

BALKAN HOTSPOT

ESC Media Lab Project



Thessaloniki, Greece

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ABOUT U.S.B.

United Societies of Balkans (U.S.B.) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Thessaloniki, Greece, working in the field of youth mobility, participation and promoting youth awareness of social issues. It was founded in 2008 by the initiative of a group of active young people who wanted to address the social issues which affect the youngsters in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.



OUR GOALS

The goal of the organisation is the promotion of youth mobility, youth involvement and participation, voluntarism and human rights.

We make it through:

- Promoting the values of non formal learning, voluntarism, active citizenship and democracy for the creation of a better future for the European youth;
- Involving minorities and immigrants into youth activities;
- Building healthy cooperation bridges between countries in the area of the Balkans and Eastern Europe with the rest of Europe;
- Using New Media and Citizens' Journalism methodologies to encourage youth expression, to raise awareness of Human Rights and to promote intercultural dialogue;
- Utilizing arts as a tool for the cultivation and expression of youth;
- Breaking down prejudices and stereotypes among the European countries and amongst youth.



ABOUT THESSALONIKI

Thessaloniki is the second biggest city in Greece, and it is located in the North-East part of the country. It is a coastal city full of life, with a lots of young people and students. It has served as the European Youth Capital in 2014. It is also a city with a long history and tradition.

It has always been a crossroad between the West and the East and a trading harbor for many Balkan countries. It embraces many immigrants and cultural groups from many areas of the wider region of the Balkans, which renders it a colorful mosaic of cultures and trends.

More information is available on the website of the municipality: www.thessalonikicity.gr



ABOUT BALKAN HOTSPOT

The 'Balkan Hotspot' Project has been running since 2009, with more than 180 volunteers having been hosted by our organisation. The main activities of the project are related to Web Media:

- blog
- online magazine
- radio & podcast
- social media
- video & photography

Through these tools, the volunteers, in cooperation with the youth of the local community will contribute to create and maintain a space of free expression and communication among young people, always within the context of the subjects, the principles and the goals of the ESC Programme.



PERSONAL PROJECT

We truly believe that for volunteers the European Solidarity Corps is an opportunity to learn, to improve themselves and to discover and develop their personality and competences.

For this reason we encourage our volunteers to develop a personal project besides the daily work for Balkan Hotspot project.

With the support of their Mentor the volunteers will develop a concrete personal plan with the objective of creating a personal project based on their own interests and goals.

Note: the personal projects are addressed to long-term volunteers only.



WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

The selection of the participants is mostly based on their motivation and personal interest in the topics of the project.

Our ideal volunteer candidate is an open minded person willing to learn, to improve her/himself and to help other people. It is important to be ready to work in a team and to share the daily life with people from different backgrounds.

It is not necessary to have a previous technical knowledge of media. Although it is not required to have a high level of English, the volunteers need to have at least a basic knowledge of the language for their everyday communication with international and local people but also for their safety.



VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The activities in which the volunteer will be involved are:

- Organisation and development of documentaries.
- Organisation and development of the online magazine "Balkan Beats".
- Management of the website and its social networks.
- Organisation and participation in special events and meetings organised by the project, especially during dates dedicated to EU or Human Rights.
- Workshops organised by USB. The three workshop on Media (mandatory) plus the Creativity and Cultural Activities Coordination Workshops (optional).
- Deliver workshops for the other volunteers as well as for locals based on their skills and knowledge.
- Participation in some public events or festivals, such as the International Film Festival of Thessaloniki.



DAILY WORK

The volunteers usually work in shift of 4 hours per day from Monday to Friday. The organisation can ask them to work more hours or during the weekends if needed, for maximum of 35 hours per week.

Every Monday there is a meeting with the Coordinator to check the working plan of the previous week and schedule the working plan for the next week. Individual or group meetings will be organised with the Mentor to talk about their personal project and development.

The volunteers have the right to get two free days per month for which they must ask 2 weeks in advance to the Volunteer Coordinator except for very urgent reasons. They will have free days during Greek national holidays too.



LANGUAGE & YOUTHPASS

We provide Greek language courses with a Greek teacher, however, we try to encourage volunteers to learn the language through non formal learning, participating in events. This is an important activity organised with the cooperation of other organisations.

Youthpass is the official recognition tool for non-formal & informal learning in youth projects. Through it participants of Erasmus+ projects can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt.

Volunteers have to keep a diary of their activities and learning in order to fullfill it properly at the end of their project. The Mentor is the responsible for the Youthpass and will support the volunteers for it.



ACCOMMODATION

Volunteers are going to be accommodated in a fully equipped building located in the city centre (Anagnostara, 13) near the main bus and train station of the city. It is an autonomous 5 floored building of 150 m2 per floor and a terrace on the 6th floor. There are two living rooms and a big kitchen, showers in the common floors and toilets in every floor. In the building there are also accommodated the volunteers who participate in other projects in the city coordinated by our organisation. Each volunteer will share their room with one or three more people of the same gender (we have double and big quadruple rooms). In the building are living up to 35 volunteers. More info about the rules are in the residence statute. There are also single rooms for people with special needs or for interns. Wireless internet is available in the whole building. The volunteers are responsible for the daily cleaning of their own spaces as well as the common spaces.



FOOD POLICY

We provide our volunteers with three meals per day through a catering service that prepares the food according to their preferences and allergies (also if they are vegan or vegetarian). In this way the volunteers will have the possibility to get in contact with the Greek cuisine and culture, but at the same time on Saturdays and Sundays they can cook and enjoy their own food. In the weekly days the House Tender will prepare the breakfast. The kitchen is always available for the volunteers if they want to cook something more or add ingredients to their food.



HEALTH INSURANCE

The participants will have a private insurance by CIGNA, which covers all their needs for the whole duration of their project and even after that (for a few months). The registration to the insurance is made by the Sending organisation. A network of doctors and hospitals is already available in order to meet all their needs, even the most urgent. The Mentor is responsible for all the issues connected with health and insurance.



BUDGET

The travel costs are covered by the association until a limit based on the distance between Thessaloniki and the hometown of the volunteer. At the beginning of each month the volunteers will take the money for the whole month calculated in the following way: a pocket money, 5 euros per day plus 5 extra euros per day for the weekends, days off and official holidays of Greece (in these day the organisation will not provide meals).

The organisation will provide a monthly pass for the local transportation. Entrances to festival or events where volunteers go for activities connected to the project will be paid by the organisation. The volunteers can refer also to the Volunteer Coordinator about what they need to buy for the house or for special funding for their personal projects. The Volunteer Coordinator delivers the monthly financial needs to the President of the organisation in order to approve them according with the budget availability



COOPERATION WITH THE S.O. & U.S.B. NETWORK

A strong cooperation between the sending and the hosting organisation is very important for the good progress of the project. The sending organisation has to communicate with the volunteers and keep a report of their educational process and their daily life. The Volunteer Coordinator provides feedback to the sending organisation about the fulfilled tasks and the Mentor will communicate about personal issues of the volunteer.

United Societies of Balkans is also coordinating other ESC project in the city. The volunteers hosted by other organisations are accommodated at the same building of our volunteers. There might be several activities where the volunteers of the network will participate all together. This network also help the volunteers to know more about what is going on in the city and about other issues faced by the other organisations. The Network's Coordinator support the other coordinators' project and is the responsible for the common activities and events.



USEFUL LINKS

- European Youth Portal: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en
- Project website: www.balkanhotspot.org
- Thessaloniki's info: www.thessalonikicity.gr
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Follow us on social media:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BalkanHotspot.org>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/balkanhotspot/>
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