

# gobpro

Волец



**PLOVDIV 2019**  
European Capital of Culture

Growing #Together  
Our Volunteer Legacy

The image shows a stylized logo in red, consisting of the Cyrillic letters 'good' (добро) and 'volunteer' (доброволец) intertwined. The letters are thick and rounded, with some overlapping and decorative flourishes, particularly on the 'd' and 'o' characters. The overall style is modern and graphic.

Being a volunteer means being a good willing person by doing good to the community.

You can even find that relation very prominent in the bulgarian language between "добро" (good) and "доброволец" (volunteer).

That's why we found this word of great importance to us.

# Growing #together

*'Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory'*

Dr. Seuss

With the upcoming end of 2019 – the year of Plovdiv as a European Capital of Culture, we have decided to look back and combine the memories and experiences of our volunteers, creating a Legacy which we can pay forward to the next generation of ECoC volunteers.

When Plovdiv was elected to become the European Capital of Culture, there was no volunteer programme. It all started with one volunteer, helping out wherever she could and inspiring others to do the same. It was like planting a tree – allowing the seeds to grow roots and helping it grow slowly but steadily.

Growing our Volunteer tree was not an easy task. We had many



trials and errors, we made some mistakes and we learned from them. That is why we want to help other European Capitals of Culture by giving them the experiences of our volunteers. Not only the good experiences and the happy memories, but also the struggles and the difficulties we met.

In this legacy, you will find out who are the Plovdiv 2019 volunteers and what they did each month from the passing year. We have included information about the structure of the volunteer programme, ways of communication, tips and funny moments they remembered. We would like to hand over the amazing volunteer spirit they have shown us throughout this year and pass it on to the next volunteer programmes of ECoC in 2020: Galway and Rijeka.

We planted the roots of our volunteer programme, and we hope you will be able to use this legacy we have built to grow #together.

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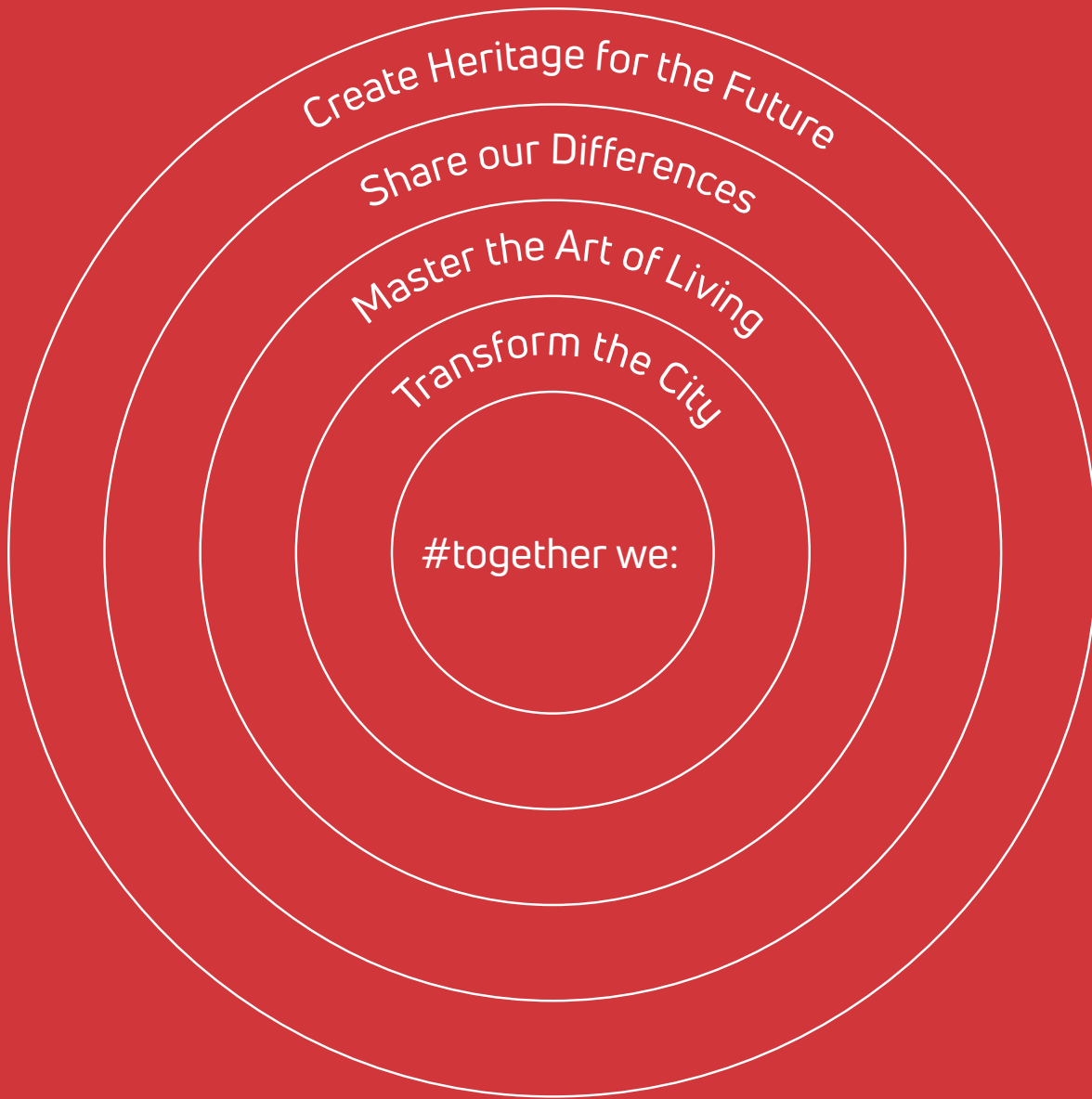
# About Plovdiv 2019



[Use this symbol to go back to contents](#)



On the 5th of September 2014, Plovdiv was elected as the first Bulgarian European Capital of Culture in a competition with other Bulgarian cities – Sofia, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo. Plovdiv’s bid was outlined as an example of a successful combination of the historical heritage of the city and the challenges and problems of modern life, with a vision for future development. Within the concept of ‘Together’ was also the ambitious task of uniting Plovdiv through culture, people of different generations, ethnicities and religions. The ‘Together’ concept, which is the basis of Plovdiv’s application, was recognised as a significantly important aspect of the development of the cultural and social life in the city. On the 19th of May 2015, the Council of Ministers of the European Union officially approved the decision of the 5th of September 2014 and designated Plovdiv as European Capital of Culture 2019. The Plovdiv 2019 Foundation now starts its work for bringing about a change in the perception of culture – as an effective tool for environmental improvement and the development of human relationships.



Plovdiv is proud of its ancient heritage and its status as one of the oldest European cities. The identity of the city and its citizens is marked by deep layers of the past. The meeting between different cultures, communities and groups has always been the biggest challenge, as well as the best drive for the city's development. 'Together' is more than a path to a more integrated community, it has been our vision for making culture more accessible so that it can make our lives more meaningful and our city more vibrant and attractive.

One of the main reasons why we succeeded being #together throughout the year of the title was our amazing and most dedicated volunteers. Here is an overview of the volunteer programme we've created.



# Planting the Seed



Every European Capital of Culture has a Volunteer programme. But how did ours start? Here is a testimony of our first volunteer – Angelina Titeryakova, who has been an active volunteer for Plovdiv 2019 ever since.

'It all happened back in 2012 when I was helping out at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) with delivering some papers to the headquarters of the brand new foundation of Plovdiv 2019. I went to their office, which back then was situated in the Old Town of Plovdiv. While I was there, they mentioned



One of Ani's (on the left) first memories as a volunteer for the foundation was on the 12th of August 2013, when she gathered around her a team of volunteers who won the cup of the International Youth Day contest.

*Source: [gustonews.bg](http://gustonews.bg)*

that they needed somebody to deliver documents to the Municipality, so I volunteered. And this is how it started. I was helping out occasionally in their office when I had the time. In 2013, when they created the programme, I was officially invited for an interview. Asking me the question 'Why do you want to volunteer for us?' was scandalous, keeping in mind that for a long time I had been the only volunteer there."

Slowly but steadily, the Plovdiv 2019 Foundation was becoming popular and more people wanted to join the cause. With the increasing amount of activities and people who wanted to volunteer, naturally there was a need for people to manage the process. Currently, there are 2 volunteer coordinators who run the overall communication with the volunteers.

# The Volunteer Coordinators



Photo by: Sonya Stankova

## FRANZ KADIRI

Franz has worked in the structures of the Plovdiv 2019 Foundation since 2012. Initially he worked as an expert on 'Projects and Programmes', and later, when the need for a volunteer coordinator emerged, he took up the challenge. He became the 'Volunteers and Regional Relations Coordinator' and created the volunteer programme from scratch. His favourite quote is: Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.



Photo by: Davey Anthony

## KAMI CLIFTON

Kami was discovered during her volunteer work for another Capital of Culture – Sibiu 2007. She had a very big experience as a volunteer in different countries which she brought with her to Plovdiv in 2018, when she was invited to be the second volunteer coordinator. One of her inputs was changing the programme's structure, which was needed, considering the large amount of people and events that were coming up. Her favorite saying is: 'Once a volunteer, always a volunteer' which proves to be true for her.

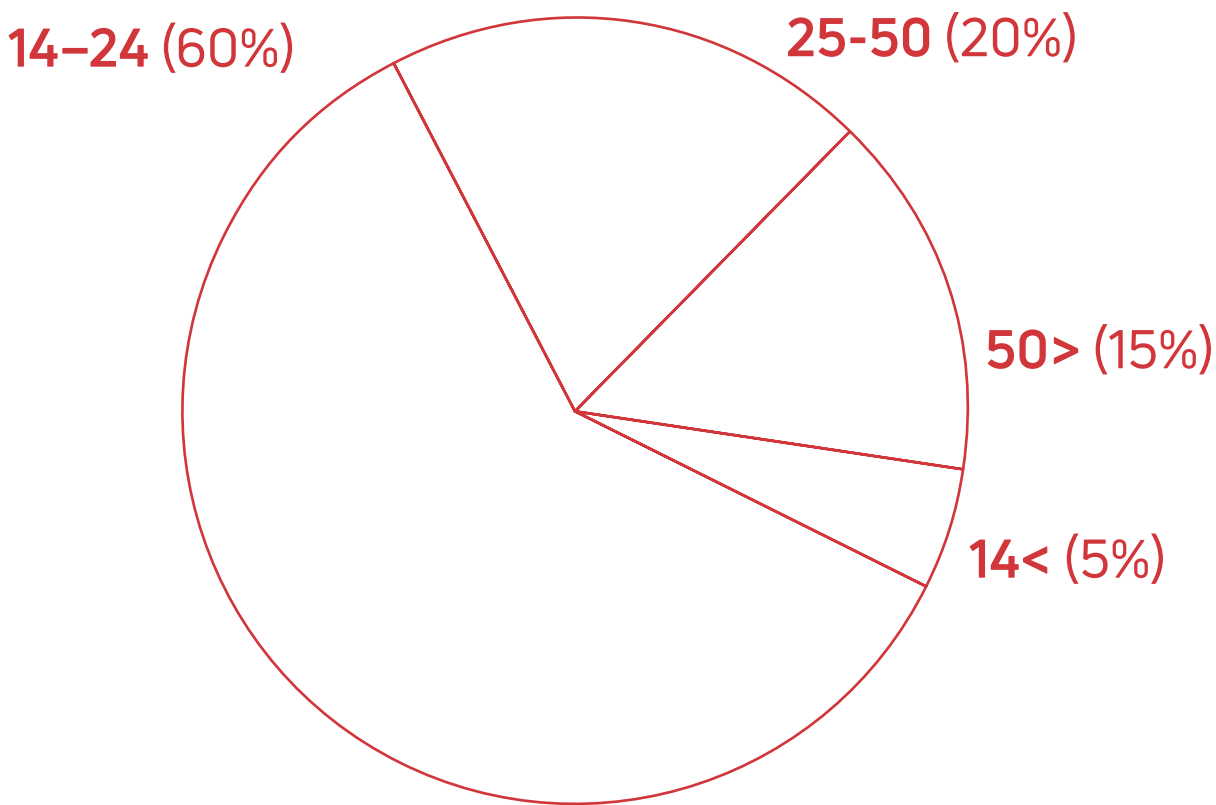
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*Kami and Franz continue to work towards popularizing the volunteer programme of Plovdiv 2019 and volunteering in Bulgaria in general. They reach out to different groups of people, diverse in their age, social background, ethnicity and culture, but united in their urge to give back and contribute to their city. Here is some information about the volunteer demographics.*

# Who are the volunteers?



*Some interesting facts and figures about our group of volunteers. Since the beginning of the programme, more than 2000 people have signed up to be volunteers and about 400 are still active.*

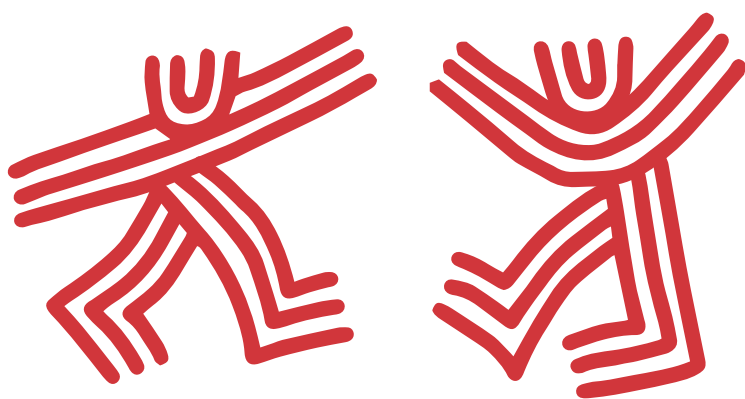


## AGE

The largest volunteer group is between the ages of 14-24 – more than 60% of our volunteers (check the graph on the top). Our second biggest group is between the ages of 25-50, after which the 3rd part of the group comes with the ages of 50+. Lastly, our youngest volunteers belong to the smallest group, with people that are under 14 years old. Our youngest volunteer started volunteering with her family when she was 5. Our oldest active volunteer is 72, and helps

mostly with distributing flyers and the monthly programme. The oldest volunteer who attended the Opening ceremony in January was 82 years old.

The biggest group of volunteers (14–24 y/o) is also the most active one. Being in school or university age, they sometimes have availability issues. Also, if they are under 18 years old, they are not allowed to volunteer at late night events or travel to different locations outside of Plovdiv. It is very important to us to have a big and diverse volunteer network, which is why we are working towards attracting an older generation of volunteers.



## **THE PROBLEM WITH ATTRACTING SENIOR VOLUNTEERS**

*For our Opening event we invited all the pensioner's clubs in Plovdiv which joined us on stage to be part of the 1100 volunteers that took part in the ceremony. They were also very active in the workshops for the Ayliak parade where they had to create different costumes and hats together with their grandchildren. The large amount of seniors (over 50 y/o) who joined those two events make up 15 % of our statistics shown above. In the rest of the activities, we observed a very low participation rate from senior volunteers, which is most likely due to the fact that Bulgaria is a post communist country. During Socialism /till 1989/, volunteering was compulsory for every citizen and it was made for the benefit of the state. The senior volunteers often don't connect the motion of volunteering to the free choice phenomenon that appeared in the country after the collapse of the communist regime and*



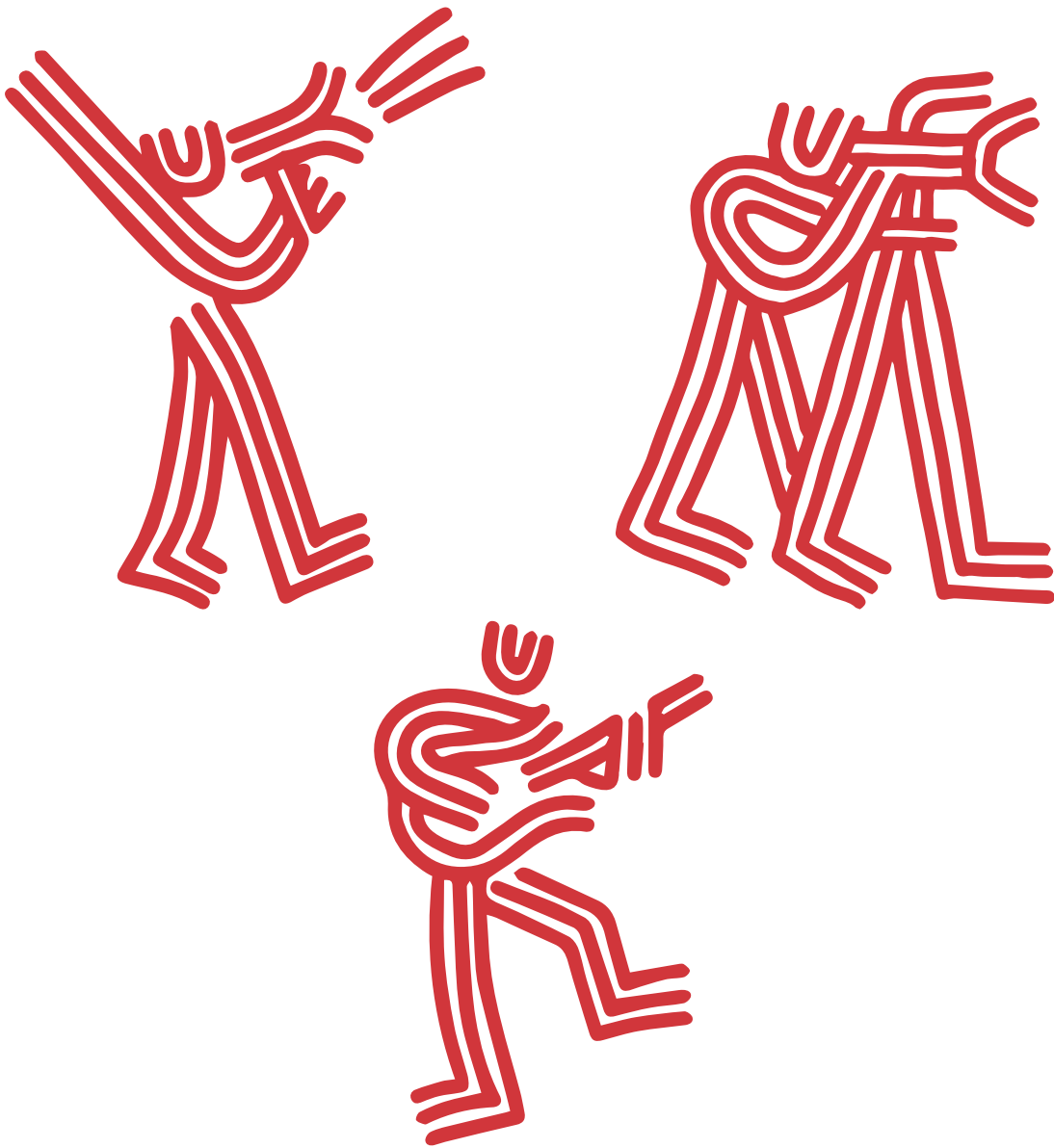
*are still taking it negatively. Another reason is the low income of this group of people which adds to the confusion they have regarding free labor. These concerns don't seem to appear in the younger generation volunteers who recognise the benefits of social activities and the development they receive.*

*For one of our most recent events we attempted to attract more senior volunteers to join the lantern making workshops dedicated to the 5th of December – International volunteer day. We encouraged every young volunteer to bring with them another older friend, parent, teacher, etc. Unfortunately, not many of them managed to bring someone, sharing later on that they felt uncomfortable inviting their parents or teachers for this activity.*

*We are still working on creating a bridge between generations and finding more things in common between our most active group of volunteers (14–24) and the volunteers over 50, who, we believe, will bring a greater value to our programme with their experience and availability.*

## **GENDER AND SOCIAL STATUS**

The ratio of male / female volunteers out of all people who registered in our programme is about 30 / 70. That ratio changes with the active volunteers, where women are slightly more than men – 60 / 40 percent. As we mentioned, most of our volunteers are students, followed by a good number of volunteers who are employed. There are slightly more unemployed people than pensioners. We've noticed that even the unemployed volunteers have some sort of financial support which covers their needs and allows them to volunteer.



## SKILLS

Our volunteers possess a variety of skills. Most mentioned are artistic skills such as drawing, dancing, singing or sports. We have a very active group of photographers who are taking pictures with their own gear. A few are creating and editing videos, some of which you can find in this legacy. A lot of volunteers have specific skills or professions such as programming, graphic design, electrotechnics, carpentry, accounting, law or finance. 3 scholars from Google joined us during the year and developed personal projects including an Interactive map of Plovdiv, a Database app for the volunteers and a Marketing strategy. We have teachers, legalised translators and interpreters, content writers, journalists, philology and marketing students who all enjoyed translating for us or writing texts.





Canada	Ghana	UK	Denmark	Serbia
USA	Nigeria	Ireland	Russia	Ukraine
Mexico	Algeria	Belgium	Estonia	Austria
Brazil	Mrocco	Germany	Hungary	Kazakhstan
Chile	Spain	Italy	Romania	Japan
South Africa	France	Sweden	Moldova	Pakistan
Burundi	Netherlands	Finland	Turkey	India

## LOCATION

We had over 100 international volunteers from 36 different countries. Some of them visited Plovdiv through an exchange programme with other Capitals of Culture or partner organisations. A few of them had internships with us. Others came at their own expense and joined particular events.

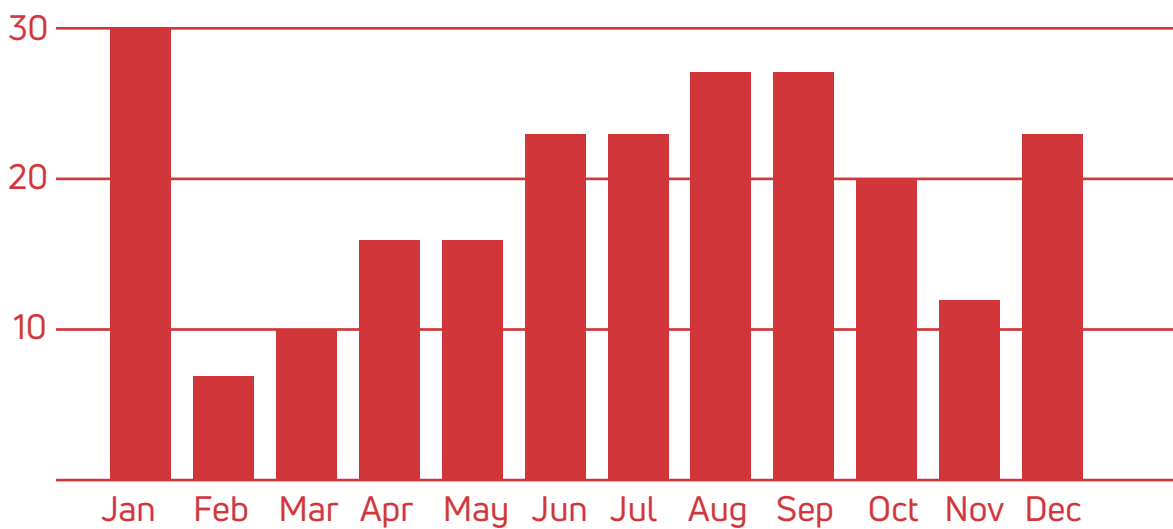
Some foreign students became volunteers in the course of their studies, mainly from the Medical University in Plovdiv.



A large group of volunteers help us online with translation or online marketing. There are many Bulgarians and Plovdivians living abroad who are eager to contribute to their city from a distance.

Our Blog and Translation department is very active due to the fact that the majority of Bulgarians have a good command of a second language. Most often we need translations from and to English on a very good level. We have created a group chat through Social Media channels with more than 80 volunteers that have level C1 or C2 in English and are able to respond quickly for urgent translations. Other languages that are often needed are Italian, French, German, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish. We also have volunteers who can translate from not so common languages such as Greek, Dutch and Japanese.

Lastly, only 20% of our volunteers are from a different ethnicity. Most of the local volunteers are Bulgarians, although there are also some from Turkish, Armenian, Russian, Roma, and Greek origin. We haven't noticed a division between the volunteers based on their ethnicity when they are interacting with each other, but there is a hesitation and worry when volunteer activities take place in Roma neighbourhoods. The majority of volunteers are still not confident visiting the Stolipinovo neighbourhood (considered to be a Roma ghetto) on their own.

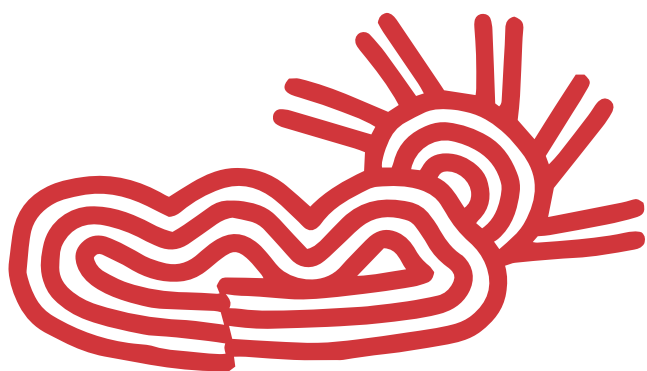


## VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

During the title year of Plovdiv 2019, we noticed peaks and more passive periods with the volunteer department. In the chapter with the monthly events, you can read about the volunteer activity. However, we would like to show an overview of the overall activity during that year. The volunteer activity didn't only depend on the intensity of our programme, but also the specific events. If an event was interesting and big, more people signed up. The year started out with a peak, because of all the volunteer activity surrounding the Opening event. After the opening event we had to catch our breath a bit, and the volunteer activity decreased as we were only just starting with other events. Nevertheless, in April we started preparing for some highlighter events such as the Ayliak parade (May 4th) and Hills of Rock (28–30 June). The programmes of June, July, August and September were packed with interesting activities, with around 1 (or more) events per day. Therefore, the volunteer activity in this period was very high. After September, we noticed a decrease again. Mainly because school started again and as mentioned above, a large part



of our volunteers were high school or university students. However, we did have interesting events in October such as One Dance Week and Jazz Fest so there was still some volunteer activity. November was a bit quieter, due to the low intensity of the programme but in December a lot of volunteers joined us for School of participation and 5 December – International volunteer day. We expected there to be a rise in the volunteer activity in January for our Closing ceremony and the end of the year celebrations.



## FINDING MOTIVATION

There is a tendency in the majority of volunteers to be very motivated at the beginning of their volunteer activity and their commitment to slowly fade away. This is due to several factors which we will discuss later on. Some volunteers take longer breaks and come back after busy periods in their life. Others would just join us for the bigger events or for the most interesting projects. There was a core of volunteers consisting of 150 people, who kept active in the entire period and contributed greatly to our programme. Those were the volunteers we turned to when we needed to find people at short notice or if we needed very experienced teams.

In the following pages we will describe the structure of the Volunteer programme and the communication process with the volunteers.

# Structure of the Volunteer Programme



## DEFINING THE NEED OF VOLUNTEERS

Most often our partner organisations or our colleagues from the artistic team come to us with a request to find them volunteers. Sometimes the volunteers are needed to help at certain events, other times an office task emerges. In some cases we have enough time to react and recruit the right people for the job, in other more urgent matters we are happy for just any volunteer that could help. No matter what the case is, for us, it is important to answer the 4Ws questions:

- W**hy do they need volunteers? → (What are their tasks, do they require specific skills?)
- W**hen is the event happening?
- W**here is it happening?
- W**hat is provided for the volunteers?

At the beginning of the year, we set up a Google form which our colleagues from the artistic team received and shared with other partners and organisations. Some of them used it when they needed to request volunteers, but most often requests were sent by email or in person.

## PROCESSING THE REQUEST



One of the main tasks of the National and International volunteers who are doing an internship in our office is processing the volunteer positions and preparing them to be presented on our Weekly meeting, on Social Media or in the Monthly Newsletter. Due to a variety of tasks being processed by multiple people, we found it easier to delegate the work through the platform Trello.

## IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROCESS

As we mentioned, at the beginning of the programme there was no record of who was doing what. In order to keep track of the volunteer activity, we are currently using cloud-based Google applications such as:

Sheets	For Database or volunteer tasks for bigger events
Slides	To present the volunteer opportunities at our Weekly meetings
Docs	For creating lists and tables where the volunteers can sign up on our board. Later on we share an online version of the list with shifts and contacts with the Project managers and all the volunteers
Calendar	To keep track of how many events are currently happening and to make sure we don't have volunteers who accidentally sign up for two or more positions happening at the same time (this happens a lot)
Drive	We have one Google drive where we keep all the documents and several more that are shared with the photographers to upload their pictures from our events
Social Media Groups	We also use Social Media groups for each department or to include larger groups of volunteers for bigger events. For smaller events or current tasks, we create Social media chat for faster communication with all parties.



This system needs improvement since it takes a lot of time processing data. There were two suggestions from volunteers to create a Volunteer database app. The first one had functions such as sending out email invitations for events and keeping track of the amount of events each volunteer has done. The second one was a Google based app implementing the Google calendar we already use. Both of them are not currently used due to technical issues with the apps. We are still looking for ways to improve our process.

## RECRUITING THE VOLUNTEERS

Most of our volunteers register on our website – [www.plovdiv2019.eu](http://www.plovdiv2019.eu). Some of them sign up during our events or after a presentation of the Volunteer programme in their school, university or Volunteer networking meetings. A large amount of volunteers are brought by other already active volunteers and we found that the Word-of-mouth is the method that attracts the most committed volunteers. We follow up their initial request to join our programme and we invite them (using Calendly) to an interview – in Skype or in person – to establish their interests and their availability. We give them an initial task – an event that they can join as a volunteer. After its successful completion we establish if they would like to continue contributing to our programme. Using pre-made invitations for interview, thank-you-emails and congratulations-on-becoming-a-Plovdiv-2019-volunteer templates in Gmail ease up the process.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

In order to make the volunteers familiar with the methods we use and to get acquainted with the people in our programme, we send them an Info Pack, which includes information about Plovdiv, the Foundation, the Volunteer programme and the way things work.

You can check the Info Pack [here](#).



One of our initial ideas was to have meetings once a month with the Mentors (more about them further on) and the new volunteers, with the intention to train them in our programme and give them valuable tips. This method only worked prior to big events when we had a peak in interest and a larger group of volunteers signing up. For the rest of the events we relied on our Weekly meetings to give the needed information and for personal communication between the volunteers, mentors, coordinators and project managers.

## VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENTS

When the volunteers come for an interview, they let us know which areas they are interested in, where they want to help out and which skills they have, or would like to develop. Based on that, we put them in one or more of the 5 departments.

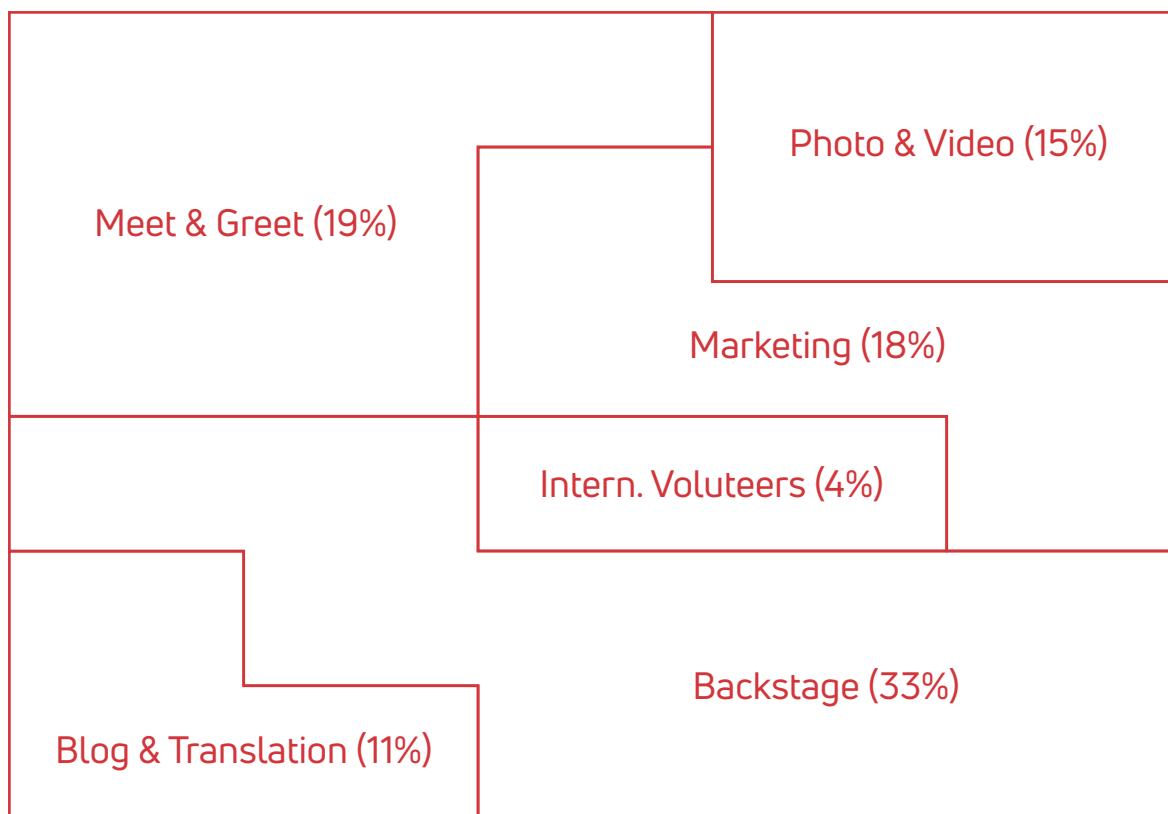
- ✧ Backstage
- ✧ Photo & Video
- ✧ Marketing & Merchandise
- ✧ Blog & Translation
- ✧ Meet & Greet
- ✧ International Volunteers

We add them to special Social Media groups with the same department names, where we can post opportunities that would interest them and events that are coming up.

The most preferred department by the volunteers is Backstage (33%, check the graph on the right), where they can support the organisation of the events and meet with the artists.

After that, we have a big group of Marketing and Photo & Video volunteers. They work together with the marketing team of Plovdiv 2019 to create content for the official Social Media page, the Instagram page and the website. The

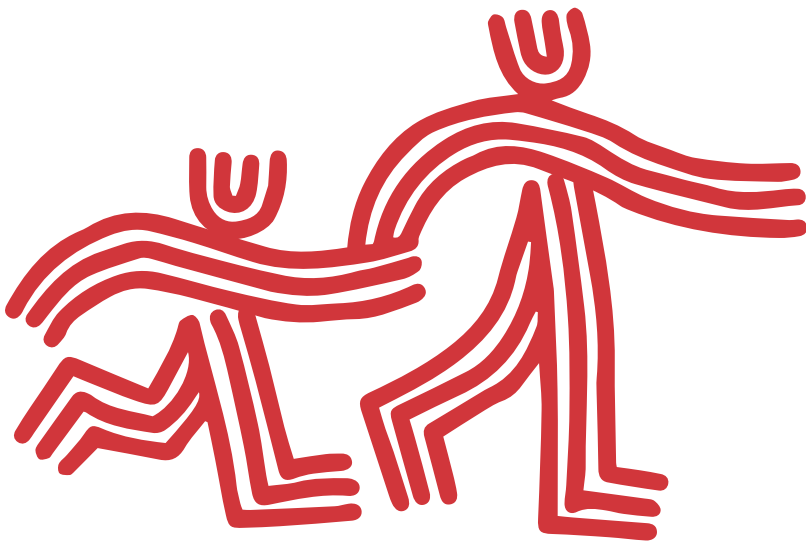




marketing volunteers have helped us reach a huge number of people - more than 550,000 were the distributed print copies of our monthly program in over 195 locations. About 4000 surveys were filled with the visitors of the events of our program, hundreds of events in all the districts of the city were branded and millions of unforgettable moments have been captured.

Another large group of volunteers are our Meet & Greet volunteers. They usually help us welcome foreign guests, or simply by being the face of Plovdiv 2019 at our events. It's important that the volunteers are responsible and know that they are representing the foundation.

Then we have our group of Blog and translation volunteers. As the name suggests, they translate for us or write blogs for the Volunteer blog (see below), about our events and other topics that can be interesting to our volunteers. Last but not least, we have had the pleasure of working with International volunteers who stayed for shorter or longer periods of times and became part of the other departments for a while.



## 'HOST FAMILY' PROGRAMME

Throughout the year we had many exchanges with International volunteers from other ECOCs and we developed our 'Host family' programme. We invited our volunteers and their families to accommodate the incoming volunteers from different countries for the period of their stay in Plovdiv. We tried to match the hosts with the profile of the volunteers taking in mind their age, sex, food preferences and allergies. In most of the cases we established an initial online contact between the volunteers and their hosts. That way the families could prepare better for the guests they were expecting. The hosts were meeting and greeting the international volunteers upon arrival and we gave them free time to settle and get to know each other. As the receiving side, we covered the daily expenses of the volunteers with a per diem and we strongly encouraged them to provide gifts to their hosts, or prepare them a nice dinner, due to the fact that their host families were not getting paid for their hosting. By the end of the exchange period, the international volunteers and their host families had developed a strong bond with each other and formed long-lasting friendships. The volunteers who were hosted in this way reported better experiences compared to the ones who were hosted in a hotel room or other type of accommodation, which proved for us, the success of the 'Host family' programme.



The first Weekly meeting was held on 12 Oct 2018 where the initial group of mentors were introduced to their new tasks for the upcoming year, by the CEO – Kiril Velchev and the Artistic Director of the foundation – Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva.  
Photo by Violeta Dincheva

## MENTORS

The volunteer mentors are our most experienced and dedicated volunteers who help us with managing groups of volunteers for bigger events. Some of them have a lot of experience in their field or department – a professional photographer helping in the Photo department or a certified tour guide in Meet and greet. At the beginning of the year, all mentors had special meetings with the volunteers and presented their department, giving them valuable tips and safety recommendations based on their previous experience. Being a mentor requires increased availability, good communication skills and the ability to make newcomers feel welcome. Finding all those skills in one person proved to be a challenge, that's why we have several mentors per department who have their own strengths and #together cover all the bases.

## COMMUNICATION METHODS



In order for us to find volunteers for certain events we use several methods. We post vacancies on Social Media groups, have weekly volunteer meetings in which we present the vacancies and we publish them in our monthly newsletter. If after all this, we still can't find people, we take a personal approach: calling or texting people we think are up for the job. Using those combined methods have provided more than 90% of the volunteers who were needed for our events.

## VOLUNTEER BLOG

The Volunteer blog is a good way to receive feedback from the volunteers regarding the events they attended or to let others know what to expect when they go to one. It's also a great way for people to practice their writing and language skills as the blogs are made in both Bulgarian and English. The blog is created and edited entirely by volunteers with the help of the mentors of the Blog and translation department and the coordinators. We aim to publish one blog article per week, which is easier for some months than others. If you're interested to read one of the blogs, you can find them [here](#).

## VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

On the first day of every month, we send out our Volunteer Newsletter. We send it via Mailchimp, and tailor it every month with the upcoming events, an interesting blog article, important volunteer positions, the volunteer's birthdays and the topics of the weekly meetings! They also have the opportunity to sign up for positions via online google forms. This is one of the tools we use to keep the volunteers up to date with news that might be relevant for them. You may find all the monthly newsletters [here](#).



## WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTEERS

Occasionally we had projects that didn't receive volunteers due to low interest towards the event, inconvenient times, long shifts or late requests. In cases like this it is good to let the project managers or the partners know they need to find a backup plan. It is dangerous to rely on the help of volunteers in order to have a successful event because working with volunteers is sometimes unpredictable.

In most cases, the Volunteer coordinators are just the link between the artists, project managers and the volunteers. Finding the right person for the job is not the only challenge. Bringing different people working #together in a stressful environment and having certain expectations can cause problems.

We tried to put together some tips for the organisations or project managers who request volunteers in order to raise their awareness on productive ways to work with volunteers.

You can find the tips in [Working with Volunteers](#)

We have also prepared [Tips for Volunteers](#) for some of our bigger events (in this case, Hills of Rock).



Sometimes unexpected events might occur, for example giving away free scarves and blankets on our Opening ceremony caused some of the crowd to become aggressive towards the volunteers. Luckily, we had police forces nearby and nobody was harmed.

Some of our volunteers were working with marginalized groups during a project in Stolipinovo (the Roma neighbourhood). Requesting experienced social workers to join the event and communicating with the volunteers about the possible risks is crucial. All of our non-adult volunteers require a written approval from their parents or guardians in order to join our programme.

Due to a lack of Volunteer legislation in this country and the unresolved volunteers rights, it is necessary to do everything possible to protect our volunteers from abuse. That's why gathering feedback from the volunteers and the organisations is so important to us.

## FEEDBACK AND HARNESSING THE RESULTS

This is an example of a [feedback form](#) after a smaller event. For our bigger events we create a special Google form or in the case of the Urban games Festival, we made a fun riddle game feedback that the volunteers enjoyed. Unfortunately, not many volunteers take the time to fill out the forms for each event. One of the least favourable volunteer tasks is filling in questionnaires with the people who attend our events. Some volunteers don't enjoy going out of their comfort zone and asking questions to strangers, but this is a method we use to gather feedback on our events from the general public. After every big event in our programme, we dedicate a Weekly meeting to express our gratitude towards the work of the volunteers and to gather their experiences. Sometimes we use Ice-breakers or methods of the World cafe, and at other times we simply start a discussion.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS



Every Thursday at 18:00, we have our Weekly volunteer meeting. The meetings have different topics and speakers and after the main focus of the meeting is presented, the volunteer coordinator gives more information about the current positions. Sometimes we organise workshops for the volunteers so that they can gain new skills or knowledge. A good example in September was the Japanese volunteers who organised a Japanese cultural workshop. During the meeting the volunteers were introduced to Japanese food, clothes, dancing, origami and calligraphy. We have also had workshops in creative writing, acting and improvisation and photography basics. The purpose of the meetings is to find volunteers for the positions we have available, and to allow them bond so as to create a volunteer community #together.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

Of course, some volunteers are more active than others, which shows during the volunteer of the month contest. Every month we announce the volunteer who did the best job as a volunteer during the previous month, and we crown him/her as a volunteer of the month. Not only do they get eternal fame, they also get an interview which results in a blog post and Social Media post. We thought this would be a great way to keep volunteers motivated, and who doesn't love some good old fashioned competition? At the end of the year we will announce the Volunteer of the Year – the one who volunteered the most throughout the entire year. You can find a list with the names of our most active volunteers at the end of the Legacy.



## **VOLUNTEER MASCOT AND THE VOLUNTEER TREE**

There were several attempts to establish a Volunteer mascot for the programme. First we organized a contest and gathered suggestions from some of our artistic volunteers. One of the suggestions was a sparrow due to the resilience of the bird in both summer and winter months. On another occasion we created a workshop where we introduced the volunteers to the idea of the Volunteer tree planted at the beginning of the programme in Tsar Simeon Garden and the mascot, after which they created the image of a phoenix living on top of a burning Volunteer tree installation. If a mascot is created, Plovdiv will be the first European Capital of Culture that has its own mascot for their volunteer programme. Check our event in December to find more info about it.



# The Good, the Bad & the Ugly



*At one of our volunteer meetings, we had a feedback session on all big events and the overall organization of the volunteer programme of Plovdiv 2019, at which we had about 40 volunteers attending. Below you will read their thoughts and feedback about volunteering with us.*



# What Went Well?



Before discussing what can be improved, we would like to look back at what the volunteers liked about our events and the organization. We hope that by pointing out the positive aspects that our volunteers saw during this experience, we can motivate others to also become a volunteer!

Starting with our events. We asked our volunteers about some of our most significant events such as: the Opening ceremony, Ayliak parade, Lieu d'etre, Plovdiv Karavana, Hills of Rock and the River Feast event. We asked them how happy they were with the event, the organization and communication between them and the team of Plovdiv 2019. With all the events, volunteers were positive about their tasks and the communication between them and the team of Plovdiv 2019. They also liked the fact that we provided water and on some occasions also food for shifts of 2 hours and more. Another thing they appreciated was that with the longer events we created shifts. This made it easier for volunteers to sign up as they could find the most convenient time for them to help out. Lastly, the volunteers were very positive about the overall execution of the events. They liked that they were part of the organization of these amazing events.

We will continue with the overall organization of the volunteer program. The volunteers really like the weekly meetings. They are a great opportunity for them to find out which positions are available, meet up with the other volunteers and ask questions if necessary. Lastly, they were also very positive about the diversity of the positions that are offered. It's important to keep it interesting for the volunteers, and create positions that will help them learn something new.

# What Needs Improvement?



At the meeting it became clear that some volunteers had ideas on what needed to be improved within our volunteer programme and at our events. According to our volunteers, it would be better to have clear and concise instructions for the tasks they sign up for. What happens sometimes is that volunteers sign up for a position, we bring them into contact with the person responsible for the project, after which they don't receive any clear instructions on what to do and sometimes they end up feeling useless even though there is enough work to be done.

Another thing they noted as needing improvement, is the way of communicating with volunteers. For our volunteer programme, we mostly use Social Media and messenger and the weekly meetings. However, some volunteers don't have Social Media or they don't find it clear what needs to happen when we use Social Media to post positions. We also make groupchats with the volunteers for their projects, which also includes the contact person for them. However, sometimes volunteers are not in the groupchat which often leads to them not knowing what needs to happen.

Lastly, working with volunteers is very rewarding as they are people who dedicate their free time to help the organizers of the event, and the community, for free. Therefore the organizers need to show and tell volunteers how much they appreciate their help. Our volunteers let us know that they do feel appreciated by the volunteer coordination team, however sometimes the people from the projects don't show any or enough appreciation. It is a good suggestion to remind the partners and organizers of events to treat volunteers with respect and appreciation. After all, the volunteers are there to help their projects be successful.

# Motivating Volunteers in Times of Crisis



This one is a hard topic, but we believe that it is important to pay attention to it, since it forms a big part of our struggles to find volunteers. Being a municipality foundation with public and political influences, the general image of Plovdiv 2019 was strongly connected to the motivation of the citizens to volunteer. On several occasions, the Plovdiv 2019 Foundation was attacked by the media and some political parties. There were two scandals concerning the building of the tower for our Opening ceremony and the exhibition, dedicated to LGBT parades on the Balkans. We noticed that during the negative public attention towards the foundation, the volunteers were put under a lot of pressure and it was harder to motivate them for their tasks. Some of them took active citizen positions, spreading their observation about the work of Plovdiv 2019 and the benefits they've seen. Others considered that it is best to not take part in the matter and volunteered only if they were really interested in the event. Of course, we lost some volunteers who were strongly influenced by the media.

In times like this we try to remind the volunteers about the bigger purpose that serves a European Capital of Culture. The positives of Plovdiv becoming one are undeniable and people who were well informed about our programme could see the difference. The fact that Plovdiv is the 'favorite city' and Plovdivians love it so much helps them see the meaning of contribution and volunteering for its cause.

We believe that through our Volunteer programme, we not only helped individuals to personally develop and meet new opportunities, but we also raised general awareness about volunteering and social change in Plovdiv and the region.

# Developments & Achievements



Some of our volunteers went the extra mile, which gave them notable achievements whilst being part of Plovdiv 2019. For example, Lyuben Branzalov, a Google scholar, created an application where people could easily find information about the events they wanted to attend, and they were navigated to the correct location.

Dimitar Ferdinandov, our photography volunteer and mentor, is a regular contestant in competitions, related to physics and space exploration. He was a winner in two consecutive years of the most authoritative Bulgarian astrophysics contest "The Cosmos – the present and the future of Mankind," organized under the patronage of the First Bulgarian astronaut. He also represented Bulgaria in many international contests – e.g. The European youth space contest Odysseus II in 2017. Moreover, he became the PR of the Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the UN and the Young European Ambassador to the EU neighborhood east project. Even though he has a busy schedule, he still finds time to come to our events and create beautiful videos. You can watch one of them at the end of the Legacy.

A lot of volunteers received certificates and recommendation letters from us which helped them in school, universities or to get better work placements. Four volunteers – Aleksandra Darboklieva, Marina Stanisheva, Silvia Stanton and Nadejda Ganeva, were employed full time by the Plovdiv 2019 foundation and many others were recommended to different partners and organizations.

Our photographer volunteers had the opportunity to create their portfolio with pictures from our events and to be featured as photographers in our media channels. One of our best photographers, Vanessa Popova, published an album dedicated to Plovdiv as a European Capital of Culture as part of her diploma work at university.

There are many positive examples that we can name. Here are some quotes from our volunteers and their thoughts on why they volunteer for Plovdiv and what motivated them.

# Why Volunteering?



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**Akis Pandis (14 years)**

*'I love volunteering because we're different, yet we stand #together'*

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**Anita Balabosova (16 years)**

*'Volunteering is full of so many opportunities: the people we meet, the bonds we form, the smiles we bring, the events we make come true. It's all so exciting and powerful.. I can't wait for others to join the experience that is ECOC.'*

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**Angelina Kostadinova (16 years)**

*'Volunteering is important, so don't let rude people make you feel like your work isn't valuable.'*

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**Boyana Kostadinova (18 years)**

*'Volunteering is important as it brings people together, awakens their creativity and contributes to the community.'*

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**Christo Andreev (25 years)**

*'I became a volunteer because I wanted to popularize my home town and to help improve my community.'*



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**Daniel Valchanov (16 years)**

*'We don't make mistakes.. we have happy accidents.  
12 out of 10 times I would recommend volunteering.'*

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**Hristina Mihaylova (25 years)**

*'Volunteering is like the sun...  
it's warm and brightens your life'*

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**Nadezda Ganeva (49 years)**

*'I became a volunteer because it feels good to help  
others, and do good things for your city and community'*

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**Nikol Delcheva (23 years)**

*'Volunteer because it's free'*

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**Sofia Manolova (16 years)**

*'Volunteering is important for the individual growth of a  
person, as well as for the development of social skills, and  
I think everyone should have some volunteer experience!'*

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**Todor Anastasov (22 years)**

*'Volunteering is great for meeting new friends and  
a very productive activity to dedicate your time to.'*

---

**Tsvetomir Stoilov (18 years)**

*'Why should you do everything for money?  
Have you never been happy? Be a volunteer!'*

# Events from Plovdiv 2019







## THE ONE WHERE IT ALL STARTED

The weekend of the 11th, 12th and 13th of January, all volunteers remember it as one of the most chaotic, stressful, fun and exciting weekends during their volunteering time of this year. This was the biggest event by far in the programme of Plovdiv 2019. It was a 3 day programme with more than 30 events filled with traditional Bulgarian



cultural performances, art workshops, a firework show and many more. The world famous Bulgarian artists performing were Theodosii Spasov, Vanya Balkanska and the German electronic artist Schiller. We also had some special events that were part of the Children's opening programme. It's safe to say, there was something to see and do for everyone. We had around 1500 volunteers helping out during the weekend with a variety of different tasks. We needed them backstage,



to help with the preparation of performances, they were handing out scarves and blankets, guiding our foreign guests around town, assisting the performers with any of their needs and just overall helped with the organizational aspects during the weekend. 50.000 people came to the city centre of Plovdiv on the 12th of January to watch the Opening ceremony. There were also over 100 VIP guests consisting mostly of other ECOC members, European Union



officials and important Bulgarian political figures. Lastly, we worked with 50 international volunteers coming from 7 different countries. They came and helped us with the Opening event and made sure it was an unforgettable event!

<b>WEEKLY MEETINGS IN JANUARY</b>	
04.01	Preparation for the Opening event
11.01	Opening event Plovdiv 2019
17.01	Feedback from the Opening event
24.01	Forum theater workshop with Genika Baycheva
31.01	Volunteer Certificate Ceremony

## JANUARY EVENTS



After the opening event, there were several other events in January. For example, once a week for the rest of January we had an event called Gypsy Wheels. It was a project consisting of several performances connected with Roma themes. They were based on authentic Roma stories and



represented their daily life in modern Europe. In addition, we also had a multifaced artwork presented at the City Art Gallery by Plovdiv artist Kolyo Karamfilov. Lastly, the Muzeiko Science Center for Children's team came to Plovdiv to present some of the most popular discoveries of the 19th and 20th century. It was called 'Eureka, Travelling Exhibition' which remained in Plovdiv for the rest of the year. Our volunteers were also asked to help with the distribution of the monthly programme to different places in the city.



JANUARY VOLUNTEER BLOG

## TO DISCOVER YOURSELF IN VOLUNTEERING

Written by Emily Kadir



*„Seriously, aren't you bored? Do you really like wasting your whole time, doing nothing? When are you going to stop wandering aimlessly through your life? Isn't it time for you to start working on yourself and on your future?“ These kinds of unpleasant questions put us at the beginning of our story. They just kept popping up in our confused friend's mind until she finally decided to do something about it. She knew that some of her friends joined different volunteer programmes. It seemed interesting to her so she started researching. This is how she found out about the Plovdiv 2019 Volunteers' Programme, which surprisingly was the answer to most of her questions.*

*Now you're probably wondering: „How can being a volunteer show you your place in the world?“ You're right. It's never that easy. Nowadays volunteering turns out to be the perfect way for young people to build up their character, to improve themselves so much, that in the process they know what they want from life and they're ready to go there and get it. It allows them to meet new people, many of them coming from different parts of the world, to create contacts, to practice other languages, to contribute to society and at the same time to learn and to have fun. And being a volunteer in a project such as European Capital of Culture gives you the amazing opportunity to become part of the creation of something new, valuable and remarkable – something that's going to stay in history. Once she learned about this opportunity, why would she let herself miss it? That's why the hero of our story decided to get involved and see where she could get to. Well, I suppose you have already guessed that this is my*

*story – the story about trying to build myself up in Plovdiv 2019. And I might still be that disoriented and confused person but ... this is still just the beginning of the story. The first thing I learned from it is: if you want to find your place in the world, be part of the world! Not just by cuddling under your blankets at home, going to school and hanging out with friends over and over again. Inform yourself, take responsibilities, meet new people, try doing something lasting and valuable. Bit by bit you will start discovering yourself and the place where you belong.*





## THE ONE WHERE WE ATE SLOW FOOD

Slow Food Plovdiv Network was a project that brought together local citizens, farmers, and food producers who were affecting sustainable changes in food production and the culture of eating. The project was linked to the values of the slow food movement, which itself was a global response to the fast-food chains' negative influence on local traditions and cultures that rely on agriculture and foods. For this event we needed the help of our volunteers. They were





asked to assist the marketing team with distributing some flyers and brochures. Volunteers were also asked to assist with backstage and meet & greet activities. Lastly, they had the opportunity to join and participate in the event by attending workshops that were part of the programme.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN FEBRUARY

07.02	What does it mean to be a mentor?
14.02	How to volunteer for the Backstage team
21.02	How to volunteer for the Marketing team
28.02	How to be a Plovdiv 2019 photographer

## FEBRUARY EVENTS



Other than the Slow Food festival, we also had other projects happening this month. It was right after the Opening event, but there were still interesting things to see and do in Plovdiv. For example, in February we had the premiere of the play *Odysseus*. The performance took place in the Drama theater in Plovdiv and was a slightly modern



adaptation of the Odysseus myth. Our volunteers helped out by handing out flyers and brochures all around the city. Another interesting project was called 'Go Under The Rainbow'. In February this meant having an international bread workshop with participants from Greece, Romania, Portugal, Turkey and Bulgaria sharing their thoughts and



recipes for the perfect bread. Volunteers were more than welcome to join this workshop as well! Lastly, a series of psychological theater workshops took place. They were called 'The Tale Inside Me', and could be attended by people of all ages. During the workshops, the participants became actors and made their own decisions as to which role to take on, and when their character would enter the action during the play. The volunteers helped actively in this project.



## FEBRUARY VOLUNTEER BLOG WHY DID I CHOOSE TO BE A VOLUNTEER?

Written by Jaklin Dobрева



*With the beginning of the new 2019, I said to myself that this year should be different. New year – new me. At least that’s what everybody says, right? A year in which I would be more responsible at the doorstep of my long-awaited 18 years. A year in which I could travel more, take photos, meet new people, have fun, and especially be part of something new, something unknown from which I could learn from and strive to achieve. I wanted to be part of a volunteer group where I could show my qualities and be useful with whatever I could... because aren’t you tired of people who prefer to live their lives complaining instead of seeing the beauty and opportunities that this world gives us? Don’t you want to do something that is important to you and to others and thus be part of the change?*

*And here I am, writing this article, precisely because I also want to be the one who changes, creates, helps and is a better version of myself. So, I decided to join the Volunteer programme of the European Capital of Culture for 2019 because I knew I would have the chance to be of help while I learnt new things. I am proud of the fact that the first Bulgarian city chosen as a Capital of culture has encouraged me to be part of the organisation and take part in different events in Plovdiv. I am glad to be able to feel and see the spirit of the people who have grabbed onto the opportunity to create something for others in all areas of art. I want to meet other young Bulgarians and foreigners, with the same ambition for help and change. I want to gain knowledge through projects and establish new friendships; to have fun and experience loads of unforgettable moments filled with positive emotions.*

*That being said, I address all young people, who are seeking the unknown, to become the change that they want to see in the world. Smile and hug more often, create, help with whatever you can, develop your interests, learn and be kind.*





## THE ONE THAT WAS CHANGING

The performance called 'Changing' premiered in March 2019, and was partnered by Plovdiv 2019. 'Changing' is a dramatization of 'Metamorphoses' by the Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann, and was the first solo performance of the famous actress Yoana Bukovska-Davidova. The performance was dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Ms Ullmann and the 100th anniversary of the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. This was also one of a handful of theatre spectacles in Europe to feature augmented reality. The focus of the dramatization, which was Ms Bukovska-Davidova's own project, was an actress, she herself, who



displays a multitude of faces without anyone ever knowing the one that's truly her own. On its part, her true self is manifested through stories and people, through childhood fears, up to the internal insecurity of a working mother, with all the attending emotional breakdowns, creative high points and failures. Our volunteers helped with meet & greet assistance, helping the audience members find their seats and explaining information about the play. Some of the performances took place in Sofia, and some took place in Plovdiv. For the plays in Sofia, we created a small network of Sofia volunteers that were willing to help out with events from Plovdiv 2019.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN MARCH

07.03	How to be a meet & greet volunteer
14.03	How to volunteer for the Blog & Translation team
21.03	International volunteers and No online hate workshop
28.03	Green Balkans conservation activities & how to get involved

## MARCH EVENTS

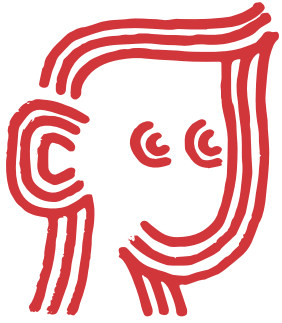
A sequence of meetings, creative workshops and exhibitions with four artists. This project was called: 'Creative Meetings in the Labyrinth'. The participants all shared their artistic experience with topics from the realm of the human body and its connection to the external world, nature and urban environment. The results of these workshops became







part of an exhibition that was on display for the rest of the month. During the month we were also part of the film factory project. The Film Factory festival presented a quality selection of contemporary feature films and documentaries from around the world. The festival programme in March included films about nature, our past, our present and our future – the politics that steer our lives, our daily routine – fashion, food and all those things that inspire us. They asked our volunteers to help promote the event by spreading flyers and posters with the dates and screenings from the festival. Lastly, there was an interesting musical event called 'From Toledo to Plovdiv'. This event helped the audience get in touch with the ancient cultural identity of the Sephardic Jews as part of the multilayered diversity of Plovdiv. The songs were performed by the actress Eva Volitzer with the accompaniment of three musicians. Our volunteers helped by distributing flyers and posters for the events.



MARCH VOLUNTEER BLOG  
**VOLUNTEERING, PLOVDIV AND  
ITS TOURISTS**

Written by Iliya Iliev



*I have always firmly believed that people should never misguide their energy and potential and instead, strive to invest it (and their free time) in timely and productive projects and activities. Always prioritize quality over quantity. In my life, I have essentially volunteered once. In 2014, I had just begun my last, 12th grade in my language high school Ivan Vazov, a fine institution, where I met some brilliant teachers. Simultaneously, I applied for the position of a volunteer tour guide at the local Free walking tour, the likes of which you would be able to see all around Europe, organized by a team of professional tour guides. In 2014 Plovdiv was way different from nowadays. The Dzhumaya square was partially closed behind metal walls, Filip II of Macedon no longer overlooked the main street and the actual Roman Stadium did not look like an abandoned concrete hole. Kapana district had turned into an empty parking lot among empty buildings, once housing local craftsmen. The pavement in the Old Town was broken here and there, and the people of Plovdiv were still not sure what ECOC was – does it bite, or what?*

*The first months the work was very exciting, but I thought that this will be something I would do while I finish high school and before university. My last high school year passed. I made it through my exams and prom night. Most importantly, I got accepted into Law school. Often people would ask me: why did you stay in Plovdiv? My answer was always: the city. During the summer of 2015, I got the opportunity to get a license and I did not hesitate. Thus, I became part of the Association that stands behind Free Plovdiv Tour – Association 365, one of the*

*best things that ever happened to me. I was the last student that we ever hired, you could say I was an exception to the rule, and to this day I remain the youngest member of the Association. Since 2015 I have been a professional tour guide, inspired by volunteering. Because I dared to get out of my comfort zone.*



*This is where this story ends. A story not just about volunteering, but about volunteering in Plovdiv. Plovdiv is magic (as cheesy as it might sound). It is art, a bohemian city. A city of big characters, a city of painters, poets and musicians. It has no insecurities, does not need to be a capital. Has no necessity to be titled or crowned in order to be perfect. Plovdiv is above all that.*

*Note: Iliya Iliev joined the volunteer group of Plovdiv 2019 and became a Meet and greet mentor. He not only helped other volunteers to give better tours to foreigners, but was always willing to give a professional tour to our special guests or international volunteers visiting the city.*



## THE ONE WHERE THEY LISTENED TO US

On the 4th of April, in collaboration with Deutsche Telekom, Plovdiv 2019 presented their prestigious collection of contemporary art. The exhibition was presented in 6 different venues. The contemporary art was balanced with the historical environment of the buildings it was presented in. The exhibition lasted until the end of June and in this period of time there were many events that took place alongside the exhibitions. There were lectures, screenings, tours and workshops with children involved in this project for which



we needed volunteers to assist them. We needed volunteers to lead the art workshops with the children, photographers to cover all the events within this project, and meet & greet volunteers to give tours to guests at the exhibitions.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN APRIL

04.04	Volunteering in the history of Bulgaria
11.04	Volunteer training & Me, You, Plovdiv
18.04	Ayliak Parade information
25.04	First Aid & Fire Safety workshop

## APRIL EVENTS



In April we started preparing for several big events that were planned for the next few months. For example, during this month we hosted several workshops to prepare for the Ayliak Parade. At these workshops, we created costumes and masks for the parade, but we also talked about the meaning of being Ayliak and how this concept could be





incorporated into the parade. Of course, all volunteers were invited to attend these workshops and help with the preparations of the parade. Another interesting event that happened in April was Archaeology for All. They were free tours through the Regional Archaeology Museum in Plovdiv. Everyone was able to join and learn more about the culture and history from the Plovdiv region. Moreover, there were a series of lectures called 'The Long Way to the Stars'. These workshops/lectures served as an original theater show/lecture that presented the most recent scientific achievements that relate to the origin of the solar system and the birth of life. Last but not least, we were also partners in the Lummix Festival 2019. Lummix is a light festival with a duration of 2 days. It transformed several public places in Plovdiv using light as a means of artistic expression. In the city center, the buildings were lit up with interactive light shows and in the garden close by, there was a musical concert and more light shows. Our volunteers helped with handing out flyers and brochures for this event. They also helped with the overall publicity for the programme but were mostly helping with the preparations for the Ayliak parade.



## APRIL VOLUNTEER BLOG WORKSHOP STOLIPINOVO

Written by Alex Atanasova



*To participate in a design workshop with such ambitious and creative people with different jobs is a captivating experience! Although I only took part in the last day of the event, from the moment I stepped through the door, I could clearly see and feel the enthusiasm and passion coming from every participant. Even though it was a Sunday morning, people from all over Bulgaria and Europe, came to support the initiative for innovative solutions for the children's facilities and the new pitch in Stolipinovo. There were architects and an archaeologist, who were side by side with participants throughout those three days.*

*During the first day, everyone went to Stolipinovo and met with native people and talked to them about their likes and needs. During the second day, different possibilities about the project were discussed and finally, during the third day, models of the alternative architecture were created, transformed and presented. The third day started with a quick summary of everything up until this moment. After this, we split into groups. Ideas kept coming from everywhere and every single one of them was heard and appreciated. In the background, there was some nice music playing, while everybody was working on their ideas.*

*After lunch, we continued with the modeling of the discussed suggestions. By the end of the day, three main ideas were developed and presented:*

*The first one was about game scape, where the risk of infections is reduced, after that, the attention was focused on rubbish and how it can be decreased and finally, there was the incredible suggestion about 'Stolipinovo Fest'.*

*Now we can only hope that all of this will come true and be further developed in the next workshop in September.*





## THE ONE WHERE WE WERE AYLIAK

In Plovdiv people always say they're Ayliak. It's not only a state of mind here, it's a way of living. That's why for the second time, Plovdiv 2019 organized an Ayliak parade. It was a parade through the main street in Plovdiv with all sorts of people dressed up in costumes to spread the joy of being Ayliak. It was a colourful day on the 4th of May. There were schools that participated with classes of children.



They dressed up with a common theme and paraded through the streets of Plovdiv. Before the actual parade, the organisers created workshops for people to make their own masks and costumes with help from professionals. In the weeks leading up to the parade, more and more people and volunteers chose to participate and in the end we had over 200 participants. Of course, with such a sizable event, there were also volunteers needed to make sure everything went



according to plan. They helped with crowd control, were part of the parade and were making sure there were a lot of pictures and videos of the event. There was music, fun and above all there was the Ayliak state of mind.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN MAY

02.05	Ayliak Parade preparation
09.05	Feedback Ayliak Parade & Festival of Lights with Stephen Clark
16.05	BG radio and Free school fest projects
23.05	Hills of Rock information
30.05	Plovdiv Karavana & Western Balkan

## MAY EVENTS



May was an interesting month for our volunteers, of course kicking off with the Ayliak Parade, but with more interesting events for them to help at, and attend. On the 9th of May we celebrated Europe Day. To mark the occasion, Stephen Clark (European Parliament Bureau Director) attended one of our Volunteer meetings to talk about the campaign: this time I vote.





They discussed the importance of voting, the European elections and the expectations of young people for the future of Europe.

Another interesting project launched in May - the creation of Plovdiv's unique cyrilic typeface. Thanks to our volunteers, more than 4000 handwritings were collected from Plovdivians and city guests and were later analysed by the



graphic design studios PUNKT and Typedepot. The creation of this five-font family is now part of Plovdiv 2019 heritage. You can check details about the manuscripts and download the fonts for free at [www.plovdivtypeface.com](http://www.plovdivtypeface.com).

In May we also continued with the lectures from the Long Way to the Stars and the tours from Archaeology for All. Alongside these, we also celebrated the Cyrillic Alphabet with the opening of the Cyrillic Alphabet Alley. Our volunteers were also present at the annual music awards of BG Radio. They were used to meet & greet volunteers to help people find their seats, and with some backstage help. Of course, our volunteers then had the opportunity to see the show for free. We also set up some new exhibitions such as the Contemporary Literature exhibition and the Museum – Open, Unexpected, Shared. We also had an interesting workshop in traditional mosaic techniques and art. Lastly, our volunteers assisted with the distribution of the program and other project related flyers.



MAY VOLUNTEER BLOG  
**THE ALPHABET THAT'S US**  
Written by: Preslava Djondjorova



*Language in its essence has always been of special importance to our society. It is one of the greatest tools and weapons that a human can have at their disposal, no matter if it is in the hands of an artist, a governor or an ordinary person. The mother tongue, fascinating and charming, is what defines our national identity. But what happens when you are far away from your fatherland and you do not have the chance to listen to or talk in Bulgarian? How could you preserve your national identity and the memory of your home?*

*The question was answered by the Association of the Bulgarian schools abroad with their project – 'The Alphabet – That's Us'. Children and teenagers from 10 schools in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and America represented the Bulgarian alphabet by recreating it with their bodies.*

*Their photos, full of smiles and pride, were shown at the exhibition in the European Capital of Culture – Plovdiv. On the 23rd of May, they were in the Historical museum and on the 24th – in Mall Markovo Tepe. In addition to the 30 pictures there was also a presentation of the project and a workshop for the kids, where they painted their favorite printed Bulgarian letters with pleasure.*

*The exhibition took place again on the 1st of June in Mall Markovo Tepe from 3 to 5 pm with its workshop for children. However, even now, after the end of the awesome day, we all have to be hungry for knowledge, like we once were and to not forget who we are.*

*We have to admire our language like those students abroad and to celebrate the alphabet with the pure joy of the kids.*



## THE ONE THAT ROCKED

The hills are alive... with the sound of ROCK MUSIC! During the year of Plovdiv 2019 it was again time for the third edition of the Hills of Rock festival. This year it took place on the 28th, 29th and 30th of June at the Rowing Canal in Plovdiv. The festival was composed of a main stage, a music jam stage and stage Na Tamno. The headlines this year were Disturbed, Whitesnake and Garbage. They requested over





150 volunteers to assist with tasks such as backstage and technical assistance, bar and kitchen assistance, marketing assistance and photographers. In order to make sure that the volunteers knew where to go and what to do, we decided to also have a volunteer hub at the festival. At the volunteer hub, we had at least 2 people that worked at the volunteer office, to make sure all the volunteers that signed up were there, and if there was someone who didn't know where to



go or didn't have a task, to tell them what to do. Luckily, lots of volunteers wanted to help with Hills of Rock so there was always someone to help with anything they needed.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN JUNE

06.06	Plovdiv Reads
13.06	Me, You, Plovdiv
20.06	Hills of Rock festival instructions
27.06	Hills of Rock coordinators

## JUNE EVENTS



The programme in June was impressive, including a very interesting event - the Opera Open Festival. The opera company started in June with their first performances in the Ancient theater of Plovdiv. Volunteers had the opportunity to volunteer for this event and watch the shows for free. The shows started on the 8th of June with a colorful gala





opening, after which famous interpretations of Orpheus & Eurydice, La Forza Del Destino, Rigoletto, Swan Lake, Otello and Aida followed. The marketing team was assisted by the volunteers not only with the distribution of the monthly programme, but also by conducting over 2000 surveys with visitors to the Hills of Rock festival and about 400 from the Opera Open performances. At the same time as the Opera Open, we also had Plovdiv Karavana coming to town. They set up 3 large artistic camps in Trakia, Stolipinovo and at the Rowing Canal. Over 200 artists, technicians and art rapporteurs came to share their art. We had volunteers helping them with a large variety of tasks. Volunteers also had the opportunity to perform at the open stage of Plovdiv Karavana! At the end of June, we also had the large-scale Medea theater performance in the Ancient theater. This event needed volunteers to help pointing people to their seats and handing out the programme. After that our volunteers had the chance to stay and watch the performance. Lastly, volunteers had the opportunity to help and attend screenings at the Summer Cinema. These screenings were held in different (outdoor) places around the city.



JUNE VOLUNTEER BLOG  
TAKING PART IN LIEU D'ETRE

Written by Elena Stoycheva



*'...and why does it hurt here  
when we see them flying  
Isn't it that they remind us that  
we have also been the kind of flying people'  
Valeri Petrov*

*The flying people are the ones who opened more than 11 doors within me. Those who were a part of Lieu D'être know why exactly 11. The process of co-working with Compagnie Acte for me was real magic. Lieu D'être is a manifestation of my views in life, so it was really magnificent to be in the position of a tool for my ideal to be manifested in reality. I highly doubt there is a more honest way for an artist to create art, than to involve the common people in it, on one plane; to show how they want to suggest their ideas and to work for it until it really immerses in the other-self, in their body and their spirit.*

*This performance was an extraordinary example of OPEN contemporary art- the stage was a part of real life (a building's facade), the ordinary citizen was a part of the spectacle, the audience was in a live interaction with the performers, and the doors and windows OPENED UP for a new community, for one feasible utopia of habitation! No boundaries, until we all become 'one' in awareness. Until 'we all plant our roots in the sky'. It was feasible because if it was happening in one building, it was already a part of the collective consciousness. The rehearsals with absolutely unfamiliar people proved to me that art can be an intensive course in togetherness, synchrony and unified rhythm. It is still quite early to be aware*

*of how many 'doors' a performance like this opens. This is in store for us to discover.*



*One of the most significant lessons, this trip taught us, was the colours of life. All of us, the participants somehow became brighter, more colourful and much more passionate and enthusiastic. It is because Compagnie Acte 'are the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop...' It was amazing to observe how in one piece of art there were so many means of expression dancing together to elevate us. It was impressive the way Compagnie Acte faced difficulties during the rehearsals, the little space on the balconies, the facade dance, stepping on chairs, the excruciating heat, rain, storms, our local leisurely attitude called 'ayliak', as well as the intercultural differences and so on.*

*I will always remember how Annick inspired us just before the performances saying that the particle, that we are ready to devote to the others in our message, is what really matters. It is not the physically correct movements of the body, that is the magic which connects and touches.*

*The change of perspective in this spectacle didn't only happen on the vertical plane. It was only the visible part that by fighting the difficulties with the help of art and their undaunted will, the dancers ascended over a new vertical plane and descended renewed, transformed and ready to go through it all again.*

*We are all different now, with new parts, more courage, more colours, more open doors and we will know a bit more of 'how to say everything without words'!*



## THE ONE WHERE WE BUILT TOGETHER

Building together has been an ongoing project during the year of Plovdiv 2019. It started in April and continued throughout the summer. The main purpose of the building together project was to work together with craftsmen from Stolipinovo and create a series of open workshops, where various structures/urban furniture, children's facilities and small facilities were to be built. The workshops turned out to be almost every weekend. Some of them were for the sub-project Children city, whereas others took place in Stolipinovo. The volunteers were asked to help and



entertain the children that were involved in the project. Also, they needed photographers and videographers to capture important moments during the project. The volunteers were also encouraged to participate in any workshop they would be interested in, such as wood carving, painting and working with different kinds of metals. Any creative volunteers that wanted to learn a new skill, were welcome to join this project.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN JULY

04.07	Hills of Rock feedback & 100% Plovdiv
11.07	How to Write European projects / Bulgarian Youth Forum
18.07	EU Japan Fest
25.07	As She Sings and Hillock Carnival



## JULY EVENTS



Some other interesting events that happened in July were the street art and food festival at the beginning of July, the Creative workshop for vloggers that could be attended by our volunteers, and the Summer cinema project. Overall our volunteers were very busy with promoting our events, distributing the programme and attending the projects as photographers. To celebrate all this active volunteering, we started a new initiative: the Volunteer of the Month contest. From the statistics for volunteer participation over the past month, we distinguished the person who was most active and deserving from our volunteers. The winner received a symbolic crown, was interviewed for our volunteer blog, and received a poster on the Wall of Fame that we created in our office. The selected volunteer for July was active in over 21 events during the month and received very good feedback from the project promoters he helped. Volunteers responded quite well to this idea and several of them aspired to participate in the competition.

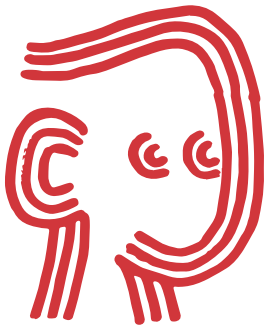
We also started an internship programme for local volunteers, which provided the opportunity for more





volunteers to intern at the Plovdiv office in 2019. For the summer months – June, July and August, three local volunteers who are also mentors of the teams – Nicol Delcheva, Teodor Danchev and Gabriela Stankova became our trainees and assisted in the preparation of the weekly meetings.

In addition to our weekly meetings, we also organized Social Meetings for the volunteers, where they had the opportunity to create new acquaintances with each other and exercise teamwork. We started with a movie night, and in July we invited the Rise of Dice organization to do a board game session. During these meetings, volunteers learned about upcoming events that were open to them. We asked them for their opinion on these meetings and received feedback from them that they would like us to organize more active meetings with more workshops and activities.



## JULY VOLUNTEER BLOG AS SHE SINGS

Written by Peter Solakov



*I joined the crew of Plovdiv 2019 and from the first moment, I assumed that this place would be filled with positive energy and that I would meet many amazing people. It took me less than a week to do my first volunteering activity and it proved me right.*

*The first thing I had to do was help with the translation for the musical journey and event 'As She Sings', which told the story of 4 amazing women with inspiring stories and awesome voices. The stories they told were stories about the place of women in our society and about the songs in different cultures. It was so interesting to listen about the way that Yiddish mothers, daughters and granddaughters sit together cooking and singing and how this language has been influenced by all of Europe and has a little of everything, not only in terms of grammar or words, but also in the style of living and singing.*

*The personal story of Lucette was just amazing to me. She had grown up with a dad who hid his Yiddish lineage and she couldn't learn about her culture from her biological family but in her twenties, after an eventful trip to Israel and a meeting with an interesting man, she found a new family among the circles of Yiddish women whose songs helped her understand herself better.*

*The stories of Ginka Tser were just as interesting – a woman, who has worked and sung with the people of the Roma culture for more than 40 years and who is now passing her legacy on to her talented granddaughter, one of the top 10 under the age of 16 singers in Bulgaria. Ginka told us about the origin*

*of the Roma people, who are an ethnicity which came from India after they were given as slaves to the Persian king by the Indian ruler, they proved good at singing, dancing and performing but not so good at working the ground or taking care of animals, so they were set on their own path to travel the world without an end goal. Ginka sang some of their songs which are filled with emotion and often tell personal stories not so different from what most young people go through – stories of stubbornness, love, hardship and happiness. The third person of this amazing trio is Maria Pasheva, whose story of growth and learning began from a young age when she played music and sang well enough to be encouraged by her parents to follow her passion and study music in the national musical academy. At first, she didn't really like this kind of music but when she went to her new school she met different people from different places and every single one of her classmates had unique experiences with all of the different kinds of Bulgarian national music, she discovered the beauty and diversity in this kind of art.*





## THE ONE WITH THE FIREWORKS

We started the preparations for the summer event of Plovdiv 2019 at the end of August and the beginning of September. This event commemorated the fifth anniversary of Plovdiv's selection to host the European Capital of Culture. It was called the River Feast, and consisted of a day full of sports activities, concerts and a major firework show. Amongst the activities, we had slacklining, motorized paragliding, free running, a jumping pillow and a hot air balloon. Of course in order for this to be a successful event, we needed the help of our volunteers! We had a total of 150 positions divided between all the departments. We needed



photographers to document the event during the whole day. In addition, we needed our marketing volunteers to help with the distribution of the programme, the children's programme and doing questionnaires with the guests. Moreover, our meet & greet and backstage volunteers were helping with the activities. We needed at least 2 volunteers per activity to assist the leaders with anything that they might need. Also, we asked for 5 to 10 backstage volunteers



to hang out in shifts at the volunteer hub in case there were any new positions that came up on the day itself. Speaking of the volunteer hub, we had 2 volunteers running the hub in shifts. They made sure our volunteers knew their shifts and where to go, that there was water available for all volunteers and coordinated the overall volunteer activities. It was a lovely end of the summer and everyone enjoyed the activities at the riverbank.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN AUGUST

01.08	Inclusive Education for All & Night Plovdiv
08.08	Mood for Food
15.08	Anti-discrimination campaign and Land Art along the Maritsa river
22.08	One Dance Week
29.08	River Feast preparation

## AUGUST EVENTS

Volunteers were extremely active in August, with most of them participating in more than one event from our programme. The Opera Open projects were very popular, where volunteers conducted more than 400 surveys with visitors for the performances and a floating concert by Orlin Pavlov, where a large group of volunteers helped







actively assemble the floating stage. The photography department became active with the photo exhibition Good Lenses in the Lens, which included photos of volunteers helping during our events. Videos have also been created for various volunteer projects that have been posted on our social networks. Our volunteers also participated as extras in various concerts, projects and films. At the end of August, preparations for the big event Plovdiv Night began,



with over 80 volunteers taking part in various positions. Several smaller projects happened at the end of the month, including Hillock Carnival and Land Art in Maritsa, and were also the subject of interest from volunteers. Several volunteers went to Varna to support the Talyana Fest project and actively participated in the workshops organized by our partners there.

The volunteer newsletter received a new layout in August, created by design studio Punkt, which allowed us to add even more refined and interactive content. Volunteers could view vacancies and apply for them online through the Google Form.

Communication with the volunteers is done in person or through Social Media groups and chat groups. We also did a new layout for the Social Media groups with their Facebook cover photos. New volunteer blog posts continue to appear periodically, although their intensity has decreased.

The Volunteer of the Month initiative also took place in August, this time selecting the three most active volunteers (31 events) and holding a secret ballot to decide which



one would win the title, focusing not only on the amount of events at which they had volunteered, but also over the quality of the tasks performed. Social gatherings also continued to be organized – there was a picnic at Bunardzik Park for volunteers, to which everyone brought home-cooked food. Also, once a month, volunteers organized a Language Cafe, in partnership with JCI and Telus, where we had the opportunity to promote the volunteer programme and find new recruits for the team.



## AUGUST VOLUNTEER BLOG MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Written by: Nina Petrova-Yordanova



*On the 10th of August, in the middle of summer, Plovdiv, its citizens and guests had the opportunity to enjoy the concert “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. This was a collaborative project between the Bremen Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Plovdiv Trimontium Female Choir and the Rodina choir from Stara Zagora. The project was called “Meet in Music”, which directly corresponds to the slogan of Plovdiv 2019 – TOGETHER.*

*The event was attended by citizens of The Cultural Capital, as well as by foreigners, some coming by chance and others – on purpose, waiting to dive into the magic of classical music and choir singing.*

*We cannot omit the names of the actors, who recreated Shakespeare’s text on stage – Bilyana Stoeva-Stanimirova and Valentin Mitev. The young talented musicians from the Bremen Youth Symphony Orchestra played so inspirationally that their names will be often mentioned during the next month as they will be touring other bulgarian cities also. Soloists Ilina Mihailova (soprano) and Michaela Berova (mezzo-soprano) were also welcomed by the audience. The two choirs on stage – the Plovdiv women’s choir Trimontium’ with conductor Vanya Atanasova and the youth choir Rodina with conductor Stefanka Zhelyazkova also performed with dignity.*

*Against the backdrop of the golden-pink rays of the setting sun and the heavy sweetness of the summer evening, guests*



*began to take their seats, expecting to experience the magic of Mendelssohn and Shakespeare again, with the artists and the space of the Ancient Theatre. Because great authors are impassive and the more that we listen to them and the more we watch them, they always manage to surprise us with some new (new to us, of course) truth, with a new understanding of what is already known.*

*And so, as it becomes darker outside, as the coolness of the evening is breaking through the warmth of people and artists, the first notes and words ring out – the magic of “The Dream” descends over Plovdiv. As it gets later and with every new wave of the gentle night breeze, “The Wedding March”, familiar to all, plays. And just like the characters in Shakespeare’s play, viewers slowly shake off the fairytale slumber, the enchantment of fairies and naughty spirits, and with heavy eyelids return to reality before the applause is heard. Surely each of them, with a little sadness but also with a lot of hope in good, love and laughter go home.*

*So the new day can turn, and the new dream may come.  
And stay forever.*



## THE ONE WHERE WE DANCED FOR ONE WEEK

September was one of the busiest months for Plovdiv 2019. It was filled with a lot of interesting events, the biggest being One Dance Week. One Dance Week is a festival entirely devoted to contemporary dance and the first edition was held in the year 2008. Plovdiv was filled with dance companies from all over the world, ready to show the people of Plovdiv their performances. Even though the name of the festival suggests the event lasts for one week, it was actually spread out over a whole month. There were 22 performances



between the 20th of September and the 19th of October. The companies this year were from Belgium – Peeping Tom, Indonesia – Rianto, Syria – Wael Ali, Taiwan – Les Petites Choses production, Japan – Kaori Ito, Hungary – Szeged Contemporary Dance Company, Taiwan – Horse, Italy – Luna Cenere, Czech Republic – Martin Talaga, Israel – L.E.V. Company, Canada – Clara Furey and Australia – Gravity & Other Myths. For all these performances, they needed the help of our volunteers. Their help was needed mostly with meeting & greeting the guests, handing out the programme and other leaflets, making gift bags and taking pictures at the events. All the volunteers that helped had the opportunity to see all the performances for free.

<b>WEEKLY MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER</b>	
05.09	River Feast and Volunteer legacy
12.09	100% Plovdiv
19.09	About Plovdiv 2019 and what's next
26.09	Japanese Cultural Experience

# SEPTEMBER EVENTS



September turned out to be one of the most dynamic months for volunteers and the calendar was filled with events. From the beginning, over 100 volunteers participated in our summer event – River Feast, which marked the fifth anniversary of winning the European Capital of Culture title with a pyromusical light spectacle, a musical aspect







and a rich programme of sports attractions. The volunteer mentors were very active and helped us organize and monitor the smooth running of the activities. During this event, the distribution of our monthly programme increased, along with the Children's Programme, and the Marketing team managed to gather over 400 surveys conducted by volunteers with guests on the event.

After the successful completion of the River Feast event, all the volunteers who took part received certificates and gifts of appreciation, given to them at a specially organized ceremony during our weekly meeting. Moreover, we started planning for the Volunteer Legacy, and we launched a new project. It will be an event organized in coöperation with Walk the Plank and School of Participation. It aims to involve volunteers in the remaining months and prepare #together a major final event dedicated to our volunteers on the 5th of December – International Volunteer Day.

The volunteers who helped with Night / Plovdiv, One Dance Week, EU Japan Fest, and Mood for Food were extremely active. The EU Japan Fest volunteer team helped care for 80 Bulgarian and Japanese children, they helped with the logistics from Sofia to Plovdiv and during their stay



in Plovdiv, accompanied them during the tours and their free time and helped during their rehearsals. At the end of the month, another team got involved in creating a set design for the Noh Theater performance and helped with the socialization of Japanese volunteers. They also participated in the +7 Hours exhibition and a photo shoot for SiP Shirting with designer costumes. These activities were extremely beneficial to the local volunteers and the organizers announced that they were extremely pleased with the help they received. Smaller projects such as the Plovdiv Children's Fair, Lis Lab and Inclusive education for All were also successful thanks to the activity of volunteers, and the 6Fest in Kapana Creative District relied mainly on them for assistance in organizing and coordinating groups of participants. Some of our volunteers became trainees for Night Plovdiv and helped with the organization of other posts. The organizers of the Night / Plovdiv awarded the volunteers with ce26.certificates, gift bags and organized a special closing party for them. The feedback from the volunteers from this event was very positive.



## SEPTEMBER VOLUNTEER BLOG INTENSE BUT AYLIAK TWO WEEKS

Written by Krisztina Kopp



*My name is Krisztina Kopp. I am a 21-year-old Hungarian freshly graduated scenographer who fell in love with Bulgaria in 2018 during an Erasmus semester in Sofia. That was also the time when I heard about the cultural programmes in Plovdiv and I started to have fantasies about coming back to this vibrant city in the future.*

*Planning my stay, I was concentrating only on the July events of the Opera Open Festival. I was very keen on helping out backstage with the costumes and building the set, I thought it would fit my professional background the most. Ironically, it turned out the Opera crew did not need an extra person. So just before my arrival, I dug in deeper in all the programmes, and spontaneously (sometimes randomly) applied to various kinds of things, not only backstage positions. I am so glad I did – man proposes, God disposes, I guess.*

*I like working with a crew in theatre because it is a creative, social environment and I love when we are doing something for a 'greater cause', or simply when there is a meaningful message behind the daily acts I call 'work'. So finding myself on a 3-day urban design workshop, thinking about how we could improve kids' environment in a quite poor neighborhood of Stolipinovo, or going to the same district with the Mobile School programme to have arts & crafts workshops there, where children are not very likely to meet a teacher, it was an uplifting experience – a bit similar to why I like theatre.*

*I spent some more time with kids on Youth Hill, Plovdiv, where with our support they built their own playground and garden*

*furniture to the park from wooden materials. I really enjoyed all the activities with the little ones. After the two-week-period, thanks to the volunteer programme, I feel like I extended my future possibilities – bringing art and architecture to children's lives in a playful but educational way.*



*Mentioning the volunteer colleagues, here I would like to say thank you for the welcoming and fun environment I had as an international volunteer with them! Maybe see you again later during the year!*



## THE ONE THAT WAS 100% PLOVDIV

During the month of October we had many events again. One event that stood out this month was 100% Plovdiv. It was organised in cooperation with Rimini Protokoll, a German theater company. What they wanted to accomplish was to get 100 people from Plovdiv with different backgrounds, ethnicity, religion and political views to gather on stage and show real time statistics of Plovdiv residents. It was a very interesting project for our volunteers to help



and participate in. They were asked to assist during the rehearsals by gathering all the people, signing them up and helping them with any questions they might have. We also asked our volunteers to spread some flyers and posters of the 100% Plovdiv performance. Of course, the volunteers that helped were welcome to come and see the end result of their hard work at the actual performances.



## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN OCTOBER

03.10	Urban Games & Plovdiv Jazz Fest
10.10	Walk the Plank
17.10	Create the story workshop
24.10	Urban Games
31.10	Halloween party and Social Games

## OCTOBER EVENTS

The first weekend of October was busy with the Love Swing Dance Festival 2019. In its four-day programme during 2019, the festival included daily swing dance lessons with some of the best teachers in the world, international competitions for different categories and ages, evening shows with a festive programme and live music from international bands,



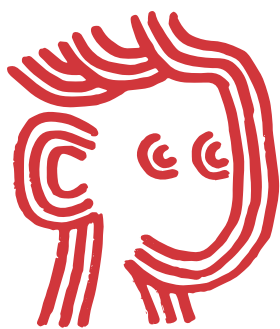




as well as a fun walk through the center of Plovdiv. Another interesting event at the beginning of the month was the 'Forum 2019: RoUm Plovdiv' event. RoUm is an artistic and entrepreneurial approach to recycling unnecessary items and transforming them into new creative products. They needed the help of our volunteers with photographers, videographers and translators during this workshop. Lastly, during the whole month of October, Sklad hosted



the interesting Graphema exhibition. 'Grafema' is a system of calligraphic typefaces which started off as handwritten works using a flat brush and Indian ink on paper. The main distinctive features are the differing angles of the instrument and the natural texture formed by the brush strokes. The exhibition featured compositions created mainly with the typeface but enhanced with various experimental calligraphic techniques. The exhibition was accompanied by a series of objects morphing from a 2D to 3D shape and presented the unique shape and exquisiteness of each letter of the Bulgarian alphabet. Our volunteers assisted with safeguarding the exhibition during the whole month between 10:00 and 18:00 during the week and weekend.



## OCTOBER VOLUNTEER BLOG FESTIVAL MATERADIO

Written by Lyuben Branzalov



*As a volunteer and part of the volunteer programme in Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture 2019 I had the chance to visit Matera, which is the partner Capital of Culture for 2019, situated in Italy. I had a warm welcome by Nora Todorova – she is a volunteer of the foundation Matera Basicilata 2019. She gave me my passport for Matera 2019, which made me a temporary citizen and gave me the ability to visit all the events which are part of the programme for free until January 2020. The first day I arrived I had the chance to visit one of the offices of the foundation Matera 2019 and to attend a volunteer meeting for the festival Materadio. The meeting was a base on top of which were built the moral values of the volunteers. To be a volunteer is an honor and responsibility! The organizer of the festival Rebecca Raponi was talking about the help that we were going to give and the importance of the things we were doing for the locals and for the visitors to the city and the festival. As volunteers it is our duty to be attentive to details and to keep safe the place and the people which are part of the events.*

*The second day in the morning we had a meeting with Michele Zaza, a professor in Archeology who gave us a fantastic tour of Matera. We started from the Conservatory of Music. We spoke about music and how it is a very important part of culture. After that we went to the Cathedral of Matera. It had a lot of archeological excavations and beautiful exhibits. Walking through Sassi di Matera we saw the production of the movie James Bond. We also visited Casa Grotta – a cave dwelling where people lived until 1948. We managed to visit*



the archeological museum with our passports. There was an exhibition of Leonardo Da Vinci's work and other archeological exhibits from the Roman Empire and the ancient Greek gods. The third day was the beginning of the festival Materadio which featured different places in the city of cultural value. At those places there were events and concerts from different music styles – classical, pop, Irish and folklore music from the region of Basilicata. From the early morning we were helping in the 'Village', a place which was built specifically for the festival and was made out of wood, by the Foundation. In the evening we attended a Contemporary Art exhibition in Cavo Paradiso. The exhibition was related to the rich diversity of gestures in Italy. Pictures and old belongings from people's homes were used to portray people's bodies making these gestures. The exhibition was accompanied by contemporary dances of young and old. The citizens of Matera were taking part in these dances and even I managed to feel the magic and expressionism of the gestures. The fourth day was really important, a big part of the programme was happening on this day. The Italian Concert by Rinaldo Alessandrini was a performance I will not forget. The representatives from Galway arrived and we had the chance to greet them. We were also interviewed about Materadio and our experience in Matera. The last day of the festival was great with a lot of important moments. The volunteers helped with one of the showcases on the main stage. We showed pictures of the proposal to UNESCO to expand the protected areas in Matera. After that there were a lot of dances and pictures accompanied by Italian and Irish cords. The finale of the festival was full of positive emotions and moments between people from different cultures. All the volunteers were on stage to say goodbye to all the people in Matera.

The day after the festival ended, we had 1 free day to explore Matera and we went to Sassi di Matera. The breakfast we had in between the ancient stones and streets was magical. We had the chance to visit Chiesa di Santa Maria Di Idris, a cave church carved in the stones. Taking pictures in this sacred place was

*forbidden. We had lunch and went into an underground cistern which was used in the past by the inhabitants of the city to store rainwater for everyday use. The same night we travelled to the other side of the Sassi called Murdzha to explore the caves and watch the sunset with a very big group of volunteers. We were walking through thousands of years old caves which were carved in the stone and saw a fantastic view of Matera. I'm grateful to the foundations Plovdiv 2019 and Matera 2019 for the opportunity to be a part of this project for developing the international and friendly relationship between the current and future Cultural Capitals of Europe. I will work for the sustainability and development of this collaboration. Together building the Open Future.*





## THE ONE THAT IS JAZZY

On the first weekend of November, Plovdiv has its annual Jazz Fest. Plovdiv Jazz Fest was established in 2015 and since then it has become a highly anticipated event in Plovdiv. This year the programme was full of new and interesting artists such as Maria João and Mário Laginha, Kurt Rosenwinkel Trio, John Scofield & Jon Cleary and Peter



Slavov Quartet. Also present, were our volunteers! They were there to help with promoting the event by handing out leaflets, with backstage work and photographers! It was a great opportunity for them to learn more about the Jazz genre, and attend performances by great musicians.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER

07.11	Theater and acting workshop
14.11	5th of December – International Volunteer Day
21.11	Closing event Plovdiv 2019
28.11	Walk the Plank – meet the team

## NOVEMBER EVENTS



Another interesting event that happened in November was the Urban Games festival. This was the first co-produced festival by 2 European Capitals of Culture and took place during the Plotera Weeks, celebrating Plovdiv and Matera 'Together for an Open Future'. During the festival we had 5 different games that took place in different spots around the







city. Some involved clues and puzzles, others were more active. The games were designed by people from different countries all over Europe, and were brought together by this festival. Overall it was a great event for which we needed many volunteers. We needed 1–6 volunteers, depending on the game, to assist with the games. Sometimes this involved translating for the game leaders, other times it would involve the volunteers explaining the rules of the games to the participants and help them with any questions they might have. Next to the Urban Games, there was another interesting project called Rapture and Rage. This was an event with 2 performances that explored where the attraction of fundamentalism and radical communitarisation comes from. We needed our volunteers to assist with handing out flyers and brochures for the performances. Lastly, at the beginning of November we held an interesting forum called Empatheat. It focused on the change needed in a radicalized world, and gave participants the opportunity to share their stories and opinions. They needed the help of our volunteers to prepare the space and assist with the logistics and marketing of the event.



VOLUNTEER BLOG NOVEMBER  
**FUSION – URBAN GAMES FESTIVAL**

Written by Alexander Manolov



*As a volunteer for Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture 2019, I had the amazing opportunity to visit Matera – the other Capital of Culture for 2019 which is situated in Italy. After flying to Rome and travelling from Rome to Matera by bus I had a warm welcome by Nora Todorova – a volunteer of Matera Basilicata 2019. She gave me my passport for Matera 2019, which made me a temporary citizen and gave me free access to all the events in the programme. I was hosted by other volunteers who take part in organizations for the European Volunteer Service. Our hosts were Pija and Sara Weihing from Germany.*

*On the first day after my arrival, I met the volunteers from Matera, including Carla di Grazia and Francesco Caldarola. Carla is taking care of the volunteers' organisation while Francesco is an expert in development and relations in the foundation. I am extremely grateful to them because it's thanks to them that this experience in Matera was so awesome. We discussed our tasks together with them. Fusion - Urban Games Festival's programme offered something for everyone – treasure hunts, activity games, board games, virtual reality, etc. In the evening, together with Ailen Mendoza, a truly amazing volunteer, we had the opportunity to see the old town and visit Sassi di Matera. The most popular of them is Sasso Caveoso. Just like in Kapana, there are many narrow streets where you can get lost any second. In order to see the whole city, one would need at least 4-5 free days. Matera was awarded World Heritage Site status by UNESCO in 1993. (...)*

*All the volunteers were very polite to us. Some of them didn't speak any English, but thanks to Nora, no language barrier*

*existed. The two girls who hosted us were extremely kind as well. All Italians thought the best of us and enjoyed the festival. Not all the local people and tourists knew much about Plovdiv and Bulgaria, but I believe they enjoyed learning something new.*



*I am eternally grateful to the Plovdiv 2019 and Matera 2019 foundations for providing us with this amazing opportunity and for the great understanding and teamwork between the current and future Cultural Capitals of Europe. Special thanks to Kami Clifton – one of the coordinators in the Plovdiv 2019 foundation – for I learned about this opportunity from her. I will keep taking part in the development of the relationship between Plovdiv and Matera. For creating an Open Future Together.*



## THE ONE WITH THE TREE

In the beginning of our program we planted a tree (a voluntree) #together with our volunteers which became a symbol of the message we wanted to send at the end of the year – that we planted the roots during 2019 and that we are hoping to Grow together for the future.

Our partners from Walk the Plank – UK organized School



of Participation that took place between the 29th of November and 6th of December. During this period 25 local and international creative practitioners from 8 different countries and volunteers were involved in the project. There was training and workshops for lantern making, sound editing and other artistic techniques that helped them to create an outdoor installation. We also had a campaign for gathering messages from citizens and guests of Plovdiv to



collect their wishes for the city. The volunteers created 10 boxes and placed them at different locations. Inside them everyone could make their #wishforPlovdiv. All the wishes that we gathered were used to decorate the 62 lanterns during the workshops. Their messages were also recorded as a soundtrack that was played during the event. About 60 volunteers attended the lantern making workshops and created their own lanterns. On the 5th of December, more than 80 volunteers joined us for the procession from SKLAD to Yadroto in Kapana to bring the lanterns to the Volunteer tree installation, for the lanterns to “light up” the tree. Three stilts walkers, one bagpipe player, one singer, pre recorded voices of citizens and more than 50 chimes helped create the magical atmosphere of the event.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN DECEMBER

05.12	International Volunteer Day
12.12	Feedback from the International volunteer day and presenting the Legacy
19.12	Secret Santa and karaoke party

## DECEMBER EVENTS



Some other events that happened during the course of December were the weekly Natural farmers market, extra performances of Odysseus, the final Archaeology for All tours and performances by the Puppet theater. The volunteers gave us great feedback from the event on the 5th and we presented the final content of the Volunteer Legacy.



Just before Christmas, we organized a Secret Santa meeting where the volunteers exchanged presents, and which finished with a karaoke party.



## VOLUNTEER BLOG DECEMBER A PERFORMANCE WITHOUT REHEARSAL

Written by Tatyana Garkavaya



*The fairy-like procession for International Volunteer Day wowed Plovdiv, illuminating its streets with lanterns and filling the air with sounds of a bagpipe. The impressive event was a unique collaboration of ordinary people and creative practitioners. It ended with the distinctive Bulgarian folk dance that united the multinational collaborators around the installation created by them specially for the occasion. The multicultural team of the European School of Participation that worked on the event had only one week to translate their ideas into practice, and no time for trials.*

*Why create arts with a community?*

*The project was organized in Plovdiv by the British outdoor arts company Walk the Plank, and Creative Europe, the European Commission's programme, in collaboration with Plovdiv 2019 Foundation. The group of trainees at the School was made up of EU and non-EU participants: Bulgarian creative practitioners, representatives of the future European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) Kaunas (Lithuania), Tartu (Estonia), Veszprem (Hungary), and Coventry (the UK City of Culture 2021). And, additionally, arts professionals from Serbia, Armenia, Ukraine and Russia also took part. The occupations of the collaborators were as diverse as their cultural backgrounds, and ranged from art teachers, to dancers to puppet makers and community activists.(...)*

*The most difficult task of the training was the process of finding feasible ideas for connecting the tangible and intangible elements of the future show. At first sight, all*





*the parts of the event mismatched somewhat: the Plovdiv Volunteers' 2019 symbols, the Bulgarian horo (folk dance), a Balkan bagpiper, Chinese lanterns, a tree composition in a postmodern style, impressive actors on stilts, and unfulfilled wishes from Plovdiv's residents... A series of special sessions organized by the team of British and Bulgarian professionals helped the participants to make sense of the offered components and create quite an appealing creative example of public art.*

*The tree group worked on the biggest element of the installation - a creative composition of a tree, a symbol of constant growth and development of the volunteer movement. The main function of the composition was to safely hold lanterns in a public place, so it had to be quite robust and stable. The Bulgarian painter, carver, musician and composer Veselin Mitev (Vesko) helped the team to effectively address the safety and aesthetic issues together with the teams from the future ECOCs and Coventry, the UK City of Culture 2021. At the same time, due to his diverse creative specializations, Vesko was participating in the activities of the sound team as well. In collaboration with the British sound designer Dan Steel, the participants created a very original composition for which they mixed Bulgarian folk motives with recorded wishes from Plovdiv's residents. Other parts of the show's musical elements were a bagpipe composition performed by Vesko and the traditional folk song from Kyustandil 'Lepa Yano, mori' performed by the British singer Anna-Sophia Menato during the final performance in Kapana Creative District. Tested in Plovdiv, can be used elsewhere.*



## THE ONE WHERE IT ALL FINISHED

In January we made a full circle and finished the year by organizing a Closing weekend filled with events and an official ceremony for handing over the title. There were 14 different events happening on the 10, 11 and 12 of January across the city – exhibitions, workshops, concerts and activities for children. Over 55 volunteers helped during the



weekend with different tasks – photography, meeting and greeting official guests, preparing gift bags and working backstage. The Closing ceremony took place at the Boris Hristov House of Culture and had a live streaming in Lucky cinema. Directed by the head of Plovdiv State Opera Nina Naidenova, the programme for the 2020 event revolved around Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, meant to symbolise Plovdiv 2019’s four platforms: Fuse, Transform, Revive and Relax.



Joining the festivities were Plovdiv children who have won awards at various music competitions and a chamber orchestra led by Bulgarian violin virtuoso Lia Petrova. Representatives from Rijeka 2020 and Galway 2020 received a fragment stone figure with the engraved words 'Staying Together'. One of the representatives, the Mayor of Galway, made a speech in which he expressed gratitude towards the two Irish volunteers who were helping the



official guests during the weekend. The two Wavemakers arrived in Plovdiv especially for our Closing ceremony and two Plovdiv volunteers will be sent to support the Opening of Galway 2020 in February.

## WEEKLY MEETINGS IN JANURAY 2020

09.01	Preparation for the Closing event
16.01	Feedback from the Closing event and Valentines for the next Capitals of Culture
23.01	What's next for the Volunteer programme?
30.01	Cultural calendar of the Municipality and Citizen club

## JANUARY EVENTS

We will all remember how active and filled with events were the last 12 months and how much they helped us to grow. But as often happens, end sometimes means a



new beginning and proof for this is the Legacy programme that Plovdiv 2019 overtook for the next two years. The Foundation decided to dedicate the Melina Mercouri Prize to the legacy and initiated a new Open call for projects. Exciting new events are awaiting us in 2020 and our volunteers are ready to take the challenge.



VOLUNTEER BLOG JANUARY  
**LET'S CREATE #TOGETHER!**  
Written by Anastacia Kehayova



*Kind, helpful and communicative; devoted to the cause; positive and reliable; organized; active; selfless... "There is no such man in the world", somebody might say... But not only does he exist, but he also spends his free time daily to support the cause, he is motivated to work, despite being unpaid, he is constantly inspired by one's fellow companions so that #TOGETHER they create worlds, tell stories and build up bridges between the centuries. He is a volunteer of Plovdiv 2019 – European Capital of Culture.*

*You see him everywhere – distributing the monthly programme of Plovdiv 2019, showing foreign guests around town, meeting you at the entrance of some bar or entertaining you during an event. You admire his willingness and energy and wonder how you can be like him...*

*And then you reach the point when you visit a weekly volunteer meeting on Thursday at 6.00 pm at the building of Plovdiv 2019 (16 Ekzarh Iosif St), become part of the big volunteer family and start contributing to the well-being of your town. You learn new and interesting facts about Plovdiv 2019 and join one of our special organization teams, where there is no generation gap and all you need is initiative and sense of belonging to the community and the #TOGETHER idea.*

*The end of the story we leave to you, however, we would like to remind you that you are a talented, unique and valued person and you owe it to yourself to have these experiences of making new acquaintances, develop your skills, everlasting memories and, of course, the biggest reward of the volunteer – overcoming oneself, getting out of one's comfort zone and perceiving the most notable feature of togetherness – sacrifice.*

#together





# Our Most Active Volunteers



[Check out our showreel!](#)

Ada Gerginska  
Aleksandar Atanasov  
Aleksandar Hadzhinedelchev  
Aleksandar Manolov  
Aleksandar Maznev  
Aleksandra Atanasova  
Aleksandra Draginova  
Aleksandra Momchilova  
Alia Paraskova  
Alime Musova  
Ameliya Nikolova  
Andrea Izmirova  
Angel Angelov  
Angelina Kostadinova  
Angelina Titeryakova  
Angelina Yaneva  
Ani Ivanova  
Ani Rishova  
Ani Stoynova  
Anita Balabosova  
Anna Velkova  
Anna Vulkova  
Antoaneta Beligashkova  
Antoaneta Boycheva  
Antoniya Baeva  
Antoniya Kalpakchieva  
Asklipios Pandis  
Atanas Cholakov  
Blagovest Ilchevski  
Bojidar Kostadinov  
Bojidara Petrova  
Boryana Buyuklieva  
Boyana Kostadinova  
Daniel Vylchanov  
Daniela Georgieva  
Daria Vasileva  
Darina Boncheva  
Dayana Ivanova  
Denislava Zlatanova  
Denitsa Atanasova  
Desislava Todorova  
Desislava Zasheva  
Dimana Petkova  
Dimitar Atanasov  
Dimitar Ferdinandov  
Dimitar Pisachev  
Dimitar Spasov  
Dimitar Toshkov  
Djemal Kiselov  
Donika Miteva  
Edoardo Campo  
Elena Gurgenidze  
Eliza Musa  
Elora Pavlova  
Emanuela Artale  
Emel Murad  
Emel Musova  
Emil Petrov  
Emili Kadir  
Emiliya Drenska

Eneya Eneva  
Evelin Todorov  
Freya Brasse  
Gabriela Stankova  
Galya Marinova  
Georgi Beshirov  
Gergana Georgieva  
Geri Georgieva  
Hristina Mihaylova  
Hristo Andreev  
Hristo Lozev  
Iliana Kozanova  
Iliya Iliev  
Irina Aliova  
Iva Ilieva  
Ivan Dagov  
Ivan Kosev  
Ivan Stoyanov  
Ivana Ivanova  
Ivanka Hristova  
Ivaylo Nazlamov  
Ivaylo Nikolov  
Ivaylo Petkov  
Ivelina Ivanova  
Ivelina Nacheva  
Izabel Spasova  
Jaklin Nalbandyan  
Jivka Petrova  
Julia Petkova  
Juliana Gacheva  
Kalin Martin Tsarev  
Kalina Kuzmanova  
Kalina Tilova  
Krasimir Hristov  
Krasimir Krastev  
Kristina Daneva  
Kristina Dimitrova  
Kristina Kopp

Lora Panayotova  
Lyuben Branzalov  
Lyubomir Proychev  
Lyubomira Geneva  
Magdalena Nikolova  
Maria Korhonen  
Maria Nesheva  
Maria Neshtereva  
Maria Tasheva  
Maria Varsanova  
Marinela Stefanova  
Mariyan Karakiev  
Martina Dimitrova  
Matei Nikolov  
Mia Miteva  
Mihaela Stanchovska  
Mihail Gerchev  
Mila Drenska  
Mila Kromicheva  
Milen Peev  
Milena Ivanova  
Nadejda Ganeva  
Nadejda Velikova  
Nadin Hamud  
Nadya Djevizova  
Nancy Sergieva  
Nestor Boli Galindo  
Nikol Delcheva  
Nikolay Dimitrov  
Nikolay Georgiev  
Nikolay Metodiev  
Nikolay Salutski  
Nikolay Vasilev  
Nikoleta Ostreva  
Nikoleta Raycheva  
Nikoleta Trifonova  
Nina Yordanova-Petrova  
Pavlina Elenska



Penka Marinova  
Petar Solakov  
Petra Nacheva  
Petya Mincheva  
Petya Mitskovska  
Petya Petkova  
Plamena Miteva  
Preslava Djondjorova  
Preslava Ploshtakova  
Preslava Stoyanova  
Rada Lambreva  
Radina Ruseva  
Radka Marinova  
Radoslav Kanev  
Radoslav Tonev  
Radost Miteva  
Ralina Kamzhalova  
Romy Geschiere  
Savina Stoyanova  
Savina Trifonova  
Silvia Stanton  
Simeon Peev  
Sofia Manolova  
Stanimir Karadjov  
Stefani Dragusheva  
Stefka Bodurova  
Stela Georgieva  
Stéphanie Issakova  
Tanya Dimova

Tanya Marinova  
Tatyana Garkavaya  
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Teodora Ram  
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Vasil Vasilev  
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Viktoriya Marinova  
Vladimir Drandarov  
Yavor Marinov  
Yoana Kashkavaldjieva  
Yoana Penisheva  
Yoana Zaharieva  
Zarko Stoyanov



# #Together



All good things must come to an end, and so does this Legacy and our year as Plovdiv – European Capital of Culture 2019. During the year of Plovdiv 2019, we have had our ups and downs. However, we always worked #together and made sure all of the projects and events were successfully executed. We couldn't have done it without you, and we wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Your contribution has been so valuable to us, and our projects. We have achieved more than we would have thought, and it's all because of your help! We are proud of our volunteers, our city and our year as European Capital of Culture.

We truly appreciate everything you have done to make this year a success and we hope that you learned, laughed and enjoyed the volunteer experience. Let's stay #together and continue the positive changes in Plovdiv.

Plovdiv 2019 team

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Good luck to the next European Capitals of Culture  
and their volunteers

**2020** \_\_\_\_\_  
GALWAY (Ireland) *and* RIJEKA (Croatia)

**2021** \_\_\_\_\_  
TIMIȘOARA (Romania), ELEFSINA (Greece)  
*and* NOVI SAD (Serbia)

**2022** \_\_\_\_\_  
KAUNAS (Lithuania) *and* ESCH (Luxembourg)

**2023** \_\_\_\_\_  
VESZPRÉM (Hungary)

**2024** \_\_\_\_\_  
TARTU (Estonia), BODØ (Norway, EFTA/EEA country)  
*and* BAD ISCHL (Austria)

gobpo  
III Волец

 **PLOVDIV 2019**  
European Capital of Culture

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