

# A VIEW FROM ABROAD

THE ESC VOLUNTEERS MAGAZINE



**INTERVIEW:  
FROM ESTONIA  
TO GREECE**



**HOW TO LIVE  
WITH 280  
EUROS?**

## How to Get Yourself Into the Christmas Spirit

As we all know, the holidays are approaching rather quickly. All the supermarkets are already decorated and selling Christmas cookies and candy, you can even hear the holiday music already (Yes, Michael Bublé and Mariah Carey, I am talking about you!). Although this year has been difficult for all of us, we can find lots of joy and comfort in the Christmas time. Lets take a look on some activities and preparations that help us getting ready for the holiday mood.



### 1. Stream christmas-themed movies

There should be christmast-themed movies for every taste from classic animations and family comedies to modern romantic films. You could even make a schedule for watching the films e.g. two films per every weekend. Here are some classic films that you could consider for the list: Home Alone series, It's A Wonderful Life, Love Actually, Die Hard (Yes, it counts as a Christmas movie), Grinch and The Polar Express.

### 2. Eat lots of good food

Christmas is the best time for eating. Since it's the ending of the year, gaining a few pounds wouldn't be the biggest problem because you can make a new year resolution for losing

some weight. Bake different Christmas-themed sugar or gingerbread cookies. Don't forget to decorate the cookies! There is a big selection of Christmas chocolate for every taste at the supermarkets. And of course don't forget to make a big cup of hot chocolate and enjoy it while wearing your favourite warm sweater.

### **3. Go for a walk in the City to watch the christmas lights**

There is something magical about Christmas lights! You can do it alone or ask a friend to join you. The best time to do it is later at the evening when the streets are more calm. Dress up warm and wear your favourite scarf and don't forget to make some hot chocolate for the walk.



### **4. Listen to Christmas music**

We talked about Christmas movies, but the music is even more important. Although Spotify has lots of Christmas playlists, making your own is always the best choice. Mix it up with all of your all-time favourite songs from Frank Sinatra to Pentatonix.

### **5. Spend time with family and friends**

During the pandemic this could be the most difficult one. If you aren't living with your family members or friends that isn't a problem at all. Have group video calls with your friends and

play different online games. Don't forget to call your grandma to ask for the best cooking advice for preparing the dinner for Christmas eve.

#### **6. Start thinking or preparing the presents for your closest family and friends**

Yes...the presents. The same headache but joy at the same time every year. It's better to start preparing the presents early so you could forget the stress of the last minute shopping. Prepare the budget and try to gift your closest ones something personal or things that they need in everyday life.

By Sten Taim



**EASY CLASS**

CULTURAL CENTER  
BABYLONIA



**Easy 'n' Silly  
GERMAN**



A German course that  
focuses on fun and teaches  
You along the way

## Mr. Corona and His Subjects

Here in our glistening house of reflection we live in the dark dim light, no shimmering sunlight to reflect on our virtues and vices, locked inside our little heads. Who are we to blame for this bad circumstance? God? Mother Nature? Karma? The Illuminati? The Lizards People? Willy Wonka? We do not know for certain, but one thing is: The situation we're in is continuous and harder and harder to manage through our everyday life. We miss the old days, days where this wasn't one of our problems, so we blame it for everything. We cannot grab Mr. Corona by his ear, take him into a room and BEAT THE LIVING \*\*\*\* OUT OF HIM telling him to „Don't you ever come back!“ While of course wearing a protective mask and gloves!



So I do not want to talk about the pandemic here, no, I want to talk about You. How someone is affected by the quarantine varies between each and every person. A very introverted person might like the time given to him by the quarantine. While a very extroverted type would just be unhappy for the lack of warmth and physical presence from others. In the end, we all need connection; to be heard and accepted, to be wanted and missed, welcomed and loved. I believe that quarantine is making us see much different parts of ourselves, ones we might not enjoy seeing, flaws we've left unrevealed and unconquered.

Let's imagine this horrible statement for a moment: „The pandemic is here, FOREVER!“ Terrible thought, isn't it. If we take that as an unending and unbending fact, what happens is that we start to change our perspectives. It allows us to ask the following questions: „Oi s\*\*\*, what can I do to fix this boring dissatisfaction?“ „What **can I do** to stop myself from blaming everything around me so I could be excused for being lazy, bored, depressed, angry and

apathetic... usually I would've gone out partying, drank and smoked but now I'm not getting any of it“ „...was that honestly my best way of solving my problems?“ „My best way of connecting with the people? The people I so love and care for.“ „Was there another way?“ These questions are easily pushed away, forgotten or ignored by in the presence of the pandemic. We focus on the outside rather than the inside. And now, in this moment, we have more free time than ever before, more time to spend with ourselves to ask ourselves what is it that's bothering us deeply and how can we fix it, some others even have the luxury to share it with a friend or family, more time to connect honestly, to communicate and listen honestly, to love honestly. Because that's the reason why we want to go outside: to live, to be engaged, to express and love but it all begins within ourselves. In the end the pandemic was not a horrible sky demon snowing death, but rather an opportunity (to get your grandmas insurance money) for learning and growth. The pandemic is real as we are, and since we cannot BEAT THE LIVING S\*\*\* OUT OF HIM, we can focus to eh.. idk where i was going with this. Okay bye.

made by Petar H. D. Keirs

# CONVERSATION CLASS IN ENGLISH

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A free class for everyone who wants to improve their conversational skills, communicate with other people and increase everyday vocabulary by easy and creative ways of learning.



**MONDAYS 16-17:30**  
**CULTURAL CENTER BABYLONIA**

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## 5 IDEAS FOR SURVIVING QUARANTINE

We are now entering the fifth week of lock-down and you have properly completed both Netflix and some of the other thousands of streaming services that the world wide web offers you. But winter is coming, the weather turns colder and there is not many golden hopes, that society will open up again in the nearest future. This time can be rough to everyone and looking into a winter without hugs, no big gatherings and cancelled Christmas shopping are just some of the not so uplifting impacts on every day life that coronavirus has caused. Therefore it is even more important to try creating a light in the darkness for yourself and do things, that will make you survive and maybe even enjoy this time. But what to do? Here are five new suggestions for surviving quarantine

### **Homemade Christmas gifts**

The lock-down has shut down all stores and shopping malls and this creates a possibility for rethinking your Christmas shopping habits. Why not make the Christmas presents for family and friends yourself this year? It is a great way to spend time in quarantine and as a side benefit you can save money and also feel good about not taking part in a unnecessary overconsumption. If you are the creative type of person there is lots of opportunities and you will never again have so much time for doing it as you have right now. Crocheting, knitting, sewing and painting are all relaxing activities, which all can lead to amazing results and who doesn't want a homemade customized sweater? But if you are neither an expert at the sewing machine nor a successor to Picasso in the atelier, a thoughtful gift can also be planning an upcoming event. Make a gift card for someone you love with a promise of something you will do, when the world becomes normal again. Plan a trip to the theater, invite your friend to a fancy restaurant or make a simple coupon for breakfast in bed. Good luck!

### **Treat yourself**

We have to remember, that we are living in a pandemic and it is okay not to feel mentally on top all the time. Cut yourself some slack and lower the expectations that you might have towards yourself. It is okay to take extra good care of your mental health these months and you should allow yourself to bring some luxury in the everyday life. Take a long bath, cook your favorite dish, treat yourself with something special or whatever works for you according to self care.



### **Help others**

The coronavirus is a big threat especially to the elderly and weakest part of society and if you have any chance to make a vulnerable person's life easier - then do it. If an elderly neighbor needs help for grocery shopping or if your own grandma has to send something at the post office offer to do it.

You will save them of the risk being around people and you will have a purpose for the day, which actually makes a difference for other people.

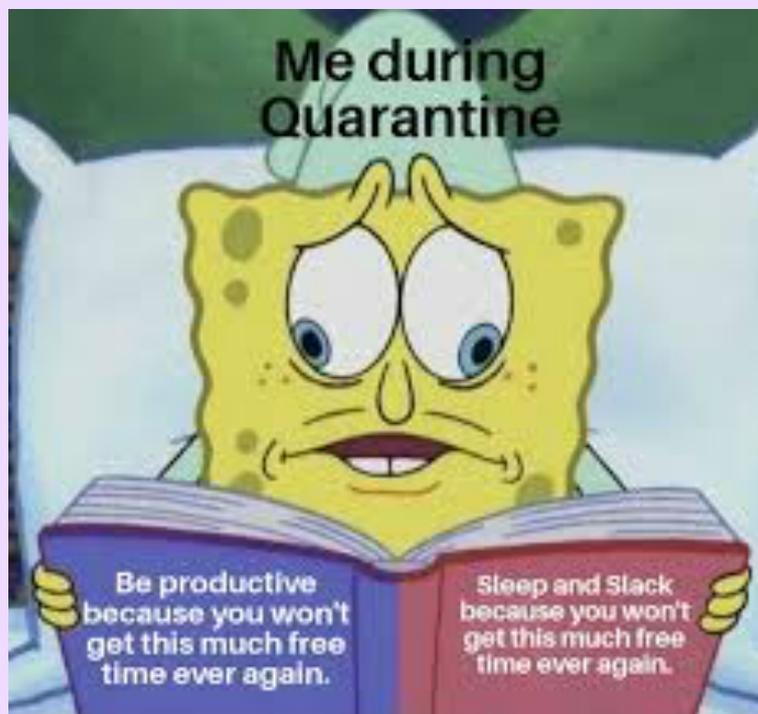
### **Exercising**

Now is the time, where there is no excuse for not exercising. If you work out regularly, you will know that the key to a successful and consistent workout regime is routine. And you surely already know the benefits of working out and keeping fit. Youtube is filled with inspiration for setting up a workout routine and there is no doubt that you will feel much for the rest of the day if you begin the day with breaking a sweat.

### **Sign up for online classes**

The pandemic has raged for so long now and more and more creative and innovative ideas pop up on the internet. Many big world famous attractions have putted up webcams and are making online tours for everyone and all you should do is just opening the laptop and google your heart out. Cultural Center Babylonia also offers different online classes and it is still possible to sign up on the webpage. Yoga, German, Theater and English classes have all moved to online platforms and the web meetings are a great way of educating yourself and socializing doing quarantine.

By Marie Østergaard



A NEW COURSE AT  
CULTURAL CENTER BABYLONIA

# THEATER & YOU

**CREATIVITY! PASSION! RULE BREAKING! CONFIDENCE!  
SUPRISE! FREEDOM! ORIGINALITY! EXCITEMENT! RELAX!  
SPEECH! EXPLOSION! JOKING! CRAZY! BAZOOKA! VOICE!  
RULE CREATING & BREAKING AGAIN! LOVE! SOMETIMES  
SAD. FUNNY! HAH! COURAGE! BRILLIANT! ALWAYS  
EXCITING!**

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR!?

## Surviving with 280 Euros In One Month As An ESC Volunteer



In every European Solidarity Corps project there is a certain amount of pocket and food money that is given to the volunteer at the beginning of the month. The amount of money is based on the local prices. In Greece, the foreseen amount is 280 which should cover the expenses that the volunteer makes on food or different expenses in their free time. In this article I'm going to describe my experience of the past two months in managing everyday expenses with 280 euros.

Let's talk about the first emotions. All my life I have considered myself as a person who is rather good in managing their different expenses. Back at home I didn't really spend that much money on different impulsive purchases and I was aware of the prices of different products. At first, coming to Greece proved that my management skills aren't the best. I think it was mostly because I wasn't really sure about the local prices (and of course I had to buy every single food or thing that felt exotic for me).

I should also mention that in our project, we get our allowance in cash (so if you want to rob someone, you should find all of us). People like to keep their money in different ways, I prefer to pay for everything using a card. Here I had to start paying in cash, which made me

lose the whole picture of my savings. I know the last sentence sounds funny and unlogical to many, but I prefer paying by card because everytime I make a purchase the bank app sends me a notification on my phone, which helps me to keep myself on track about my spendings.

In the middle of the month I decided to do the first calculations about how much have I spent. I found out that I had spent all of my monthly allowance, but how did it happen? The best answer for it is good emotions. I think that when you are in a environment or group of people that makes you feel nice about yourself you forgot the cost of things and just want to live in the moment. From that moment on I decided to remind myself that I need to be more aware of my expences, cause nobody wants to live on noodles and cheap cookies at the end of the month. By the end of the first month I had started to using my personal savings and I also had to give a pityfull call to my mom, so she could send me some food money.

At the beginning of the second month I was much more wiser with money (due to corona the shopping malls are closed and you can't spend money on useless stuff). This month I have spent money only on food and by my own suprise I have managed to keep an eye on the spendings quite well. So what can I say in conclusion. Lockdown is good for your financial situation because you can't spend money. I also need to mention that I have started to order less food and cook more at home, which is both healthier and cheaper. The last important thing to mention is that I have gotten over the first excitement of being here, so I have developed a more certain routine, which helps to spend less.

By Sten Taim

## Volunteering in Thessaloniki

The majority of the population in the world has this year spent much more time staying at home, than anybody imagined when we jumped into a new decade at new years eve. The quarantine and the first lock-downs around Europe and the rest of the world forced us to stay at home and called a halt to one of the biggest benefits of globalization - traveling. The traveling and tourist industry is still bleeding and many people have passed this year without trips and vacations to new exotic places. Some has however still taken the chance despite the madly pandemic and ventured into unknown and new exploring. One of them is the 22 years old Sten Taim, who this autumn packed his suitcase and left his dorm room in Estonia to take a plane towards the mediterranean sea - more specifically Thessaloniki. I spoke to Sten about his life here and how it is being quarantined in a place so far from home.



The weather and climate here in general are one of the things that Sten points out when I ask to his impressions of the city. *“Coming from the north it is a great happiness, that the sun is shining in november here and that you actually can go outside without hat and gloves*

*“I took the plane to Athens and then the train further to Thessaloniki. When I arrived I got immediately hit by the high level of air humidity and of course the nice temperature there in spite of my late arrival still was around 22 degrees and I could easily just wear a t-shirt.”* tells Sten, who has come to Greece for volunteering via the European Solidarity Corps. This summer he graduated from University of Tartu - a city with around 100.000 citizens, where he studied history. After handing in his bachelor thesis he wanted something new to happen. Previously he has taken part in different youth exchanges and his experiences in these cultural meetings has inspired him to spent his gap year in another volunteering project. Fact that Greece ended up as the final destination was quite a quick choice and it did not take many days from when he got the offer to he landed in the warm and sunny climate in Athens.

### Cultural differences

*this time a year”*. And the heat is not the only thing where the southern europe lifestyle separates from the Estonian everyday life. *“The food here is much different from the traditional Estonian cuisine. The Greek food culture includes a lot of freshness and tasty vegetables and I love that you can go for a walk and see trees with pomegranates and tangerines on. On the same time Greece offers a big selection of different fast food and it surprised me how cheap take away and fast food are - especially compared to the food prices in super markets, that I consider are at a higher level compared to general Greek salary.”* Even though Sten appreciates the

Greek food, the lack of traditional Estonian dishes are also the thing he misses most from his home country. Potato salad and black bread are just a few elements from the Estonian food culture that he mentions when I asked about if he has suffered from homesickness.

### **Lock-downed abroad**

When Sten arrived in the ending of september, Greece was still an open country and the infection numbers were low. That changed quickly and suddenly all of Europe was hit by the pandemic again and going out and sitting at cafes was now not longer a matter of course. Sten's experience here has taken a turn and he explains which mixed emotions he feels about being trapped in a foreign country far away from family and friends. *"I feel very safe here and when you just follow the restrictions, wearing a mask etc, then I am not afraid of catching the virus myself. On the other hand the lockdown causes a lot of trouble in relation to the project here."*



The volunteering project originally implied teaching different classes and working at a refugee center. None of these activities can take place as they were planned and Sten is now teaching online classes in stead. *"It is hard that we dont have the opportunity for teaching physical classes, but what can we do. Nobody is the master of the pandemic and I just have to get the best out of this quarantine time"* Hopefully for Sten and all of us the situation will soon get better and we are crossing fingers, that soon we have the possibility for exploring even more of the city.

By Marie Østergaard



# Yoga and meditation.

*Basic foundational yoga for everyone who wants to experience yoga, promote flexibility and relax by peaceful meditation. Bring your good will, a mask and a towel. Mats can be provided, but you can bring your own as well.*

Every Wednesday from  
11-12

At the Babylonia  
Cultural Center  
(Lofou Virolos 3, Thessalonix)

