



# AJ INTER JOURNAL

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VOL.62/63

WELCOME TO THE TEAM: NEW ESC  
VOLUNTEERS MARLEEN AND MIRO

ERASMUS+ TRAINING COURSE IN ROMANIA  
"LET'S MAKE A CIRCLE"

ERASMUS+ YOUTH EXCHANGE IN ITALY  
"TALKS FOR INCLUSION"



Erasmus+



EUROPEAN  
SOLIDARITY  
CORPS

# WELCOMING NEW ESC VOLUNTEERS



Who

Am

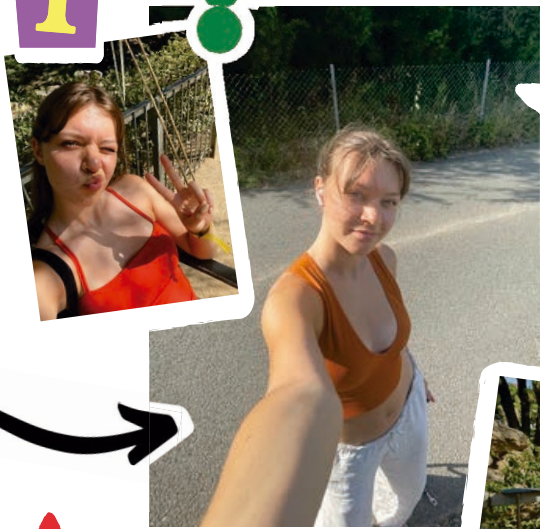
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Hi, my name is Marleen. I'm 18 years old and I'm from Germany. This summer I just finished high school and now I am volunteering in Jerez de la Frontera for six months. On the following pages you can get to know me a little bit better...

I would describe myself as a very creative, open-minded and caring person.

In my free time I love reading books, especially fantasy novels. What I enjoy most about reading is how it lets you forget the world around you and discover a completely new one.



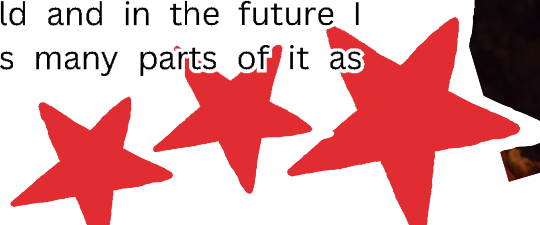
Moreover, I genuinely like DIY crafts. Since I was young, I've always liked doing something with my hands and now I do whatever I am in the mood for, whether it's sewing, crocheting, knitting, or painting. Lately, I mostly enjoy making clothes because I like the feeling of creating something useful and wearable. In the pictures you can see some of my work...



I also really like having food or drinks together with friends. Sometimes when I'm motivated I even enjoy cooking.

Some of my interests are sustainability and second-hand clothing, because I think the overproduction of clothing and the fast fashion industry are a real problem. That's why I often go to second-hand shops or flea markets. The clothes are usually cheap, still in good condition and often quite unique. You'd be surprised what you can find...

I am curious and open-minded and I really enjoy discovering new cultures and meeting new people. I love to travel the world and in the future I want to see as many parts of it as possible.



# Where Am I from?



My (very small) hometown is located more or less in the middle of Germany in a very rural area. About 3 000 people live there and the town is more than 775 years old. There isn't much to do in the town but if you ever came to visit, I would recommend looking at the traditional half-timbered houses in the city center or going to the "Holsterturm" a historic tower in the forest that was once used to spot attackers.



A fun fact about my hometown, Nieheim, is that it's unofficially called "Germany's capital of cheese". Every two years there's a huge cheese market in the city and there are people from all over Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, ...) selling their cheese. The residents are very proud of this event and Nieheim even has its own special cheese.

Some of my favourite places in Nieheim are the forest, my neighbourhood, the swimming pool and the sports field. I love walking in the forest because it's so peaceful and idyllic. Furthermore, I like my neighbourhood, also because it's very quiet and everyone knows each other very well. I also like the swimming pool and the sports field, because when I was as child I always used to go there to meet with my friends or to spend my free time.

Apart from that, there's not really much to do in such a small town but still, it's where I'm from and to me it feels like home.



# NIEHEIM



# Why ESC



# VOLUNTEERING ?



After finishing high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next. That's why I decided to take a gap year to explore new opportunities and figure out whether I want to study at university or do an apprenticeship.

Through the European Solidarity Corps, I came across the opportunity to volunteer for a project in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain. I really liked the idea of participating in a project where people can actually benefit from it.

Here at AJ Inter, my work is very versatile. I enjoy helping with activities, being creative, and working together with other volunteers. I'm happy to experience something completely new and it feels like something exciting happens every day.

Another reason I chose Spain is to improve my Spanish skills. I learned Spanish at school and didn't want to lose the progress I'd made, so now I try to study every day and I do my best to speak with the locals.



Finally, I love discovering new cultures and getting to know new people. So far I've learned a lot about the Spanish culture. Especially the times for eating and drinking are very different here compared to Germany but I'm starting to get used to it.

This volunteering experience is helping me grow personally, learn new skills, and create many many memories. I am grateful for the opportunity and excited to see where it will lead me in the future...



# my fAVORITES

## RIGHT NOW...



**Flower**  
Daisy

**Texture to touch**  
Sand



**Crystal**  
Tiger's Eye



**Camera setting**

0.5 lense! It takes the best photos, prove me wrong.

**Food**

Pasta with Pesto (very simple but you can never go wrong with pasta).



**Place**

Jardín Escénico El Altillo, Jerez de la Frontera, Spain



**Emojis**

The fairy, the content one and the eyes.

**Song**

FALLIN by CRO



**TV Show**

Grey's Anatomy. I've rewatched the first seasons lately and I'm obsessed with everything about it!!!



**Color**  
Purple

**New Spanish Word I learned**

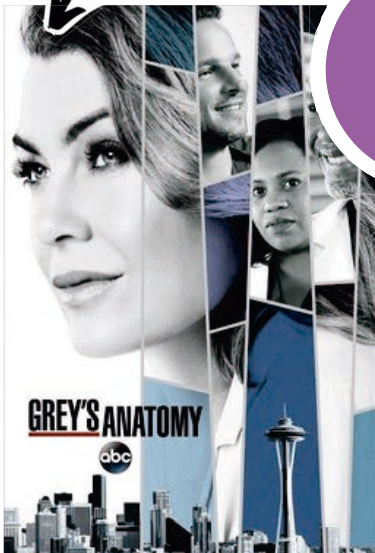
la estrella - the star

**Piece of clothing**

This thrifted Adidas jacket from a small second-hand shop in Germany (very proud of this find).

**Small things that make me happy**

Seeing dogs in the streets, together with their owners.





# Miro Koch

## WHO AM I?

### About me

My name is Miro Koch, and I was born on September 10th, 2007 in Sankt Vith, Belgium. I grew up in Weywertz, a small village in the municipality of Bütgenbach, where I still live today. I've just finished high school at the Royal Athenaeum in Eupen, where I was part of the bilingual German-French section. Right now, I'm spending a year in Spain as a volunteer at A.J. Inter in Jerez de la Frontera.



I would describe myself as an open-minded person, who likes to spend time with the right people, but also loves spending time alone listening to music. I am a creative but also minimalist person that likes to learn from others around me. I am an athletic person that likes to spend his free time doing sports. Reading books is also a passion of mine, that I would have never thought to have. Reading books about self improvement and how to become a better person is a thing I like to do before going to bed. I have also discovered my passion for markets in the past year. I love buying my jewelry or accessories for my room in the street markets.

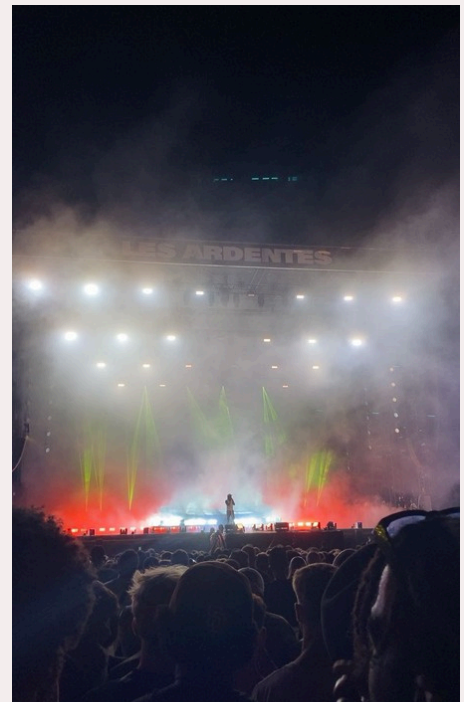
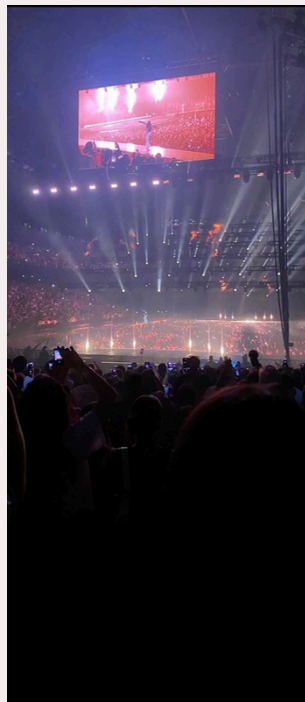


# Interests

## Music



Music has been a big part of my life since I was young. I started playing guitar a few years ago, sadly I forgot everything so recently I've been teaching myself piano at home. I also just love listening to music, and in the last two or three years I've gone to many concerts and even some festivals with my friends, which is always a lot of fun.



## Sports



Sports are another important part of my life. I've been playing football for many years in my hometown, and more recently I started playing tennis and going to the gym. In winter, I especially enjoy skiing, which has been a passion of mine since I was little.



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# Food

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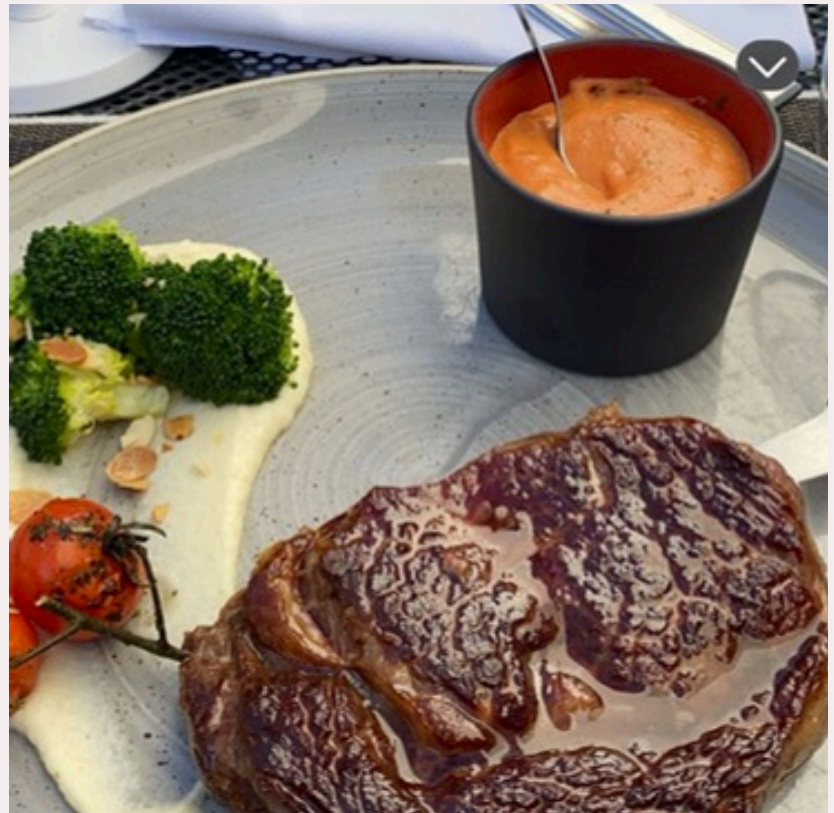
## COOKING & EATING :)

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Cooking is something I really enjoy too. It's funny because my last name actually means "cook" in German, and I really do love experimenting with new recipes and cooking for my family. Here is a meal that I am really proud of ----->



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Being alone for the first made me realise how much easier it is to make the meals at home and how much better they taste :(



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# Holidays

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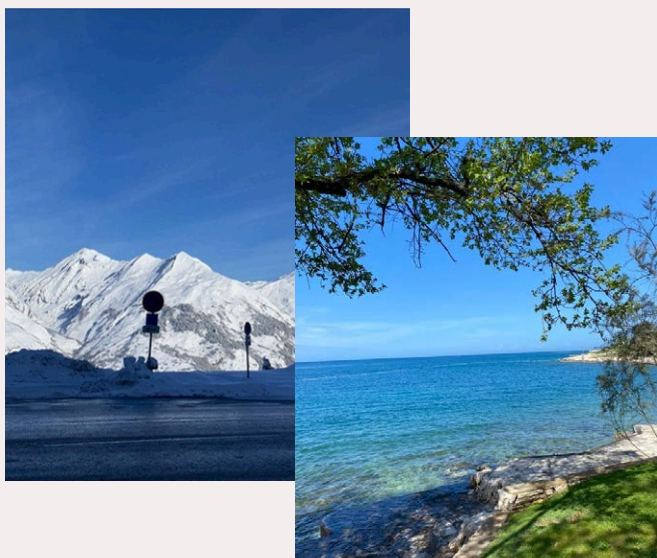
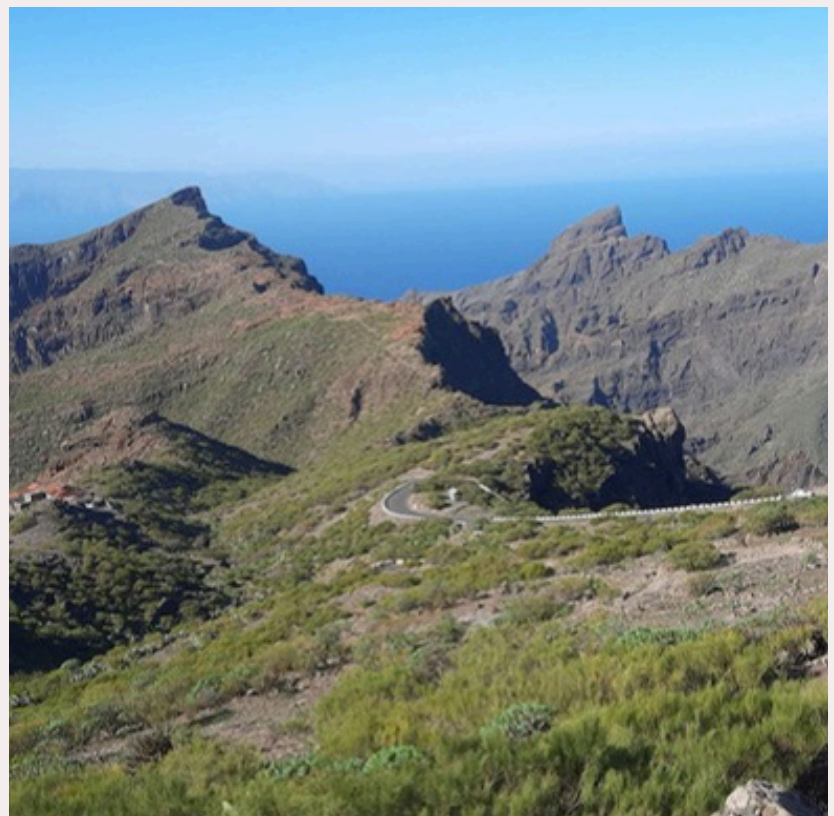
## TRAVELLING

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I really like traveling, whether it's a city trip or a relaxing day at the beach. Discovering new places, walking through unfamiliar streets, or just enjoying the sea is something that always inspires me and gives me energy.



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This is now the first time travelling alone but I really enjoy the first weeks here. Even though it can get a bit more difficult without any help of a family member in person.



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# Family & Friends

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My family is very important to me. My mom, Christiana, is an art teacher, and my dad, Gino, is an architect. I have an older brother, Nevio, who just started college, and my sister, Rachel, works in politics in Brussels. At home, we speak both German and French, and I also share my home with a dog (8 years old) and a cat (5 years old). My grandparents on my father's side have always been close to me and my siblings too, which I really appreciate.



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Spending time with my friends means a lot to me. Whether we're going out, playing sports, going to concerts, or just hanging out and talking, I always have a great time with them. They make everyday life more fun, and being with them helps me relax, laugh, and see things differently.



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# Volunteering

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## WHY DID I BECOME A VOLUNTEER?

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I've been involved in volunteering since I was young, especially helping out with disabled people, and ever since then I've really enjoyed it. For me, volunteering is not only about helping others but also about learning and growing as a person.



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It gives me the chance to discover new things, meet people from different backgrounds, and see the world from other perspectives.



# Weywertz

## MY HOMETOWN

Weywertz is the place where I grew up and where I still feel at home. It's a peaceful village of around 1,700 people in the province of Liège, Belgium. The village lies along the Warche River and near the Vennbahn cycling and hiking route. One of the landmarks is an ancient lime tree in the center of the village, which is more than 300 years old and has been protected since 1984.



WEYWERTZ



This beautiful church is the center of the city. The church is still visited a lot these days. Even though there is not that much to do in the city, the church is one of the places where people still unite and meet each other. For my grandmother for example it is her favorite place in the village.



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# Weywertz

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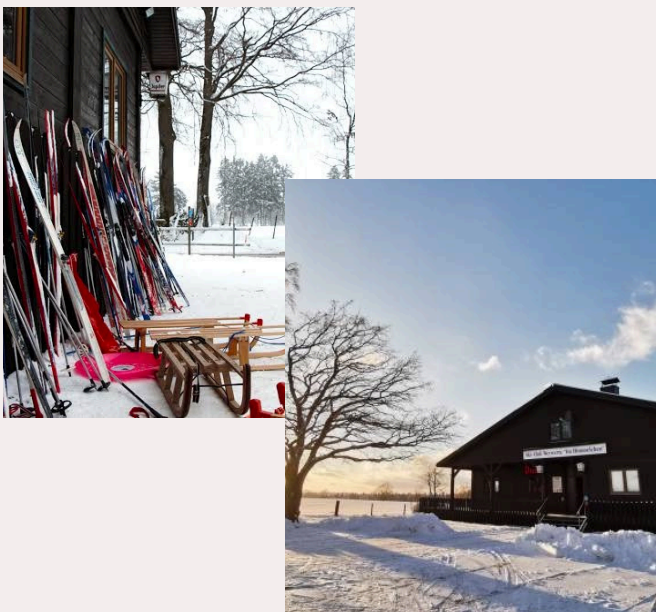
## MY FAVORITE PLACES AT HOME

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### The Lake Bütgenbach

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My favorite place in summer is for sure this Lake that is only ten minutes away with my bike. Spending time there is just so relaxing and I also love running the tour of it in summer. Sadly the temperatures at home aren't the best, so it's difficult to go there every few days.



### Im Himmelchen

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My favorite place in winter is without any doubt this cabin. It is a bit hidden, but especially in winter it is surrounded by such a beautiful nature. You can do cross-country skiing there through forest trails. They have such a big variety of slopes it is amazing.



# België, Belgique, Belgien

## THINGS ABOUT BELGIUM



Belgium is a small country in Western Europe with its capital in Brussels, where the European Union and NATO are based. It has three official languages: Dutch, French, and German.



Belgium is famous for its medieval cities like Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp, as well as the Grand Place in Brussels, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The country is also known for its rich comic culture with Tintin and the Smurfs, and for its world-famous beer, chocolate, waffles, and fries.



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# Belgium

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## MY FAVORITE PLACES IN BELGIUM

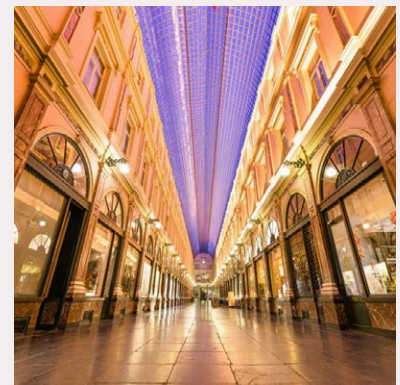
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Manneken Pis, a small statue with a very important history



Grand place in Brussels, decorated with flowers once a year



Galeries Royales Saint - Hubert, galerie with true belgian shops



Antwerp train station



Mini Europe



The Atomium



The Comic Strip Trail in Brussels, with over 70 buildings decorated with Belgiums most famous comics  
Sadly in my area isn't that much to do, so you would need to travel a little bit to get to the nice places in Belgium



# Favorites

Favorite store:  
Mercadona & The  
Market in the center

Favorite apps:  
Tiktok,  
Snapchat,  
Instagram,  
Spotify

Favorite  
Spanish  
Food;  
Churros,  
tapas in  
general,  
Colacao



looking back at old  
pictures of my family and  
me



Museum visits

Music artists:  
Drake, Dave,  
Rihanna, Thizzy,  
Gims, L2B



Taking funny pictures of my dog



Phone backgrounds in this type of style



Favorite TV Show:  
Breaking Bad



Fruits

Favorite activities so far here:  
visiting a friend who also  
does an exchange year in  
Spain, tour around the  
center of Jerez



going to churches  
around the world,  
especially as a  
christian

My future: idk,  
there are so  
many things I  
would like to do

Favorite  
spanish  
word:  
Abuela



The market  
in  
Maastricht



Doing my  
work in a  
coffee shop

# ERASMUS+ PROJECT IN ROMANIA



# Let's Make a Circle, Erasmus+ Project Training Course



Erasmus+



## Why this project?

Have you ever thought about how much we throw away every day? Clothes, plastic bottles, food leftovers... Our world is based on a linear system: take → use → waste. But what if we could change that into a circle where nothing is wasted, and everything is reused?

That's the main idea behind "Let's Make a Circle", an Erasmus+ Training Course happening in Buzău, Romania, from 26 August to 4 September 2025. The project brings together young people from different countries to explore how circular economy can make our world greener, fairer, and more creative.

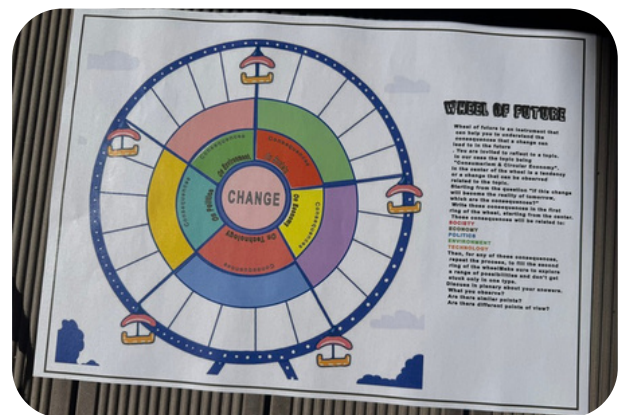
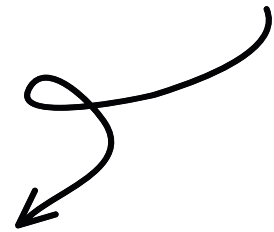
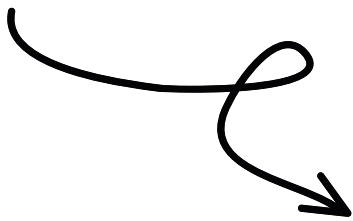


## What did we do?

Instead of boring lectures, the project was designed as an interactive adventure. Each day focused on a new topic:

- From Linear to Circular : understanding the basics, sharing examples from our own countries.
- Fashion & Food : workshops on how what we eat and wear can be part of a circular system.
- Plastic & Consumerism : games and discussions about our habits and how we can change them.
- The Future Wheel : imagining how our world could look in 2050 if we live sustainably.
- We Rule : Let's Make Our Plan : teamwork sessions to create real action plans, campaigns, and creative solutions.

We also had lots of energizers, intercultural evenings, cultural visits (like the Buzău Geopark), and of course time to reflect, share, and have fun.



## How did we learn?

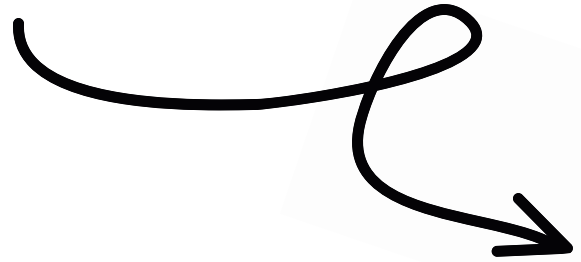
The project followed the non-formal learning approach:

- Learning by doing (games, role plays, storytelling).
- Sharing experiences with people from different cultures.
- Working in teams to design projects, posters, and campaigns.

Why does it matter?

This project shows that sustainability is not just about “big policies” , it’s something we can all do in our everyday lives. And when young people from different countries come together, they don’t just learn , they inspire each other to build a better future.

If you want to go deeper about what is circular economy you can read the next article.



Finally, a huge **thank you** goes to the amazing coordinators **Fabi, Catalina, Bogdan, and Tolea**, as well as the whole ODEN Nehoiu team, for making this journey possible.

# CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Interested in this topic? => Then make  
sure to read the following article.



## WHAT IS THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

The circular economy is based on the idea of extending a product's life and reusing resources again and again. Instead of simply "take, use, throw away", it follows the principle of "take, use, reuse, recycle."

Examples:

- Repairing a broken phone instead of throwing it away,
- Composting or sharing leftover food instead of wasting it.
- Selling or donating clothes you no longer wear instead of letting them sit in your closet.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Protects our planet:

Natural resources are limited, so we must use them wisely.

- Reduces waste:

Keeps landfills from overflowing and prevents pollution in the oceans.

- Invests in the future:

A sustainable lifestyle means a better world for future generations.

- Creates new job opportunities:

In areas like repair workshops, recycling centers, and second-hand platforms.

# Circular Economy



## RESOURCE RECOVERY

Electronic waste contains precious metals such as gold, silver, copper, platinum, cobalt and rare earth elements.

For example, about 300 grams of gold can be recovered from 1 ton of smartphones, which is much more than 1 ton of gold ore.

In 2022, the amount of e-waste generated worldwide was recorded at 62 million tons, with an economic value of over \$62 billion. If all e-waste were recycled, \$42 billion worth of raw materials could be recovered every year.



## REUSE AND REPAIR

The circular economy is not only about recycling, but also about extending the life of products.

Old computers, phones and equipment can be refurbished and resold. In Europe, 15% of e-waste is reused in this way.

### Economic and Employment Benefits

In Europe, the e-waste recycling sector in the circular economy employs more than 200,000 people.

## STATISTICS OF WASTE

In 2022, out of about 2 billion tonnes treated:

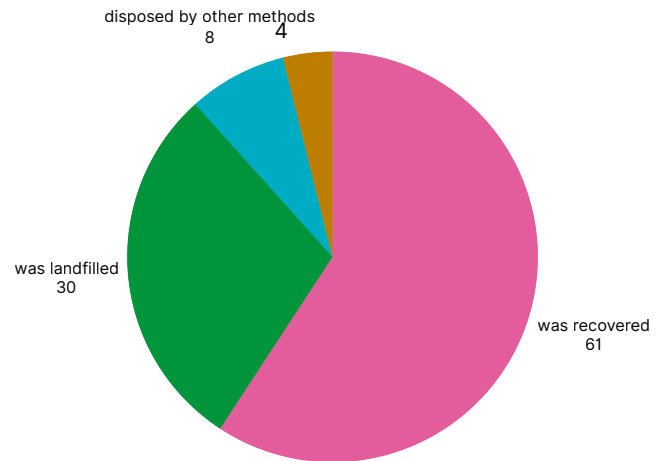
~61 % was recovered (recycling, energy from waste, backfilling).

~30 % was landfilled.

~0.4 % incinerated without energy recovery,

~8 % disposed by other methods.

While most waste is treated domestically (over 90 %), the EU still exports around 32-33 million tonnes yearly for recovery, especially ferrous metals and paper.



## GLOBAL WASTE OVERVIEW

All waste types globally were estimated at ~20 billion tonnes in 2017, rising to ~46 billion tonnes by 2050 under current trends.

Municipal solid waste (MSW) alone is about 2-3 billion tonnes per year today, projected to reach nearly 3.5-3.8 billion tonnes by 2050.

Globally, only ~13.5 % is recycled, ~5.5 % composted—meaning roughly one-third to 40 % of MSW is dumped or openly burned, especially in low-income regions.

In high-income countries, only ~2 % of waste is dumped; in low-income countries, the figure is around 93 %.

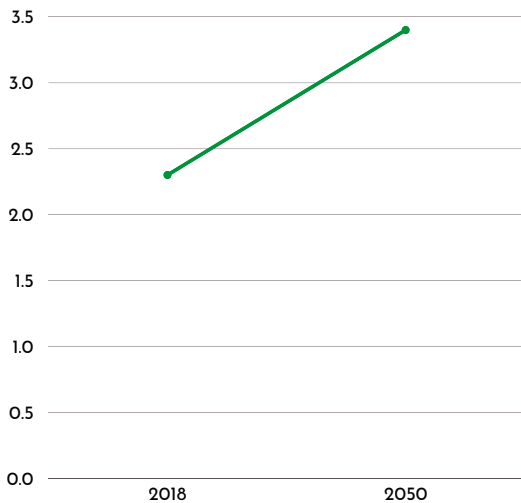
## CLOTHING WASTE

Worldwide: About 92 million tonnes of textile waste are produced every year. 57% goes to landfills, 25% is incinerated, and only a small fraction is recycled.

EU: Around 7 million tonnes of textile waste yearly (~12 kg per person). Only 1% becomes new clothes.

USA: Produces ~17 million tonnes of textile waste per year; most ends up in landfills.

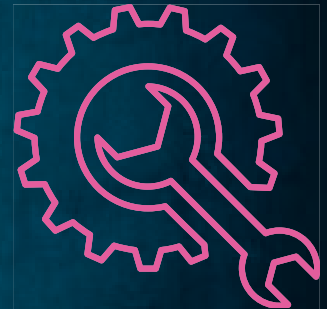
China: Discards ~26 million tonnes of clothing annually, mostly landfilled. 24



According to OECD data, 90% of the materials mined in the world turn into waste after being used only once, and according to the World Bank, the amount of global waste will reach 3.4 billion tons in 2050, up from 2.3 billion tons in 2018.

In the European Union, annual waste per capita is 530 kilograms, of which only 49% is recycled, while the global recycling rate is 13%.

In addition, 45% of greenhouse gas emissions come from the production and use of products. In addition to reducing these problems, the circular economy is of great economic value, with the potential to save €600 billion and create 700,000 new jobs by 2030, according to the European Commission.



WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN UNION DOING?

The European Union wants to build a circular and climate-neutral economy by 2050. To achieve that the EU has introduced in recent years many new measures to reduce waste and make products more sustainable.

These are some steps taken to support the circular economy:

- Banning single-use plastics,
- Introducing rules for electronics to be easier to repair,
- Promoting recyclable packaging,
- Setting standards for sustainable product design and production.



## TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Everyone can contribute to the circular economy by building small daily habits:

1. Shop less, but better: Choose high-quality, long-lasting products instead of always chasing new trends.
2. Buy second-hand: It's affordable and eco-friendly.
3. Repair and upcycle: Learn simple fixes, and don't be afraid to transform old clothes.
4. Share: Books, items, clothes... they may be useful for someone else.
5. Reduce food waste: Take only what you can eat, and learn to make use of leftovers.

## QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK OURSELVES

Do I really need this product?

Is it worth this price?

Will it lose its quality after a few uses?

Does it go well with other clothes in my wardrobe?

Can I use it for a long time?



## Conclusion

The circular economy is a system where waste is minimized, products are reused and resources are kept in a continuous loop.

This approach not only increases economic efficiency but also contributes to social welfare by reducing environmental impacts.

Therefore, circular economy is one of the most fundamental transformation paths to be adopted for a sustainable future.

Now, your opinions and habits are the most important today and this will have an impact in the future:

What do you think about this topic?

What habits do you have about this issue?

If there are changes you would like to make, what would they be?

# ERASMUS+ PROJECT IN ITALY



# “Talks for Inclusion” Erasmus+ Youth Exchange



Co-funded by  
the European Union

From 22 August to 2 September 2025, Bassano del Grappa in Italy hosted a youth exchange called Talks for Inclusion. This Erasmus+ project brought together young people and leaders from Italy, Sweden, Greece, Bulgaria and Spain to talk about an important topic “ How to be inclusive in a diverse world.”



Our organisation took part in this project together with six young people from Spain.

## WHY THIS PROJECT?

Today, many young people face exclusion, stereotypes, and even fear of diversity. This project was created to give us the chance to answer questions like What does freedom mean? , How can we live together with respect and understanding? . This project aims to rethink communication and emotions.



## WHAT DID WE DO?

During the Talks for Inclusion youth exchange, there were many different activities that helped us learn, share, and connect. For example these activities were workshops on human rights and emotions, outdoor activities, debates and intercultural evenings. Each group shared games, traditions, and stories.

The exchange focus on:

- Raising awareness of fundamental rights, and exploring how they are protected or violated both offline and online.
- Facilitating cultural exchange among participants through dialogue, teamwork, play and reflection.
- Understanding how stereotypes and preconceptions are formed and learning how to challenge them.
- Supporting participants in their personal learning journey.



## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This project taught us useful skills for everyday life like how to solve conflicts, how to speak with respect, and how to include other people. It also gave us new friends from different countries and saw that many young people want the same thing, a more friendly and fair Europe.



The two weeks in Italy were amazing. What I enjoyed the most was meeting people from other countries, even if we have different cultures. The trips taught me a lot and I saw beautiful and well-preserved nature. I also learned about different countries and about human rights.

BELEN

LUCIA

This project has been an experience that has made me grow as a person and in my knowledge. The topic of human rights has given us all much to reflect on, and we've worked hard on it. I've taken away experiences, moments, laughter, and memories with people from different countries who started out as strangers and ended up as family. I've also been able to get to know a new country and some of its most famous cities. Finally, I've learned about the culture of different European countries, including food, traditions, and typical dances. It's definitely an experience I'll repeat as often as I can.



Mi experiencia en Italia formando parte del Youth Exchange los días 22 de agosto a 2 de septiembre fue, resumida en una palabra: increíble. Pude conocer gente nueva, hacer bonitos lazos y al mismo tiempo pude reflexionar acerca del impacto que los derechos humanos tienen en nuestro día a día, en nuestra sociedad; todo ello mediante actividades dinámicas, lo cual despertó mi apetito y mis ganas de aprender más y más. La convivencia entre los participantes estos días fue muy buena, teniendo en cuenta que teníamos que compartir espacios comunes y organizarnos para ayudar con el orden, con la limpieza, con distintas actividades... Por otro lado, pude conocer rincones preciosos de Italia, enriqueciéndome de su cultura, de su gastronomía, de su gente. Recomendaría este proyecto sin dudarlo ya que el impacto que ha tenido en mí, a nivel personal, ha sido gratificante, sin olvidar la perfecta gestión por parte de Hande y José, los cuales en todo momento estuvieron atentos y dispuestos a ayudarnos para que nuestra estancia fuera lo más cómoda posible.

JOAN



Mi Erasmus en Bassano del Grappa fue una experiencia muy enriquecedora. No solo fueron las clases, sino que también hicimos actividades y hablamos de cosas importantes como los derechos humanos. Aprendimos que en cada país las cosas son diferentes, pero todos debemos ser tratados por igual. Además, hice un montón de amigos de muchos sitios. ¡Eramos como una gran familia! La comida estaba buena, pero lo que más me gustó fue pasar tiempo con todos ellos. Fue una experiencia muy bonita y nunca lo olvidaré.

Mi nombre es Ainara y el pasado agosto participe en un youth exchange en Bassano del Grappa fue una experiencia inolvidable llena de recuerdos y vivencias. Tuvimos muchas actividades relacionadas con los derechos humanos, fue el objetivo de nuestro viaje, aprendimos que todo el mundo tiene derechos y que no hay que tener miedo de comunicarse con personas con capacidades diferentes. En nuestra estancia allí compartimos albergue con personas de diferentes países y entre ellas habían personas de Bulgaria con dificultades auditivas por lo que tuvimos la suerte de aprender como comunicarnos en esa circunstancia y un poco de lenguaje de signo. Además las actividades fueron muy dinámicas y productivas. Tuvimos desde actividades al aire libre, taller de pan, debates, juegos deportivos, etc.

Por último me gustaría decir que personalmente la experiencia fue preciosa y enriquecedora. De este viaje me llevo todo lo vivido y las personas que he conocido, todas fueron muy amables y construimos un grupo muy bonito, sin duda volveré a repetir. Le recomiendo esta experiencia a todo el mundo y pienso que todos los jóvenes deberían participar en al menos un proyecto en su vida.



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