

Report by Laura Churcher – Uk in the Europahaus des Kindes Vienna 2012

From December to March 2012 I volunteered through Grenzenlos at Europahaus des Kindes in Vienna. Europahaus is in the hills above Ottakring in Vienna, a wooded and green area, with plenty of open space and even a llama or two. I was working primarily in the Hort, which is a bilingual after school club (German and English) and my role was to speak English with the children as a native speaker. The school that they attend is also bilingual so they got English homework which I helped them with.

I've very much enjoyed working with the children as they always have something new to tell you or show you. It was certainly never boring and no two days were quite the same. Some of the kids can occasionally be a bit trying especially when they don't want to do their homework. You need a lot of patience, but it is lots of fun! I especially enjoyed doing special projects with the children in the run up to Christmas, like Nikolausfeier and Advent songs as well as telling them about some British traditions. It snowed in January, and I have never seen a bunch of children so happy about the weather.



This led to a lot of sledging and snowball fights. We also celebrated Fasching and I was very much impressed with the wide variety of costumes that appeared. I also introduced the children to the English version of the festival, pancake day. They certainly enjoyed the pancakes and by the end of the day I was very good at flipping them.

Over the Semester holidays I spent a week in the Kindergarten with the 2-5 year olds which was very different. I picked up some new skills, including getting a 2 year old into a ski suit. The little ones were sweet but if you took your eyes off them for a moment they would either be trying to eat something they shouldn't, crying or heading out the door. It was an exhausting week but enjoyable all the same. I was glad to be back working in Hort and enjoyed talking to the kids about astronomy whilst we made papier-mache planets and teaching them some origami.

During my time at Europahaus I came to have great admiration for anyone who cares full-time for small children as it is exhausting work, but very rewarding. I learnt many new things during my project and also enjoyed taking in all the art and culture the wonderful city of Vienna had to offer.