

A VIEW FROM ABROAD

THE ESC VOLUNTEERS MAGAZINE



**INTERVIEW:
FROM
DENMARK TO
GREECE**



**CHRISTMAS
TRADITIONS IN
DIFFERENT
COUNTRIES**

It is all about traditions

December is here, Christmas is coming and for the first time in my life I am not in my home country for december. Christmas is a huge deal for many Danes, because when you live in a country where the biggest part of autumn and winter is dark it makes it more important to have the light of holiday in the middle of the darkness. I love danish Christmas but being here in Greece have made me curious about which traditions both greeks and other nations have and I will try checking that out in this article.

Traditions in Denmark

Christmas celebrations in Denmark already begins at the first sunday of advent, where Danes at every advent lit a candle in an advent wreath with four candles in total (see the picture) . Most people makes the advent wreath them self and homemade Christmas decorations is in general a thing that both grown ups and kids practise all of december. Another tradition is Christmas lunches - meaning Christmas parties. Usually, when there is no pandemic, workplaces and families host an annual lunch where the main activity is eating meat and drinking snaps. Snaps are small shots of strong alcohol beverage that are consumed at holidays and I think snaps might be the danish companion to the greek Ouzo. On actual Christmas eve families are gathering and the eve is all about tradition. The meal is heavy and old-fashioned and it will leave you satisfied and filled. Duck or pork is on the menu as well as boiled potatoes, caramelized potatoes, gravy sauce and red cabbage. Yum! After dinner and before opening the Christmas presents, you have to join hands and sing Christmas hymns while walking around the tree. The evening ends with presents, coziness and even more sweets as cookies and chocolate.



Traditions in Greece

Greece has been a big maritim nation and it is common for Greek households to decorate a small boat for Christmas - it symbolises love, respect for the sea and welcoming loved ones home. Food and sweets are of course also a big part of greek Christmas tradition. On the actual Christmas eve the main dish is also pork and as I understand the custom of eating pork has a symbolic meaning but also strongly related to household's economy in the old times. The most popular traditional Christmas desserts in Greece are called Melomakarona (honey cookies) and Kourabiedes



(sugarcoated butter cookies.) The main ingredients in these cookies are oil, honey, oranges and nuts and I hope I will get the opportunity to taste these a day.

Traditions in Estonia

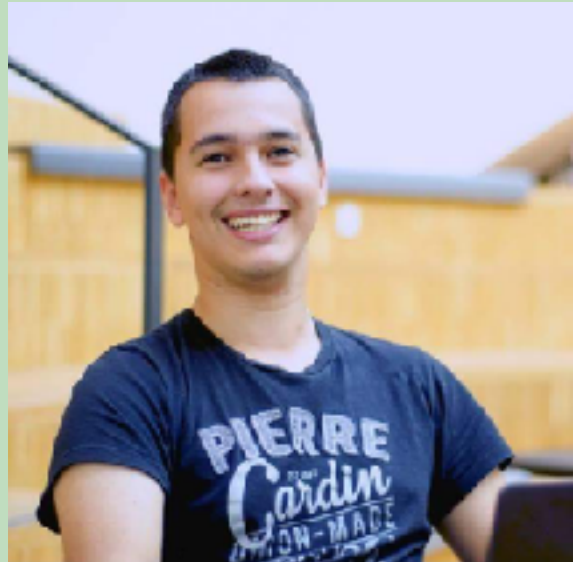
In Estonia Christmas celebration is not only connected to the religious stories about Jesus's birth but is also a way to celebrate that winter solstice occurs - the time where one of the Earth's poles has its maximum tilt away from the Sun. On Christmas eve the traditional Estonian food consist of pork with sauerkraut and blood sausage - and blood sausage is exactly what it sounds like - A sausage consisting of blood. It was customary to eat large meals on Christmas Eve and Christmas Night. To have plenty of Christmas food at home symbolically meant enough food for the whole coming year. A cute tradition in Estonia is the visiting of Santa Claus on Christmas eve. Santa Claus comes to the house after dinner and then everyone have to do some kind of performace before receiving their present. Most people rote learns poems or hymns, that they can say for Santa and in that way earn the gift, that he has brought.



By Marie Østergaard

Interview with Radu Dalidis

Lots of students, volunteers and young people in general travels every year abroad and the opportunity of traveling and living in another country is a experience many youngsters have been gifted with the last many years. All these opportunities arrises on the basis of lots of hard work with paperwork, organising and coordinating and a person who is in charge of that is 27 years old Radu Dalidis. Radu is the manager of a danish non profit organisation named “Danish youth team” and he works with sending people abroad for working, studying and volunteering in foreign countries. He came to Denmark for studying marketing on the school of business in the second biggest city in Denmark Aarhus. In 2016 he randomly got the chance to go for youth exchange in Georgia and that



experience opened his eyes for the world of Erasmus projects. *“The trainer at the youth exchange was so inspiring and she talked so passionated about the projects and the benefits of cultural exchange”* says Radu and tells about how that experience gave hime the motivation for working to create the same opportunities to other youngsters. Radu founded the danish organisation with his friend after the youth exchange in 2016 and today he stills manage the organisation. His every day works consists of planning, organising and preparing things at the office for creating great memories and experiences for both Danes who wants to travel abroad but also for foreign youngsters who wants to experiance Denmark *“I want to create opportunities for people - both students and youth workers - and promote european values and give the possibility to travel and learn about other cultures”* says Radu, when I asked him about what his main goal and purpose was, when he facilitated the organisation. Unfortunately the options for travling and exploring new countries and cultures are sat on hold these days due to the worldwide pandemic. That can be a big

obstacle for an organization like “Danish youth team” - *“The travel restrictions has a big impact on our work in the organisation and we have to postpone many of already scheduled events and exchanges, that we have planned”* tells Rudy, who is despite the situation optimistic and he believes that 2021 will be a better year for both projects and traveling.

By Marie Østergaard





IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CULTURAL
CENTRE BABYLONIA

QUIZ NIGHT

**The quiz is in the form of a Kahoot and
there are questions from different subjects!**

10.12.20 | 6:00 PM
ONLINE EVENT

For more info and registering
Contact us on FB: Cultural Centre Babylonia
or send an email: unitedbabylonia@gmail.com



How much of You is You?

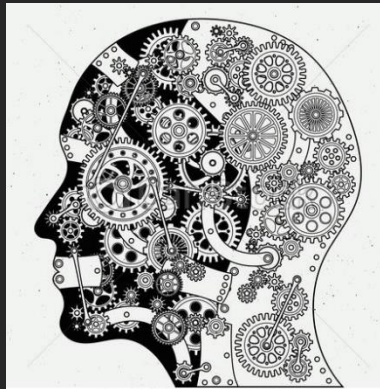
Death, dread, FEAR!!!! Is an automatic response to perceive scary shite. But fear itself is not under your conscious control. It is automatic, and if its automatic then that is not you. It is a thing your brain does, but it is not a thing that YOU do – conscious You. So presumably, there's stuff in your brain you don't control, and then there's stuff you do control. Stuff that is You. Let's find out where the line is, shall we?

Well, for the most of the day so far you've been blinking and breathing automatically. Congratulations, keep it up, but now you're thinking about it, so you're doing it manually. Anyway, you'll forget about it in a few minutes and all of that will become automatic again. So that is not YOU.

So what about the things you like, let's say, your music taste, for example. Good music activates the part of the brain dealing with euphoric reward response, or the bit that makes you feel nice. Okay, fine.

But did you CHOOSE to prefer Metallica over Beethoven, or over the blood-curdling sound of two cats banging outside? No. obviously not- otherwise you'd just choose to prefer everything.

Even though you can choose what to listen to, the preference itself – what presses your musical, or food-ish, or social buttons – is out of your control. So that is also not you.



So you don't control the survival stuff, don't control stuff that scares you, don't control things you like. "Okay, Jesus, but what about high level stuff? What about playing instruments, or driving car? That must take awareness. That can't be automatic!"

Yeah, okay probably – for the first while. But if you play an instrument, you may have noticed your fingers just know what they're doing – automatically. Or if you drive, you know it's impossible to get from A to B in a car, and spend the entire time having an argument in your head with your mum, because she hasn't made your favourite dish!! THANKS FOR NOTHING, MUM!!! ... while never actually thinking about changing gear or pushing the pedals. So high-level motor coordination, when practiced, can be completely automatic too. "Yeah, okay, but at least simple motor tasks are in your control – Moving a hand or leg. "

Yeah. Or not. Very simply, Benjamin Libet did a fairly famous experiment with getting people to press a button randomly when they felt like it. He was monitoring their brain activity while they did this. The weird thing is that the brain seems to be preparing to push the button a disturbing length of time before people were reporting choosing for itself. There are problems with this experiment, for sure, but it does seem a bit like the systems underneath you – underneath being conscious – might be way more essential

than the conscious systems themselves, and that choosing to do stuff is maybe just a game the brain plays afterwards to justify what it was already going to do anyway. Maybe.

So fear isn't you, survival stuff isn't you, preference isn't you, Christ what else is going on in there that isn't you? Well.. a fair bit, actually:

Like, oh, you know... Balancing when you walk, or falling asleep and waking up, or remembering who you are, or where you are, or when you are, or fetching memories in the 1st place, or controlling your liver, or taking all of the perceptions that are coming in through your senses and turning them into a coherent picture of the world that actually makes fckn sense, or even just processing everything at the same time, or processing text, or perceiving colour or just pretty much anything – most of it is automatic. Or at least not mediated consciously by you.

SO IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DO CONTROL, YOU SILLY CLEVER MESS!!!



Yes. Sit down, sorry to startle you like this. I would tell you to close your eyes but then you couldn't bloody read. There in this carbon mess that we all live in there is something called awareness and we don't know what it exactly is, where it comes from or where it is centered- „THE BRAIN! It has to be the brain!“ – yeah, i get it, but in an experiment scientists have taken out almost every part of the brain and still the man was aware of itself, so no, the brain isn't the ultimate answer.

We know that there is a connection within nature, within the unconscious is the conscious, the golden ratio in the roses and the galaxies, the threads that connect all living beings - it all came from stardust. All living things are NEWBORN but ANCIENT (weird? Very); every living being has its ancestors, and they had successfully survived and reproduced, conquering 3.5 billion years of life in a ruthless environment. A victor of nature! That's what You are, you tough little cookie!

We are an ongoing experience that develops within every day into something more profound and unique. We do make decisions, yes? Thoughts, yes? and goals... mhm. with which we push the boundaries of what is expected within nature and develop grand progress in our lives, even tho, we're constantly being bombarded by the razor-sharp biological imperatives- survival, territorialism, competition, reproduction, group forming. Our little brains stuck in our biological vessels can do incredible things, with the right mentality, understanding our biological needs and the nature of development is just an useful tool in which we can truly have free will.



So consciousness is rooted in awareness, and awareness unexplained, but its giving us the chance of experiencing life and giving us a chance of free will, chance of living our own self-made lives, that's the most liberating part. So stop being a dick, you lovely You. Wish you a pleasant and exciting life.

P.S. -i was again under a time pressure, again, by my own fault: so the ideas were a little scattered and unpolished. To all the readers that have felt a little bit offended by the language in this text, you're welcome.

by Petar H. D. Keirs

8 Interesting Facts About Greece (Viewed By A Foreigner)



1) The original Santa Claus was Greek

The original Santa Claus: Saint Nicholas, was born a Greek, on the fifteenth of March 270 in Patara in Lycia (Modern day Turkey). He died, on the sixth of December 343, which is now celebrated as the feast day of Saint Nicholas. His reputation for generosity was boundless: his giving of gifts was usually done secretly, such as putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him.

2) Greece houses the most number of archaeological museums in the world

Greece has more than 100 archaeological museums

3) People forget to die

In the North Aegean Sea is the island of Ikaria, the island of longevity, where people "forget to die". Ikaria is one of the five "Blue Zones" (places where the highest number of people live to a hundred), the other four being: Barbagia region in Sardinia, The Nycoya Peninsula in Costa Rica, The Seventh Day Adventists of Loma Linda in California and Okinawa in Japan.

On Ikaria people sleep late, get up late, take frequent naps and wear no watches. They live off the land; herbs for flavour and also medication, goat's milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, beans, lentils, honey (a type found only on Ikaria), very little meat and plenty of local wine. We can call it the true "Mediterranean Diet".

4) Greeks love sex (Confirmed by the condom giant Durex)

Condom manufacturer Durex conducted a survey about which nationals have the most sex weekly and which ones are the most satisfied by their sex life. 26,000 people from 26 countries took part in the survey. They replied to everything concerning their sex life in a bid to chart “what constitutes intimate well-being.” According to the survey, Nigerians are the world’s most sexually satisfied while Greeks have the most sex weekly. The Durex survey showed that Greeks have sex 164 times a year while Brazilians rank second with 145 times. Polish and Russian people follow in the third place, having both 143 times sex a year. But who has the least sex per year, you wonder? It’s the Japanese with only 48 times!

5) There are more tourists in Greece than Greeks during summer

Did you know that the amount of tourists is more than double the amount of Greeks during the summer? It’s one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

6) The first nude scene in European cinema history was in the Greek movie Daphnis and Chloe in 1931

The fact itself says it all.

7) The truth about sculptures

Greece is well known for sculptures, marble monuments and temples. Lot’s of them, which we see today, didn’t look like that originally. When they were created, thousands of years ago, many sculptures were decorated with the brightest colours imaginable. Time and the weather has removed the paint, leaving us with the pure white we see today.

8) Grandma never moves out

That’s right. Children live with their families until they get married, and then grandma and grandpa usually stay with that family until death. Retirement communities are rare in this country.

By Sten Taim

From Denmark to Greece, Marie's volunteering story

In the first three issues of our magazine, we're going to introduce each of our volunteers. For this issue I sat down with our youngest volunteer from Denmark – Marie and we had a nice chat about her experience here and life back at home.

Introduce yourself briefly, Marie.

I am 19 years old. I just graduated high school this spring in the middle of the pandemic. I come from the second biggest City in Denmark – Aarhus, which is well known for its art museum and cultural life. Before and after graduating I was working in a local Italian Pizzeria as a cashier.

How did you find this opportunity, why volunteering?

It's really common in Denmark to take multiple gap years after high school. Back at home I was mostly working, but I felt that I needed a change or a new experience somewhere abroad. One night I was scrolling my Facebook and I randomly saw that there was an organization (Cultural Centre Babylonia) offering an opportunity for volunteering. I decided to apply and see what happens. For my surprise they responded quite quickly and in a couple of days I packed my bags and flew to Greece. When I look back to the process now, it is really spontaneous.

I wanted to do some volunteering because I wasn't sure what to I want to do next – get an apartment back at home and work or travel a little. I think that volunteering is a lifechanging experience because it gives you an opportunity to learn a lot about other people and you also get to know yourself better.

You must have seen other similar posts, why did you pick Greece as your destination?

It's interesting to come here, because you learn a lot about Greece at history classes. Ancient Greece has had a huge impact on world history. Most of the Danish people usually visit the Greek islands but I thought it would be interesting to visit the mainland.

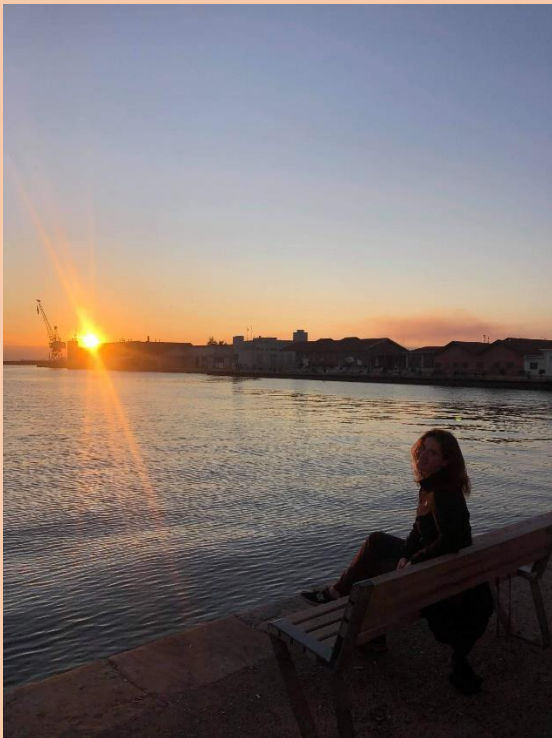
Did you have some previous volunteering experience before coming here?

I have been a gymnastics teacher for smaller children about three to four years, I really enjoyed working with children.

Describe your first emotions when you arrived here.

I was really lucky, I got a direct flight to Thessaloniki. When I stepped out of the airport I was really positively surprised of the warm weather here. The weather was completely different, I think that at the moment we have a Danish weather at the middle of the september here.

At first I felt quite weird because I didn't know what to expect and being in a different environment both culturally and climatically seemed interesting. I didn't know what is going to happen here and if it will fit me sharing an apartment with other volunteers from different countries.



What do you like the most here?

Well, nothing can't beat the weather here. I don't really know how to describe it but I really like the city. Although it is a really big place with about one million residents, it feels really cozy and small at the same time. I really enjoy the atmosphere here. Also, I need to mention the locals. People are much more opened and temperad if compared with people from Northern Europe.

What do you like the least here?

The pandemic, but you hate it everywhere in Europe. I think there isn't a proper recycling system here. I feel that there is too much trash at the streets and nature. My home country is

much more cleaner. Also, I have noticed that people don't have that much respect towards the authorities here.

What do you enjoy doing here in your free time?

I try to get out of the house as much as possible. I really enjoy reading, listening to podcasts and audiobooks. I really like that there is someone around the house all the time that you can share your thoughts with. Me and my roommate watch quite many films here. There is another organization here that hosts Danish volunteers and we spend quite a lot time together. I enjoy taking walks around the city, there is so much to explore.

What is your favourite memory from Greece?

Some weeks ago when the weather was much warmer we went up to Heptapyrgion with the other volunteers to enjoy the sunset and it was really nice. Beauty lies in small things!



And the last question: if someone plans to do some volunteering abroad, what would you suggest them to know?

Maybe the sentence sounds a bit harsh, but I feel everyone should know it: even though you think that you are opened to other cultures, it might be challenging to adapt because people have different viewpoints and you have to accept that.

By Sten Taim