**Ukrainian Cultural Center**

**Organisation description**

The Ukrainian Cultural Center (UCC) is located side by side and operates together with Labora Workshops and the Tallinn School of Calligraphy.

The UCC provides a place where local Ukrainians can preserve their language, culture, and traditions. The organization serves as both a community center and a Sunday school for the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic parish in Estonia. The center also makes it possible for Estonians and visitors from other nationalities to learn more about the Ukrainian culture and diaspora.

Even though we are dedicated to introducing the Ukrainian cultural heritage, it is far from being our only aim. The UCC has a wider focus on development and protection of disappearing traditions, cultures, crafts, and endangered nature. We depict them and capture their uniqueness in handmade books.

Since protecting ancient traditions and disappearing techniques is one of our main aims, we regularly organize workshops and courses that teach a number of different medieval arts and crafts. Our courses and workshops are organized for children and adults alike in Estonian, Russian, English, and Ukrainian. They include papermaking, calligraphy, bookmaking, letterpress printing, and traditional woodwork.

The UCC organizes exhibitions to promote the ethnography of Ukraine. It participates in the Old Town Days and other similar events. We have initiated and are in charge of several international projects connected to the protection of unique cultures and endangered animals and plants.

Both local and overseas volunteers are welcome to participate in our work. We find it very important that people supporting the aims of the UCC could contribute to our projects, share their knowledge and learn from our experience. The UCC is a flexible organisation, always open for new ideas and projects.

**Project context**

Tallinn is the capital and the largest city of Estonia. It lies on the northern coast of Estonia by the Gulf of Finland. The city is an important industrial, political and cultural centre and seaport. Tallinn's population is registered 416 144 (as of 1st of January 2012). In addition to the native Estonian language (which is of the Finno-Ugric group, closely related to the Finnish language), Russian, Finnish and English are widely understood in Tallinn. Although extensively bombed by Soviet air forces during the latter stages of World War II, much of the medieval Old Town still retains its charm. The Tallinn Old Town (including Toompea) became a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 1997. Tallinn has also gained its glory as the European Capital of Culture in 2011.

The Ukrainian Cultural Center is housed in a beautiful 14th century building located within the medieval walls of Tallinn’s Old Town. Tallinn’s Ukrainian Catholic Church can also be found on the same grounds. The intriguing building, right alongside the city wall, is indeed medieval, but during its long history it has always served a secular purpose. The Ukrainian congregation thoroughly renovated the building and made it unusually charming - a sacred building which seems, at once, historical and modern. The church interior with Petro Gumenyuk´s iconostasis is also remarkable.

**Proposed Activities**

During their service, the EVS volunteers will have a chance to participate in all activities of our centre. In other words, they are going to have unique opportunities of studying old techniques, medieval arts and crafts, including papermaking, calligraphy, book art, and traditional woodwork. They can also be involved in various renovation works in our carpentry workshop or in maintaining the garden on the grounds of the center.

They will also have opportunity to meet many different people, who come to the UCC every day, among them artists, journalists, and people interested in art, history and culture. These visitors can provide the volunteers with not only new learning opportunities, but also a great intercultural experience. The volunteers will be giving guided tours of the centre, during which they will introduce its history and projects to visitors.

The Ukrainian Cultural Center maintains collections of national items, which need complete organizing and structuring. The volunteer will further help with promoting the Ukrainian Cultural Center, these activities will include taking photos and editing them, posting on the UCC’s social media and website.

All of the present staff members meet every day to have lunch together. One of the volunteer’s regular, though not necessarily everyday tasks will be to cook lunch for others. Lunch is the time when we meet, talk and enjoy each other’s company. It is the time to discuss not only work-related issues, but also learn from each other.

We will encourage our volunteer to start and independently work on their own project. We would like them to pick up one of the UCC’s many activities and develop it further, or come up with a whole new idea of their own. We will give them all the assistance necessary.

Apart from this, we expect our volunteers to participate in different cultural events organized by and happening in our center.

The working languages are English, Estonian, Ukrainian and Russian; the volunteers will have the opportunity to practise whichever they choose.

**Profile of Volunteer and Recruitment Process**

Most of our activities are focused on preserving culture, art and nature, therefore we prefer volunteers interested in these topics. It would be very useful if volunteers coming to our organisation had experience in those fields, it is however not crucial. A strong personal motivation to work on and learn about these topics is the most important quality we are seeking in our volunteers. We expect from our volunteers the eagerness to widen their horizon on art and cultural history, nature and philosophy. We are ready to teach all we know and we are also open to new ideas brought up by the volunteers.

The main characteristic of a future volunteer should be his or her own personal motivation and willingness to learn, cooperate and work with us. We believe that in order to develop a mutually beneficial cooperation, volunteers should be proactive and independent.

We choose our volunteer based on their motivation expressed in their application and a Skype interview.

The volunteer will have an 30-35h Estonian language course at the beginning of the service. It starts within the first month of the service. The coordinating organisation EstYES finds a proper teacher before the beginning of the service.

All our staff is ready to support our volunteers with practical, emotional, artistic and professional needs. In case of problems that occur during the voluntary service, there are persons amongst the team who will help solving them. The coordinating organization EstYES provides the volunteer with a mentor who will give personal support to the volunteer during their EVS period. The mentor is a support person who is not in any direct way connected to volunteer's projects; the mentor is a person who the volunteer can turn to in case of any personal questions or problems. The mentor acts as the contact person between the volunteer and the local community; assists the volunteer with administrative formalities, should the volunteer be faced with any difficulties; monitors the volunteer’s activities and make sure that he/she receives enough support; has regular meetings with the volunteer and pays attention to the volunteer’s behaviour and general well-being in order to provide the appropriate support.

**Risk Prevention, Protection and Safety**

The Ukrainian Cultural Center is housed in a beautiful 14th century building located within the medieval walls of Tallinn’s Old Town, which is considered a safe living area. The volunteers will be provided with a tutor throughout the project, whose responsibility is taking care of the volunteers’ daily duties and dealing with issues and questions that may appear during the volunteers stay in Estonia. The volunteers will also work closely with our staff members, who do their best to create a safe and friendly work environment for volunteers, as well as support them in their daily duties. As participants of EVS program, volunteers are covered by an insurance plan for EVS volunteers. This covers possible medical expenses and helps solving possible health related issues during the EVS period. We believe that good communication is one of the main ways of preventing possible crisis.