



Open Culture Center

Polikastro, Greece

Education and Cultural Support Intern

Organisation Overview

Open Cultural Center (OCC), previously known as Idomeni Cultural Center (ICC), is an organisation formed by volunteers that carry out both educational and cultural programmes with refugees currently living in the camps in Greece. OCC was set up in early April 2016 and came from a collective initiative from independent volunteers working in the Idomeni refugee camps. Refugees and international volunteers worked together to give classes and create a safe environment for children as well as adults, where they could continue to learn despite living in the camps. After the shutdown of the Idomeni camp on May 24th 2016, OCC followed the refugees to the official camps in Cherso and Sounio, taking their experiences and resources with them in order to continue the classes, workshops and cultural activities imparted by the refugees. OCC officially registered as a non-profit organisation in 2016 with the name Open Cultural Center, to be able to continue their work in the current official camps. Our sister organisation, based in Barcelona, works on projects aimed at providing information, raising awareness, sensitivity and cultural exchange throughout Catalonia from an artistic, educational and linguistic perspective.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life and promote the social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers through education and community activities in transit areas. We seek to promote inclusive communities and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers through awareness and cultural exchange. OCC Greece is based in Polykastro. Polykastro is a town which belongs to Kilkis regional unit of Central Macedonia, Greece. Next to Polykastro there is also a refugee camp called Nea Kavala which hosts around 400 refugees. The Polykastro Cultural Center project was born in February 2017 in order to offer education and cultural support, as well as to aid the integration of refugees in Greece. Refugees are relocated from camps to houses and apartments through projects that facilitate their integration and improve the local Greek economy. Currently, the objective of OCC is to focus on educational support in urban areas rather than in camps in order to facilitate the integration of refugees and collaborate with the withdrawal of camps where possible. 200 refugees live in Polykastro and the number is rising. The projects of alternative housing in Polykastro do not have any educational, cultural, vocational components, or any ties to schools of public institutions.

Social Issue Focus & Impact

There are many hardships and difficulties that refugees have gone through during the course of their life. Our organisation seeks to improve the quality of life of refugees and provide resources that will allow them to better their lives in the future through integration into modern society. As well as this, there are a great deal of misconceptions and stigmas surrounding refugees and the refugee communities.

Our organisation seeks to break those stigmas and focus on the protection of the dignity of human life. Through educational programs and intercultural events, we seek to integrate and unify the refugee community into the local community in a smooth and easy manner. We want to teach the local community about the benefits and beauty that can come through the integration of refugees into the community and to change the preconceived thoughts and notions surrounding refugees and show that they have nothing but a positive impact on the local community.

This project will enhance the community by allowing the refugee community to integrate better into modern society. They will learn to live cohesively among other members of society and in this way, stigmas and misconceptions surrounding refugees will be diminished.



The community is involved in many different ways:

- Using resources of OCC Greece
- Providing classes
- Participating in activities, classes, workshops etc.
- Close collaboration with other local NGOs to establish other social activities to create a more cohesive environment. These students will help achieve these goals and projects by being active members in the education and cultural immersion process of refugees and their eventual integration into society.

Position Description

The intern will teach English classes whilst also giving support/mentoring to other teachers, serving both adults and minors respectively. Other duties include facilitating and coordinating various physical activities including sports, games, arts and crafts etc., as well as intercultural events for both children and adults that live in the camps.

The intern will also help with the administrative side of the project including scheduling, managing activities and keeping in contact with the Open Cultural Center in Barcelona, in order to keep them updated on the progress of the project. We also ask that the students help to document the project via Instagram using pictures, videos etc. with close collaboration of OCC Barcelona. The intern will also work on different European and international grants.

The intern will assist in managing different resources that OCC Greece has such as the bike repair garage, cafe, market and the cultural center itself. On top of managing facilities, the intern will be providing support and mentorship to the participants. The intern will also be in charge of administrative needs of these centres including organising timetables, scheduling pick ups and drop offs of refugees and making sure that we have sufficient supplies etc.

The intern will be working closely with people who speak different languages including Arabic and Greek. They speak English as well, so the intern will be able to communicate with one another easily. The intern will be attending workshops about collaborating with local authorities to further the goals of OCC Greece including social integration, obtaining jobs, obtaining visas etc. The intern will also be in charge of researching different legal techniques that will help refugees integrate into modern society legally and allow them to obtain visas, jobs etc. The intern will become an informal mentor to the refugees and provide them with various types of support (legal, emotional, educational, etc.) throughout your internship.

Student Profile

We ask only that the intern have an open mind and a desire to work closely with the refugee community. There are no specific language or course requirements with students coming from the United States, but a background with international or social work is desirable.

Time Frame

Preferable start date would be in June, but there is no requirement for a starting date. We are flexible and ready to accept interns at any time from May to August.