



Full Name: Lucia Torlai

Residency country: Italy

Country and city where you did your ESC experience: Bulgaria

Dates of the project: 15 November 2024 - 28 February 2025

Hosting organisation link: [Caritas Sofia](#)

Description of the project and impressions: I discovered the opportunity to volunteer with Caritas Sofia through the European Solidarity Corps portal while searching for a new and challenging experience after completing my traineeship in Brussels. I am currently

staying in Kuklen for four months, with the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) in Brussels serving as my sending organisation. I was particularly interested in a volunteering role that involved volunteering with children while also giving me the chance to explore a new country, its culture, and its language.

Over the years, I had the chance to volunteer with various organisations in both Italy and Belgium, each offering unique and enriching experiences that have helped me grow. Helping others without expecting anything in return is deeply rewarding, and knowing that I can bring joy or make a positive impact on a vulnerable child's day is what drives me.

At the Kuklen Caritas Centre, my daily activities involve engaging with children during their after-school hours. Together, we enjoy board games, drawing, painting, creating sculptures with clay or plastiline, and other creative activities. Additionally, we help them with homework, and we listen to music and dance together.

I enjoy expressing myself through artistic activities with the children and sharing these special moments with them. I am especially thankful for the growing bond we are forming over time. Despite the language barrier, I cherish the times when we understand each other and laugh together.

One of my favourite experiences was designing a Memory card game and another card game for the children, which we now regularly play at the Centre, sometimes joined by the Caritas staff. It is incredibly heartwarming to see them enjoying the cards I created—it has been a fun way for me to connect with them through play while also picking up some Bulgarian words.

Another enjoyable activity was crafting Christmas cards with the children, using vibrant colors, glitter, and decoupage techniques. These cards were donated to elderly residents in Kuklen, making it a meaningful project that combined a festive atmosphere with a spirit of giving. I appreciated the enthusiasm and dedication the children showed during this initiative.

In the week before Christmas, we organized a festive party at the Centre for all the children and Caritas staff. The celebration included tea, sweet treats, dancing to Christmas songs, and a special visit from Father Christmas, who brought gifts for the children. It was a truly heartwarming community moment.

In January, after a heavy snowfall, we enjoyed a snowball fight and built a snowman together in the courtyard. This fun-filled, tiring day outdoors is another cherished memory I will carry with me.

Volunteering has taught me to be open and patient, recognising and respecting everyone's unique needs and abilities when working on creative projects or playing games together. It has also given me the chance to slow down, savour the little moments in everyday interactions, and enjoy exploring the beautiful city of Plovdiv during my free time.



Moments of the Christmas Party:

