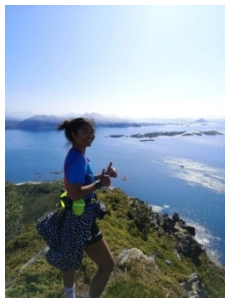

Olivia Hynne

About Olivia



My name is Olivia Hynne. Before starting my ESC volunteering placement, I had completed two bachelor's degrees—one in Sport Science and one in European Languages. I've always been motivated by the opportunity to be part of international and multicultural environments, where I can combine my interests in practical and meaningful ways.

I previously spent two years as an exchange student in Prague, studying at both FTVS and the FF at Charles University. This gave me insight into student life from different perspectives and made me familiar with many of the common questions and situations international students might face. It also made me feel more confident stepping into a new role where supporting and connecting with others would be central.

Working both independently and in teams has taught me the value of taking initiative - people and tasks won't always come to you, so involving yourself and being curious is key. Through sports, I have come to appreciate the importance of collaboration, inclusion, and mutual support - values that continue to guide me in day-to-day situations.

In my free time, I'm always up for discovering something new—whether that's hiking a new trail, trying a recipe, capturing moments through photography, or getting to know local traditions.

Joining the ESC program felt like a natural way to turn these interests into something purposeful: connecting with others, learning by doing, and contributing where it matters.

WHY INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING AT FTVS

Why did you choose to volunteer in general?

After completing my undergraduate studies, I wanted to use my academic background in a meaningful and practical way, and the ESC provided the perfect opportunity to do so. I was motivated by the belief that engagement driven by interest, purpose and civic responsibility can be just as valuable as paid employment. Volunteering also offered a unique chance to grow personally, step outside my comfort zone, and connect with people and communities across borders.

Why did you choose to volunteer abroad?

I really enjoyed my time as a student in Prague and wanted to stay longer in this city. I have always been drawn to international opportunities, whether through travel, friendships, studies or cultural exchange. Volunteering abroad gave me the chance to gain further valuable international experience and a better understanding of the working environment outside my home country.

Why did you choose FTVS UK?

I chose FTVS UK because of the unique combination of tasks and learning outcomes the volunteering project offered. My passion for sports, communication, and multiculturalism made FTVS a perfect match, especially as I had prior experience at the university through my exchange studies. However, there was no International Student Team during my exchange, which made me curious about how the establishment of this team had changed the university environment and what kind of initiatives had been implemented. In this way, the opportunity to support international students and help create an inclusive environment truly appealed to me. I was excited about gaining hands-on experience in organizing events and fostering connections within the student community, particularly in an international setting.

OUTCOMES

What did you learn during your volunteering placement?

During my volunteering at FTVS, I developed both professional and interpersonal skills. I gained experience in organizing events, facilitating intercultural activities, and contributing to educational workshops. I also improved my teamwork and communication skills while working in a multicultural setting. The placement helped me understand how physical activity and informal education can be tools for social inclusion, and I appreciated learning how theory and practice can connect through international volunteering.

What did you consider to be the most successful event/activity that you have participated in?

The most successful activity I participated in was being part of the International Student Team. It was an incredible experience of collaboration. Together, we organized several events tailored to enhance the recreational university life of students. These events helped bridge cultural gaps and created a sense of community among students from diverse backgrounds. The atmosphere of inclusivity and teamwork made these activities impactful, providing a platform for students to connect and feel more like home in a new environment.

What was the biggest "challenge" you managed to solve during your stay?

I encountered several challenges during my stay, though none were truly negative, they were rather opportunities to grow outside my comfort zone. At first, it was about adapting: learning Czech bureaucracy, understanding the culture, and finding my way in communication. The greatest overall challenge was building self-confidence and creating trust with the people I worked with daily. If I had to pinpoint one specific moment, it would be speaking and presenting in foreign language. Despite being used to international environments, I had never used to present or speak up with the use of more professional language.

FEEDBACK

What do you recommend/would like to say to FTVS (institution)?

FTVS has been an incredibly open, supportive, and inspiring place to volunteer. From the very beginning, I felt included and supported, and it's been great to experience how much effort FTVS puts into creating a vibrant, international student environment. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be part of it, and I hope you continue to offer this kind of meaningful experience to future ESC volunteers.

What do you recommend/want to tell FTVS (team)?

Continue being as welcoming and open-minded to new volunteers as you were to me. My biggest fear was not finding a sense of belonging, but the kindness, humor, and openness of the team quickly made me feel at home. This spirit not only made our daily work fun and meaningful, but also positively impacted the students we supported. I recommend maintaining a clear team structure where responsibilities are known, and the focus stays on teamwork, mutual support, and shared growth.

What do you recommend/want to say to future volunteers?

At first, you might feel a bit lost, but don't worry, that's completely normal. Be open, curious, and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. This is where the most growth happens. Remember, opportunities won't always come to you automatically. It's important to take the initiative - whether it's volunteering for a task or reaching out to someone to collaborate. For example, helping organize a spontaneous small event can help you build connections and learn new skills. Don't hesitate to ask questions and offer your help - your involvement is what makes the experience meaningful. Each small effort adds up to a bigger impact, and you'll find that as you engage, the journey will become more interesting. And most importantly: enjoy the journey!