



Connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina

As a part of my EVS project, I decided to connect my passion towards traveling with my skills gained in Bosnia and Herzegovina (local language, interpersonal skills etc.). I came with an idea to visit 5 different cities and in each cooperate with local organization or individual to see the impact of their actions to local community. Long story short, I found a lot of interesting organizations to which I wrote and about 15 of them replied to me positively and accepted my stay. From positive replies I have chosen 4 organizations and one individual and when the time had come, I packed my back and hit the road.

If you are interested, how did I manage those people to host me and provide me with accommodation and even basic food, here is the email I wrote to all of them:

Hello.

My name is Martin, originally from Slovakia, currently volunteering in Mostar for NGO Youth Power. Here in BiH I started to work on improving the local community (at first making connections and reaching organizations and youth), connecting our organization with other platforms and working on different projects.

One of current goals of our NGO is to send me in April to travel for one month in Bosnia and Herzegovina, explore the work of individual organizations and describe their goals, achievements, plans and strategies in my blog (it will also serve as a promotion of individual organizations and work they are doing to improve the local community). On the other hand, the whole action might be a new milestone to better cooperation between us in the future, because it will help us understand the goals and achievements set by every single one of us and the ways and means to reach the goals. It is understandable, that to understand the procedures implemented in every organization, I have to experience as much as possible, by simply helping with the basic tasks, the organizations is dealing with in everyday life, maybe helping with a workshops or activities etc..

The only thing we are asking in favor is a place to sleep (I am okay with floor or couch), food to eat and since I can hitchhike from one place to another, traveling expenses aren't mandatory. Please find attached my presentation, which will explain you little more about our project and if you have more questions, do not hesitate to write me and ask me.

Now the time has come, to share my experiences. Enjoy

Jablanica – Pod Istim Suncem

My staying in Jablanica has been quiet amazing. I came to club Pod Istim Suncem on Thursday and've met staff and also kids, who were at first little shy, but afterwards really curious and interested. From talking of people who are working in center I figured out, that the main problem of the whole club are finances. The project which they wrote is working until October and afterwards it might be really difficult for them to get money. Also lack of finances causes, that hungry children from challenged families are often asking stuff for money to buy some food, for their families are not providing them with meals while they are staying in center. So from a point of view of the people working in the center, they salary is quiet reduced, since they are not able, due to their good hearts, to refuse kid's needs. Second day in organization I have been showing kids the juggling abilities with diabolo, drawing on their hands some positive pictures and messages. We went to visit fireman's station located nearby and also we have been celebrating one little boys birthday with a cake, which stuff bought to him and some juices and snacks. Day after I participated on opening of mountain road, where Emil from center brought me and I have met some ambassadors and we discussed the problems of NGO sector in BiH. Afterwards we wished ourselves luck and strong nerves and I went on.



Zenica – Naša Djeca

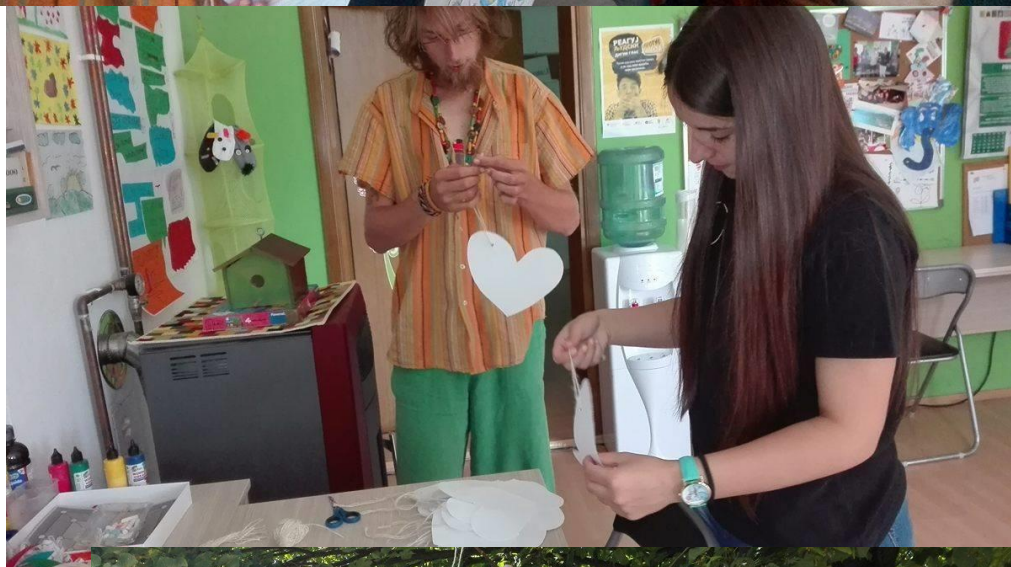
My next stop was Nasa Djeca in Zenica, the city of Iron industry, in which around 25 000 people used to work before the war in factory for Iron. Nowadays it is around 2 thousand and this decline caused many problems in the society of Zenica. They welcomed me really nicely and introduced me to their organization and activities. The radio Active, which is one of their fields of interests, is really amazingly working and all the people are trying to make it even better, and I've been told, that the very next day I will be interviewed as the guest in one of the emissions. In radio there is around 20 volunteers, responsible for different kinds of tasks. Some of them are in charge of program, some of them are taking pictures, preparing web page and so on. Organization also recently started with summer school, focused on German language and guitar. About 50 kids and youth were interested and came for the first session and they were really up to something new. Also I've been told, that the organization is preparing some another summer activities, they are currently developing, one of them should be artistic colony, where people from all around BiH will be invited for one or two days to work together. This is a good example of a well working organization, which is combining the needs and wants of youth, with the common interest of society, while also focusing on sharing a good vibe with their local community. One day we also implemented one action in the city, basically as a promotion of radio, I have been juggling and we were drawing with kids, playing some music instruments and having a lot of fun. Organization is probably since now going to do it at least once two weeks.



Bosanska Gradiška - Udruženie Most

My next stop has been Bosanska Gradiška and they organization Most, which is also holding the local Budi Muško Klub and center for kids (Gnijezdo). Volunteers in organization are mostly local youth (from Lokalni Volonterski Servis), but also two people from Italian Civil Service.

Worth mentioning is also the brand of the clothes, they are producing to support financially the activities, Funky Guerrilla. On the same day I came, the volunteers were screening a movie in the organization and afterwards organizing jam session with local musicians. They are also leading guitar and bass lessons, and doing various activities with kids. I suggested them once again to organize some simple action in the city, so for half of the day we were preparing everything but sudden rain stopped us from the execution. Never mind, the organization made the action happens 2 days after I've left Gradiška as you can see from pictures. Udruženie Most was truly great example of self-sustainable organization, which is using the potential fully.



Doboj – Carpe Diem

Doboj and the organization Youth Centre Carpe Diem surprised me the most. Two polish girls and one Italian girl volunteering in the organization through EVS were responsible for their own program. During my 3 days staying I haven't seen in organization anyone else but them and some older people (participants on their language workshops, even though the main activity of the organization is to work with young people) Girls were really welcoming and trying to explain me the situation in the organization and from what I have understand, person responsible for organization don't care about anything but money and is not capable of leading the organization with full potential. Since they were free to do anything, I suggested them to decorate the wall in front of organization (old underground bunker) and write there at least a name of it, since it took me about 2 hours to find it, due to missing marking of the place. We were drawing and afterwards the girls had an individual language lessons for already mentioned older people. It was definitely interesting experience and insight into not properly working organization.



Tuzla – individual effort

After visiting all of the organizations I found an opportunity to come to Tuzla and organize with one girl Amra an event in a park for kids. Simple idea, in which my task was supposed to be juggling for them and participating on treasure hunt and further activities turned into amazing fun in the park with about 15 kids. This was for me one of many great examples, how individual can improve the local community by voluntary-based actions.



Free time and interesting story points

Hitchhiking in BiH is not so difficult and dangerous as many people would think. During my trip I have been almost raped only once (not literally and violently, but only asked to walk with random guy to forest and... you know).



There are many organizations, which are not doing anything, but being well looking on their internet pages and in Medias, but the only purpose is to suck the money from not well developed NGO system in BiH.

People are truly welcoming and generous. During my travel I ate a lot of free food and drank a lot of coffee I've been invited for. Also the olds driver's stories are worth to listen, if you are lucky enough to understand 3 local languages.

Advice: Always bring with you some spare clothes in case of sudden whole day lasting rain. It does not matter if you triple checked weather forecast 2 hours before your trip and the weather was supposed to be sunny and around 30 degrees the whole day.



Bonaparte – this amazing place in Zenica is really alternative, welcoming and full of interesting talkative people. Background music is combination of all genres and they are also occasionally playing music from Radio Active. If you are coffee lover, you have to come before 8pm. sitting is also possible outside.



For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/bonapartebarcafe/?fref=ts>

Baza Coffee and Lounge – This amazing place in center of Bosanska Gradiška is really welcoming and comfortable, with an option to sit outside on sitting bags and enjoy music of great quality. Every evening you might experience parties, jam sessions or live music. The prices are really reasonable and the offer of drinks is really great. It is also worth it to meet the owner of the place Vanja, who definitely is an interesting, multitalented and greeting person.



For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/bazacafelounge/?fref=ts>

Credits

In the end, I would like to share with you contacts for all of the organizations, in case you would be interested to help them, cooperate with them or just say to them, that they are doing amazing job.

Jablanica – Pod istim Suncem

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Zenica – Naša Dijeca

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Bosanska Gradiška – Udruženje Most

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Doboj – Carpe Diem

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Individual girl in Tuzla

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100004955346794&fref=ts>

Also in this way I would like to thank to all of the people I have met during my Connection BiH project, to all the organizations, for how amazing job they are doing and I would like to wish to all of you good luck, strong nerves and mind full of visions and perspective for the upcoming days.

Have a nice day