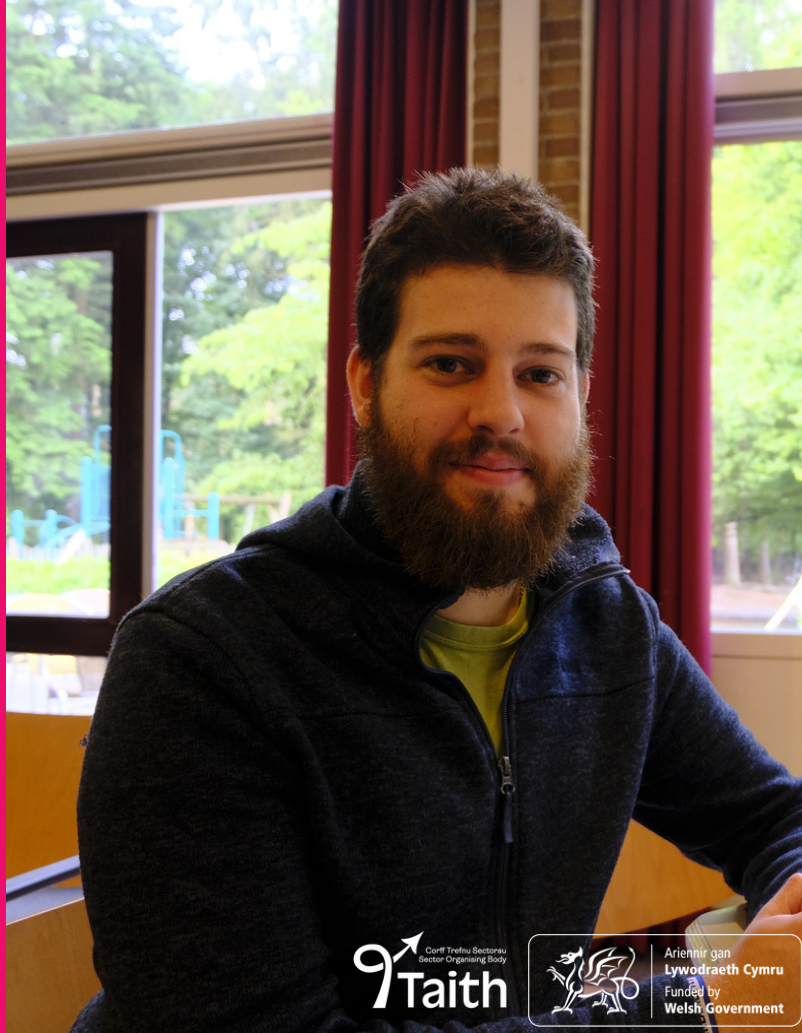


Alex's Volunteering Story

NETHERLANDS 2023



WCIA has been sending young people on international exchanges since the 1970's. We believe that there is no better way for a young person to develop key skills and competencies, as well as gaining invaluable citizenship skills, than to undertake an exchange, get out of their comfort zone and do something truly life changing.

We believe that everyone in Wales should have the opportunity to volunteer abroad, to develop as global citizen and contribute to a fairer and more peaceful World in a safe environment.

This is Alex, from Barry in South Wales. This year Alex embarked upon a fantastic experience in the Netherlands with long-standing partners De Amicitia and SIW Internationale Vrijwilligersprojecten (SIW International Volunteer Projects). Both organisations aim for young people to discover their impact abroad, achieved by bringing volunteers into contact with different cultures. Alex took part in a project called 'Challenge Accepted' where participants learnt to improve their creative problem-solving skills in International volunteering. International volunteering is all about dealing with the unexpected - and actively pursuing it for the exciting opportunities it holds. Anyone who volunteers or works in International volunteering faces a diversity of challenges that they have to respond to.

As part of the project Alex lived and worked with other volunteers from all over the world. Aside from sharing accommodation, the young people cooked for each other and shared each other's cultures.

"Alex worked hard in participating and understanding what a Learning Community is all about. After experiencing one, Alex contributed actively in creating a video explaining this participatory working method."

*S Rob van Leeuwen, a trainer at SIW
Internationale Vrijwilligersprojecten*

What Alex Enjoyed Most

Being able to leave with a shared learning community project. (Lifelong Learning Community). Contributing ideas and knowledge to the other volunteers and received it from them. We all helped with each other's self-development and I tried to participate fully in the process, contributing when appropriate as well as providing space for others to contribute.

A Typical Day Volunteering

We had 3 learning sessions per day and each of the 3 groups cooked tea for everyone one night. Each session started with an energiser and had other interactive activities throughout (including sessions in the learning community)..

Taith and International Exchange

2022/23 was the first year that young people in Wales could take up international exchange opportunities through Taith.

Taith is a Welsh Government scheme aimed at bringing Wales to the World and the World to Wales. Every young person who lives in Wales, aged between 16-25, regardless of their background or where they live are able to take up an international exchange through Taith.



How the Placement Impacted Alex

I have learned more about organisation and smart planning. SMART goals, SWAT analysis, etc. I learned a new non-formal learning technique called Learning Communities as well as planning activities.

What did Alex find challenging about his placement?

Joining an already established group and not really knowing anyone. I overcame this by taking all the opportunities to speak to other participants that were available. It was useful to find common ground such as hobbies and beliefs. .

What will Alex take from the placement for the future?

It makes some of my plans feel more achievable. I feel that I have more contacts that can help me learn and develop. I think my chance of volunteering or working part-time in International Volunteering and Youth Mobility projects has increased because of this course.

WCIA are really thankful to the team at SIW and De Amicitia for organising such a transformative experience for the young people, including Alex. For Alex at least, it inspired a new perspective on life and a desire to experience more of the world through international voluntary work. It's testament to programmes like Taith, that in allowing young people from Wales to experience the world and contribute to a project that enables the creation of a new generation of ethically informed citizens of Wales and the World.

If you've been inspired by Alex's story, or know a young person who could benefit from international volunteering experience, check out our other volunteering opportunities which can be found [here](#), or email us on volunteer@wcia.org.uk

