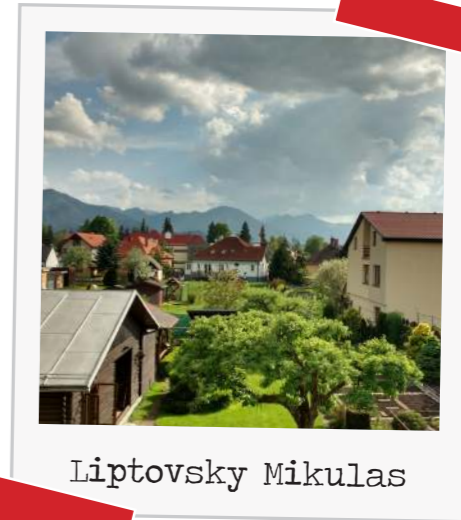
Little Carpathians



Komarno



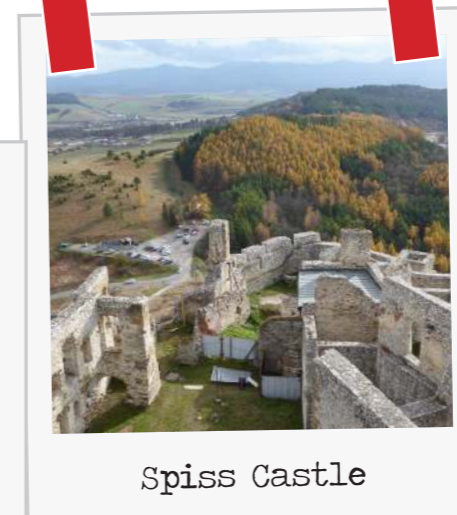
High Tatras



Liptovsky Mikulas



Cicmany



Spiss Castle



Kosice

# ...and abroad

Vienna  
Austria



Krakau  
Poland



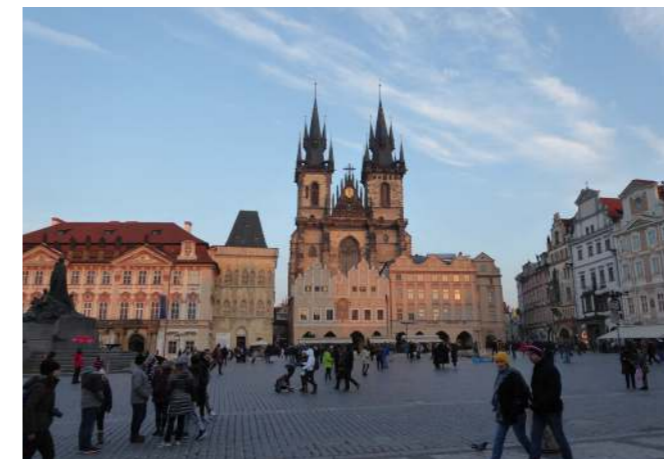
Brno  
Czech Republic



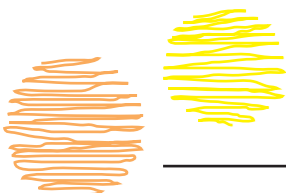
Lednice Castle  
Czech Republic



Budapest  
Hungary



Prague  
Czech Republic



# Free time



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

1) I had some visits from friends and family from The Netherlands. It is really nice that if I tell now something about my life here, they know what I'm talking about.

2) Just outside of Bratislava starts the low mountain range Little Carpathians. I liked to join the hiking events that were organized here and to be in the nature for some Saturdays.

3) This treasure I discovered in Summer. Zlate Piesky, a little lake on the other side of Bratislava. A perfect place to swim on hot days and a little comfort when I miss the water from The Netherlands.

4) With a group of church people, we went sometimes on a trip. This is Schloss hof, just across the border in Austria.

5) With my friend I cycled to Hainburg an der Donau and I discovered the beautiful surroundings of Bratislava.

6) With Anthony and Maud we sometimes went for a drink, or in this case a picnic after work.

7) Bratislava might seem small, but it is a capital and there is always something to do. For example the christmas market, concerts or free museums every first Sunday of the month. This is the museum of transport.

8) A big part of my life in Bratislava was my church Brastislava Faith Community. 'Your family away from home' is the slogan, and that was how I felt it. Honest people, seeking God and sharing their lives with each other. This picture is taken during the thanksgiving lunch.

9) My favourite free time activity until summer was the weekly latin & ballroom dancing lesson, given by another EVS volunteer. This picture is taken during the final ball.

Always  
is your water moving.  
Always  
in the same direction.  
No matter if the wind  
is wild or quiet.

Sometimes  
you are grey and mysterious.  
Sometimes  
you reflect the lights of the city  
or the sunset.

You are beautiful.  
You make me calm.

*Danube*



# Looking back

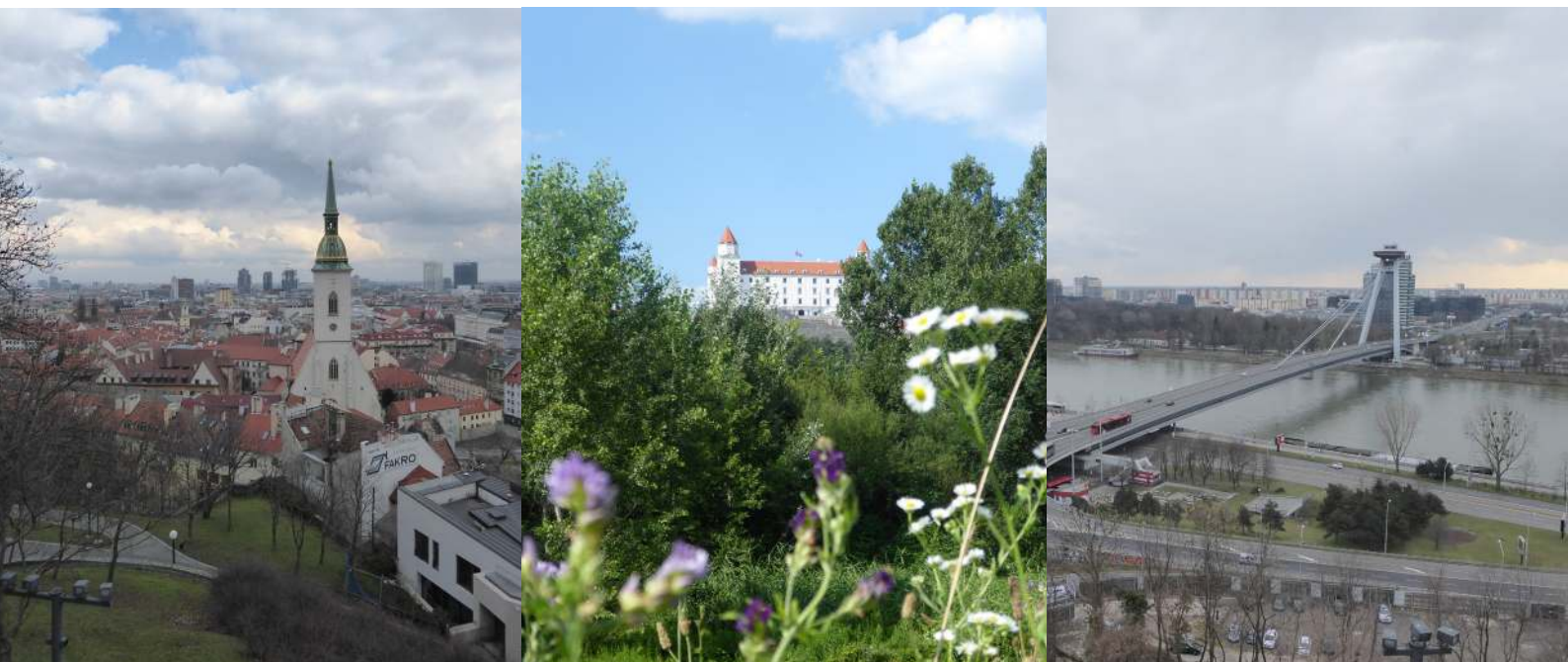
When I decided to go for this EVS project, I didn't know what the year would bring me. I hoped that taking a step out of my daily life, would help me with thinking about my future life. I hoped it would teach me something. It did.

- I improved my English.
- I met people from all over the world. I lived as a foreigner in the capital, where many other foreigners are. In this community of people who don't live in their home country, it's easy to make contact. Also on the workcamps I met people from different countries. By talking with them, I got to know many cultures.
- By meeting so many different people, I learned so many different stuff. It's called informal learning. I know for example more about the geopolitics of mostly central and Eastern Europe and talked with people about religions, astrology, environment, politics, Europe and much more.
- I worked and lived together with the same people for a year, my EVS colleagues. We still like each other :). It asks to be open, respect others in who they are, respect myself and know my borders and stay communicating.
- I am more confident. A year with many new people and situations asks to stay close to myself. It's the only way to enjoy it. I think that I will take this to my future life.
- I learned to lead international groups of young people, during the trainings and workcamps. I learned to communicate with people, to solve problems, to keep people motivated.
- The office work is vary variated. It was a good practice in managing tasks, planning, switching and being flexible.

I'm happy that I went on this year and am thankful for having the opportunity. It has been a good time, where I worked in an amazing organization, meet many lovely people and have been part of a wonderful church. Until a few weeks ago I didn't want to say goodbye. Now I'm okey to take a next step. Curious for what the future will bring.

*4th week of November, 2018  
Carina*

# Goodbye Slovakia



Filled with thankfulness