



AJ INTER JOURNAL

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EUROPEAN
SPAIN

ADVENTUROUS





WELCOMING NEW ESC VOLUNTEERS



EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS

WHO AM I ?

My name is Seyma. I'm 21 years old. I'm from Ankara, Türkiye. I'm a sophomore in computer engineering in Bolu. I love seeing and exploring new places. I enjoy taking photos, especially watching and photographing sunsets.

My goal in life is to always be a good person and help people. I especially enjoy communicating with children and elderly people. I want to continue on my path with more awareness by improving myself a little more each day. At the same time, I want to realize my own potential and be successful in my field.



The place that moves us most in Ankara is undoubtedly Anıtkabir. With every visit, we are filled with both pride and profound respect. As we walk along the Lion Road, our steps slow, and silence naturally ensues. Being in Atatürk's presence, feeling his traces, is a truly special feeling. For us, Anıtkabir is not just a monument; it's a place filled with history, values, and emotions.



I want to talk a little about Ankara. Ankara Castle, nestled in the heart of the city, is a place brimming with history and energy! You'll feel the past as you walk along its stone streets, and when you reach the top, you'll see all of Ankara beneath your feet. Colorful shops, the smell of gözleme (Turkish flatbread), and a warm vista...

That's the picture you see on the side! My friends and I always make our first stop in Ankara: Kızılay Square. It's the heart of the city! The crowds never stop, everyone's running around, and the streets are always lively. Simit sellers pass by, musicians play, people chat and smile. We take a walk around the square, grab a bite to eat, and experience the energy of Ankara firsthand. Kızılay is always the starting point of our Ankara adventures!

Cafe Arabica is definitely where my friends and I spend the most time and have the deepest conversations. Besides its warm atmosphere and delicious coffee, its location in our neighborhood makes it even more special and accessible. Whenever we feel like going out, it's always the first place we think of.



Ulus Square isn't just a square for me; it's one of those special places where I feel the spirit of Ankara. The crowds, the historic atmosphere, the surrounding old buildings... all of this combined creates a completely different atmosphere. Sometimes my friends and I just sit and observe, and sometimes we wander the streets, feeling like we've traveled back in time. Every time I go to Ulus, I feel like I'm connecting with Ankara's past.



Finally, this little park right below my house has been a very special place to me since childhood. This area, where I played and rode my bike as a child, has now become a meeting place where my friends and I take evening walks, and sometimes sit and chat for long periods. Even as time has passed, the way this park makes me feel has never changed: peaceful, familiar, and somehow always like home.

Why ESC Volunteering?



My interest in volunteering began when I attended a youth camp in Trabzon. There, I experienced how complete strangers can quickly become a team and the value of working together towards common goals. Everyone had a role to play, and when our contributions came together, truly meaningful work emerged. This experience demonstrated the power of collaboration, solidarity, and empathy. Now, with ESC, I want to experience a similar solidarity with diverse people in a different country, contributing while also improving myself.

One of the reasons I want to volunteer at ESC is to improve my English. It's also very important for me to learn the words and expressions used in everyday life in the country I'm going to. This will help me communicate more easily and adapt better to the culture.

Coming to Spain had been a dream of mine for a long time. The TV series I watched and the culture had always intrigued me, and I longed to be here one day. I'm so happy to have stepped out of my comfort zone and embarked on a life different from what I knew. This decision offered me the opportunity to both discover myself and learn new things.



Andalusian culture has always intrigued me and I'd always wanted to experience it firsthand. I'd admired both its history and its atmosphere from afar. Now, volunteering for 35 days in Jerez has become one of the best ways to get closer to that dream. Being here inspires me, and discovering something new every day is exciting. If you're reading this and have even a little curiosity, go for it. Because sometimes the most beautiful experiences begin with rediscovering yourself in a place you've never been to.

WHO AM I?



Hello! My name is Elif and I am from Ankara, the capital of Türkiye. I am currently a first-year student in Industrial Engineering.

Since I was a child, I have always loved creating something with my hands. Drawing and painting are not just hobbies for me – they are a big part of my life. When I paint, I feel peaceful and free. It helps me express my thoughts and emotions without using any words.

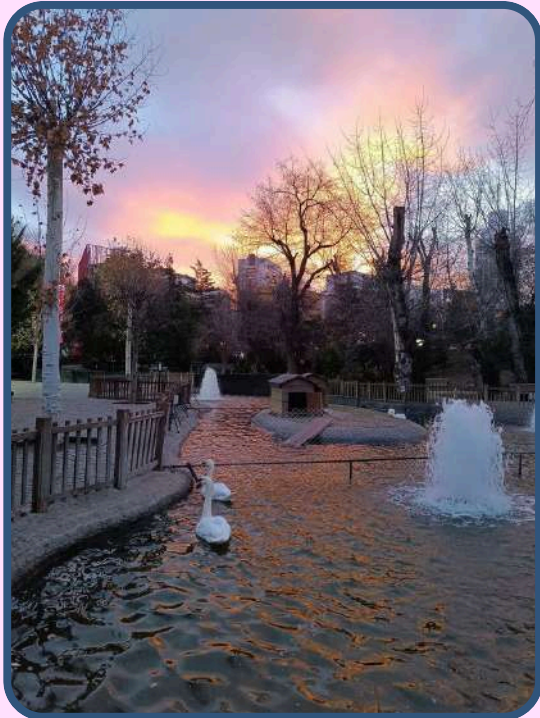
Besides drawing, I also enjoy reading books and doing puzzles. Reading is another passion of mine; I love exploring new worlds and ideas through stories.

Another thing I love is travelling. I have visited many different cities in Türkiye and I hope to travel abroad more in the future. Meeting new people, learning about different cultures and seeing new places always excites me.



I believe that passion gives meaning to life. For me, art and travel are the things that keep me motivated and happy. I hope to continue doing what I love and maybe one day share my art with more people around the world.

Türkiye is a country full of history, beautiful landscapes, and diverse traditions. From the beaches of the Aegean coast to the magical land of Cappadocia and the energy of Istanbul, there's always something to explore.



I live in Ankara, the capital city. Many people think it's only a political city, but it actually has many hidden gems. One of my favorite places is Kuğulu Park, a small park with swans and a peaceful atmosphere. Very close to it, there is a little-known café called Boutique 312. It's full of plants and also sells perfumes, so the entire place smells amazing – it's a very cozy and special spot!

Another place I really love is Dikmen Valley, especially in springtime. There are many sakura (cherry blossom) trees that bloom for about two weeks, turning the area into a breathtaking pink paradise. If you are in Ankara in spring, it's definitely worth a visit!




Right now, I'm in Jerez, Spain, for a short-term volunteering project. I will stay here for about one month. This project is not only about volunteering – it also helps me discover a different culture and improve myself.



Jerez de la Frontera is located in the south of Spain, in the Andalusia region. It belongs to the province of Cádiz and it is famous for flamenco music, horses, and its well-known wines. The city is full of history, with narrow streets and colorful buildings that make it really charming.

Jerez is also close to many other important cities. For example, the coastal city of Cádiz is only about 30 minutes away. Sevilla, one of the biggest cities in the region, is also easy to reach by train. That makes Jerez a great place both culturally and geographically.



A group of young people, mostly women, are gathered outdoors for a demonstration or rally. They are holding a long yellow banner that features the LÖSEV logo and the word 'Ankara'. Some individuals are also holding smaller white flags with the LÖSEV logo. The background shows green trees and a clear blue sky.

I have always been involved in volunteering activities in Türkiye. One of the organizations I worked with the most is LÖSEV, where I gained a lot of valuable experience supporting children with leukemia. These experiences made me realize how important solidarity and community are. This is what motivated me to join an European Solidarity Corps project. I wanted to take my volunteering experience to an international level, and I was also eager to discover new cultures and improve myself. I had never been abroad before – this is my first time!

Why did I choose this project?

I chose Spain because I have always been curious about its culture, lifestyle, and traditions. I admire the country's rich history, warm and friendly people, colorful festivals. Being here in Jerez, in the Andalusia region, allows me to experience all of this in a very authentic way. I believe this opportunity will help me grow not only as a volunteer, but also as a person who values diversity, cooperation, and cultural exchange.



ERASMUS+

Explore the Opportunities Europe Offers to Youth!

Erasmus+ and **European Solidarity Corps** (ESC) programs provide a wide range of possibilities for young people to learn, grow, travel, and make a difference. Whether you want to join a cultural exchange, participate in training, discover Europe by train, or volunteer in solidarity projects, there's something for everyone.

In this article, we want to introduce you to these amazing opportunities and help you figure out which one suits you best. Who knows? You might soon be traveling across Europe by train or joining a project with young people from all over the continent.

Find the right path for you and start your European journey this year!

QUIZ

Let's discover which EU Youth Opportunity is Right for You?

1. DO YOU ENJOY MEETING NEW PEOPLE AND LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENT CULTURES?

- A. Yes, absolutely!
- B. Only in certain situations.
- C. I prefer individual experiences.

2. HOW OLD ARE YOU?

- A. 13-17
- B. 18-20
- C. 21-30 above

3. WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRAVEL?

- A. To explore new countries and make friends.
- B. To contribute to society and do something meaningful.
- C. To study or improve my skills.

4. DO YOU PREFER WORKING IN A GROUP OR ON YOUR OWN?

- A. I love teamwork!
- B. I'm fine with both.
- C. I prefer doing things on my own.

ANSWERS

*What do your answers
say about you?*

MOSTLY A'S

Youth Exchanges and **Discover EU** are perfect for you! You'll meet young people from different countries, experience new cultures, and have a lot of fun.

MOSTLY B'S

You're ready for **European Solidarity Corps** projects, where you can volunteer and make a real impact. **Youth Participation Activities** may also suit you if you care about making your voice heard in society.

MOSTLY C'S

Training Courses are ideal if you're looking to deepen your knowledge and grow professionally. You'll join workshops and courses tailored to your interests.

https://youth.europa.eu/home_en
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities>

Opportunities

The European Union places great importance on the development of young people and offers them a wide variety of opportunities, from education and training to travel, volunteering, and civic participation.



YOUTH EXCHANGE (5-21 days)

A program is a structured cultural and educational experience where young people (13-30 years old) from different countries come together to learn and interact through non-formal education methods.



TRAINING COURSES (2 days - 2 months)

It is a structured set of learning experiences designed to help individuals (youth workers/leaders/trainers - upper 18 years old) acquire, improve, or update knowledge and skills in a specific field.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

It aims to actively involve young people (13-30 years old) in civic society and facilitate participation in Europe's democratic life at local, regional, national and European level.



DISCOVER EU

It is a European Union initiative that offers 18-year-olds the opportunity to travel around Europe, primarily by train, to explore its cultural heritage, history, and diversity.



EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS (2 weeks to 12 months)

A program that offers young people (18-30 years old) opportunities to volunteer or work on solidarity projects that benefit communities, both in their home countries and abroad.

Open Call for ESC Volunteers!

AJ Inter is looking for 4 long term (6 months) ESC volunteers!

Do you want to discover new cultures, learn new skills, and be part of meaningful projects through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)? Then this opportunity is for you!

If you're between 18 and 30 years old, open-minded, and ready to make a positive impact, we're waiting for you!

This is more than just volunteering. It's a journey full of new friendships, teamwork, self-discovery, and unforgettable memories.

Being a volunteer at AJ Inter means much more than joining activities, it's about becoming an active and conscious individual, learning by doing, and growing with others. We also love spending time outside the office with our volunteers. Every month, we organize fun and engaging activities in nature. In recent months, we've gone climbing and enjoyed bike rides together!

It's all about building connections, trying new things, and enjoying the experience to the fullest!

📧 Applications are now open!

Apply from this link:

<https://forms.gle/NaKfX54NELeWwujQ8>

or

scan the QR code.



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EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS, DAILY LIFE OF A VOLUNTEER

The European Solidarity Corps is not just an opportunity to travel and visit other places, the volunteers have responsibility too. Now in AJ Inter, we have 4 people doing volunteering, we work all the week in the morning (9am – 1:30pm) and Tuesday and Thursday we work in the afternoon too (5 – 8pm).

Throughout our two-month volunteering period in Digital Marketing, we are involved in various activities that contribute to the development of the projects promoted by the organization, including: preparing and organizing initiatives led by AJ Inter, creating content for social media aimed at promoting and publicizing the projects, participating in the AJ Inter Journal and assisting with any tasks needed.

After work hours and on the weekends, each volunteer can enjoy their free time, however they prefer and they have 2 days of vacation per month, so yes, there is free time in which we can do new activities, visit new places and go to the beach, for example.

ROCKHOUSE ACTIVITY



I am a sporty girl and I never say no to a new activity. The last time I climbed it was at college, but it was my first time on this kind of climb. I liked it very much, it requires strength in the whole muscles, and I surprised myself, because I didn't know it would be so easy for me to climb some routes. So, I would like to know more about and practice again, **Ana Catarina.**

On July 14, a climbing activity took place at RockHouse in Jerez de la Frontera, offering an enriching experience on both a personal and collective level.



This initiative was organized by the AJ Inter, which made it possible to carry out the activity and enjoy a fun and challenging moment for everyone.

This experience provided me with an unforgettable moment in this volunteering adventure with AJ Inter. It was a time when we could all laugh and have fun together. I truly loved the experience and would definitely do it again without any hesitation, **Maria Vasco.**

The activity began with a brief introduction to the space, followed by the necessary preparation for the climbing practice. Then, we did a short warm-up adapted to the activity.

After that, we ventured onto climbing routes with varying levels of difficulty. Without a doubt, it was an incredible experience for everyone, filled with fun and positive energy!



La Cartuja de Jerez

We all set off from the office early in the morning, riding our bikes, and it was impossible not to be amazed by the beauty we saw along the way. Although the heat was a bit challenging, it was a very enjoyable and tiring journey.



La Cartuja is a historic monastery located near Jerez de la Frontera in southern Spain. Built in 1478 for the Carthusian monks of the late 15th century, it is one of the most magnificent religious buildings still standing today.



When we visited La Cartuja with our volunteer friends, the first thing that greeted us, was the silence. Its natural setting, historical texture, and high stone walls created a truly captivating atmosphere. Everyone walked quietly, paying careful attention to detail. This place is unforgettable not only for its architecture but also for its spirit.



La Cartuja was more than just a historical structure composed of stone walls, it was a place where time slowed down, thoughts deepened, and silence spoke. We were captivated by the tranquility and simplicity within, as much as by the magnificence of its architecture. This monastery is one of those rare places that bears traces of the past yet still serves as a profound destination for today's visitors. During our short time there, we had the opportunity to see a historical structure and immerse ourselves in nature and silence. This experience was not just a trip for us, it was also a spiritually and personally enriching moment.



Popular Saints

The Popular Saints are celebrated in June with lively street festivals, grilled sardines, traditional parades and basil plants with poetic verses. In Porto, during the Saint John, people playfully tap each other on the head with plastic hammers.

Fado

Fado is a symbol of Portuguese identity, born in Lisbon and known for its emotional depth. In 2011, it was recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity, highlighting its national and international significance.

Torres Vedras Carnival

The Torres Vedras Carnival is known as the most Portuguese carnival in Portugal. Famous for its Matrafonas (men dressed as women) and satirical paredes, it has maintained a popular and irreverent tradition since 1923.

PORTUGAL FUN FACTS

Cork

Portugal is the largest cork producer in the world, accounting for approximately 50% of global production and processing near 35% of the world's cork oak forests. Cork is sustainably harvested from the bark of the cork oak tree, which regenerates, allowing harvest every nine years without damaging the tree.

Conventual Sweets

Portuguese conventual sweets originated in monasteries and convents, where egg whites were used for starching clothes. To avoid wasting the yolks, nuns began creating rich recipes using eggs and sugar, giving rise to traditional desserts such as Pastéis de Nata and Ovos Moles.

Porto Wine



Porto wine is a fortified wine produced exclusively in the Douro region of Portugal. It is distinguished by its sweet flavor, resulting from the fortification with brandy. It was one of the first wine regions in the world to receive legal protection, in 1756.

Mastros

In the municipality of Odemira, the Mastros Festival takes place every 2 years. The streets of the town are decorated with handmade paper flowers by the local population, and the event features traditional popular parades and performances. It also includes plenty of music and entertainment.



Campaniça Viola



The Viola Campaniça is a traditional instrument from the Alentejo region, preserved in Odemira. With 10 strings, it was used in folk singing and dances. Nearly extinct in the 20th century, it has been revived and is now a symbol of the region's musical identity.

Crafts

Handicrafts in Odemira are notable for weaving, basketry, and cork work, preserving ancient traditions and the cultural identity of the region.



ODEMIRA FUN FACTS

Ecological Diversity



Odemira stands out for its rich ecological diversity, encompassing protected areas such as the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park. This region is home to several rare and protected species, including the European otter, the osprey and endemic plants, making it a crucial area for biodiversity conservation in Portugal.

Alconcoras

Alconcoras is a traditional sweet from Odemira, made with almonds, sugar and eggs. Reflecting the region's rich culinary heritage. This handmade dessert is typically prepared for festive occasions and local celebrations, preserving a recipe passed down through generations.

Agricultural Multiculturalism

Odemira stands out for its cultural diversity resulting from intensive agriculture, which has attracted immigrants from various parts of the world enriching the local community.

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