

Diversification of Elva Youth Centre

Programme: Erasmus+ (European Voluntary Service)

Country/City: Estonia, [Elva](#)

Duration: 8 months

Beginning of the service: 2016, November 1st (preferred, negotiable)



Background of the organisation

Elva Huviala- ja Koolituskeskus (Elva Hobby and Training Centre) is a subordinate establishment of the local government of Elva and its main activities are *providing 16 different hobby classes (with 17 teachers) and open youth work (with two youth workers) at the youth centre*. As the participants at the hobby classes usually need to pay for it, activities at the youth centre remain mainly free of charge. The youth center is opened 20 hours/week (from Mo-Fr at 1pm – 5pm).



Elva Open Youth Center is located in renovated building with a very beautiful graffiti, which was previously sauna house. Youth center is located near to the lake Arbi and train station, downtown is 10- minutes walking distance. We moved to this house on 2014. On the first floor there are photographer

studio, cafe, hairdresser and youth hobby classes (animation, ceramic and art hobby classes). On the second floor there are youth center and dance hall with dressing room and shower rooms. Youth centre have 4 different rooms - small office room; room with three computer, table football game and air-hockey; bigger room with billiard; kitchen room with TV and play-station and WII game. Our regular activities are: opened youth centre coordination, international youth exchanges, youth initiative support, youth council support and coordination, youth camps, allowing voluntary activities to youngsters, Children Protection Day event etc. We are also involved to different city-wides cultural events management (Father's Day event etc). The year of 2016 is dedicated to the chess and checkers at the youth centre.

Elva Hobby and Training Centre together with the open youth center is looking for a volunteer for 8 months. Main activities for the volunteer that are expected are:

- ✓ Writing projects (it's possible to submit at least two projects in the field of youth work and international youth work – Erasmus+/youth exchange)
- ✓ Participation in the youth projects
- ✓ Cooking lessons/workshops at the youth centre (cooking lessons about the national food, also possibility to learn how to cook Estonian national food)
- ✓ Making contacts at the youth centre during the opening time with the children and youngsters
- ✓ Providing language lessons (Portuguese, English, if applicable)
- ✓ Cultural awareness (organising cultural events)
- ✓ Helping to organise chess/checkers competitions
- ✓ Promoting the organisation, creating posters and keeping blog
- ✓ It's also possible to assist another kind of hobby classes (depends on the volunteer's personal interests and skills) like dance, handicraft, ceramics, art, animation movies
- ✓ We expect the volunteer to be at least 18 years old, open-minded and with an active attitude.

Accommodation (negotiable): in Elva or in Tartu (only 25 km from Elva), which is the second biggest city in Estonia and a typical student city. According to the programme the volunteer is provided with the accommodation, money for the food, pocket money, transport from home and back. The volunteer has also own doctor and mentor. We promise that the volunteer in Elva becomes the member of the community for sure! ☺ Your main contact person during this programme in the hosting organisation is: Mirja Jõgi (in Facebook Elva Noorsootõtaja Mirja), e-mail: mirja.jogi@elva.ee



My home away from home

Anna-Maria memories

When I said goodbye to my family at the airport for my 9 months of EVS, my only fears seemed to be all about missing the flight, not being picked up at the airport or not really knowing my destination. Well, I knew the names and addresses and of course - I googled, but I practically didn't know anything about Estonia, particularly not about Elva.

My new home for the 9 months duration of my service was called "Elva", a small town, which basically doesn't offer much more than some supermarkets, a school, a cultural centre, a train station, a townhall and one Pub, that during the day is also the only Café and Restaurant. At least it seemed to me like that when I lived there. However, believe me – I learned to love this city, with all these wooden houses in the middle of beautiful lakes and forests. I got to love the natural surrounding which actually gave me a lot of calmness and peace.

“What the hell did I think just going somewhere in the middle of nowhere?” That was the question, which was all over my head when I walked around Elva's streets during the first weeks of my EVS. Everything was new: the work, the people, the language, the culture and the town! Well – what did I really think? I decided to do EVS, because I wanted to get to know a new culture, to get international friends, to get more independent and much more... My list was long. Now – 2 years after my EVS adventure I know, that my goals fulfilled automatically without me giving a lot of effort. It just happens in EVS and it surely happens in Elva. And I am proud and happy to say, that my expectations got even topped: I never expected me to learn how to do cross country skiing (not that I like it, but I tried). I never expected me to really enjoy sauna and running out into the snow to cool off again. And I never expected me to join a Estonian choir and sing on a big song festival – bigger than one can imagine.

And the more I was learning about Estonian culture and the more I identified myself with Estonian language I started to feel more and more at home. And I found out – if you want to be friend with Estonians: show interest in their culture and learn Estonian! You won't believe how many hugs I got just for saying some tiny Estonian sentence and how many smiles I got from the children I worked with when I tried to speak Estonian, but actually failed. At least I tried! So, it is definitely worth it to go out, speak with people and get to feel the Estonian spirit!

Looking back, I can say that I survived Estonian winter, which was a dark and cold time and a challenge, but I also got to know Estonian summer which lets you forget all the cold toes you had and the unbelievably short days. I learned that - in summer – whole Estonia awakes from a long sleep. My tip – spend a lot of time outside, travel around, see the seaside and the bogs. You will get addicted to the smell of the woods after a rainy day in summer or the singing of the birds in springtime. You will see lakes, where you swim to cool off on hot days, freeze in winter. Maybe you will fall in love with Estonians Islands and Estonian choir traditions. I remember all – the winterwonderland and the summergreen - And all of this means Estonia for me.

Plus: Elva is not far from bigger cities – you can reach Tartu, Estonians beautiful student city with the bus on a regular basis. You can travel to whole Estonia easily from there. However, **Elva has something bigger cities like Tartu or even Tallinn doesn't have: Elva is totally, typically Estonian. For me.**

Admittedly, Elva might not be the biggest and most vivid place in Estonia and you might not find a lot of foreigners (if any!) there. However, going to a place like Elva for my EVS guaranteed me the chance of learning so much about Estonian culture and Estonian mentality and at the same time so much about myself.

After 9 months of EVS and 2 Months of travelling in and around Estonia I look back at a time full of challenges most of the volunteers face and a lot of experiences most of the volunteers face. However, what might distinguish me from other volunteers all around Europe is that I got to find a new home, in a small green town called Elva. So, I never regret the decision taking off with this plane that led me to the biggest adventure of my lifetime. When I took the flight home I wasn't only going back. In fact I needed to leave a home in order to be able to come home again. In other words: From one home to another.