

Welcome to
your European
Solidarity
Corps
experience in
Sofia,
Bulgaria!

Volunteering for Youth Empowerment Project

Dear Volunteers,

Welcome to the European
Solidarity Corps and
welcome to Sofia,
Bulgaria!

We would like to give you
some more information
about the project
“**Volunteering for Youth
Empowerment**” and about
us, the **International
Foundation for Y-PEER
Development**.

The International Foundation for

Who we are

Y-PEER Development (IFYD) was
registered in early 2017 to support
the **Y-PEER International Youth
Network**.

Y-PEER is a network of youth-led
and youth-serving civil society
organizations, governmental
organizations, community based
organizations, institutions, youth
activists and advocates, young
people, and trainers working
together on youth related issues. It
was established in 2002 in the region
of Eastern Europe with the support
of UNFPA and after 15 years has
expanded its scope and areas of
work to grassroots and advocacy
related to **Sexual and Reproductive**

**Health and Rights (SRHR),
peacebuilding, youth leadership
and HIV/AIDS interventions** in over
50 countries on 3 continents. Y-
PEER aims to ensure that young
people:

- Have access to **quality SRHR
information and education**
through non-formal and formal
learning and training,
- Enjoy the highest attainable
standard of **physical and mental
health**,
- Have their **rights recognized and
upheld**, enabling their
engagement in all aspects of their
development,
- Participate in a progressive,
substantial and inclusive way in
political and decision-making
processes at all levels with
regards to the achievement of the
new development agenda and
the **Sustainable Development
Goals**.

The **International Foundation for Y-PEER Development's** main goal is to provide sustainability, technical and financial support for the activities of the informal International Y-PEER network and national Y-PEER networks in response to their needs. The Foundation is currently based at and supported by the **International Institute for Youth Development PETRI-Sofia**, which is one of the regional resource centers of Y-PEER and is a part of the structure of the National Center for Public Health and Analyses, Bulgaria.



PETRI-Sofia is a knowledge hub and regional resource center that supports youth empowerment in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality and peacebuilding in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and beyond. You can find more information about PETRI [here](#).

As PETRI supports the International **Y-PEER Network**, we create a **newsletter** for the network which gives information about the activities done globally by our young people. You can check the latest issue [here](#).



The project



The project **“Volunteering for Youth Empowerment”** is funded by the **European Solidarity Corps**, the new European Union initiative which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe.



The main **objective** of the project is to **inform and change the attitudes of adolescents and youth from Bulgaria** (students aged 14-18) on topics related to **human rights and healthy lifestyle** (focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including HIV / AIDS, gender equality, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, etc.) as well as the **empowerment of young people**, encouraging them to talk about their needs and to protect their rights, including the right to correct information and adequate services in this field. This will be done through the organization of **training sessions and workshops, through interactive and non-formal methods**, learning by doing.



Local campaigns and events will also be organized (e.g. on Youth Day, World AIDS Day, World Health Day, etc.) as well as **online campaigns**, dissemination of information through the online **SpeakActChange platform**, in order to raise young people's awareness of issues that are important not only for their personal health, development and



meaningful lives, but that also are of social significance, reflecting on the community as a whole.

Volunteers who will be involved in the project will be introduced to these topics and will acquire knowledge through the training materials developed by the International Foundation for Y-PEER Development and its partners. The volunteers will organize and participate in various activities: local, national and international training sessions, information campaigns and workshops for students aged 14-18, including those of Roma origin, in different schools and other organizations in the country.

Two long-term volunteers from Macedonia and two long-term volunteers from Georgia will participate in the project and will be part of the Foundation's team for a period of **6 months**. **4 short-term national volunteers** – from Bulgaria, will also join the team for a period of **2 months each**.

As volunteers, with the help of our team members, you will have the opportunity to organize a series of activities for adolescents (training sessions, information campaigns), in order to motivate them to make informed decisions related to their health, especially their **sexual and reproductive health and rights**, to be aware about different aspects of human rights and healthy lifestyle. In order to

organize an active and effective learning process, **creative, informal and interactive techniques** and approaches will be used actively. Social networks will also be utilized, as this is one of the main resources youngsters use to find and share information on the Internet, as well as the **online platform for advocacy SpeakActChange** <http://www.speakactchange.org>, which provides space for sharing information on different youth topics at a global level.

You will have the chance to increase your knowledge of the main topics of the project, to be in constant communication with representatives of the international Y-PEER network and to participate in the coordination of its activities and campaigns at the international level. Through these activities we will encourage you to develop your **"soft skills", personal and professional competences** your skills to work with online tools.

You will also have the opportunity to get to know Bulgarian culture and reality, as well as to work in a **multicultural environment** with young people from different countries who are part of the international internship program of the PETRI-Sofia, which supports the Foundation.

We also really welcome **your own ideas** and input on what the activities could look like, we encourage you to share with us what you are passionate about and what your skills are, so that we can also adjust our program to you and so that you could make the

most out of this **unique experience**. We also promote and support **intercultural learning**, so you will have the opportunity to share your traditions, culture, food and anything else you would like to share with the team and/or to organize an intercultural workshop for a broader audience.

Practical arrangements

The international volunteers:

For the duration of your mobility (6 months) you will be provided with **accommodation, transportation card, as well as with money for your living expenses**.

The period we have planned for the mobilities is:

- **1 person from Georgia and 1 person from Macedonia for the period August 2019 – January 2020**
- **1 person from Georgia and 1 person from Macedonia for the period February – July 2020**

The apartment where our fellows and volunteers live is located in [Pavlovo, on Kota 150 str., bl.137, floor 4, ap. 17](#). It is around 20 min. by tram from the office and around 30 min. from the center of Sofia. The volunteers and international fellows at PETRI-Sofia will share the living space. The apartment has 2 bedrooms (with 4 beds in total) and a living room, as well as a kitchen, bathroom and toilet.

The amount of the money for living expenses is approximately 410 BGN (leva) per month, which is equivalent to 210 EUR (1 EUR is around 1.95 BGN).

To get an idea about the **cost of living in Bulgaria**, you can check some information [here](#).

Our office is located in the building of the [National Center of Public Health and Analyses](#), on 15 Akademik Ivan Evstatiev Geshov str., and during your project you will be based here (when there is no specific workshop, training or event elsewhere).

We will **cover your travel expenses** up to a certain limit: for Georgia it is 275 EUR per person for a round trip and for Macedonia it is 180 EUR. We will also cover your **visa fees**, up to 200 EUR per person. Please note that you will need to apply for the visa in the Bulgarian Embassy in your country and you will need sufficient time for receiving it before coming here (the procedure might take around 1 month). We will provide you with an official invitation letter for this purpose.

You will be provided with **health insurance** through the **Cigna system** that is working on the European level for all European volunteers (by the sending organization in your country). In case you have any medical conditions or special needs, please inform us before you come to Bulgaria!

The national (Bulgarian) volunteers:

For the duration of your mobility (2 months), you will be provided with a transportation card and pocket money for your living expenses. The amount of the money for living expenses is approximately 410 BGN (leva) per month. No accommodation will be provided for the national volunteers, and transportation costs outside Sofia will also not be covered.

Our office is located in the building of the **National Center of Public Health and Analyses**, on 15 Akademik Ivan Evstatiev Geshov str., and during your project you will be based here (when there is no specific workshop, training or event elsewhere).

The period we have planned for the mobilities is:

- September – November 2019
- November 2019 – January 2020
- January – March 2020
- March – May 2020

On-arrival and mid-term trainings

For the long-term international volunteers: after your arrival in Sofia, you will have an on-arrival training organized by the Bulgarian National Agency that manages the European Solidarity Corps, together with other newly arrived volunteers. Depending on

Learning process

the National Agency, you could also have a mid-term training and evaluation where you will be able to share your experience with other volunteers in Bulgaria, as well as with representatives of other organizations.

For the long-term international volunteers: you will have the opportunity to **learn Bulgarian** through online courses that are provided for free to the volunteers, as well as through courses. Since most of our work in the office and the international network is in English, you will **practice your English** on a daily basis.

During your project you will have the support of **our team**, as well as a **mentor** from outside of the organization, a young person who will have regular meetings with you and will make sure that all your needs are discussed and hopefully met. Your mentor will assist you with any issues you might have.

For all volunteers: in the end of your project, you will be awarded with a **YOUTHPASS certificate** which is used in European youth projects and is an official recognition of the skills and knowledge you acquired. You can find more information about it [here](#).

Living in Sofia, exploring Bulgaria

The weather in Bulgaria changes a lot throughout the 4 seasons, so be prepared, depending on the period of the year when you will be here. In summer the average

temperature is high, around 25-30°C. In autumn the temperature is unstable, it might be rainy. When there is sun, the temperature can get up to 20 °C but when it is cloudy and windy it can be around 5-10 °C. In winter usually the temperatures are between 0 and 10 °C, but it can get warmer or colder, and there is usually snow during some weeks of the winter period. In spring the weather gets better and the temperatures rise, they are usually between 10 and 20 °C. Bring the most suitable clothes for the weather here, so that you are prepared ☺

The Bulgarian cuisine is a representative of the cuisine of Eastern Europe. It shares characteristics with other Balkan cuisines. Bulgarian cooking traditions are diverse because of geographical factors such as climatic conditions suitable for a variety of vegetables, herbs and fruit. Aside from the vast variety of local Bulgarian dishes, Bulgarian cuisine shares a number of dishes with Persian, Turkish, and Greek cuisine.

Bulgarian food often incorporates salads as appetizers and is also noted for the prominence of dairy products, wines and other alcoholic drinks such as *rakia*. The cuisine also features a variety of soups, such as the cold soup *tarator*, and pastries, such as the filo dough based *banitsa*.

Similarly to other Balkan cultures the per capita consumption of yogurt (*kiselo mlyako* in Bulgarian, lit. "sour milk") among Bulgarians is traditionally higher

than the rest of Europe. The country is notable as the historical namesake for *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, a microorganism chiefly responsible for the local variety of the dairy product. White brine cheese called *sirene*, similar to feta, is also a popular ingredient used in salads and a variety of pastries.

Sofia is our capital, a city where around 1.5 million people currently live. It is a cultural and administrative center, with a rich history and many attractions. It has had many names throughout the centuries, and the current name is pronounced by Bulgarians with a stress on the 'o', in contrast with the tendency of foreigners to place the stress on 'i'. The female given name "Sofia" is pronounced by Bulgarians with a stress on the 'i'.

There are many things to do in Sofia, cultural events, museums, parks, interesting historical sights. In the city center everything is within walking distance, but we also have buses, trams, trolleybuses and metro.

We definitely recommend the free walking tours, organized by youth NGOs in the capital, such as the [Free Sofia Tour](#) and the [Balkan Bites free food tour](#). They are a good introduction for the history of Bulgaria and Sofia, to our traditions and cuisine. And the best thing, of course, is to explore on your own (and/or with your friends and colleagues ☺).

During weekends, you can also visit other towns and cities in Bulgaria, which are not far away,

and also offer beautiful sights and historic places, such as [Plovdiv](#) or [Veliko Tarnovo](#). You could go hiking in the Rila Mountain (see the [Rila Monastery](#) or the [Seven Rila Lakes](#)) or go to the seaside if it is summer (see [Nessebar](#) and [Sozopol](#)). The most important thing is to be open for this new experience and to enjoy it to the maximum!





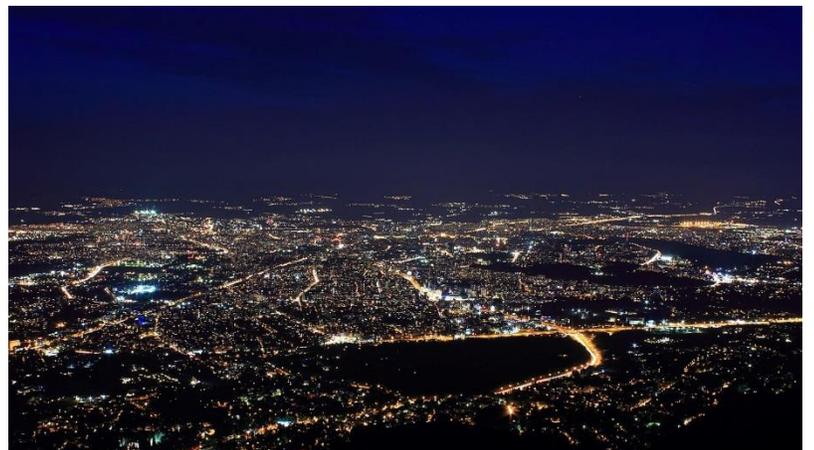
The National Palace of Culture

The National Theater with its garden, one of the best spots to hang out in the center of Sofia



A view of the emblematic Alexander Nevski Cathedral and the Parliament

A view of Sofia by night, from the nearby beautiful Vitosha Mountain



We are looking forward to meeting you
soon in Sofia!

In case you have any additional
questions, do not hesitate to contact our
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