

## *My Youthpass Experience*

My name is Sara Matzinger and it has been three years since I have participated in my European volunteer service.

Actually, the text I am submitting has been written a while ago and it hadn't had an opportunity to be shared earlier. I found this competition the right way to share my EVS story that had turned out to be an important part of my present life!

I only knew that I was going to Croatia two weeks before traveling.

Although apparently rushed, this trip and participation in this EVS was part of a process of choice and decision quite complete and that, at the end and without a doubt, was meant to be. Yes, because I belong to this group of people that believe in fate.

My desire to visit Croatia existed already since some time ago. I have to confess that until quite late in my life it was a country that didn't drop my attention. However, when I first participated in an youth exchange program from the EU, I meet a Croatian group who presented their country. The images they have showed were enough to let me completely striking and with a huge desire to go there.

Perhaps it was the call of nature, or once again, faith, you never know ... The truth is that several perfect factors connected themselves: the country itself; an EVS project related to nature and permaculture; the countryside; the opportunity to experience rural tasks; to live in community in a small village – Latinovac; the respect for environment, etc. Despite knowing that the trip was being planned with little time in advance, I knew this was my opportunity to develop my inner knowledge and belong to something significant related to values like our social and ecological awareness and role in the world.

Living in latinovac was an experience that I will certainly not forget. I keep so many good memories from the times I have lived there. From my personal perspective it was very important for me and my live to participate in this project. The country itself; all the good people that I've meet especially other volunteers; the magical countryside where we were living in, it felt like home to me; the kindness and stories that I have heard from the community; having the opportunity to bring something new and different to them; and, of course, saving and adopting the dog that the organization could not keep in the farm.

I consider something difficult to put feelings into word, however and in spite of this story being so relatively recent, it is something that I've wanting to do since the day our story began.

I don't know exactly when his side of the story began (it is still a mystery), but I remember exactly the day he first appeared in Latinovac, it was exactly the same day that we have arrived there. From his past nobody knows, where did he came from nobody knows, how did he get there nobody knows, I just know that this day can be considered the day he had reborn.

He decided to stay around, choosing the Eko Center as his new home. Once again, nobody knows why he decided to stay there, I mean he was always completely free to go away. It was clear - the dog had made a decision to stay. Volunteers were happy to see him every day around and bounds were being developed. One day, someone decided to name him - Tiki

Tiki is certainly a special dog and I just felt it was the right thing to do – bring him home, to Portugal! A quite big change in his life and in ours of course (mine and Phil's – my boyfriend that was also doing the EVS with me).

We didn't save him from dying in a shelter, because I don't even know if dead is worse than (sometimes) living in this world. I just gave him the opportunity to keep sharing his feelings and good vibes with the same world that was not giving it to him. He has so much unconditional love to give so many good and important things to taught. I want to travel all this path along by his side.

Almost three years have passed since I have returned to Portugal with Tiki and with an amazing experience and youthpass added to my CV. This has been valorized in all my job interviews and professional involvements. It has enriched myself not only has a more cultural wide professional but also my inner self as a person. I would say the the love is the basis of this story! Thank you Latinovac, thank you Croatia, thank you EVS, Thank you TIKI!!! <3

Thank you very much for reading.

Kind regards,  
Sara Matzinger