




**"CATALOGUE"
OF INSPIRING STORIES
ABOUT NON FORMAL
EDUCATION**





Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning aims at promoting participation in Non Formal Education activities and the power of validation and recognition of competences acquired outside the formal education environment through an innovative methodology.

Project wants to take into consideration what has been done so far within this area, research for best practices and successful stories, and get ready to go on the field to reinforce the importance of Non Formal Learning.

This Catalogue collect inspiring stories of young people that, thanks to Non Formal Education, built a personal or professional path, identifying their way to arrive there and how did they manage to make it important for their future.

Each partner organisation from 11 communities collected at least 5 stories, leading to this “Catalogue”, which will be one of the tools used by the Youth Ambassadors to promote Non Formal Learning.

Special thank to more than 50 young “Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning” who have shared their inspiring stories with all of us.

Thank to the all project partners: Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto (Novo mesto / Slovenia); The Future Now Association (Sofia / Bulgaria); Kosovo Center of Diplomacy (Prishtina / Kosovo*); United Societies of Balkans (Thessaloniki / Greece); Youth 4 Society (Tirana / Albania); Center for Intercultural Dialogue (Kumanovo / North Macedonia); Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet – ZID (ADP-ZID) (Podgorica / Montenegro); NGO IUVENTA (Šabac / Serbia); Turk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu (Istanbul / Turkey); TDM 2000 (Cagliari / Italy).

Project is supported by: Erasmus+ (KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the field of Youth) and Institut za razvoj mladih KULT.

Catalogue has been published by Local Democracy Agency Mostar (LDA Mostar).



My name is Adrijana Nikitovic (25), coming from Belgrade, Serbia. I study International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science, and I am enrolled in the Young European Ambassadors project where I am Young European Attache for the Western Balkans. Mine bringing up and educational system in my country always wanted me to follow the path of obedience, stuffiness and uncritical thinking. Back then, I wanted to change that world with my actions, and, later in life, I found a way to do so. I will tell you the secret about my tool for it, but

you have to promise to use it yourself. It is a non-formal education(NFE)! In my opinion, NFE has the same importance as a formal one, and only synthesis of these two makes a person complete. NFE helped me to get out of my comfort zone and to escape from the familiar environment and everyday routine. For me it means being more confident, developing new skills, improving English and learning new languages, achieving

goals and developing full potential. It encourages creativity, expands talents, raises awareness of other peoples' needs and teaches a lot about differences and similarities that moves this planet. Through that process, I get to know and understand myself better, but what is more important, others as well. What it makes NFE priceless is that this is a form of knowledge and experience and that you can not gain by going to travel agency and paying for it or by going to the



library and learning it from the books. By NFE, you create your journey and write your own book. I hope that my journey will become our journey and that my secret tool will help you fill the pages of your book.

ADRIJANA





Aleksandra Mihajlovska is a professional actress currently working in National Theater Kumanovo. Despite her theater career, she has been working on coordinating, managing and facilitating youth projects since 2007 as part of different organizations and networks. As a trainer and facilitator she is working on promotion of theater techniques as tools for social change. She is currently finishing her specialization studies in the field of psychodrama psychotherapy. In 2017, she co-founded Center for Personal and Creative Development, Percipio, where she is presently leading theater workshops for personal and creative development of youngsters and kids.



Her first experience with non-formal activities came together with her first year of high school. She became part of Blue Sky Youth Network and one of the leaders of a local club created and coordinated by The British Council. The following year she became one of the local facilitators of Center for Non-Formal Education Triagolnik, Kumanovo after completing their long-term training for youth workers.

She joins CID in 2008. Shortly after that, she is part of the organizational team of a youth exchange supported by the Youth in Action. From 2010 until 2013 she works on EVS projects. In the period 2015 -2017 she is a coordinator of the youth center MultiKulti for its local activities supported by the projects „MultiKulti Cube“, „MultiKulti Social Youth Service“ and “MOTIV8” funded by UNDP. She is still part of CID's family as an external expert on intercultural dialogue and youth participation through arts.

One can clearly say that her formal education was always followed by her non-formal activities. Aleksandra believes that everything she has been doing with projects opened her viewpoint, encouraged her to take risks, to enjoy diversities in any sense and to always be aware of different perspectives and different worlds. This influenced her career as an actress as well because she was encouraged to explore theater out of the formal setting and to learn about all the different ways it can be made and used. Her work on stage combined with her work with groups led her to psychodrama psychotherapy, a field that she is currently exploring and would maybe be an impossible direction if she hadn't had some previous experience in leading and facilitating groups.

She encourages every young person out there to use the possibilities of non-formal education, to enroll in local and international activities following personal interests, to explore and travel, to meet people and to exchange everything: cultures, ideas and inner worlds. Non-formal learning supports and appreciates the participants giving them the freedom of choice: you choose to be active, you choose to share or step back, you choose to break one boundary and to set others according to personal needs not according to the needs of a pre-created system.

ALEKSANDRA



My name is Ana Barbara Kovacevic and, although I graduated pedagogy and have a master's degree in educational policies, I've been working as a babysitter for years. The first encounter with non-formal education happened when I was 16. I applied to go to an international camp in France with other participants from Serbia, Germany and France. We worked on arranging and nurturing neglected forest and spent our free time learning the basics of all three languages through language games. We had an intercultural evening after 20 days of camp and then I knew it wouldn't be my last experience of that type.



The next camp was in Germany and the participants were from many countries around the world (Vietnam, Japan, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Serbia ...). I was 17 years old and then I knew I was in love with this kind of learning and gaining practical experiences through interaction and fun.

I dedicated the next two years to Youth in Action programs in the region (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia) and at the age of 20, I went on a youth exchange for the first time as a team leader. I invited 4 other participants from Serbia and we were working on street art and performance. In those two years I learned a lot more about project writing and I progressed a lot in English. I learned to cope in unfamiliar situations and environments, to enjoy outside my comfort zone, and to transfer gained knowledge and experience.

In 2018, my friend and I realized our first regional youth exchange for participants from Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. It is an endeavor we are most proud of. 28 participants gained this type of experience for the first time and are still developing the acquired contacts and friendships. We passed on to them our fascination with the benefits of the Erasmus program and shared our experiences so far. We motivated some of them to apply for the EVS program and some to write their own projects for youth exchanges.

All in all, I think it is a great pity that this is the topic that is not talked about enough and that it isn't known more among young people. They want to learn and expand their knowledge of the world around them. Interculturality is a precious thing that this type of program makes possible.

I would like to share my enthusiasm and excitement I feel at the very thought of going to the next international exchange with as many young people as possible.

By the way, I have volunteered in numerous organizations over the past ten years and there I have acquired much more practical skills than mere theories from university literature (soft skills). I got to know myself, broadened my horizons, strengthened my self-confidence and fell in love with the world in a completely different way.

ANA BARBARA



I'm Anna, 21 years old, from Sofia, Bulgaria and currently I'm in my last year of my Bachelor in Business Psychology and Human Resources. In my free time I'm a new Zumba instructor, preparing new songs and choreographies for my first class. Last year in September I participated in the Erasmus+ project GUIDE which was about outlining successful strategies against gender-based violence. It was my second non-formal education as my first one was in my high school years where I went to Barcelona, Spain for a whole month to learn different marketing skills in an international environment. I decided to participate in these two projects to learn something new about myself, learn more stories about other people, develop new skills and practice my English.

Both times the time flew by so fast I was sad and not ready to leave the place and the people when we had to. I wanted to spend more time with them, explore more beautiful places and learn even more new things. Both projects gave me a lot – I made new friends, learned new skills and gained new knowledge, I feel more secure and comfortable in situations in which I have to talk in English and I have more confidence when expressing myself in front of people.





Non-formal education is very precious today. It is useful to learn new things, but also helps you find other people with similar interests and ideas. The opportunity to connect with new people, to share your stories with them and hear theirs, to exchange ideas how to make different situations better, to create new friendships, to learn something new about yourself –all that and more stands behind non-formal education. If you are still wondering whether or not to try it out – I would suggest you do, because it is really inspiring and is a good first step in self-development.

ANNA





My name is Blazhen Maleski, I am a researcher at REACTOR - Research in action, an independent and not-for-profit think-tank based in Skopje, North Macedonia, and I've been doing this for the past 8 years. I research related questions such as unemployment, the social capital of young people and civic participation of young people in general.

From 2017 to 2019 I was the president of The National Youth Council of Macedonia.

My involvement in NFL activities started in 2015 when I did my EVS in Postdam, Germany, in the organization Mostar Friedensprojekt. The organization dealt with young people -refugees that would try to integrate better into society. Part of my tasks was to organize Erasmus+ activities to incorporate them into opportunities that Europe has for young people.

Before finishing my studies at university, I chose to ignore few years of my formal education and tried to be more active in the NFE, learn more from people and organizations that were implementing such activities, meet other different people and see what they were doing for young people, have exchanges of use when it came to the issues that young people were facing all around Europe, and what they are doing in those countries.

I think besides knowledge, it is the connections and the people that I would highlight the most, especially when I was in Potsdam. This in a way, led me to grow as a person in terms of understanding how different societies work.

I think that NFE helped me a lot in choosing my career, the things that I do now, and what I want to do in the future. It gave me ideas, it gave me a clear vision of what I can do, it gave me the connection to talk to certain people and actually implement certain activities, so this experience was very important for me as a person in general, not only to my career path, because it helped me to grow.

Since I work in the NGO sector, NFL progress is being recognized in this sector, and is very important for building the experience of people in the civil society, but then again, I don't think the teachers understand the positivity

of NFL and the necessity for young people to be part of such activities.

To a young person that has never been a part of an organization, doesn't have the opportunity to travel, live alone, learn new things outside the formal aspect of education, I would suggest taking part in anything that they get their hands on, whether that's a YE, TC or EVS. Take every opportunity, since all of those are an extra experience that you gain, have added values to themselves, and are a great chance for a young person to grow. What I would say to the young people is get out there, meet people, discuss, debate, and have an open discussion about the things that are happening in Europe or even in the world, because this is the only way that you can understand how other people feel, how other people think, how other people perceive the world when it comes to any topic in the world.

BLAZHEN



My name is Bleon, and maybe I am starting this story not in the right way, but I need to emphasize that ever since I remember going to school, my friends and I were all taught by rules. We were taught and we still are taught maths, physics, chemistry, history, languages etc, which are all either talents or future occupations, subjects that make some of the students feel superior and the others inferior, subjects that are not understood by everyone. We were taught so many things in school, different equations, different grammars, different laws and I am not saying that they were useless, but we weren't taught something more important like love, respect, care and help. Today, there are different NFE activities that help students grow mentally, morally, spiritually and correctly.

For my age, I have so many experiences with NFE activities, they have helped me a lot to grow as a better person with a brighter future. Being part of non formal activities has helped me have a wide circle of friends, greater knowledge, independence from family and friends, great pride and a warrior soul. At the age of ten I was part of a movie in which I had the main character, the whole movie was in English language and it helped me having dreams for my future and also increased my confidence because the character itself was really powerful and loved by everyone, the movie wasn't chosen the best one due to technical reasons, but participation was important for me and really worth it. I always wanted to do things the way I wanted and not how others wanted, of course I listened to the advice of my family and professors but I also always wanted to get out of the box, because staying in wouldn't let me grow out. I was part of an organization about children's rights around the world, we had to do a painting that would describe the differences between children. As one of my many hobbies that painting was, I really did a great painting with a great message of how children are not treated the same but instead



in some places are used for work and in other places they are treated the way that they should be, playing with toys and enjoying their only years without worries. P.s I described the painting in English because the judge who decided about my painting was English.

My NFE activities never really stopped, at that time I was attending English language courses where I had so much fun, I was improving my English, making friends and memories. At that time, I learned a lot of things that we never discussed in school, everyday we opened new topics, talked about our dreams, future plans etc, that was really a time I still cherish. My swimming classes were my favourite NFE activity, I started swimming at the age of 9 until last year, I was part of different races in Kosovo and Albania, swimming helped me a lot during puberty and it helped me grow a lot physically, even tho it is an individualistic sport it helped me a lot to learn techniques and styles from other swimmers.

NFE activities are really helpful in life, learning is about the human empathy we have learnt throughout the years, the human love we have, the non-racist heart we have and the respectful acts that we do. The volunteering hours that I did with kids in the summer school at Don Bosko last year was also a great time, helping kids collaborate with the others, making them win in different races was a time to remember.

This experience made me able to know how to take care of children, and currently I take care of my sister's twin babies. Basically, nowadays the roles have switched, a woman can literally drive a lorry if she can, without shame, or a man can babysit without a problem, if it's something you love doing you should work and run for it. Taking care of them, whilst my sister is at work is the most beautiful time and the dream job one can ever have. From non-formal activities I learned that 'a friend in need is a friend indeed', so my advice to all the future teenagers is to work with passion whether it's volunteering or it's a paid job, to help others, to make yourself proud and to take every chance that it comes to you, because you live only once the life.

BLEON



I am Büşra Akdoğan from Eskişehir / Turkey and I am 26 years old. I graduated from Dokuz Eylül University English Language Teaching department in 2016. My profession is project manager.

Actually, my non-formal education story is a little bit unexpected. Graduating from English Language Teaching, I was assigned as a secondary school teacher to a city in east of Turkey. After I worked two years with formal education, I have realized that I don't want to do this job anymore because I had the feeling that I was not improving myself in my profession and also my personal career. So I decided to quit. I was unemployed, and searching for opportunities to test myself in different, tough experiences and found about European Voluntary Service (EVS) by Erasmus+ to be able work as a volunteer in Romania for working with disadvantaged kids in the school.

In the beginning, It was a little bit difficult for me as an ex-teacher to adapt myself from formal education to non-formal, but then I have learnt how to manage to teach something effectively to the kids through non formal activities.



At the end of my EVS, I learnt how to write Erasmus+ youth exchanges and trainings. It gave me the chance to prepare even more non-formal activities in different topics for youngsters and adults as well since project activities under Erasmus+ had better to be done with non-formal activities. Thanks to my voluntary service, I had the chance to join many exchanges and trainings where I can learn many more activities which can be implemented non formally.

When I finished my project, I got a job offer from the association which I was a volunteer for to work with them as a project manager! Now, I am working in an organization in Resita, Romania.

I want to mention this journey to show people that to change our lives is in our hands. If we don't take risks, neither we can improve nor the society we live in. We have to acknowledge that life is full of surprises and unexpected things only if you know how to take a step. That's why, I would suggest to youngsters to be a volunteer via ESC, to join youth exchanges and trainings where all the activities are done through non formal activities, learn by doing and experiencing. Because it is the best way to learn something when you do it and this is the biggest opportunity that non formal education gives someone.

I would like to finish my story with a quote from a very nice movie "Life is like a box of chocolate, you never know what you are gonna get"

BÜŞRA



Hello, I'm Desi, a sixteen-year-old high school student from Pleven, Bulgaria. I have numerous hobbies, some of which are dancing, drawing, linguistics, making jewelry and many other.

Over the years I have participated in many non-formal educational activities, many of which I continue to go to. As of now, I have dancing, additional Bulgarian and Math classes and Linguistic and English courses. I also participate in an Online Youth Group. I have been training ballet for around 11 years and scouting for nearly 5 years. I used to go to Coding, Math, and German classes when I was in Elementary and Middle School and started visiting an Art group in 5th grade. Most of them were chosen by my parents and agreed upon by me when I was little. Later in life, however, I decided which ones I want to stick with and resigned from the others. Each and every one has its own reasons for me to participate in. For example, my ballet dancing and being a scout were strongly influenced by my friends and brothers and some were "mandatory" like my English courses.

The non-formal type of education has given me much more than just the knowledge for the subjects and activities I like. Because of them I met and created bonds a lot of people. Some, such as the Youth Group and my Scout club, have taught me valuable skills about life and relationships and increased my self-confidence. Ballet dancing has also helped me be a better teammate and keep calm when I'm in front of an audience.

The non-formal education hasn't helped me much in choosing a life path. However, it has assisted me as an aspiring writer, mostly by providing me with various experiences, similar to the ones, I try to emulate in my books. Moreover, they sometimes give me inspiration for new stories and books. I've usually strived to do my very best. Nonetheless, most of my improvement are mostly slow and steady, which is why I, myself, have a hard time recognizing it, unless it's pointed out by someone else.

From my experience, people should take part in non-formal activities that interest them, whether or not they have a natural leaning towards the subject, as most of the success is usually achieved by hard work and dedication. Every class or course has something to provide. The possibilities are endless! Still, nobody is ought to feel forced to participate in something they don't want to and if they feel like they cannot handle it, it's better to just leave it. No one has to be good at everything.



In conclusion, I believe that non-formal education is just as important as school, if not more. It's because it consists of activities, that leave an everlasting impression and knowledge on kids and teens and allow them to experiment and meet new people.



My name is Diella Valla and I am currently studying science, but am interested in various activities that include art, entrepreneurship, fashion design etc. I have been part of different activities, as I have always enjoyed exploring more visions of myself and my interests. Non-formal education is a great opportunity to be experienced by each student, not only in my country, but all over the world. Different experiences that surround us everyday and expressed ideas that follow each day in a huge difference from another, are part of non-formal education that aspects as important as the education itself. NFE provides knowledge and touches a variety of topics that matter in our daily life such as : Human Rights, Socialization, Culture topics etc. NFE through years has helped me develop my own critical-thinking and expressing myself clearly. It also helped me gain knowledge in fields that I may have never heard of and improve my communication skills. It's a mirror that shows the real personality of yours and improves aspects that you lack the confidence for. Basically, non-formal activities are lessons learned or theories that you may use in practicality. Being part of a huge project in Kosovo, I participated many activities including: helping on social media by promoting our club, assisting with planning and logistics of a youth exchange program with youth



in Finland, the topic of which was "Service Learning and Youth Entrepreneurship", in which the group visited organizations and individuals taking initiatives in Kosovo, and shared experiences together, and I have also been part of the meetings of our new program Changemaker S.K.I.L.L.S funded by the U.S Embassy in Kosovo.

Although there I found many opportunities, I have been working with the leadership on creating a new club in which the topic would be "Art and Society". While being a part of non formal learning activities, broadened my horizons of thinking and seeing a clear

vision of myself. I have helped with social media by sharing my art interests ,but I have always tried to learn from my mentors and collectively create something beautiful for the youth that surround us.

It's not about the places we held our meetings ,but about the people I have had the chance to meet and share my ideas with,so we could offer opportunities for the youth in Kosovo. The positive change that non formal education, presents even today the happiness I am filled with helping the community I live in. There is unquestionably nothing more beautiful than seeing people have the same aspirations as yours ,believe in you and the change you want to give for a better future. To move on,as a painter I have participated in exhibitions and art workshops in local and international ones.

Sharing my knowledge for painting and always being ready to learn something new are two main reasons that I focused on NFE.

The best part of NFE is having the chance to keep up with it even on online platforms. This year,I have been part of webinars and workshops held from organisations such as DVOTIO in which I had the opportunity to present myself as a fashion illustrator and be involved as a volunteer for their work. The accessibility for everyone is another great benefit you can receive from activities that NFE offers.

It isn't about telling people that you have participated in something,but it's mainly about challenging your abilities and putting these abilities of yours in real life actions. I hear everyday people complaining about the air pollution or the environment covered with trash,while in contrast none of them does any volunteering activity or is part of any free-events offered from NGO-s of our country.


Projects or activities like these usually consist of activism,as a movement that everyone needs to be challenged with. In one of the workshops called "Daily life of young kosovars" held from KETNET, I saw perspectives of people that affected me in negative and positive sides ,but in contrast we collected our stories by finally the bright sides that even today stay memorized in my mind and will always live there.

Not each activity you are going to be part of,is going to make a big change in your life,but memories and learned-lessons will. Even Michelangelo at age 87 said "I am still learning",as all of it. If we knew and learned everything in school,life wouldn't be a problem you need a solution for.

It wouldn't be a road you needed to travel so you can find your way. NFE includes a bunch of benefits I cannot count,because there are many advantages you get from it. For this reason and for a lot of unmentioned ones,I encourage everyone to fill his/her journey with new challenges and experience what NFE offers everyday.

DIELLA





My name is Diellëza, and I studied Engineering at UBT (University for Business and Technology), and I am a Junior Software Developer at ODK (Open Data Kosovo). I've always been the one who wanted to learn new things out of what is served at school or at the university... So, this made me go out of that comforting zone and become part of so many training and courses that not only made me learn new things, but also made me create new friendships, and improved my interaction with others, and I'm very glad of that.

I see Non-Formal Education as "more experience", and most of the time, experiences give new chances. In march 2020, I was part of a training called Techstitution, implemented by Open Data Kosovo, and that training gave me the chance to become the newest junior software developer at the ODK team.

But except for those trainings that were kind of my studies, that really increased my knowledge and gave me the best experiences, I've also been part of many other training and volunteering activities, that made me feel satisfied with the way others think and live, and differences that existed between me and them.

I have been part of projects in different fields, such as in the drafting project proposals, the media and public com-



munication, seminar for illegal migration, summer schools, different training, seminars and conferences with a multicultural dimension. -And if you are curious to know why all this variety of activities; I chose to be part of all these activities because more and more every time I participated in such activities, I developed multidisciplinary knowledge and learned more about life - these two things that I now consider the most important!

While formal education mostly focuses on learning of knowledge, where practice of skills is done less, I see non-formal education as focusing more on practice, and for me as for so many other people, the things we practice take more time to be forgotten. In fact, NFE is more than just practicing, you train your performance, collaborate with others, and get to know new horizons that you would never know otherwise. You even get that special bond with other participants sometimes, and that special energy that makes it so hard to say goodbye, and return home!

One thing I need to emphasize is that non-formal education in our country is not one of the priorities of our society and we are not given many opportunities, I again call on all those who are optimistic about life and the future to find the opportunity to engage in non-formal learning as I did. I started with difficulty and now I cannot imagine life without being part of informal activities.

-It is strange, some NFE training even made me see life, the future and everything around me, differently!

All of my experience with NFE reinforced a quote which I go by: "Formal education is a walk through the zoo, informal learning is a walk through the savannah".



DIELLEZA



I'm a 3rd grade business university student at Yıldız Technical University. I'm working as an intern at Corbiz. Also I'm a member of Aiesec and Peryön. In addition to all this stuff I'm playing tennis and try to go for a walk in my free time. This helps me to stay focused and motivated. Last January, I went to Ukraine with Aiesec to teach English to children. I stay in a host family and my job description was teaching English to my host family's children. I stayed there for six weeks. Actually it seems like a short time but since the first week I was feeling like I'm at home. My host family never felt me like I didn't belong there. I chose to go to this project with Aiesec because of three reasons. First one of them was I had never been abroad before so this would be my first experience. Second reason was getting out of my comfort-zone. Before this project, I wasn't trying to make myself uncomfortable. I didn't do anything for my future life. I needed to get out of my comfort-zone

as soon as possible. And my last reason was becoming a world citizen. We see lots of news about other countries on social media or news pages. And for some of us becoming a world citizen means showing an interest in the world's problems and arguing those problems with our friends, family. But for me becoming a world citizen means having friends from another country, from another continental, from the far end of the world... And being able to argue when a problem occurs in their country. Talking with somebody who was born there and grew up with that culture.

When I was teaching English to children I was all alone there and I had to plan, schedule, and control the process by myself. This was too difficult in the beginning but after I started to teach, and knowing children everything became much easier. We were at home when we were studying English so children were losing their



attention so easily. As a solution to that we started to watch English grammar videos, English movies with Ukrainian subtitles and playing lots of different games with children. This process taught me how to manage problems when you are all alone and keep going even if it's too hard. My purpose was much bigger than developing my leadership skills. Also I learned how to become a world citizen. I gained lots of friends from South Korea to Indonesia. I got to know different cultures and how this culture thing affected people's life, how people can be that much different even if they were living in the same universe. I went to a foreign country all alone that I have never been before. I never had a teaching experience before but went there to teach English in a language that children can't understand or speak. I learned to manage stress and risk. I learned to control everything and keep going while hiding my feelings about what if I can't do it in a perfect way. I became better at communication. I spoke with lots of new people in a foreign environment in a foreign language. I learned to say yes to all new opportunities. And now I can say I'm glad to do that.

In the beginning I feel like I wasn't doing things right. This experience is not going to teach me that much, I'll not teach English to children. But when I keep going everything becomes better and I feel like I'm doing really big things to touch those children's lives.

My project helped me to get out of my comfort zone and learning by practicing. As a global non-formal learning experience I learned that we can make a change and we can start with being a caring person, a world-citizen... Creating a caring society is in our hands.

ECE



My name is Elsa, 22 years old, and I am a third-year student at Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Faculty, Computer Engineering Department at University of Pristina. I like working on my field but I also like to try new things. Even though I'm a student I've always pushed myself to learn new things in different ways. I like music, sports, dancing, cooking, design, travel, meeting new people and have so many hobbies so I've always thought why not do something that I like such as learning new things in a way that includes my hobbies as well. That is what NFE gave me a totally new experience in the things that I like, a new point of view of the things that I've learned and a new point of view of myself as well. And I am grateful for that because I've grown my knowledge and worked on my insecurities to get myself out of that comfort zone by doing something that I love.

Coming out of your shell is the best way to discover and develop more about you and the thing to do so is to not be afraid to challenge yourself. It's hard to reach out and find young people interested in additional education since they

are already learning in schools and in college. They find their formal learning enough for them, and everything else very boring but with non-formal education everything changes and becomes challenging, exciting and fun - something that young people like, to have fun, to actively participate and to benefit from it. Of course, formal education is important and is also the basis of our life knowledge, but I believe that challenges, traveling and knowing new cultures, knowing new people, creative projects, and all this kind of forms of NFE are the ones that help us discover more about who we are and at



the same time show it to the world.

Out of all of my work of participating and volunteering in youth activities (my experience in trainings with different groups with young people, marginalized young people, teachers, health care providers and other stakeholders in the social field; also my working experience in national and international institutions and organizations in conducting research, experience in different projects of reconciliation, migration, different trainings and conferences with a multicultural dimension), best experiences were those while traveling and meeting new people and having an idea of their mindset about things that we learn daily and how they use them. Being able to see a mindset different from the ones you are used to seeing, also being able to learn from someone and being able to give someone the opportunity to learn something from you is also the best feeling and the best way to see the world with a different eye.

Also, to give another perspective about NFE and discover it more in order to encourage the youth to challenge themselves in these forms of education we can compare NFE with a colorful child's windmill, like the one we used to play when we were kids. As the colorful winds of the windmill are connected to each other and start moving and producing sound and energy thanks to our blow, thus the non-formal education connects different young people, full of energy and freshness of their age, who attain great achievements with the support of a trainer/coach/tutor. So, my advice is get out there, challenge yourself by connecting to others so you can see that colorful rainbow.

ELSA





My name is Eva, and I am a 20-year-old student at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security. I come from a small town in Bela krajina, but you could find me all over the world. I like various sports, preferably martial arts, and in the past, I was also a member of the Slovenian national team in ju jitsu, I also play tennis. I could say that I love everything that is a little bit different and that is why I like to travel, get to know different languages, cultures, people and cuisines – and those are the reason why I think that non-formal education (NFE) is important. Of course, formal education is crucial and is also the basis for NFE, but I believe that experiences, travel, communication with people, creative projects, discussions and other forms of NFE are the ones that give us the opportunity to cash in on that “school” knowledge, and at the same time show to the world who we really are. NFE does not merely give us a different view of the world, the width, the competencies we acquire; but it gives us something we become aware of when we look back - memories, experiences and a social network. Something that stays forever and that we cannot gain through mere theory!

I learned this by simply trying different forms of NFE: I led the Student Organization of Gimnazija Novo mesto and there I was the responsible person for almost 30 projects, I attended the Living Library, in the project with Gimnazija Karlovac I co-led a self-defence workshop and finally I travelled to Portugal to Youth Exchange and to Denmark to attend the project Up close. If you ask me why I wanted to be part of each of these projects, I would answer: Not because I just want a line more in my CV, but because each of them is now a part of me and because all my experience, training and education has led me to what I am today.

For all those of you who don't know if you would try or you are afraid of something, if you procrastinate and are in doubt, let me say this: If you move, those wonderful things you dream of will happen; maybe even those less wonderful, and yet they will happen because you will move. If you stay put, it will only get worse. You will be stuck in place and nothing will happen.

You will learn many things that will be important; when you stand in front of a room full of students and you will not be afraid to speak; when you bake that best danish cake at home; when you get a Christmas card from Austrian friends; when you write an application for (student) work and state that you have the certificate required by the employer; or when you'll be talking over coffee to a friend about all the ad-



ventures that have happened; in short, when you will look back and say to yourself "Thank God," then you will know that all these projects were not in vain. They gave you something that the school notes will never be able to give you. It may sound a little poetic, but still - they will leave a mark in the form of stories, they will leave you the Life - that unwritten that you will never be able to read in an encyclopaedia or other literature but it will have meaning because it will be full of amazing stories, memories, knowledge and it will be written by the best author - you.

I would not want to tell you which projects, trainings are the best and which to choose. If you find (or not) appropriate, give it a try. Everything you do gives you something - even if it is a bad experience.

So what?!

We all have them and that way you will start to appreciate what you want and like.

I was and I am still taking a part of non-formal education because projects give me momentum. This is who I am. I decided to learn at every step and that I will be a part of every step in my life. Forrest Gump said that life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you are going to get. It is similar with projects, you never know what they will bring you, you enter the unknown, and yet have you ever stopped trying chocolates. Did you try first and only then said, "it was really good".

EVA



ERASMUS PLUS IT'S NOT A PROGRAMME, IT'S A FAMILY THAT MAKES THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Life is an adventure

When I left for my first project, I was in one of the worst times of my life. At that moment I didn't even know what to expect, I just knew that all the things would be worth it to be better than I was.

I had never traveled before and I was absolutely unable to take care of myself, but I felt inside me that root that often remains hidden or sunk from the ground above, but that is growing deep inside you and tries to say: "A' bello hai finito de piangerte adosso? - Come on' man when you gonna stop crying about your own mistakes? Come out of the box and become who you are."

Since the first day of my short-term EVS in Croatia, I had a great time! It's like when you live for years inside a nightmare in which you feel imprisoned, but suddenly you discover a light that is made of the same substance as you.

We lived in a hostel in the suburbs of Zagreb, the capital. Every night, I remember that people from all over the world used to come and enrich me and indelicate me with a new culture, or maybe with the thing that creates more value and balance within ourselves: diversity. Unfortunately, it wasn't a great project at a professional level, but in life you don't learn the important things with a piece of paper, you learn them by living.

I learned to let go and live intensely every day surrounded by people who love me... so much, that I think I learned in 2 months what I had forgotten in 20 years. I learned to be eco-sustainable and that every little gesture is important to help us and the planet. I have also understood that you don't have to be afraid to throw yourself into life, and that as a wise woman said to me a few days ago



stacce* – get dealt with don't be afraid. Because even if life slaps you, today we are still here, and we still have the power to smile and change things.

*italian expression

Once back home, I resisted about a month, then I left for a youth exchange, in a country where I never thought I would go like Tunisia. That was not just a cultural exchange, it was The Cultural Exchange. I finally understood what the Erasmus Plus program was really like (the project was well-organized this time), and I finally managed to get out of my insecurity and expose myself to the public without fear. I remember that I was not shy anymore, and that I kept on talking to so many people. "You speak later at the presentation that you are the bravest one!" and I stood there and was like "But are you talking to me?" I couldn't believe that there was a version of Filippo that was not shy and awkward, and I was so happy that from then on I didn't want to stop traveling and discovering myself.

Friedrich Nietzsche in "Thus Zarathustra spoke" said "The spirit has three metamorphoses, from camel to Lion and from Lion to baby". At that moment I had finally managed to get rid of my camel; and from my skin a solid fur with its mane was beginning to come out.

So I did 6 other youth exchanges in Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain and Italy. After having learnt a lot and had a really great time, I made a discovery! A great discovery, as if the Archangel Gabriel had come down to Earth to communicate something to me.

I had always despised Italy, because the place where I was born never gave me any kind of satisfaction. But as I traveled and met people from other places in my country, I finally realized that there was not only one Italy, and that the beauty of my country is just that: the fact that it is so different and varied that it pushes you to discover it by becoming a better person.

In 20 years I hadn't done anything else but regret about myself, and follow some absurd rules that should make us civilized people, when in reality they enslave us. I didn't even take the opportunity to enjoy the fact that I am Italian and I am lucky to be a citizen in such a beautiful country. I left again from home and went to live in Rome for about a year.

On the streets of Rome I found the light-heartedness and serenity that I had never been able to find in the north of Italy where I am from. I finally felt part of my country but not only... let's not let the borders define us! We are all part of this planet and there should not be foreigners but only brothers and sisters.



After a long time spent between travel and madness, I went back home for a while. Then the quarantine arrived. We think that bad times are to be avoided because they hurt us. Probably whoever said this was not out-of the box enough to realize the idiocy he was talking about. I think that what happens is inevitable and that whatever bad things happen can only be an opportunity to stand up even stronger.

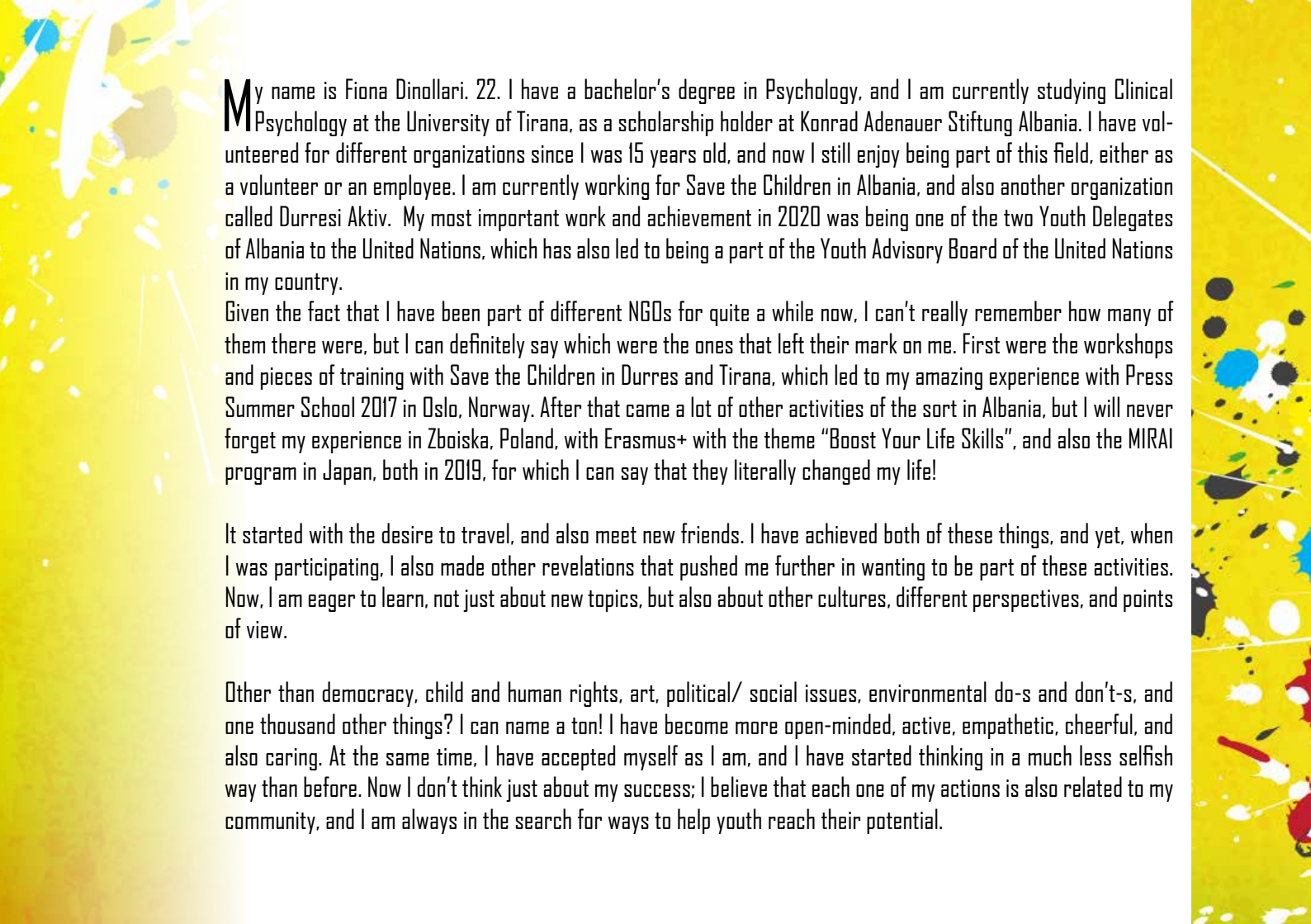
The pandemic gave me the chance to reflect and better understand what I wanted to do in life, so in summer I found this ESC project in Thessaloniki. I'm good at writing and I've always wanted and still want to turn my art into a job. So without thinking even twice I joined it and left for Greece. I am really happy with what I am doing and I am satisfied to be part of this big family that is the Erasmus Plus program. I think it is not just a program. I think it is a mean to help thousands of young people to succeed in

life, flying high above the sky.

In addition to being a volunteer, I am doing a project managing course and I hope that once I finish this experience I will be able to find a job in the youth field, for a non-profit association. This is not only a program for young people, but it is a lifestyle that pushes us to improve ourselves for a better future every day!

FILIPPO





My name is Fiona Dinollari. 22. I have a bachelor's degree in Psychology, and I am currently studying Clinical Psychology at the University of Tirana, as a scholarship holder at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Albania. I have volunteered for different organizations since I was 15 years old, and now I still enjoy being part of this field, either as a volunteer or an employee. I am currently working for Save the Children in Albania, and also another organization called Durresi Aktiv. My most important work and achievement in 2020 was being one of the two Youth Delegates of Albania to the United Nations, which has also led to being a part of the Youth Advisory Board of the United Nations in my country.

Given the fact that I have been part of different NGOs for quite a while now, I can't really remember how many of them there were, but I can definitely say which were the ones that left their mark on me. First were the workshops and pieces of training with Save the Children in Durres and Tirana, which led to my amazing experience with Press Summer School 2017 in Oslo, Norway. After that came a lot of other activities of the sort in Albania, but I will never forget my experience in Zboiska, Poland, with Erasmus+ with the theme "Boost Your Life Skills", and also the MIRAL program in Japan, both in 2019, for which I can say that they literally changed my life!

It started with the desire to travel, and also meet new friends. I have achieved both of these things, and yet, when I was participating, I also made other revelations that pushed me further in wanting to be part of these activities. Now, I am eager to learn, not just about new topics, but also about other cultures, different perspectives, and points of view.

Other than democracy, child and human rights, art, political/ social issues, environmental do-s and don't-s, and one thousand other things? I can name a ton! I have become more open-minded, active, empathetic, cheerful, and also caring. At the same time, I have accepted myself as I am, and I have started thinking in a much less selfish way than before. Now I don't think just about my success; I believe that each one of my actions is also related to my community, and I am always in the search for ways to help youth reach their potential.

I have gotten waaayyy better at working with teams! I believe that that is one of my biggest successes, even in the way I work. I have currently changed the focus of my studies; now I am not just someone that wants to work in counseling! I am mostly dedicated to the creation of new social politics, that would help now only on issues of mental health, but also beyond. It has helped a ton with the topics I work with every day; child rights, environmental issues, and even multilateralism! Everything I learned mattered, and the best part is that I had fun learning it!

I have always believed that the education system, wherever that may be, does not alone succeed in helping people reach their full potential. A high-school diploma, a bachelor's degree, etc., are a must for the society we live in nowadays, but still not enough. What you learn in non-formal education is like a magic tool, that allows you to use it however you want! It can help in a certain profession, maybe also in changing that profession, in connecting better with people, and also in better connecting with yourself. My profession is being a psychologist, but it hasn't stopped me at the age of 22 to be also a young diplomat, human rights and environmental activist, writer, trainer, and also a very fun person to be around! I am friends with not only my fellow students but also teachers, not only my colleagues but also my employers. I think that says it all.

Try everything, but most importantly, try Erasmus+! If you don't, then I can never truly explain why that is so colorful to explain! I will say nothing more on this topic...

Youth exchanges recharged my batteries; now I know what to do. If other people from my country experience something similar to Erasmus Plus, I know for sure that they will also find their way, even the way to make Albania a better place to live. If we rely on our forces on international learning, then we will be able to create an international state of well-being.

FIGNA



My name is Franja and I come from a small Slovenian town. I believe that education is the biggest contributing factor in making our world and our society a better place for everyone. However, to achieve that, everyone should have access to the same quality of education, and that includes other learning opportunities – not just schools, but all the opportunities that make us learn and grow as human beings. In the past three years I took part in 6 Erasmus+ Youth Exchanges and one Erasmus+ Youth Mobility project (training). I had been a group leader in 2 of the youth exchanges. When I applied for my first youth exchange, I wasn't familiar with this part of Erasmus. It seemed like a good opportunity, because I would travel, meet other likeminded young people and we would get to learn about and discuss a topic I was passionate about. However, when I got there, I experienced all those things and more. And after I got back, I decided that I want go on more projects and learn more things this way. Activities that are part of non-formal education help participants improve the skills that they will need later in life. Everyone can benefit from participating in debates; they teach us to speak our mind and prepare our thoughts, just as they teach us to be patient and listen. Presentations and public speaking are good for those of us who used to avoid public speaking due to fear. Brainstorming and teamwork are useful no matter which career path we take. Role playing doesn't teach us just acting skills but also empathy. Non-formal learning activities also promote creativity, problem solving and communication with people, sometimes in different languages. Through these non-formal learning activities, I got over my fear of public speaking. I learned that I really enjoy debates and sharing opinions with other people. I learned organizational skills and familiarized myself with different types of workshops that I can now use in other projects. I met people from different countries and different backgrounds, and I learned about their cultures. I can now say that I have friends all over the continent that I wish to visit and meet again. And most importantly, I realized that this is something that I want to do for a living. I want to



play a bigger part in these sorts of projects. I want to be a bridge that connects people with opportunities. I want to provide people who are open-minded, ambitious and outspoken with opportunities to express themselves. I do however think that there is still room for improvement in the field of non-formal learning. Mainly it should be recognized and appreciated more. I find that there are many people who do not know about it or do not value it enough, which is a shame, because it may well be the crucial factor that distinguishes us from other candidates when we are applying for jobs, universities or any other opportunities in our lives. To conclude, I would like to emphasize the importance of non-formal learning and the Erasmus+ program, as it is the one, I am most familiar with. I would implore everyone who has a chance, to take part in youth exchanges or similar opportunities. Recently while paying attention to what is happening in the USA and the world, I have realized how lucky we are: we have a government (EU) that encourages and even finances opportunities for young people to learn about and discuss the problems that our society is facing, rather than discouraging their involvement by calling them "kids" or "hooligans". We should cherish this knowledge and use these opportunities – for our own good, and for the good of our society.

FRANJA





My name is Giovanni Biscu, I work as a freelance web designer. I deal with the creation of websites, especially in the field of tourism for hotels, bed and breakfasts, and tour agencies, although, especially recently, it is not uncommon for me to create different types of websites for other sectors, such as e-commerce for local businesses that want to go digital, or websites for Foundations or Associations. In my past, I have been involved in different types of activities related to non-formal education, from training courses to Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs. Each of these activities has left something in me that I have tried to build on in my working life. I chose to take part in them because after attending NGOs, I realised that the European Union with its programmes could really help me to develop some experiences and skills that are difficult to develop in the current world of work, which is always looking for the usual monolithic “skill” of experience without which it is difficult to work and be properly paid. When I took them on, I realised how much they were an opportunity to grow professionally, which is what happened. These are choices that I would make again for the rest of my life and that have enriched me not only professionally but also personally. With each project I left a little piece of me and I took a lot back from those around me and from what I was living.

Working abroad as I did with Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, but also all the other non-formal education projects I did, allowed me to understand working methodologies different from my own through the solutions of other participants and all the people involved as in the case of the host institutions. It sounds trivial, but it is not trivial



at all. It is about opening your mind and understanding how to approach different types of situations. Nothing can be taken for granted, however much it may seem sometimes.

The courses I followed definitely helped me to embark on my current career path because they allowed me to develop various practical skills, learning from professionals who worked with me and who were real masters for me in the use of certain professional programmes that I use every day now and which are used to run my business, and in the past they helped me to get employed by other companies, before taking the decisive step of setting up on my own.


The progress made during these experiences is not immediately apparent, at least not the most important ones. You realise it after several months or years. I am definitely not the same person who left many years ago, I consider myself much more complete both professionally and personally. That's why I say I would always make the choice to participate again.

If I had to allow myself to suggest some programmes, I would definitely point to Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs. A programme that, for those who have a dream to develop, allows them to work alongside those who have already developed that dream, even if in another country and at a different time. And it does so in a serious and remunerated manner based on the cost of living in the host country. I would add the advice not to get stuck on a basic idea, everything can change and is in the making. Let your instincts guide you and accept that your idea/dream may initially be imperfect, understand what points need to be improved and then take it forward. The result may surprise you.



GIOVANNI





I was in the middle of exam deadlines when I found out that my application for the Large Scale Event in Tarragona had been approved. Namely, a few months before that, I applied for the position of volunteer at the Mediterranean Games 2018, which were held in Tarragona, within the Erasmus + project "EVS in Mediterranean Games Tarragona 2018".

It is an EVS project that brought together more than a hundred international volunteers from sixteen countries, under the coordination of the Asociación Mundus organization from Barcelona. So Katarina, Katica, Bogdan, Petar, Miloš and I went to Spain, into the unknown, and experienced an incredible month in Spain. After our arrival, we had the opportunity to participate in thematic trainings, which, together with interesting, informal methods and workshops, brought us closer and contributed to a better acquaintance before the start of the big event. We all could hardly wait for the start of the Mediterranean Games, the event that took us there, because we were aware of how special it feels to be a part of something so big. Not only to be a part of such an event, but also to contribute to the organization and realization. Most of us thought about the moments when as a child we watched the broadcast of the Olympic Games and wondered what it was like to have the opportunity to be there and be a part of such a big sporting event. Now, in a way, we found out and were proud to be part of the team that directly contributed to holding this year's Mediterranean Games.

During the training, we learned how to work as a team, how to work under pressure and in the middle of various situations, which we knew would be waiting for us during the Games themselves. And indeed, we have managed, without any conflict and with an understanding of every difference, every different habit and approach, to solve the problems we have encountered. Despite a lot of time and effort that had to be invested in the realization of the Games, we had the opportunity to do various interesting things. We held an Intercultural Evening, where all the volunteers presented their country - either by dancing or singing, and certainly with food and drink. We presented our country with the unique taste of our wine and olives, with the anthem and the Montenegrin oro. The great impression on the members of other cultures was especially left by oro. Also, what everyone liked immensely was camping. For some it

was something new, for some it wasn't, but it certainly allowed us all to get to know each other even better, to function as a team, share and learn to adapt. Every evening was filled with socializing, unforgettable moments and memories for a lifetime. In addition, we also had time to explore Tarragona and even a few neighboring cities. The members of the Association Mundus tried to bring Spanish culture closer to us, so we learned the language, made traditional drinks and food and learned from professionals how to make Human Tower or Castells, a tradition of two hundred years, where "castellers" make human towers that have up to ten floors. We didn't miss that party either, so we made a three-story tower.

These are just some of the details we experienced in Tarragona last month and we are all immensely happy to have had the opportunity to be there and that there are programs that allow us to do this. Although I have already had the opportunity to participate in several youth exchanges and Erasmus scholarships, participating in this EVS project has made me more determined to apply and be even more open to opportunities of this nature. "

ISIDORA



My name is Iva Ivankovic and I finished Bachelor of Social Work in Mostar. Currently working as Junior Youth Worker in PRONI Center for youth development. My path in non-formal education started in the college where I was an active student and wanted something more than just a theory. Searching myself, I find a way to express myself through non-formal education. Something in there always gasped my mind and wanted to explore more. After being active through my study degree, I applied on the project "Putujmo u Evropu" in 2017 where active students from Balkans will travel with Interrail card in Europe for 22 days. When I got accepted with other 19 students I was surprised by the chance I've got of all the people that applied. At that journey, I met a lot of active students in NGO and it got me thinking why I didn't take more advantage of those opportunities like they did. When I got home I've started to search for more of those opportunities.

I applied to the Academy for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency because it was connected to my formal education. After that, I was on the program "Encouraging Democratic Values and Active Citizenship among Young People" '17/'18 of Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina. At this program, we created a project "Available for me too" that was a web site about accessible accommodation for people with disabilities in Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla. Other non-formal education that was most important for me was training in Ljubljana for "Non-violent communication, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices" in 2018, course of local sign language in 2016 and PRONI Academy of Youth Work in 2019. After PRONI Academy, I've got the opportunity to work as a Youth Worker in PRONI Youth Club Mostar that I'm very grateful.

More than 20 certificates and 2 Youth passes had gained me a



lot of knowledge and personal growth, ability to create and implement ideas for a better community, gain positive network around me that are inspirational and most of all, gave me a space to grow. That is the beautiful part of non-formal education. No one can deny what I've become and most of my close friends say that my participation in non-formal education has spread my horizons. Professors and potential employers appreciated my activism. My volunteering and active participation in non-formal education got me here where I am now.

Non-formal education that I most recommend is PRONI Academy of Youth Work. It is a unique program of the PRONI Center that provides knowledge and practice to young people in the field of Youth Work, Youth Activism and Conflict Resolution.

The point of non-formal education is to collect all your knowledge and start to implement it in the local community. You have the chance to express yourself and use it as your asset that no one else has. With non-formal education, you can stand out in every work area. And best of all it's just up to You, do You want to make the most of your life.

So go, search, apply and explore!

IVA





Ivana Davidovska is born in Kumanovo, but currently lives and works in Brussels in the European Youth Forum, which is one of the largest platforms for youth organizations in the world. She works as the membership and governance director. In the past she used to work in Center for Intercultural Dialogue as a trainer, youth worker and later as the executive director of the organization.

Ivana started to take part in NFE activities when she was 15. Her most memorable first activity was a seminar on peacebuilding and reconciliation that was fully methodologically led by NFE. She believes that since then, as a part of being an activist in a youth organization and working for many other youth organizations, most of the work that she has done or events that she has participated in, have been influenced by this seminar and NFE.

She chose to take part in NFE activities because it gave her opportunities to meet other peers, make friends, learn something new, travel abroad and visit and experience different cultures. Ivana believes that she kept going back because she was able to gain new skills and learn something new in an environment in which you get the chance to practice, the opportunity to say what you think without being pressured that somebody will judge you.

By taking part in such activities, Ivana noticed that it changed who she was and how she grew as a person. She is happy for all of the attitudes and changes she gained due to taking part in such activities, the intercultural understanding and identity increased awareness about her own self and what she can do, it provided her with the possibility to increase her social impact as an activist and a citizen in her society. She believes that these programs made her become much more active in NFE.

NFE helped Ivana's path and career a lot, especially in her current job in the NGO sector, and all of the experiences that she gained with NFE, are as much complementing as the formal education.

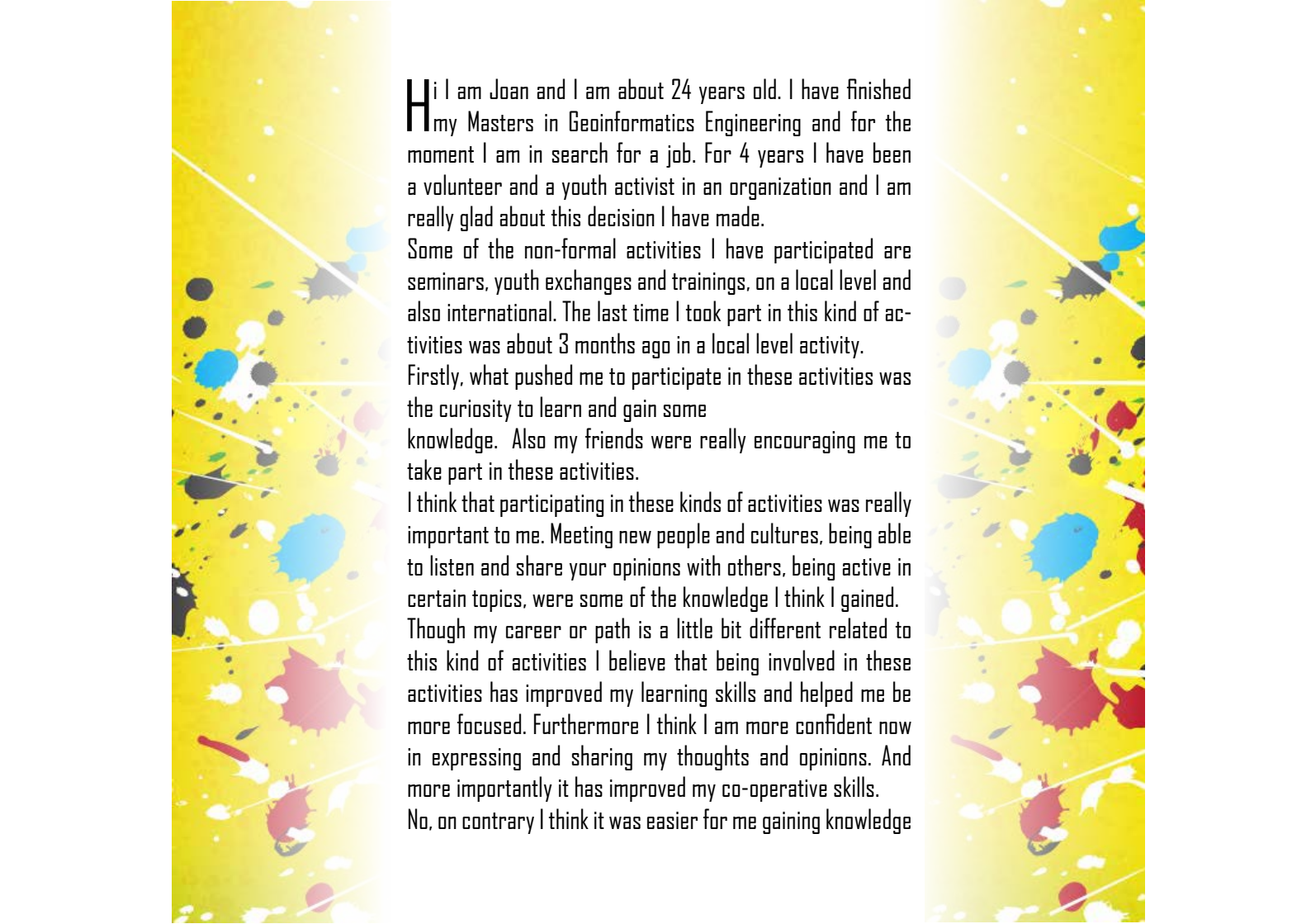
Since Ivana works in the NGO field, her progress recognition that she got thanks to NFE was not difficult, especially with her last employer, since it was stated in the call that experiences which are gained through NFE and NFL will be as well taken as experiences within the formal educational processes. However, she thinks that it was always more difficult and challenging to promote NFL when it came to the national level.

Ivana would suggest to any young person to take part in any NFE program since it helps you to open your potential, and it changes the person you are and helps you to grow, it gives you an opportunity to be able to take steps forward, both on personal and professional level. Ivana believes that NFL really helps you to gain a lot of skills and attitudes as well as knowledge that is not possible to gain in another place.

Ivana strongly encourages every young person to take every opportunity and each time to really consider it as a new adventure and journey that will help them to learn a lot about others and about themselves as well.

IVANA





Hi I am Joan and I am about 24 years old. I have finished my Masters in Geoinformatics Engineering and for the moment I am in search for a job. For 4 years I have been a volunteer and a youth activist in an organization and I am really glad about this decision I have made.

Some of the non-formal activities I have participated are seminars, youth exchanges and trainings, on a local level and also international. The last time I took part in this kind of activities was about 3 months ago in a local level activity. Firstly, what pushed me to participate in these activities was the curiosity to learn and gain some knowledge. Also my friends were really encouraging me to take part in these activities.

I think that participating in these kinds of activities was really important to me. Meeting new people and cultures, being able to listen and share your opinions with others, being active in certain topics, were some of the knowledge I think I gained. Though my career or path is a little bit different related to this kind of activities I believe that being involved in these activities has improved my learning skills and helped me be more focused. Furthermore I think I am more confident now in expressing and sharing my thoughts and opinions. And more importantly it has improved my co-operative skills. No, on contrary I think it was easier for me gaining knowledge

in a non-formal way of learning because I was really focused and tried to get involved and be active as much as I could. They were really supportive and helpful.

I think you should try and take part in different kind of activities, programs developed by organizations, professional conference style seminars, community-based sports program, youth exchanges. These kind of activities would help you get more involved, be active and meet new people.

In conclusion as a youth activist and a volunteer myself I would really suggest and encourage young people to take a look and be more involved towards non-formal learning because it will help them a lot in every kind of way. It is just seeing a different perspective other than formal learning and also is something new and exciting.

JOAN





Julija Jankovic, professor of Russian Language and Literature, from Velika Plana, Serbia

When I first heard about NFL, I was 18, it was my first Youth in Action project. Now I'm 27 and I have participated in 8 projects.

Back then I was still in high school, and the only way of learning I was aware of was just listening to the school lessons and revising them at home. Now after 8 projects I am sure that NFL is the best way of learning. Seeing that there is another way thought me to think outside the box, and that helped me so many times in life with solving numerous problems, especially when things don't work the way we expect. This learning method teaches you to react faster, to brainstorm, and most importantly to try. Interacting with people from different countries has brought so much to me. Exchanging ideas and experiences has made me a more open-minded

person, has shown me many chances to grow, to get better as a citizen and a person, to look at things from another point of view. I would certainly recommend it to every young person, especially from my region, where the diversity is not respected enough, and NFL is to me the right way of dealing with all of the needs of the society we live in.

As a future teacher I am sure I'll be using all the techniques I saw and learned by being a part of these projects, ways to learn and teach with structure, but without pressure.

JULIA



"Sherry Anderson said that volunteers are not paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are invaluable, and I as a volunteer want to say that the experience, acquaintances and knowledge I gained by volunteering cannot be compared to any monetary compensation.

Considering that I have already volunteered for several international sports competitions held in Montenegro, I had great expectations from the Mediterranean Games, which managed to be exceeded.

Before leaving for Tarragona, I knew that I would be the youngest and I was afraid that I would fit into the company of about 100 people from 26 countries, whether I would be someone my age, whether I would miss my family, who I would be with. room ... However, after the first evening (Intercultural evening), which was intended to meet other people, other cultures, I saw that although we are all different, one thing connects us - the desire to travel and socialize, and of course to help organized by the Mediterranean Games. The very next day, On Arrival Training began, which lasted 7 days and aimed to help us create a team, to get to know each other better, to prepare us for all the "challenges" that await us at the games. With the help of various techniques, we were able to address topics such as: culture, future perspective, conflicts, teamwork, individual in a group ...

After the training, what we all expected with excitement, curiosity, but also a small dose of nervousness - volunteering at the Mediterranean Sports Games! We all had different assignments and were in different positions, and I got an assignment that I couldn't even imagine! I was an assistant to the Montenegrin Olympic Committee! My task was to connect the Montenegrin delegation with the organization in Spain, to be with them all day and to help them with everything they need. I met our handball players, water polo players, handball players, swimmers, karate players - people I have only seen on television so far. I saw how a big sporting event is

organized, how athletes prepare for matches, how they hold trainings ... What was most beautiful for me was when I walked with the representatives of the MOC and Montenegrin athletes at the athletes' parade as part of the Closing Ceremony of the Games.

After the Mediterranean Games, we had a few days off that we used to explore Tarragona and the surrounding cities, and then it was the turn of the final evaluation and the end of our EVS project. Only then did we realize how much we connected during these months - we became a real big family! Throughout the project, we supported and helped each other, solved various problems that arose during the games, spent a week camping together on the Mediterranean coast, celebrated five birthdays and the holiday of welcoming the summer of San Juan ... There was a lot of farewell tears, but this is definitely not the end! We stayed in touch via social media and are already arranging for new encounters!

Participation in this EVS project has changed me a lot as a person - I have become more tolerant, flexible, think differently about problems and how to solve them, communicate more easily with strangers ... I am sure that this is an important springboard for my further progress... "

KATARINA



Hello, my name is Kasia and I'm a nineteen year old polish girl. I just finished my high school this year and decided to participate in a NGO voluntary project from an organization called 'United Societies of Balkans'. I work at "Balkan Hotspot", which is a journalism and media ESC project.

Two years ago I participated in a non-formal education activity in Poraj, Poland. It was a youth exchange with people from Barcelona and Osijek, Croatia. It was an amazing opportunity that was offered to me thanks to my English teacher. She pushed me to try something new and unknown. I guess she knew that this would really benefit me. The topic of the project was "Factfulness – Fight the ignorance" and we mainly focused on the journalism and media developments, media literacy, how to spot fake news and to stop our brains from taking shortcuts. It was only one but a very intense week. Despite the workshops being 8 hours long every day none of us minded as the activities were so interesting and cultivating. We were not only sitting and listening. Everyday they engaged us in many various tasks, where we could see what works best for us and what is the most advantageous.

I learned many relevant and useful things. When you really partake in the workshops your brain starts opening to different realities. Basically you stop being ignorant. Spending time with young, ambition driven people is also a great way to feel inspired. I think this kind of education is the most beneficial.

Experience like this also helped me make friends from all over the world. Most of us still keep in touch and even visit each other. When many inspired young people meet together there's opportunities and ideas in every corner. I'm very glad that I could work with them as each of us taught the rest something different.



I was only seventeen back then but the project definitely influenced me very much. I became even more open minded, more knowledge-hungry and more aware of the world issues. Even now that I work in journalism I feel very privileged of having the opportunity to already know about how media works. Despite my young age I don't feel in any way less informed than my colleagues and sometimes maybe even more. That's why I think non-formal education is the best way to truly share and take in the knowledge.

I was already very open-minded person as I love learning new things, however for me the best way to absorb the information is through creative ways as I see myself, more of an 'artist' so sometimes basic school 'teaching program' is too boring or just exhausting for me. But after I came back from the exchange my teachers could see that I was way more inspired and full of life. I just wanted to share the knowledge with other students, to put more energy and joy in them. I think that is what education should be about.

Both volunteering and youth exchanges are an amazing ways to learn. It's hard to decide which way is better but for me it influences me in a different ways. Now I live with more than 20 people and besides learning form my project I learn everyday from people around me. It's like a multi-classes university every single day. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunities in my life as they made me discover my true passion and ambition.

In my opinion, everyone should participate in some form of informal learning at least once in their life. Especially if someone is not so fond of learning. This kind of thing opens you up to so many different aspects of education, as it make you work with your own possibilities and strengths. You already know more than you think, so it just shows you what you are capable of.

KASIA



IN THE LAND
OF CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES



After the Large Scale EVS in Spain and all the wonderful acquaintances and memories she brought with her, Katika Nišavic continued her search for projects ...

Even while studying the ideas of the long-term ESC project, I was incredibly attracted, which proved to be a persistent motivation while filling out a bunch of different applications, updating CVs, writing cover letters over and over again... There was no giving up, because I knew there was somewhere a special project waiting just for me.

And then Belgium happened. An open invitation for a photographer in an art residence twenty kilometers south of Brussels. Destelheide-Hanenbos, an oasis for Belgian artists, surrounded by forest and fairytale gingerbread houses. After the portfolio was sent, there were phases of waiting and biting cuticles, then skype interviews, and then it was official that I was the one they chose among hundreds of applicants! The sighting process was over, the suitcases were packed and already at the end of January I started my ESC adventure in the town of Dworp, not far from Brussels.

Destelheide is an art residence under the authority of the Flemish government, founded in 1971. He is one of the leaders who provides art education for working and school groups of young people, and at the same time an inspiring environment and refuge for artists. The complex is a number of buildings containing different rooms; from the concert hall, theater hall, music studio, photography room, clay hall, work rooms, etc. itd

I am part of the communication team, which means that my main task is photo (and video) documenting the work of artists who come to our residence, then design (posters, magazines, flyers, educational folders), blog editing, organizing art tours, working on personal art project, participation in other projects such as the International Club, Summer Academy (seven-day program of art studios to be organized in July), etc., etc.

The very opportunity to meet painters, actors, musicians, designers, to learn more about their work and life, constantly awakens in me an incredible inspiration that I want to express through photography.

KATICA



I'm starting from the beginning. My name is KERİM and I'm 21 years old I was born in İZMİR. I played basketball for 11 years, 6 years amateur and 5 years half professional and now I'm studying at Maritime Faculty. I'm graduating this year and I'm so excited to be an online graduate :) My non-formal learning experience started with Aiesec. I decided to join aiesec on November 11 and applied for January 23 February - February 28 for the global volunteer program. My job description was teaching English to children. Some of my friends recommended it, but of course I've also heard some other comments that aren't good. But I said I should try I have confidence in myself. At the beginning I was a little worried but everything went well. My goal was to know and test myself and finally I did. Of course I gained, away from your family, alone and thousands of miles



from my hometown, that's real life. When the program is over and when I return to my country I said yes I can live alone, I can travel alone, now I can cook when I need to, those experiences are more important than most things for me. I've seen that I can live in different cultures, and because of that now I'm making career plans in abroad and different cultures. At first, our group had a local leader, after 1 week local leader said me 'kerim I don't need to come here from now on you can handle the lessons and presentations' that means After one Week, I adapted to the environment and became a leader, this is a new development for me I have leadership qualities and if I want I can become a leader. Everything happened spontaneously like step by step, the group leaders picked me up from the airport and the story began. In my opinion it doesn't have to be a perfect program because you have to solve some problems yourself if you can learn how to solve the problems in life. That means after that, your life can be perfect or you can do something to make your life perfect.

I became both a learner and a teacher. As a result of that I learned how to wait to see the results and this was the result of intentional effort.

Being part of that experience not just made me happy but also felt like I helped those children to see the world in a bigger window, helped them to have bigger dreams, brighter futures...

With this non-formal learning opportunity I learned that there are so many bigger things happening in the world and if we can't do something about it, who will do it?

New experiences in new places, just you, God and strangers. You should try something new!



KERIM



My name is Klajdi Priska. I've just finished bachelor's studies for computer science, and I hold diplomas on several professional courses in economics and political sciences. Part of his education is also a series of non-formal learning means in Erasmus+ programme along with international seminars and conferences.

Previously I've worked in the Albanian Parliament in collaboration with the NDI, assisting MP's on administrative and public work. I have worked as a moderator for multiple foundations including UN agencies, and assisting projects part of the international foundations. I have been part of policy making groups in youth employment and education and acted as foreign affairs coordinator in Albanian political youth forums.

I have engaged in numerous capacity building processes (trainings and holding workshops around Europe). I have volunteered in the Civil Society continuously and worked with CSO's to promote their activities on increasing youth engagement and empowerment, social security and amongst other things better educational system and inclusive labor market.

Currently I work as Policy and Advocacy Officer at the National Youth Congress of Albania, organizing and attending in stakeholders' meetings, documenting, and following up with important actions and decisions from the meetings, and developing project strategies as well as undertaking project tasks as required. At all times, the work is aligned with personal, national, and European values.

I feel enormous gratitude for being able to participate in numerous non-formal education activates, which include participating in seminars and trainings for different topics including human rights, hate speech, media literacy, online learning tools and means, and among other democracy, mostly through the mobilities of Erasmus+ programme but also invited in other international occasions for such experiences. Nevertheless, the environment that is created in the Erasmus+ mobilities is one of a kind, remarkable and always looking forward to if a new opportunity is presented.

I've always wanted to explore other cultures, mindsets, and languages, and at the same time feeding my Appetite for new knowledge. When participating in these activities I experienced nothing short than that. Everything seemed to met my wishes and expectations.



I'm proud to say that I've made great friends all around Europe, we talk to and care for each other. Besides knowledge I've gained a broader understanding and a greater self-awareness as well as social awareness. I've been able to put aside with past stereotypes and work and collaborate in an interregional and international level, which boosts confidence, defies labels and opens the mind to future prospects and possibilities.

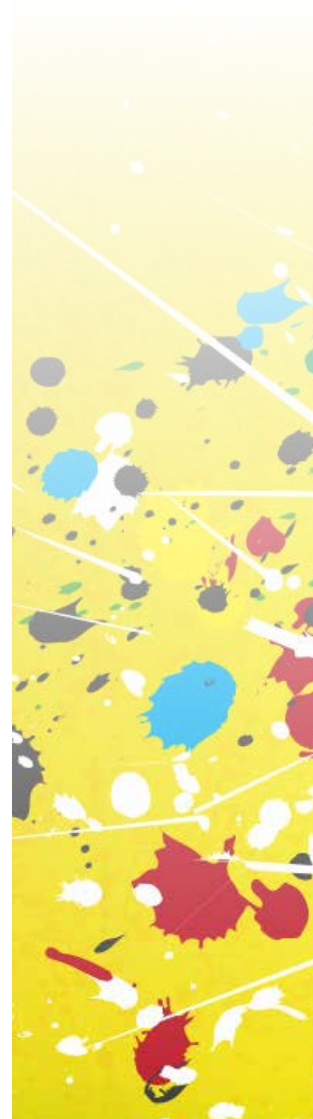
I strongly believe that my participation and the deepening not only of my knowledge but likewise of my network, because of these activities, was essential and vital to the determinant of the path I've taken and to the duty I currently serve at. The skills I gained, and the right connections were crucial to taking the right career path.


I believe that every time I returned from an activity of Non-Formal learning, people could tell my energy, enthusiasm, and my eagerness to learn new things as well as apply the newly acquired knowledge. In that regard I don't think it was hard to recognize the progress that I got thanks to Non-Formal learning as it was the right push to visible self-improvement and increased efficiency.

As I value the Erasmus part greatly, and taking into consideration the immense opportunities that it presents, I would suggest taking part in these mobilities, seminars, trainings, cultural youth exchanges or European Solidarity Corps. I would suggest Erasmus+ because it is a consolidated program by now, it has proven it self throughout the past years and decades as one of the main pillars of a thriving and unified European continent.

I believe that the survival and the success to our societies stands in the hands of prepared and educated with any means possible of young individuals. Thus, I would say to my fellow youngsters, that if an opportunity is presented to you, or if you seek one, you should jump on that ship, because it is not only your personal path at stake but that of the whole society, and at the same time you will be able to have fun.

KLAJDI






I am Kostandin Feshti, a 18 year old senior student in high school, also a TV/radio host and journalist. I've been working for four years in the Albanian media, three since I've joined the National Television of Albania, first as a radio host, later on as a TV Host and journalist.

I was part of a Youth Exchange back in November, 2019, for a full week. The activity was held in Bansko, Bulgaria. The theme of the project was about the opportunities that the European/Balkan youth have when it comes to employment and education and how we, the young generation can improve the situation and make it better.

I wanted to take part because I find it very important to be present in projects that put you in front of cultures you haven't dealt with before and that also have a theme very close to you and the future of young people, not only in your country, but in a regional level, especially with themes up for discussion such as employment and education. Absolutely. Not only knowledge, but I have gained the ability to see other's point of view as well. Being able to understand more, and listen not to reply back, but to affiliate your opinions with someone's other, in order to understand the situation even better. Spending time with people who come from a different background than yours, puts you in a position of learning to fit in and getting more interested to





know about your respective neighbor countries. It helped a lot to become a bit more social, and I as I said, a bit more understanding, more flexible allowing myself to be put in someone else's shoes, in order to think for better solutions related to a situation or problem. Also, being part of the media world, you always need to be up to date with different cultures, traditions, people, makes you more round. Not really, it wasn't that difficult and as far as the impact goes that it had on my teachers and friends who I told about the youth exchange, they were all very appreciative of it, not only in a personal level, but also for the activity itself and the way that it was organized and the fact that it had participants from most countries of the Balkan. One thing that made it even more special to them was the theme of the project and how it was developed during the days.

Having been part of a youth exchange, I would recommend it 10 out of 10, but also trainings with organizations, after school activities and meetings, online and physical, I feel as though are all great ways for the youth, but not only, to educate themselves for different subjects related to day to day life and bigger issues as well.

It's one of the most efficient ways to keep yourself educated and up to date, learning while having fun, and under-

standing a problem/situation by being put in the middle of it. Besides, it's a great way to know new people and make connections that you might need one day, whether it's for fun, but also for work too. We always complain about the fact how we would like to have more informal ways of learning available for us, so here you have the opportunity to be part of them and improve your knowledge and skills.

KOSTANDIN



My name is Leja and I am studying social work. Since I can remember, I was participating in many different activities with the aim of helping people. I like everything connected to young people and am always keen to learn more. Am especially interested in issues that our society is dealing with: migrants, refugees, minorities ... I have participated in summer camps, organised by different NGOs. To this day I am volunteering at DRPNM; before I was also volunteering in a local kindergarten. When I was younger, I was training handball and was majorette. In the past two years I participated in three international Erasmus+ projects. The topics were human rights, cultural intelligence and youth inclusion. My non-formal education (NFE) activities are continuing – currently I am studying in Germany and am taking German language course.

I decided to enrol in all those courses because I wanted to know more about specific themes, wanted to meet new people and know other cultures. Also, I was always curious about other people's opinion and different views. Knowledge is not the only thing I gained; beside meeting people and learning about different cultures I experienced many things and travelled across Europe. When you do these activities, you can be with different minded people who can help you to grow as a person. They help you to shape the values (tolerance, solidarity, teamwork, collaboration, etc) and by that they help you to become the best version of yourself. For me it was crucial to become a volunteer at DRPNM because there I realised what I want to study. I chose social work, and it was the right decision because working with youth makes me happy. Part of my DRPNM experience was also Erasmus+ training in Bulgaria, where was the first time that I really met with human rights topic. I have learnt that there is always something that is meant for us and I do not regret any of the choices I made. Those choices created the



path where my life is leading, the path I really like!

In the beginning you are not sure if you really need certain knowledge but later you realise the importance of it. After some time, you also realise that previous activities build your personality. In the past, I did not know how I will use gained knowledge, but NFE proved to be extremely useful. I can share my experiences with other people, my teachers like the fact that students are not only learning from books but also get the knowledge from different activities. NFE is different for everyone because we all feel and think differently about the same thing. If I had to advise someone what non-formal course to take, I would say sport and physical activities, because it is important to be active. Also, join the activities that relate to social life and lifestyle. It is good to learn about relationships and values. And of course, join something that you really are passionate about. The best feeling is when you deepen the knowledge about something you like to work with.

NFE is something that you choose. Is not obligatory, it is only your wish and interest. Grab every chance to participate and do it. Sometimes it is hard to go out of the comfort zone, but without stepping out of it you cannot experience what outside world is preparing for you. With NFE you gain so much more than just knowledge. There are so many things that you do not pay attention to now but someday you will need that knowledge. There are so many possibilities and opportunities that are waiting for you and I am grateful that I took part in all of mine. It is up to you to decide what you want in life but never forget: as long as we live, we are always learning. You cannot avoid learning processes, but you can always grab the chance and try making best of it.

LEJA





Lindita Rexhepi comes from Kumanovo and currently lives in Luxemburg. At this moment, she works as a freelance trainer as well as a consultant. Her background is primarily working on NGO development, international organizations, and also, she has a master's in peacebuilding and woman.

Lindita engaged in NFE activities at 14 when she started high school. She participated in many activities, from local workshops to national trainings, where the topic was mainly peacebuilding happening in North Macedonia. Later she was engaged in European projects and activities. Later on, her passion grows by attending trainings and exchanges, so she became involved in writing projects, coordinating them, and offering peace opportunities for other young people.

She chose to be a part of the workshops and other NFE activities because they kept her engaged during the summer breaks, she was learning and making new friends, and her wish to be a part of these events grew more and more. Those activities were something that she continued during her studies and they continued to be a part of her career.

Knowledge was one thing that she gained, but she also thinks that it broadened her perspectives on how she sees the world and the environment around her. It also broadened her skills on how to work in a multicultural environment, her intercultural understanding, and helped her on shaping her identity.

NFE influenced Lindita on a larger scale with her career choice and her bachelor's



degree, it influenced her with the type of jobs she engaged in. Working with Center for Intercultural Dialogue gave her a lot of empowerment and skills which she wouldn't get in another setting. She feels lucky that she had the chance to experiment, fail or make it a success and build on that success. She thinks that if she wouldn't participate in NFE activities, she wouldn't be the person she is right now.

When it comes to recognizing the progress from NFL, Lindita thinks that it hasn't gotten as much attention as it needs to get from the teachers or other community members, but she was fortunate enough since her employers saw and valued NFE, however that's in an international context. She thinks that in North Macedonia NFE has not gotten so much recognition and the level of awareness is still low. In terms of evaluation, she had some feedback from teachers that high school kids that participated in NFE workshops and sessions in our youth center MultiКулти, were more open and more engaged in the classrooms.

Lindita suggests that every young person takes part in any kind of NFE that they can get, but wants to highlight the importance of European projects and the European perspective because that's where her personal stereotypes and prejudices got challenged, she learned about different cultures, or had her first experience traveling alone to a European country. She also advises young people that with NFL you will get where you want to be, it's a journey and how much you get from it it's up to you, there is no certain limit, so you can explore your potential and build upon the journey you want to take.

LINDITA





I am Marco Meloni from Cagliari, Sardinia. In short, I am a researcher and curious of many themes and knowledge(s). At present, I am a Ph.D. candidate of Democracy in the XXI Century at Center for Social Studies (CES), associated to University of Coimbra (Portugal), with fieldwork activities in Madrid and London. My research interest focuses on public participation and Intra-Party democracy. I graduated from the University of Cagliari in 2015 with Master Degree in Governance and Global Politics. During my professional career, I work as project manager and trainers in several projects funded by the European Union, in the framework of the programmes Erasmus+, Youth in Action, Leonardo and Europe for Citizens, and in projects at local level, mostly on education and gamification for democracy, participation and inclusion. Since I was 16 my training path - both human and professional - has been largely nourished by experiences of non formal education. From the first youth exchange in 2006, in Russia (Pavlovsky Posad, near Moscow), I never stopped: training courses, partner building activities, Leonardo projects, many local activities and others followed. Each of these experiences, from the shortest to the most challenging, has been supported by TDM 2000 Association, which became a learning community for me, as well as over the years a family. Among them, in 2014 I carried out my European Voluntary Service (precursor of the European Solidarity Corps) in Rosario, Argentina. Each of these projects and initiatives has been important to me, but this last one has certainly changed my life. This might sound like a cliché, but is definitely

true. There I discovered my research interests and saw my passion for certain topics grow, which then encouraged me to begin my academic career (post-degree) and carry them forward.

Probably this would be enough to give an idea of the role that non formal education played for me. However, the experience, the knowledge(s) and the transversal (or soft) skills acquired and developed overcome what my CV contains or

the story of a single moment. All these over the years helped me to face situations and choices, to interact with the others, to know how to present myself, to perform at work and - why not know - how to behave in front of a beer or a coffee with anyone. Although deeper formal recognitions of this training sector are still needed, various of my non-formal education experiences have played an important role in my work and I am sure they will in the future. Even when they are not mentioned in a job call, they are often extremely useful in the selection processes as well as during the work activities especially in team.



My fervent suggestion for everyone is to participate as much is possible to non formal education activities, at different stage of

the life. Let's invest your time in one or more long-term projects and let's try to be constant and assiduous in short projects. Non formal education never ends, stay young.



MARCO



My name is Mateja and I am a young woman who admires the world very much. There is nothing that does not arouse my interests - from cooking, music, painting and even discovering the hidden corners of this planet. I am working in a family business and in parallel I just started my second year of studying psychotherapy. I must admit that life could not be better right now, and I believe that when we learn about human nature, we also learn about ourselves as individuals. These never-ending insights always remind me that we must learn and discover ourselves until the end, otherwise we will never be close to the realization of our true beauty. I am a woman of many interests, but to try all of these things I had to push myself out of the comfort zone many times and "look behind the corner" to see if there is something more. The basics like going to school, be able to attend university here in Slovenia (for free) are given to everyone, but if you want more and be better, you have to take matters into your own hands. When I started going to school, I was amazed by many things. I instantly became a part of different activities that school offered: a choir for children, extra classes for English, fine arts ... With every year that passed, I got more and more bored and could not hide my dissatisfaction. To accept school activities as the only option was not possible for me. Now, when I think about my impatience and how I wanted to do everything at the same time I am forever grateful to my parents for their peaceful and serious guidance. They helped me to take one interest at the time and to stay committed until I finished it. If it were not for them, I do not know if I would ever learn how to be stubborn enough to start and finish anything I decided to do. That is how I got the opportunity to participate in non-formal education (NFE). I learned to dance, I enjoyed attending various sports classes, piano and guitar lessons. Last year I also took part in various Erasmus+ projects and also put my dancing shoes back on because my learning path led me to salsa. In the last two years, I started with volunteering in non-profit organizations, because I want to learn and help in different fields, such as environmental protection, migrants, refugees, the importance of preserving cultural heritage, etc. I started volunteering because I had a big inner urge to discover who I am as a person and



where on this Earth I belong. Through time, while I was trying to find myself, I learned a lot about NFE and what it can offer to a person. You learn things that formal education does not give you. The learning is more effective and NFE also points out that human is a social being. One more thing about NFE I would highlight. I find it crucial! You are forced to think with your head. With NFE you can learn more, develop the competences that otherwise you would not. I must say that everything that happened to me and everything I decided to do led me to where I am today and to discovery of who I am and who I want to be. NFE gave me an opportunity to "taste" the world differently. All the experience I got by it, helps me decide what I want to focus on and by pure chance I discovered psychotherapy. At first it was interesting and mysterious area I knew nothing about but through time I fell more and more in love with it. When I was choosing my professional path, NFE played an important role but I discovered its miracles and importance long before. Even though I was doing the NFE classes for myself I admit that it gave me skill base that formal education did not. The knowledge I got in NFE helps me everywhere I go. It gave me an advance at school, because I saw the boring knowledge we had to learn in more interesting way. The music, dance and sport helped me to find creative ways to confront and solve problems faster and more effectively. I must not forget that it helped me to gain many social skills. Also, when you are in touch with different types of people you learn to be patient and accept the criticism, different ideas and suggestions. Basically, to take everything into consideration. Now that I am in the university, does not mean my NFE days are over. Quite the opposite. I think that NFE is never over, it is lifelong. Every chance I get, I take it. Of course, it also looks good

in my resume and I believe that all my NFE courses and lessons will help me find better job. But discovering life and its beauty is my main goal and I hope it will stay my primary goal for a long time. The topics, such as environmental protection is still on my list to discover in depth, but now I feel that I want to put all my focus in human relations. NFE is more than just learning the data. You train your performance, collaborate with others and get to know new horizons that you would never have discovered otherwise. It helps you to find yourself as a person and to choose things that will make your life full. The best advice I can give to others is to be on the move and always push yourself out of the comfort zone. I know it is difficult and scary, but when you go beyond your insecurities you see that the only real obstacle is you. So, embrace yourself and seize the day.



Milena is participating in a volunteer project in Malaga within the EU program European Solidarity Corps, and we are sharing her story and experience.

“When you focus your thoughts and desires on socially useful activities, and add to them the need to act on a wider level, you have the opportunity to volunteer in ESC (European Solidarity Corps) programs. Thus began my engagement in the project and still continues, and In addition to the above-mentioned desire, a good, local organization that prepares, sends and leaves volunteers to the organization in charge of the project, based in one of the European countries, is needed, and thanks to such an organization, I found myself in It sounds like an advertisement, because it is, but like any place in the world, this exotic city needs people willing to take part in the mission of expanding education. more precisely, the project is called “Promoting integration and breaking through barriers”, and is realized through work in school, where My role as a volunteer is realized by assisting and working together with teachers, especially in English language classes. Being able to teach children, up to the age of 12, is a great challenge but also an indescribable pleasure. However, I will try to describe it in a few words, because after each contribution, that feeling of merit for someone’s progress remains, that is, the feeling that participation in this project can give you, and it is the most beautiful form of salary. Although I was aware of the importance of education as well as the role of those who transfer it, I was not fully aware of the effort invested on the other side of the classroom, that is, behind the chair. The moment you become aware of the fact that you are the only link between knowledge and the child who, by birth, deserves and needs that knowledge, creates a sense of responsibility and a great motivation to pass it on to him. Because who guarantees that the student will be provided with an alternative way of learning, if you miss the opportunity to explain to him the material provided for that lesson. Since I never planned to do this job, but, driven by the desire to directly influence the development of human rights, I was given the opportunity to do so through education, I am quite happy that the youngest are involved in my work and that I can contribute to the earliest stages of building a society that respects human rights. Even such a beautiful feeling cannot match the pleasure you feel when a child masters what you are teaching him and when you know



that it will be useful in his life. For those who are engaged in this business, this feeling is probably well known, and for me it is something completely new and surprisingly pleasant.

It is also encouraging that you know how to participate in language teaching, which is used by the world community in reaching and realizing all important agreements, which is why future generations are expected to be ready in that regard. In that way, language barriers are really broken, first of all, and children, in communication with foreigners, face differences and accept the idea of the connection of peoples. Rather, the beauty of this project does not end there. In addition to these activities, I was given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of activities for the organization that hosted me on the project, which is in charge of organizing entertainment events for children and the elderly. Tasks where I had the opportunity to express creativity, again in honor of vulnerable groups in society. Through all these activities, you gradually improve your Spanish, which is best achieved in communication with students, during the exchange of knowledge, and this project also offers a free online course. The fastest world language, as they describe it, is additionally faster in this part of Andalusia, so you can expect an advanced level of Spanish after the project is completed. The environment is motivating for learning the language, because the inhabitants of this part of the country cannot boast of a good knowledge of English, so it is up to us to adapt, in which I see a great advantage. In addition, the environment is extremely well preserved and the quality of life is best described by the fresh air from the sea, clean beaches and a large number of green areas, which is why there is little chance that enjoyment can be avoided in this city and on this project. The high representation of ESC projects in Malaga and the good connection of volunteers is another advantage, and there are many opportunities to visit the surrounding places.

Of course, the question arises as to what to live on during the project, but this concern has been removed given that the ESC programs are funded by the European Commission, which covers the cost of living, respecting all basic needs. The costs of accommodation and a monthly allowance are included, from which you can live quite decently. Sounds like work can't fall hard in circumstances like this? That's right, and the countless benefits that this project brings can testify to that. "



MILENA



"Hello people", the words I used to introduce myself to people from 26 nations during a cultural evening in Spain, in that small town of Tarragona. With these words, I introduce myself to you. My name is Miloš, I am 24 years old and this is my first experience of this type. My great wish was to apply and participate in this and similar projects. It has become a reality, sports volunteering, a sport that I have been involved in for a long time, and now I participate in it from the other side as well.



The arrival itself, the euphoria, the journey, cannot be easily described. The most important thing is to know that I had great support from people from ADP-Zid, and when I came to Spain, great people and people from the Association Mundus team. Socializing with about 100 people of different cultures, nations, religions and opinions is something I would wish to every man on this planet. Personally, I really like the Spanish language and the first positive sur-

prise on the project was when they told me I had a roommate from Venezuela, they say - he only speaks Spanish. Then come the days of getting to know each other and the previously mentioned cultural evening, which is one of the perfect events on projects like this. Dance, songs, games, drinks, food, from 26 countries, unforgettable. Then began an intense, interesting, useful training, which lasted 7 days before the start of the games. During this training, meeting different people, countries, customs, meeting and crossing opinions, teamwork, are something that changes me as a person, affects many of my thoughts.

And then games and everything they carry, responsibility and work on the one hand, enjoyment and realization of dreams on the other. Getting to know the athletes, support, socializing and all that until 100 of us volunteers left the complex and went on an unforgettable camping by the beach. Again a new experience, again delight, and even sadness when leaving the camp.

The last week is coming, people are becoming even more connected, contacts are being made, some maybe even for a lifetime. Emotions prevail, happiness that we participated in such a wonderful project, sadness because we are parting with the people with whom we shared life for the previous month.

And finally, a return to our country, as a new person, who will be eternally grateful for the opportunity, with new friends, new knowledge, new opinions. Now, more than ever, I continue to work on myself, participate and apply for similar projects, because the possibilities are endless, and I would recommend that to every young person from the bottom of my heart. Enjoy, travel, make your dreams come true, live them! "

MILOS





Milosh Ristovski is from Kumanovo, North Macedonia, living and working in Brussels, Belgium as the Secretary General of Young European Federalists, where he does day to day advocacy and projects for bigger integration of the European Union. Previously, Milosh was the executive director of Center for Intercultural Dialogue.

Milosh has been involved in NFE activities from the age of 15 and has participated in various activities: from local workshops, international activities to global activities. He has also been engaged as a trainer/facilitator by using NFE tools.

At the time Milosh started being involved in NFE activities, the high school didn't offer enough for him, and CID was promising interesting activities such as: meeting new people, practicing English, international seminars, traveling abroad, and most importantly - activities where he could do something good for his city.

Milosh believes that he developed knowledge, skills and attitudes, such as: soft skills, communication skills, effective conflict resolution skills, managerial experience of teams from 5-25 which he still uses every day, competences that he gained through the courses on communication and conflict management.

Milosh thinks that the local and national activities helped him take his current path massively, especially the long term projects, such as the annual programme of CID Academy for future leaders, and the workshops in the youth center MultiКулти which gave him a long process of learning and practicing. He says that the skills he gained from those activities are the ones that he uses every day in his line of work.

Milosh agrees that it is difficult getting recognition of one's non-formal education, especially when you have to develop a one-page CV, you've done 100+ hours of NFE activities but you can not put them in your CV, because there is no formal recognition.

In Belgium, things are a little different than in North Macedonia, for example when you are applying for a certain job there is a requirement of a university degree, equivalent education or work experience. In this way, the skills acquired through non-formal education can be expressed, which is something that can not be seen in North Macedonia.

Milosh thinks that the International seminars are great, but the workshops that happen at the local and national level are a must, since that's where you learn the most.

Milosh strongly believes that non-formal education is beneficial, it develops

skills and attitudes on your knowledge, but he thinks that it doesn't replace formal education, instead, it should go parallel. A person that really wants to invest in their knowledge should go through both of the processes.

One of Milosh's most successful stories was the establishment of the youth center MultiКулти, first in Kumanovo and the wider region. This year is the 10th anniversary of the youth center. His favorite moments from MultiКулти were after a finished project when he got to present the project results to the local public.



MILOSH





My name is Nora and I'm a 26-year-old from Sofia, Bulgaria. I'm a graphic designer by day, video game streamer by night, mother of guinea pig year-round.

While I had participated in non-formal education activities many years ago, which were mostly related to practicing English, my most recent experience was a trip to Latvia at the beginning of 2020, where participants from all over Europe learned how to become youth group leaders based on a new methodology by Centre Marta. I decided to join the training programme through The Future Now in part due to a desire to learn more about myself, and an even deeper yearning to give young people around me a better chance at figuring themselves out at a younger age.

While I do feel like I've gained a decent amount

of knowledge on certain topics related to the training, an unexpected result was the bolstered confidence. I am usually not one to push my opinion into a conversation, but lately I've rarely faltered when wanting my voice heard on topics I feel strongly about, be it equality, mental health, sexual education and the like. Another somewhat unexpected outcome was an absolutely fabulous friendship that blossomed during that trip.

Today, non-formal education is a definite must for me. Engaging the individual on a personal level, it's a space for natural growth, instead of mandated compatibility.

NORA



My professional path and my training have been dedicated to the transformation of conflicts, mainly those arising from civil conflicts or political ideologies. Consequently, one of my strongest qualities is the mapping of conflicts, including their source, actors and structure. In addition, I have had the opportunity to work with the OAS (Organization of American States) and the European Union in multiple electoral processes carried out in various countries, including Paraguay, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ecuador, Colombia, El Salvador and Haiti since 2014, which has also exposed me to the particularities of different cultures as international organizations. I believe that while the power of one's own vote and the ability to cast this vote is one of the fundamental rights we enjoy in democratic countries, strong democratic governance is essential for building solid societies. In recent years (2017) I have focused on issues related to active conflict and minefields and I am currently on a two-year mission to Ukraine with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as Special Observer. In that role, one of my most important functions is to be able to transmit clearly, both vertically and horizontally, key information for the daily decision-making process. To this end, I collect information through local interviews and visual observation and prepare monthly reports on the security situation in the area of intervention on specific incidents following the OSCE guidelines on monitoring human rights, fundamental freedoms and inter-ethnic relations. As part of the work, I must cultivate and maintain a constructive relationship with local and regional authorities, representatives of minorities and religious groups, civil society and the local population. I have a degree in International Relations (University of Cagliari, 2008-2011) and a Master in Peace Sciences "International Cooperation and Conflict Mediation" (University of Pisa 2012-2014), with a field of studies that includes legal instruments for the post-conflict area, project cycle, geopolitics, anthropology and gender, and law of international cooperation among others. I also have specialized training



in hostile environments, crisis management of the civilian population and I have attended courses on election observation.

I also had the opportunity to work with minority groups and young people on issues related to the creation and promotion of intercultural dialogue, using creative methods to transform conflicts, migration and internal movements and interreligious dialogue.

Participated courses.

- EU Youth in Action Training "Citizenship - New ideas in Europe". Kiev, Ukraine (2014)
- Euromed Youth Program "Cultivar: Euro-Mediterranean Games for Intercultural Dialogue". Amman, Jordan (2013)
- EU Youth Training in Action: "Youth for a Common Future - Creativity in Conflict Transformation". Pristina, Kosovo (2012)
- Training EU Youth in Action "Migration and Mobility". Ureki, Georgia (2011)
- EU Youth in Action Training "Interreligious dialogue in youth work". Riga, Latvia (2010).

Non-formal education is the kind of education that takes place outside the curriculum provided by formal education. Non-formal learning activities have been fundamental for my personal and professional growth and with my relationship with the different actors in the performance of my work, I believe that it is essential for everyone to accompany their curriculum growth path, the non-formal one.



PAOLO





Hi, I'm Raya, I'm 26 years old and I work in the youth sector. I have been working in NGOs since I finished my education, even though I never imagined it as my path in life before that – studying business, entrepreneurship, finance and accounting. I had a very different idea of how life would go. Life had a different plan for me though – I started working as an administrative assistant in a non-governmental organization in Sofia, Bulgaria, where I am from, with the thought of gaining some experience before finding a more appropriate job.

But there is something magical, enthralling and appealing for me in the work of the third sector and I couldn't help but want to know and experience more of it once I 'accidentally' found myself in it. I spent a year in the European Voluntary Service, volunteering for a wonderful organization, supporting young people in Milan, Italy, and now I am part of the Management Board, as well as a Youth projects manager in a youth organization back in Sofia, called The Future Now Association. Here, I am exploring the depths and limits of the environment, the projects and initiatives, the opportunities for young people, with great passion and a lot of desire for the job!

In many ways, non-formal education and the youth sector completely changed and shaped my life. I have found myself in the position of a trainee, participant, organizer, sometimes even facilitator, and non-formal education has made me see learning and education in many different and wonderful lights. Non-formal education has been a uniter, a bridge for understanding and collaboration, on topics such as human rights, social

action, education, prosperity, violence prevention, and so many more. More than that, I feel that non-formal education has created within me a bigger capacity for caring and a bigger need for participation and involvement in decision-making, discussions, and a bigger drive for life-long learning.

Something very important, which I learned and solidified thanks to non-formal education, has been the importance of reflection. In most non-formal activities, I have participated in and organized, there is always a special place for reflection foreseen – what I have learned, what has changed with me, what more do I want and how to get it. When you spend some time in reflection, you improve the results of that training or exchange for yourself. But when you incorporate those same principles in other aspects of your life, you improve them the same way.

As advice, I'd say that if you haven't – jump into the world of non-formal education, knowing that it is full of support, understanding, amazing interesting knowledge and wonderful people. Jump in and learn from the experiences, thoughts and imagination of other people, knowing you will be contributing to theirs as well.

RAYA



Hi.)

My name is Rosaliya and I have been working in the youth field for almost 8 years. My first experience with youth projects and non-formal learning was related to being a mentor in a youth voluntary project at a small NGO in my hometown. The project was about working with children and young people with special needs. There were 24 volunteers from Spain, Turkey and Poland who spent 6 months helping and communicating with young people, learning from each other, and building relationships of friendship and cooperation that have been lasting for years. This was the moment where I realised how significant non-formal learning is for a young person, how much you can gain based on knowledge transfer and exchange of competences and developing new skill, while having fun with peers that have similar goals and attitudes.

Then I continued working within youth projects as a Project Manager, but also as a constant learner and participant in various non-formal learning activities.

To be honest, one of the most amazing non-formal activity that had a great positive impact on myself and my professional career was a training course that was held in May 2017 in Zakopane, Poland – “Give Power and Help – Self-identity in Youth Work and Projects”. 25 youth workers from 8 different countries participated in the training course with the aim of raising youth workers’ awareness concerning realisation of various types of project initiatives.

Despite raising youth workers’ qualifications and their personal development the training course was aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue. Due to the mutual cooperation, a stable and reliable contact network was established, which enabled the participants to promote good relations and grounds for successful future partnerships.



After taking part in this activity, I motivated myself to obtain Project Management Professional (PMP)® certification and focus myself on initiating and managing of youth projects. That is how, 2 years later, together with a dear friend and colleagues of mine we started our adventure by creating our own NGO – The Future Now Association.

The organisation is working on national and international initiatives, activities, and projects for and with young people and youth workers. We are passionate about learning and high-quality education, multicultural bridge building, equality and human rights, leadership, and personal development, as well as transfer of knowledge.

We are constantly striving to motivating learners and creating a learning culture by providing counselling and guidance on lifelong learning at schools, universities, and workplaces. Promoting lifelong learning has become one of our main goals, as it provides the unique opportunity for young people to develop new skills and competences and create amazing experiences, enriching friendships and precious memories with other youth!

ROSALIYA



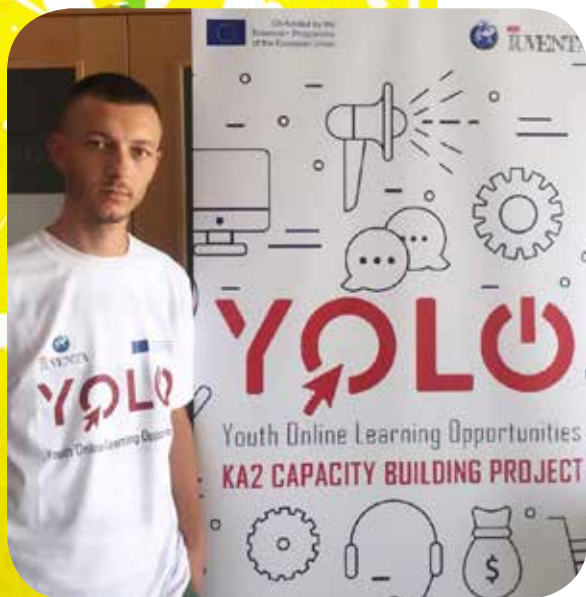


My name is Sabina, and I am a dancer and dance pedagogue for preschool children. I love Hip hop culture and all its elements became a part of my life when I was just a child. I did many sports in elementary school, and at the beginning of high school, I enrolled in dance school, which is still part of my life. I have a degree in preschool education, but lately I am more inclined to work with youth and I also have more interest in another work spheres, such as: event organizer, graphic design, and digital marketing. As an educator, youth worker and volunteer I have been involved in many activities in youth camps. As a babysitter in California, I was also part of one cultural exchange programme, which was one of a kind experience. I worked, studied, travelled and made new friends there. Also, I learned a lot about myself and it made me mentally stronger. When I have time, I am usually looking for interesting non-formal education (NFE) options, as I always like to learn something new. In my free time, I like to create, draw, sew, paint, dance, have fun, travel, read, meditate, hang out, "skate", DJ and listen to music ... I have already participated in many NFE trainings; it started already in primary school. So far, quite a few have accumulated - from sport clubs, athletics, basketball, volleyball, religious education, dance classes, Red Cross motivation days for animators, education for educators, Screen printmaking, Business classes, English class, Website developer, Successful application and project implementation, Online courses for Adobe programs, Digital Manager, Agile methods, Design thinking business model ... I took all those classes because I love to learn new things, and because school never gave me this kind of activities. NFE gives you practical knowledge and through it you grow as a person. It gives you experience and opportunity to meet new people with the same goals and interests. It made me who I am today: social, positive, healthy, persistent, resourceful, communicative, intelligent ... Through NFE, I also met many

interesting people, organizations, made friends, and personal ties. The NFE can really give you a lot, the very things we miss so much in our school system. The NFE subconsciously teaches you solidarity, tolerance, cooperation, teamwork, empathy, and being yourself. I think that all my knowledge and experience which I got it through different NFE helped me solve problems I encountered with. I am more resourceful anytime and everywhere I am because I have some knowledge from different fields of life. It is good to try and learn different things from different areas at which you are also interested in. I am usually the person who does not recognize my skills and knowledge, so for me it is always hard to recognize the progress. When I remember all my experiences in NFE courses and try to explain them to people then I realize what they gave me, what they taught me. I think that employers in Slovenia still give priority to formal education. For them, NFE is still just an interest and they are looking at them as hobbies. I believe that my past NFE can show what I am good at and what I love to do, where my attention lies. My advice to anyone is: "Do an NFE course or class, it is never too late to learn something new. You should take every NFE class you are interested in. There are so many things to learn in this World, so open your mind and never stop exploring and looking for knowledge. NFE is usually more fun and relaxed than learning at school. We make jokes with teachers, help each other, socialize also out of class ... I am sure you will meet new people, grow as a person, maybe go out of your comfort zone and also you will learn something you need in your life, career and find your own path.

SABINA





Hello, I'm Sadri Aliu an Albanian born in Switzerland at 93' spent three-years of my childhood in there but my true hometown was Presevo (Asane) a small town located in the south of Serbia, where I came back forever together with my family. I moved from a school to another till my high school in the city of Presevo.

Now I'm 27 yrs old a former student of CST, graduated at "South East European University" in Tetovo North Macedonia where I was living there from 2012-2015. After this, I come back again in my beloved town Presevo looking for something but not clear what I really want.

At a beginning I started looking for job opportunities where I can find myself, looking for some courses, events, activities, volunteer work whatever just to be busy but it was hard because lack of opportunities for the youngster, no activities, passive youngster because of non-information, political issues and so on.

After a year with a lot of difficulties, I manage to be part of Local NGOs leading & coordinating activities in local level and trying to raise the awareness and capacity of young people in my city, in youth work ,youth policy and the impor-

tance being part of non-formal education.

My biggest motivation about non-formal education, civil society and the youth work happened in 2017 when I attended a training course of social Entrepreneurship in Topola,Serbia. Not so prepared not sure what is going on but something was pushing me.

By then I followed more than 20 Erasmus+projects I'm almost part of every activity or project managed by NGO luventa under the Erasmus+program. My circle became so huge meeting new friends -different culture, travelling from a country to another, challenging my self, my mind was changing in a good way I became more polite, I learnt listening to others, gain a lot of knowledge, Improved my skills in different fields all through NFL process.

Now, after all this experience, I have developed myself professionally during my participation in various topics and projects funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus + program all around Europe. Therefore, what is most important is my will and my time should not be wasted, but to give everything for the advancement and activation of our youngsters.

I'm not tired seeing the youth not having opportunities or manipulated by some mechanisms I'm tired seeing them not ready to fight about their rights...We need a cooperation -all together sharing information ,participation as much as possible in non-formal education & experience can help in the way raising awareness of our youngster in active society. All they need is an extended helping hand .That hand t it can be a light in the end of the tunel.

So experience through non-formal education, exchange of ideas between young people, problems they encounter along the way, seeing up close the learning process with young people from Europe learning together and spreading information to the youngsters is all our society needs...

sometimes you need to forget who you are from where you're coming, you're a minority or not but to focus on what you wanna be...

I found out that NFL is important as much as Formal Learning maybe more ...

Be part of it you will regret that you did not start earlier ...

SADRI

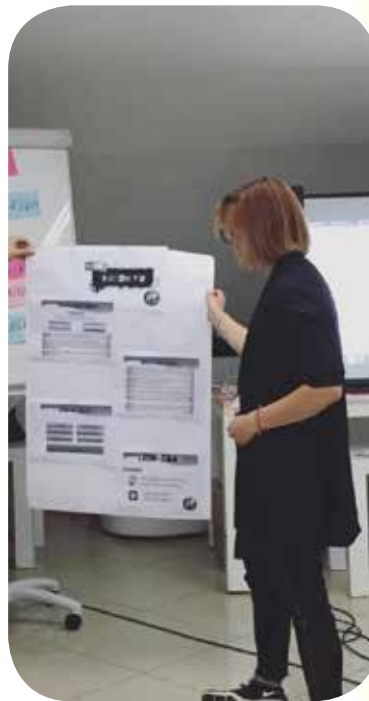




My name is Sandra Bogdanovic and I am a journalist. Currently I am working on Serbian national TV station as a journalist/reporter. I am 25 years old and 3 years ago I started working in the field of non formal education because as a journalist I wanted to feel multiculturality and to learn more about alternative ways of learning, improve my knowledge about other religions, languages, and traditions. I started volunteering and then working in NGO field when I was in high school but more serious I started as I said 3 years ago in NGO luventa because that is one of the best organizations in my country who gave me all the possibilities to move forward in being youth worker. I went on APVs, Training courses, exchanges, meetings and myself was the team leader of many of them. I started to learn about non formal education through trainings, board games, with some of the best trainers and facilitators. As I said, I found it useful for my work in the first place but once I started doing it I fell in love with the world of non formal education. I wanted to meet new people different profiles than mine, to know more about their process of working in the field of non formal education. When I was younger and through my formal education I always found boring and hard learning through traditional way. I always wanted it to be more creative, more open minded and adjusted to every child/person's possibilities. Luckily, I found out about non formal way of education and I can say that I still remember everything I learned in that way but on the formal way for the 17 years of education. I've gained and I am proud to say in the first place that I've gained a lot of self-esteem during sessions and trainings. I've gained a lot of new perspectives, friends. It helped me because I started to feel more self love and to be more sure about my ideas, myself and what I want in life. It helped me with

some work related contacts that I can use whenever I need them and help them going public and be heard in national television. It helped me to find my way and who I want to be. NLE helped me to be more aware of the people's personal struggles. At first it was hard to recognize my progress because it was incredible how my voice was heard, how my ideas were accepted and how fast I was moving forward in my path at NGO luventa. I gained self esteem and I never thought I could be that open with the strangers. From this point of view, the progress I've made was huge and I think no one and nothing else could affect me more in a good way than it happened through seminars and trainings in non formal education programs. My employer recognized it quickly that is why I had my first facilitator role in such a short time. She gave me the opportunity to run our social medias because she believed that I am the best for it because I made be in the job so quickly. To everyone who thinks about starting with NLE I suggest being open minded when going into the field of NLE cause there is so much it is offering to people. First let's start with some basics, introducing with NLE and if a person likes it then can go deeper and reveal much more even at the end be a trainer and lead sessions, it is the best feeling!!!! I would tell them that NLE changed my life i would tell them that if they always were in a „fight“ with traditional way of learning then this is the best for them. It will for sure shape them for the future, open their eyes and mind for things they thought are out of their league. It will mek them closer with people world wide and give them many many new friends, perspectives and friends. My advice to them: prepare for everything you ever dreamed about to become true!

SANDRA



I am Silvia Dervishi, 25 from Tepelene, Albania. I have studied geoinformatics-engineering and currently I am working as project coordinator at Beyond Barriers association, which is an organization working in the field of youth. I have started to participate in NF activities back in 2013 where I had the opportunity to participate for the first time in a youth exchange in Lisbon, Portugal. Since then, I got acquainted with the sending organization and I have participated in more than 100 activities of NFE in local, national and European level, respectively in Youth Exchanges, training Courses, seminars, follow up activities, network meetings etc. At first, I had heard from friends of mine who were part of these activities before me, that it would be an unforgettable experience and that I definitely had to attend them. So, I would say that from what I had heard I chose to give myself a chance to broaden my horizons, get new knowledge, meet new people, have fun and improve my skills.

I always tell to everyone that asks me that these activities are life-changing. To me personally these activities have given me more much than only knowledge. Of course, that was the primary thing that I got from these activities as they provide you with different type of learning, information and methods that aren't very common in formal system. But other than this, these activities helped me to know myself better and build myself not only personally but professionally as well. Beside the fact that I had the opportunity to build certain competences, I had the chance to meet amazing people and youngsters from all over Europe and more, and I started to see things outside of my small box where I was used to stay in. I made new friends and learned about values of human rights, inclusion and importance of youth work as well I confirmed once again that there are not real borders between people coming from different countries, but mostly this border is set in our mind.

Thank to different activities I have participated within Erasmus Plus program, I have built my competences and knowledge in different fields as HRE, gender equality, Social inclusion, entrepreneurship, policy making etc. The skills I improved during activities helped me to get more engaged in local and European level within the organization I was part in, and with experience I had I got accepted to work at Beyond Barriers association. Attending in NFL activities are always an efficient way to learn and improve and it pushes me forward to work and engage more in the field. Having had a chance to share different opinions and ideas for building our societies, collaborate with each other, contribute to enhance the involvement of other youth and feel that my small contribution still makes a change, has motivated me to continue working in the CSO sector and international youth work. In these events I have realized the importance of intercultural learning, the respect for diversity and promotion of Eu-

European values such as respect for human rights, peace building and democracy, equality, and solidarity for marginalized youth and the rule of law. While being in the position of Project coordinator in BBA, among others I am responsible of keeping communication with different partners from WB and EU and organizing different activities which help me to develop my skills in organization, communication, time management but more importantly these activities and projects made me realize that taking an action is the key element to make a better society.

It wasn't very difficult to recognize the progress because it was visible even after the first activity while I understood that I was more competent in different topics, I improved my skills in communication, leadership, foreign language etc. Through participation in different activities and workshops I was able to boost my creativity, learn how to be more empathic and raise my voice towards different causes. These two last years I also started practicing as a facilitator in different activities of non-formal education, where I discovered another aspect of international youth work which I love and would like to engage more with. BBA experienced trainers gave me a chance to learn from them and taught me how to be better every day, also motivating me to push my boundaries further and go out of my comfort zone.

I would suggest youngsters to participate more in activities such as training courses, seminars, youth exchanges covered by the Erasmus Plus program because from my view it is a true life-changing experience and will equip them with the right skills and competences for life and labor market. These activities provide a different and interactive learning experience that it is quite important to grow as a person and make a change in the society. I would say that they should participate more in all kind of activities that are related with NFL, for a new learning experience. This learning form will boost their critical thinking, help them to perceive things from different point of view and most important NFL is built around participants' learning so the youngsters will always be a protagonist and main actor.



SILVIA



I am Sonia, 32 years old, graduated and mastered, curious and thirsty for knowledge. I speak English and Russian. Until today I have never stopped studying and learning new things every day. After working in the private sector for 10 years, changing dozens of jobs, today I work in the public administration (culture and associations sector) and finally I was able to put my skills at the service of the community. I live in the magnificent island of Sardinia. As an islander, I grew up facing the difficulties of living in the middle of the sea (inconvenience of travel, expensive means of transport and poor accessibility). So I started to move from my native territory and get to know Europe relatively late, as a university student.

Thanks to the world of associationism I became aware of the numerous projects promoted by the "Erasmus +" program. With them I had the opportunity to get involved in new and unexpected contexts. The advantages I have derived from them are countless. First of all to be able to increase my professional skills, secondly to be able to confront myself with my peers from different cultures and with diametrically opposed backgrounds. I have learned how "diversity is a unique asset".

I have experienced and tested on myself the importance of the famous "transversal skills" that I did not know before. I understood how non-formal education can make a difference in both educational and work contexts.

I consider myself very lucky because I have participated in 10 different projects. At the beginning I decided to participate because I was fascinated by the idea of being able to relate in a 100% international, heterogeneous and dynamic context. I participated in projects together with peers, but I also worked with groups of disabled people, Syrian refugees, Kurdish shepherds and people with fewer opportunities, of all ages. Working in contexts so far from my "everyday life" helped me to understand my strengths, to break down some of the prejudices and stereotypes



unfortunately inherent in our culture.

I took part in training courses and cultural exchanges, both abroad and in Italy. I have been a guest and in turn I have hosted people. Each project has given me something unique, both in terms of skills acquired and in terms of new awareness. Non formal education is fundamental. It allows to acquire a particular empathy and sensitivity, critical thinking, incisive and smart learning.

I learned to focus on my goals, to work in a team, to conceive stress not as an enemy, but as a motivating factor. I have learned to give less importance to purely economic aspects, more importance to social aspects.

Today I am continuing my training, daily growth and "learning by doing". Thanks to my problem solving and public speaking skills, I am often identified as a leader of working groups. Without the Erasmus+ projects, I probably wouldn't have the same job and career opportunities today, moreover knowing languages has given me an important competitive advantage.

To young people I would say: never stop! Jump, explore, listen, learn. Only by putting yourself on the line and getting out of your "comfort zone" will you understand what your talent and your way is.

SONIA



LEARNING WHILE PLAYING



1985, Ampelokipoi, Thessaloniki, math class - introduction to fractions!!! Our teacher enters the class with a chocolate cake, divides it into equal shares and serves us! After watching her with excitement and surprise, after eating that slice of cake, it was so clear what fractions really are, or how you work with them! And please, do not forget that I am not (never was) a person of math!!

Experiential Learning can really motivate students to share ideas, try new methodologies and learn new things in a playful environment. New knowledge that miraculously enough needs less homework to be accumulated and remembered! Experiential learning creates an atmosphere of equity, overcomes academic and linguistic barriers, letting people (of every age) free of academic burdens or cognitive troubles!

Moreover, everyone can be either a "teacher or a student" in that experiential circle of knowledge. As psychodynamics and group dynamics play an important role in E.L., people act in a holistic way

and not just with their cognitive minds, new knowledge becomes communal, an outcome of the group and not just a personal academic achievement, as E.L. also promotes solidarity and teamwork. 2020 Thessaloniki. Being now 43y, I still enjoy participating in E.L. activities, either as a trainer (teacher) or as a participant (student), loving the latter as much as possible! Try it!, try learning while playing and amaze or -even better- surprise your cognitive minds by activating the whole of your self!

URANIA



I am a graphic designer and student of architecture, I am 25 years old and I am from Ussana, a town of about 5000 inhabitants in the province of Cagliari, Sardinia. Right now I am living in Lisbon, Portugal, to complete my course of studies and my 10 months Erasmus Studio period.

About three years ago I participated in many non-formal education activities. Having done the national civil service at TDM 2000 International, I was able to participate in several training courses, youth exchanges and mobility activities of all kinds.

I chose to participate because this type of activity forms transversal skills that other educational systems do not offer, in fact I acquired more practical and less academic skills, more useful in dealing with everyday life and other people.

The skills and experience I acquired through these activities have been useful



to enter the mentality of the labour market, both at national and international level.

It was not difficult to recognize the progress because it was visible from a practical point of view; the people who could see the progress, evaluated my "new" way of working and the relationship with the people involved in this process.

This kind of activity is useful to anyone, especially to people who have not yet defined their own path and are looking for very strong external stimuli to be more addressed.

Non-formal education is as important as formal education because I believe that non-formal education, unlike formal education, has the great advantage of training for daily life and therefore, transversally, also the world of work.

It is therefore a matter of opportunity and completeness, an opportunity not to be missed!

VIOLA





I am Yunus from Istanbul/Turkey and I am 29. My profession is Digital Marketing and working as a freelancer. I am interested in being a Digital Nomad. I like travelling, to discover new cultures, people and places. I was volunteer in Poland by Erasmus+.

Thanks to the projects, I met many people from different languages and different cultures. As an example of non-formal education activities, we played games with the children in the forest and studied English. The atmosphere definitely affects people's education. You cannot teach people what is in life by keeping people behind closed doors.

The most important gain of such activities is human. Getting to know new people, making new friends and expanding your circle. These are very valuable achievements. After all, everything we know is for human beings.



Different minds mean different thoughts. When there are different minds in an environment, everyone says different ideas. Thus, we have the chance to look at things from different perspectives and different windows.

Life is experienced by living. To live life, you have to discover. Life cannot be experienced sitting at home in front of a screen.

Discover your life...

YUNUS





My name is Zach and I'm currently living in a way I was never expecting. All my life has been somehow predictable, but I arrived to a point where I found myself procrastinating for 4 straight years, having bad habits, being stationary with my university studies, depending on my family's money and feeling like I was "digging my hole" day by day. I couldn't take it anymore; I had to do something about it. At the same time, around 1 and a half year ago, it happened that I found a volunteering project in Romania, somewhere away from my homeland Greece, a place where I could start from 0. So, I went; this time dedicated to do all the things I hadn't done all these years; to not say "no" to opportunities and to take responsibility for my actions. Being in a program related to well-being, a field that I'm passionate about, I got myself into doing workshops in schools about mental health, sports classes, correct body posture, creating a charity race from scratch along with other diverse activities. Most of this time I was applying a method whose name I didn't know. Later, after participating in trainings designed for EVS volunteers, I got to know "non formal education". Finally, the activities I did and couldn't explain the impact they had, had a term to refer to. But not only that, by participating on the trainings, I became more capable of articulating learning outcomes and planning my own learning. This helped me to have a clearer idea on how to foster specific skills and knowledge to my target group, such as teamwork, leadership, communication skills, even empathy. Seeing myself taking such an active role in shaping my own life, as well as helping others



to do so, gave my life such meaning that I just couldn't hide how good it felt. What also struck me as a surprise was that all of these were reflected in my relationships with people that I began to value more and consider as learning opportunities. This appeared clearly to me while participating in a youth exchange, right after my EVS, I organised several workshops for which I received inspirational feedback, but also for my stance as an individual. This February, returning home after 11 months of adventure, I wasn't the same person. I finally knew what I wanted my next step to be and how to take it. So, I started seeking ways to get involved into the empowerment of people, by using my non formal education skills. After relentless web searching and email sending, I took courses on dialogue facilitation and found a job offer in an NGO that is involved in youth work. It was a tough challenge for me to get there, but my persistence now has me in the position of doing an internship in this NGO, as well as being an dialogue facilitator for cross-cultural university students. Anticipating for the next day to come makes things feel so right, along with having a goal that I'm moving closer to day by day; to help people discover their true potential and improving myself so I can do it better.

ZACH



THIS PUBLICATION IS EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY
LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCY MOSTAR IN COOPERATION WITH:



TURKONFED



TFNOW







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With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Supported by:

Institute for Youth
Development KULT



This publication was supported by the Institute for Youth Development KULT. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute, and are the exclusive responsibility of the author.

PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 2020

Layout design: **ZLATAN NEFIĆ**