



## What a strange year this was!

We started to kick off as normal and were looking for volunteers for our projects here in Aschaffenburg. Soon we learned that meeting people and travelling across borders was not a normal thing anymore, because of the pandemic. We picked two soon-to-be ESC long term volunteers from outside European member states for our projects in September 2020 and were confronted with closed embassies, no flights scheduled and some borders totally closed for a long time

Our current volunteers, who had started their ESC volunteering activity in September/October 2019, found themselves in a strange situation with their work turned upside down, if any at all, or sometimes with new routines and challenges.



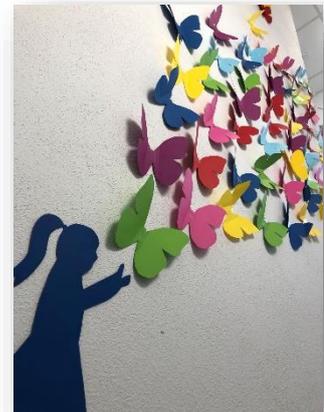
Polina Luk, a young woman from Russia, found herself taking daily bicycle trips rather than doing team sports with disadvantaged children because the schools were closed.

Our project in Johannesburg, at the multigenerational house, was cancelled, as the after school club was closed and there was no more work for Jesse Drosson, a young

Belgian. Before, he had enjoyed to offer arts and craft activities to the children that were visiting the club.

At the children's home, the project went on as usual, there were no changes in the daily routines of the children living there. Asim Okan Erinc, from Turkey, supported the team

every day in after school activities, doing their homework and leisure time.



Meanwhile in Aschaffenburg, we could not meet for Café International, an open youth club, anymore, where volunteers and Au Pairs could meet, make friends and socialise in an open environment. We found ourselves organising Zoom events and Watch



together parties online instead. This gave us some freedom to invite ex volunteers, ex Au Pairs and soon to be volunteers to meet in virtual space, which was a new feature to Café International, and somehow sparked new energy.

We found that a lot of German young people were feeling deeply insecure about travelling abroad, be it into ESC or Au Pair placements. We tried to buffer these anxieties and offered online video support.

Over the summer, we started out with hybrid meetings, like a guided city tour in Aschaffenburg, virtual tours through our participants' home countries and a summer party in the backyard with pizza and soft drinks.

With our new partners in Funchal, Madeira, we applied for a new project, "Tell the past, to prepare the future", which was granted by the German National Agency. So, we could send the first volunteer, Luise Kellermann, from Germany to Portugal in September for 6 months. Three more girls will follow in March, a little bit postponed due to Covid-19.



In between, we prepared 4 more volunteers and 3 Au Pairs to leave Germany for their projects and families in several European countries.

In September, the new volunteers managed to arrive in Aschaffenburg, in an adventurous way.

For Jennifer Thull, a native of Luxembourg, the quarantine was suspended a few days before she travelled, we had expected 14 days of quarantine! Jenny now enjoys the project in Johannesberg.

For Natascha Gulina, a Russian, the sports project at the Jugendkulturzentrum kicked off as usual, after she had a very unusual journey from Russia to Turkey and then to Germany, because the borders were closed and no flights scheduled. Recently, after school sports activities were cancelled again, she is helping out around the centre where she is needed.

In January, we will expect our third volunteer, Paul Ivanov, also from Russia. The embassy was closed until recently, so he could not get a visa for Germany. He's on his way now, though!

In the last few weeks, restrictions have become more and more severe, with no physical youth work whatsoever... Our yearly day out (in 2019 we went to Nuremberg) was cancelled, hopefully we will be able to schedule it in the springtime. Soon, we will be distributing little Christmassy care and craft parcels to everyone



near and far, packed with love and to brighten up young people's hearts, as there is no Christmas party possible. We shall overcome!

Let's hope for the best in 2021, thank you for your support!

In case you would like to promote our projects amongst young people, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Thanks especially to our brilliant volunteers and their diligent sending organisations in the background.

With warm Christmas wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maresa Gieles'.

Maresa Gieles  
Coordinator