

WHERE: Dolnośląskie Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Dzieciom i Młodzieży z MPDz Ostoja
CITY: Wrocław/Poland (capital of Lower Silesia region; 632 430 inhabitants)
HOW LONG: 01/09/2016 – 31/08/2017

Info about Receiving Organization – OSTOJA

Wrocław is the capital of the Lower Silesian region and one of the biggest cities in Poland with the population of about 750 000. It is situated in the south-western part of Poland, not far from the German and Czech borders. The big part of the region, south from Wrocław are mountainous areas, many of them being Polish favorite holiday destinations. The Lower Silesia region was Polish, Czech, Austro-Hungarian and German and at different points of its history and therefore its cultural and historic heritage is multicultural and very impressive. Wrocław itself is a beautiful city with many historic sites and very friendly atmosphere. It is a lively academic town and hosts many cultural and arts festivals. Our Association's centers are spread around Wrocław and in Środa Śląska. The transport links are excellent, and many important points are within walking distance. It is accessible for wheelchairs and easy to get to, because these are the basic criteria for our clients.

For last 10 years we used to host around 40 EVS volunteers and 10 from Grundvig project from different European countries. The profile of the EVS volunteers was always different - starting from very young and unexperienced persons, ending up on young professionals graduated of social studies. All of them found their comfortable place to work, and had a lot of satisfaction. The two advantages of our placement are: 1) our professional staff is always there, ready for help in any case, 2) a young volunteer can feel really needed, can feel sense of dedicating part of her/his energy for people who need them so much. And they receive a lot in return- people's smile, closeness and friendship.

Our organization consists of several centers, each of them has its own profile:

The Rehabilitation-Educative Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy. The clients of this center are deeply disabled children, majority with Children Brain Paralysis, a lot of them don't speak, don't walk, and have very limited contact with the outside world. The proposed therapy there are: physiotherapy, speech lessons therapy, room of the world experience, pedagogy therapy etc. There are circa 60 children, aged 3-25. They work mostly with 3-5 children and 2 professionals (special educator, protector for help) in 1 group. The place is open from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. (common room 2 p.m.-4 p.m.)

Youth rehabilitation - therapy center. The afternoon occupation for youth disabled working or practicing people. Also for youth with less disability who couldn't get place in Workshop of Occupational Therapy. This place is also for wheel-chair group. The place is open from 3 p.m. till 6 p.m., for people 20-40 years old, circa 70 persons. Different skills and interests can be developed here: sports, artistic (art-therapy, ceramic, movie group) cultural activities, communication skills, also work support and psychologist support. Within the activities the groups visit different exhibitions, movie, theater etc.

KLEKS. This center belongs to Youth Rehabilitation -Therapy Centre (kind of common room/ club for youth). There are 15 participants, aged 25-40 less and moderately disabled. The center is open from 8 a.m. till 2 p.m., the clients can come between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m., from

2 p.m. till 4 p.m. there is individual work with deeply disabled persons. There are 3 therapists, who work here permanently. Each day in the week is connecting with practicing one activity, for example Monday - educational day, Tuesday- workshop (artistic) day, Wednesday - music therapy, Thursday-reeducation, Friday – cooking & cleaning day. Every day from 8-9 they have gymnastic.

Workshop of Occupational Therapy. It's one of the biggest in the Poland. In this place they prepare disabled people to participate in aid employment, practicing how to be independent in their own life, exercising some life and personal skills. Some of the participants are making job practice during attending the center (e.g. cleaning, making salads in the fast-food shops). There are 100 participants, aged 19-55, moderately and deeply intellectual disabled, also mental, with autism and cerebral palsy. The workshop is open between 7.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. There are 13 workshop groups: nature; cleaning; preparation for the job (aid employment), computer usage; digitizing documents; photography; household; art-therapy; ceramic; manufacture (artistic handy-craft); music; wooden craft; personal skills training. There is also gymnastic obligatory for everybody and also jogging group 3 times per week, also another activities like English lessons, dances leaded by volunteers. Some groups have 5 people +1 therapist, another 10 part. +2 therapists. Personnel working here: 20 therapists, 2 psychologists, physiotherapists, speech-therapists, re-educator, nurse, 2 managers. Activities, which are lead here: different projects, camps, participating and organizing art festivals and sport events, trips, visiting exhibitions, movie, theater etc.

Workshop of Occupational Therapy/Środa Śląska. Small workshop in small city, 30 km from Wroclaw, belonging to OSTOJA. This center doesn't have experience with hosting EVS volunteers yet (they have only local), but they want start to join in EVS project. In this place they also prepare disabled people to participate in aid employment, practicing how to be independent in their own life, exercising some life and personal skills. There are 30 participants, aged 25-50, less and moderately disabled, intellectual, mental also with autism and cerebral palsy. The workshop is open between 7.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. There are 5 workshop groups: computer & integration with European Union, nature&cleaning group, household, re-education & social skills, art-therapy. To this place volunteers have to go by suburban buses from Wroclaw, but it's not so complicated, takes circa 45 min. from Railway Station to center of Środa Śląska.

Role of EVS volunteers in the host organization

The first weeks after arriving will be entirely dedicated to introduction training on how to work with an intellectually retarded people and also the time to go and see all centers belonging to OSTOJA Association. There is official volunteers' coordinator in our association responsible for taking care of volunteers throughout the entire term of a project. Volunteers will help therapists during activities working in team or individually with one participant who has difficulty to fulfil the tasks. Depends on different profiles of ours centers part of the tasks should be also to help by dressing, feeding, cleaning during the workshops etc. The choice activities they will perform will be left to the volunteer's interests. Due to challenging target group, volunteer, in consultation with coordinator will always choose freely the activities

she/he would like to assist or perform. Volunteer will never stay alone with the group. After some time, when volunteer will get involved into the therapeutic work and know Polish language enough, she/he can carry out their own ideas and small project (for ex. dance workshop, English classes) with the participants. A young volunteer can not only learn about cerebral palsy therapy and methods, but first of all learn about himself, her/his limits, possibilities and predispositions. The volunteers will participate in many cultural, sports and others outdoor events with our participants. During the summer time volunteers can go with us for SLOT Art Festival where we participate every year, also join summer camps we organize in different parts of Poland (for ex. in the mountains and at lakes). This will also be an excellent opportunity for volunteers to see and experience Polish holiday resorts. We also greatly encourage our volunteers that they sometimes meet with our clients and workers outside work, so they could feel that they are friends. To avoid language gap we will encourage volunteers to master basic everyday Polish after arrival with coordinator and therapists from the center. There are ten Polish volunteers working in the centers. The EVS volunteer besides working together with them will be expected to organize some informal meetings in which they would exchange experiences with working with mentally disabled youth in different countries and learn from one another. Naturally volunteers are encouraged to dedicate some of their spare time to plan and prepare their own activities, with help of professionals. Especially welcome by the group members is to make a presentation about their country, to cook traditional meals, teach a national song or dance or something else which will surely be very interesting for the viewers. Every own idea is welcome!

As each of the center has its own profile, so the activities, proposed for volunteers could be also different.

At The Rehabilitation-Educative Centre for Children with Deep Intellectual Handicap they work with hard disabled children, so the work there is connected with help the special educators with their feeding, dressing, helping to move, stimulating the kids etc. (it's mostly physical work).

At Workshop of Occupational Therapy and Youth Rehabilitation-Therapy Center the volunteer will help therapists, work in groups or individually with more disable persons, going outside with group, teaching English or dance or... - own ideas are welcome.

Also going with participants to camps, trips, taking part in artistic festivals and projects.