



For me this is my second experience in another country after spending some months in Sweden, and now I'm in Athens with European Voluntary Service (EVS) project ready to spend here one year in total. It's eight months that I have lived in Athens and I want to be totally honest...

Before leaving my country I was so scared, I was wondering if I made a good choice to leave again from Italy at 28 years old, instead of spending my time to search a job with a good salary, like my parents wished after my college education. But from the very first moment I arrived in Athens, I realized that I did a good choice, and now after spending eight months here, I'm getting to think that this experience will be over soon, and I'm a little sad, because Athens is my home now.

During my time here I travelled around Greece and other countries, because EVS means also this, to have the opportunity to discover new cultures, new people, new places that are so different from you. This means also to grow up, to broaden your horizons, but above all, you are given the chance to develop your empathy with people, with real problems of daily life.

My association provided me a shared flat with four more volunteers from other countries, and this was a wonderful chance to improve my English, to understand and to get to know new cultures.

We work all together in CIVIS PLUS. My project is called "EVS in After School" and it is about supporting migrants and refugees. I help with projects, administrative and communicational work, I also spend time with young children. In particular, I'm responsible for the creative classes where children have the opportunity to play games, draw, socialize and spend their time creatively in a safe and pleasant environment.

During this period, I changed my approach to myself and others and I'm still working to improve my English and also to learn Greek, even if it's a difficult language but not impossible to learn.

I didn't find big difficulties during these months, apart from the language, but this is an everyday challenge for me. Working and communicating in English and trying to speak in Greek is part of my ordinary life.

So, my advice is *"don't be afraid to dare, to change your life, to travel, to discover new people and reality, because it's never too late"*!

Gabriella Parrino