

CIF Austria exchange program experience, 2010

In April this year I had a great opportunity to participate in CIF Austria exchange program. There were three of us who took part in that: Anita from Latvia, Lea from Estonia and Irmak who represented Turkey.

Upon arrival in Vienna, we spent the first weekend in CIF Austria President Judith Lamatsch family's country house, where we met the kind and friendly Austrian CIF Division members. We saw the beautiful surroundings of nature, local rural people's life and got a necessary information on the exchange program, etc.

My individual program was focused to get more familiar with social service system for asylum seekers and refugees in Austria.

I had received the opportunity to attend the various social institutions and get acquainted to social services, which have been provided to the target groups I'm interested in. I can only admit that there are many and various social services / social benefits available for the social services' clients. There is an opportunity provided to asylum seekers and refugees to start their lives in Austria by helping them to obtain the necessary skills and education. As a professional social worker, I gained a new knowledge and important information that will help me in my future work. There are asylum seekers arriving to Latvia as well and I will work with them as a social worker in a non-governmental organization.

During the exchange program I lived in Vienna, which I believe is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Its architecture, powerful history and extensive cultural life just made me to fall in love with it. Due to the fact that we were members of the 20th program, CIF Austria organization invited us to the Opera of Vienna, which was an unforgettable experience, as it had been my unfulfilled dream for years.

I have a lot of nice and warm memories regarding my host family (Sita and George) as we have spent a great time together. We had a beautiful walks through Vienna and its surroundings, long conversations and delicious meals. I've also learned to cook the Apple strudel, which is a traditional Austrian dessert.

I would like to thank all CIF Austria Members for their care, the beautiful sightseeing opportunities, for their responsiveness and friendship we could feel at every step during the whole program.

I'll recommend the CIF Austria program to any social worker who would like to find out more about the work done by our colleagues in Austria. Thank you to all at CIF Austria- let's hope there are lots of applicants in the next years!

Anita Ūdre, member of the Board CIF Latvia



(Participants CIF Austria Program 2010, from left to right: Irmak – Turkey, Lea – Estonia, Anita – Latvia)



(CIF Austria Program 2010 – Introduction weekend in the country side)