

## The EVS Adventure Begins

### First Impressions

My experience in Thessaloniki started with a delayed flight – Σιγά σιγά style – and a warm welcome at the airport by my EVS colleagues in Arsis projects, Saadia and Dario. I was expecting to meet someone new, so I was a bit nervous, however my perceptions were immediately positive and rewarding. We started speaking in French which I really appreciated, since I was hoping to find someone with whom I could still practice this difficult and beautiful language. While on the bus during the way I saw the sea side (the port) and I was so excited, but the guys revealed to me that one could not actually swim in it because of pollution – I was shocked! – So, my welcoming was also quite traumatizing. We arrived at our accommodation located right in front of the train station, and I already felt I was in the right place at the right moment! Later that night I went to eat a σουβλάκι with some of the flat mates by our place. I had already understood that a great love with Greek food had just started! Then, they showed me around the china town of the city, our hood and I adored it. There are so many graffiti and pieces of street art that I could get myself lost for days!



### Knowing the Organization(s)

I met Maggi, my project coordinator from Arsis, in person at her office in the central office of Arsis in the city center. Maggi is a very open minded, fun and smart person. I feel very comfortable with her, I am sure I can speak with her about anything, and she would be always ready to give me useful suggestions! Maggi was so kind to follow me through the presentation day at the Arsis Shelter for Unaccompanied Minors, indeed, she introduced me to Antonis the person in charge of my integration in the shelter. Antonis is a very calm and kind person, he is a pedagogue at the shelter, and showed me around the different sections of the facility and introduced me to the young adults there accommodated and to the staff members.



There are 3 houses accommodating between 7 to 10 young adults mostly from Pakistan, then there are some guys from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iran. The first impression that I had about the shelter is that the place is so beautiful, it is located in the middle of nature and it has a very high potential since the area and the location are very wonderful. Nevertheless, I understand that for youngsters to be that far - at least 45 minutes from the city center - can be very difficult. First all, because this does not help them to go to school, most of the schools that they go to are located at least 2 hours away by bus from the shelter, and then because every other activity such as sport classes, cinema, swimming pool etc... are held mostly in the city center. A weakness I find is that they only have internet access 3 hours per day inside the office and this can lead to some tensions since there is no room for all of them and for all of their chargers - there are only 2 plugs. Indeed, the first couple days of work were quite intense, this because one day a brawl erupted particularly because of a charger.

One of the positive points other than the incredible human and working experience I am living about my EVS is that I can be very flexible. Thus, other than the Language Support Classes for the ones who actually want to learn the language of the country they wish to go to, I can also propose to participate to some events. For example, one day me and Antonis organized an outside activity at Fix In Art Factory. This gave the guys from the shelter the opportunity to change settings and do something different and interesting about ecology, recycling and art. They had so much fun and it was nice to participate to their constructive development.



### Developing Social Life

Since the beginning I had the opportunity to get in touch with the local social life surrounding me, indeed with some flat mates we have been on a weekly base to the market by our place behind the station. We bought so many things, including a huge octopus for just 7e! I cooked it and it was delicious, everybody home liked it! At night we went out to Micropolis with my flat mates it was so much fun! We met so many people also from other projects as Fix! Which allowed us to participate to the project "Don't Buy Swap" promoted by Fix in Art. It is an event held every



Sunday, and it consists in exchanging your clothes for clothes you can find there.

I very happy also because I am discovering the city skating from my place, I skate on the seaside bike lane, and it is very beautiful! One weekend we started to cook all together to have the opening of the roof parties. It was a success, one of my flat mates was playing music with his computer, the food was perfect, and someone else took care of the delicious cocktail! The same weekend we had our fist dinner with Maggi at my first taverna, omg everything was so good. Also, we met Antonis and we went partying at LaDoze Block Party with one of his friends, who could also speak a bit of Italian, I am so amazed by Greeks!



Indeed, I want to tell you a last anecdote about how amazing the Greek people are. One night we went to a sea food taverna behind the train station and it was so funny because the waitresses had really a hard time finding the English menu , and even speaking English, so she started to actually draw the menu on our table towel! I will always remember this!



*“Life is what we make of it. Travel is the traveler. What we see isn't what we see but what we are.” - F. Pessoa*

