
SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

For

Madara Zamarina, Latvia

Profile of the host organisation

ABCD Innovation Center is a non-profit organization which works with an approach that catalyzes change and development based on utilizing the existing gifts and capacities of young people and their communities. We are mostly implementing projects aimed at empowering young people, developing their communities, helping community members to understand the role of the humanity in the protection of the environment and promotion of the sustainable development. ABCD Innovation Center has huge experience in organizing various non-formal education projects in Kalavan village. Two years ago we decided to establish a social enterprise called Hooga House that is located in Kalavan village and implements rural tourism development projects and consequently addresses women and youth unemployment issues among rural people. Some of the rural young people work in the social enterprise, others do guided tours, young artisans conduct master classes for tourists and sell their products in the souvenir shop and other youth sell their agricultural products to the social enterprise like milk, fruits, vegetables etc. Basically we created a rural tourism social enterprise that affects the lives of almost every single young person in the area.

Learning from an outside view describing the input or feedback the trainee is offering

It was a great experience both for ABCD Innovation Center and Kalavan inhabitants. We saw the impact of short term traineeships and how one trainee can change the community life. More than 90% of the local villagers do not have an opportunity to travel outside of the country and with this project they had the possibility to get to know another culture and exchange views, experiences and practices.

The main activity that Madara conducted was so called "Language club" where she trained English and discussed different topics related to sustainable development with local children (and occasionally some adults). They spent about half of the classes learning the basic words and phrases to help children successfully have a simple conversation with foreigners visiting Kalavan. The other half was spent giving children more freedom in terms of specific discussion topics but also a bit more work since it was necessary to prepare for each lesson. The lessons were held in a manner that allowed participants to train different aspects of language – reading, listening and speaking. We tried to touch each of the sustainability dimensions – environmental, social and economic – and had lessons on topics as pollution, waste reduction, inequality

and community building. This was critically important for the village development because more and more foreign visitors go to Kalavan and it is vital to know English.

She also conducted a workshop on so called “customer routing” that is a method connected to design thinking. They were trying to understand the “customer” experience in the context of territorial development and generate ideas to improve that experience. To use this method in the most effective way and ultimately to produce specific, usable solutions, we chose one driving force for the development of the Kalavan village – tourism, which is the focus of much of the village's activities and jobs.

Madara also initiated a Kalavan clean-up initiative and around 15 people participated in it.



Evaluation

Overall this project had a great impact both on the trainee and the local village. Beneficiaries actively participated in all the initiatives and improved their language and communication skills. They also learnt about the Latvian culture because Madara was talking a lot about her culture as well as she did a presentation about Latvia. Besides, she brought different meals and drinks from Latvia.

Recommendations

As it has been mentioned many times in this report ABCD Innovation Center had the privilege to join this project and host two trainees from Latvia and Croatia. We do believe that the impact of this project is very significant both for the trainees and host organizations. Our main recommendation is to continue this initiative next year and increase the number of volunteers to at least six because what we have seen during this process is that the local community need this kind of projects and trainees really transform the life of the villages.