

My deaf & Italian ESC in a pandemic.

Enjoy.

Sign language. Capabilities. Italy. I chose these 3 words that perfectly describe my volunteering in Italy. I'm hard of hearing people, and I use sign language on a daily basis. Sign language is my language with which I feel comfortable and trouble-free every day. At the same time, it is easier to establish contact with foreigners.

For starters, I will start with the words "quiet world" means "Deaf world". Well, my volunteering was based on the fact that I worked in the Turin Institute for the Deaf, i.e. in a place where the language for communication is sign language and also people who can't hear and are in a similar situation as me. Thanks to that I felt more secure and I was glad to be among my people.

I remember that the first Italian days made direct contact with deaf people here, thanks to sign language. And with hearing people, I had difficulty communicating. I strive for knowing that sign language can get along with another person from another country.

I'm glad that I had the opportunity to learn a new sign language or Italian Sign Language (LIS). Knowing another foreign language, I feel more open to the world because I know that I can make contact with a larger group of people. Arriving here I only knew Polish Sign Language (PJM) and American Sign Language (ASL). Knowledge of a second sign language helped me make contact with deaf foreigners before I mastered LIS, I used ASL to communicate, therefore I also had the opportunity to enrich my ASL dictionary.

There are many opportunities that volunteering gave me. Among other things: working with elderly people who are deaf. This is because they use sign language, and sometimes their signs are older, which gives me a chance to get to know LIS more deeply. The time spent with them gave me knowledge of what their everyday life looks like, in what aspects they need help and support. I can say the same thing about working with deaf people with intellectual disabilities. Each of these activities contributed to the development of my skills in several areas, which translates into the fact that I feel more confident, smarter, and understanding in a variety of situations.

Italy. A country that was the first to steal my heart through their culture, cuisine, and joyful approach of people to the world around them. I was very happy to realize that my 9-month volunteering will be carried out here, where people use gestures to communicate with each other on a daily basis. At the same time, it is friendly to people who can't hear and gesticulation will help in establishing relationships.

Impression

Living here for a long time, listening to what people are talking about, commenting on what annoys them, and what makes them happy, it allowed me to learn from the kitchen their culture that can't be read from books or the Internet.

The most common words I will use here are 'sign language'. I think that sign language will not cease to impress me with its diversity, origin, and similarity. As I mentioned, the language I used during ESC was LIS. With each course, I was surprised by the history of the signs, their shape, and sometimes there are such moments that one Italian sign language means something different in PJM or ASL, and even in German Sign Language (DGS). How should I not go crazy? :)

Me. Being abroad for a long time, you discover yourself again, because functioning in an area where you don't know the local language, don't know the local people makes us more self-sufficient and self-sufficient. You learn how to make dishes that only Grandma or Auntie always made. You're trying to do your business in a foreign language. How much success you can achieve in this way, at the same time make you realize that YOU CAN live in a borderless country without any problems. You gain more confidence and pay more attention to your behavior and approach to the situation.

Contact

For those who don't know. This project was written for 2 volunteers: 1 from Germany, 1 from Poland. You've met me, it's time you met a volunteer from Germany. Johanna is deaf since birth, she speaks as many languages as I can, maybe more. Her personality is interesting, she has a stoic calmness and an angelic approach to everything. Living with her and working every day has allowed me to see myself more and discover who I am. Danke schön!

As I mentioned in the title, my volunteering was during a pandemic, i.e. quarantine, lack of work, not being able to visit Italy, which was my one of the many goals of this ESC. You know this sentence: two heads are

better than one. Supporting each other in a difficult time when our families and friends are far away. Danke schön Jojo! <3

Laura - Deaf woman who is impossible, LIS teacher, International sign language (IS) interpreter, student, I could exchange endlessly. She strives for deaf people to be treated at the same level as hearing people: education, rights. Grazie mille <3

Simona and Cristina - women who lit up the days when it was hard for me. I don't know what I would do without them. Their commitment to work, ideas, sense of humor, and support when problems arose. Their personality – priceless! Grazie mille Donne <3

Satisfies

Openness, who I am, who I have become, what new goals I have created, that I know in what field I would like to try my hand. The fact that I managed to cope with the challenge and managed to experience with beautiful memories abroad, starting with ignorance of Italian spoken and LIS, place, people. Prove that despite hearing damage, you can do it! Not satisfaction, it's an honor to meet so many wonderful people and learn a lot of important information from them.

Puzzled

I wonder if there is something that surprised me ... As one Polish singer Czesław Niemen said: this world is strange. We all know that each country has its own customs, traditions, customs, and behaviors. You just have to be open to it and show tolerance and respect for others.

Eureka

Working with seniors, looking for ideas about what to do with them, what activities, what tasks - it was Eureka for me. Because it was a difficult challenge for me, due to the fact that I have no experience how to work with such a group of people who, to some extent, have limited opportunities, not only due to age but also on an intellectual level.

Difficult

Communication, learning Italian grammar. Cheese. I mentioned that not everyone spoke English here, which makes it difficult to make contacts. Not difficult for one who wants it. Learning Italian, LIS, and trouble disappeared. Before I came here, most people said Italian was easy to learn. And that was a myth. Cheeses, I mean parmigiano or mozzarella, because every time I go to the store, I never know which type of cheese to take, hmm ...

Solutions

Talking with friends and also with local people. I could always count on the support and help of Johanna, my great roommate. Reading various information on the internet. But most of all the people around us, for example, Cristina and Simona.

Discover

Myself, places, dishes, culture, sign language. Every day I was tearing something new, including places, castles, palaces, and parks surrounding me. I had the opportunity to taste many Italian dishes, not just pizza, pasta, and lasagna. The discovery for me was the variety of mozzarella, burrata, stracchino, ricotta cheeses, etc. I had no idea that I would see so many cheeses in the shop at once. Sometimes a person has reflexes after performing a given action, or says a sentence adequate to a given situation. And I discovered that although we associate a given situation, we still have a different saying/sentence. Signs that we were all agreed on certain sign languages and their meanings.

New ideas

I would like to continue volunteering, in which I will deal with the deaf community and sign language. One person inspired me to help deaf children in Africa, teachers who have no experience/education on how to educate deaf children. One of my tasks during ESC was to co-write the Erasmus + project on LGBT + Deaf. It made me think that there is no accessibility in this field in Poland, therefore I decided that I would try to act in this direction.

Talk again

With everyone who accompanied me for 9 months in Italy. So Johanna, caregivers who work at the home of the elderly, teachers who work at the center, chefs, people who work in the office, with everyone I had the pleasure to meet and talk to during ESC.

Motto

Now or never.

Everything is possible.

Don't talk stupid, just get to work!

Which/what?

Ukulele.

Finally, I would like to thank my coordinator Karl, who wrote this project, thanks to him my dream came true. I also thank foundations in Poland that supported me and helped me participate in this wonderful project.