

VOLUNTEERS

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H.O.P.E. - THE PROJECT

From 16th of April to 15th of May 2025

ARMENIA - GYUMRI

Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas - European Solidarity Corps

OPEN TO: ITALY, FRANCE, UKRAINE, POLAND, ARMENIA



ABOUT THE PROJECT



H.O.P.E.
PROJECT

In Armenia, the project activities will be implemented in cooperation with the local organization **Youth Initiative Centre NGO** (YIC), specialized in supporting young people, with particular attention to young people with fewer opportunities, in the field of formal and non-formal education, inclusion and promotion of human rights and peace. Armenia, like Ukraine, has been facing in the course of many years, and also more recently,

a particularly difficult political situation linked to the conflict with Azerbaijan over the autonomous region of the Republic of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. This disputed territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan has led to several clashes over the years: in 2020 the so-called Second Nagorno-Karabakh War took place and after three years of low-intensity conflict, the situation worsened once more. In September 2023, breaking the ceasefire proclaimed in 2020, Azerbaijan started an offensive in Artsakh that resulted in the process of dissolution of the unrecognized autonomous republic, which ceased to exist on January 1st 2024. The dissolution of the republic forced the majority of the Armenian population to flee the territory, seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries, mainly in Armenia. The conflict has caused great stress especially on the new generations, both for young people directly involved in the consequences of the conflict and for young people from the rest of the country.

The project activities therefore aim to **support young Armenians** through educational activities organized during youth camps **for the promotion of personal development, non-formal education, mental health, peace, equal opportunities and human rights**. Volunteers will have the opportunity to organize various educational and leisure activities for 10 to 12 years old, with particular attention to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, in youth centers located in Gyumri and Artik. The project will give both participants and beneficiaries the opportunity to interact in an international and intercultural dimension, in which the history of the country and current difficulties will be taken as an example for fostering the culture of peace, solidarity and respect for human rights, with the aim of building a better future for the new generations.

2 volunteering teams composed by **15 participants each** will be deployed for a stay of 30 days each +2 travel days (**first in April 16 – May 15, 2025 and second in summer of 2025**) and will have the opportunity to organize various educational and leisure activities for young people between 13 and 18 years old, with particular attention to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, in youth centres located in different Armenian cities (Gyumri, Artik, Gavar, Armavir and Ejmiatsin). The project will give both participants and beneficiaries the opportunity to interact in an international and intercultural dimension, in which the history of the country and current difficulties will be taken as an example for fostering the culture of peace, solidarity and respect for human rights, equal educational opportunities with the aim of building a better future for the new generations.





ABOUT ARMENIA



The Republic of Armenia is a landlocked country in the Armenian Highlands of West Asia, it is a part of the Caucasus region and is bordered by Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north and Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan to the south.

The first Armenian state of Urartu was established in 860 BC, and by the 6th century BC it was replaced by the Satrapy of Armenia. The Kingdom of Armenia reached its height under Tigranes the Great in the 1st century BC and in the year 301 became the first state in the world to adopt Christianity as its official religion. The ancient Armenian kingdom was split between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires around the early 5th century. Under the Bagratuni dynasty, the Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia was restored in the 9th century before falling in 1045. Cilician Armenia, an Armenian principality and later a kingdom, was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea between the 11th and 14th centuries. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the traditional Armenian homeland composed of Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia came under the rule of the Ottoman and Persian empires, repeatedly ruled by either of the two over the centuries. By the 19th century, Eastern Armenia had been conquered by the Russian Empire, while most of the western parts of the traditional Armenian homeland remained under Ottoman rule.

During World War I, 1.5 million Armenians living in their ancestral lands in the Ottoman Empire were systematically exterminated in the Armenian genocide. In 1918, following the Russian Revolution, all non-Russian countries declared their independence after the Russian Empire ceased to exist, leading to the establishment of the First Republic of Armenia. By 1920, the state was incorporated into the Soviet Union. The modern Republic of Armenia became independent in 1991 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Armenia is a developing country and ranks 85th on the Human Development Index. Its economy is primarily based on industrial output and mineral extraction. While Armenia is geographically located in the South Caucasus, it is generally considered geopolitically European. Since Armenia aligns itself in many respects geopolitically with Europe, the country is a member of numerous European organizations.

Here's some fun facts about the country:

- the country's name in the national language is Հայաստան (Hayastan).
- Armenian architecture, as it originates in an earthquake-prone region, tends to be built with this hazard in mind. Armenian buildings tend to be rather low-slung and thick-walled in design.
- Almost all Armenian surnames end in -yan and the suffix is usually preceded by the name of great-grandfather of the family.
- Armenians have their own distinct language and alphabet which was invented c. AD 405 by Mesrop Mashtots and consists of thirty-nine letters.

ABOUT THE HOSTING ORGANIZATION

Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre (YIC) is a non-governmental organization established in 2008 in Gyumri, based on the idea of increasing youth civic activism and community development by promoting youth initiatives and active participation.

Since 2008, through its outreach and center-based activities, YIC has promoted young people's development to reach their fullest potential through meaningful non-formal and informal educational, social and cultural activities.

The Mission of YIC: to promote the development of the young person as a competitive, initiative taking, responsible individual and a citizen.

Every year, more than 4500 local and newcomer youth, learn how to participate in local decision-making processes on matters that directly affect them, receive significant volunteering opportunities that promote social cohesion and solidarity, and engage in activities that prepare them for meaningful employment opportunities.

Based on principles of equality and equity, youth activities of YIC are open to any young person living in Armenia. Youth can participate in language clubs, workshops, local and international exchange programs, camps, training courses, study visits, internship opportunities, research studies and advocacy campaigns for adolescents and youth.

The activities of YIC are open to any young person living in Armenia and abroad, irrespective of sex, education, social status, and religious views. Throughout its activities, YIC has served thousands of young people, offering a wide range of opportunities for volunteering, becoming competitive in the labour market, being knowledgeable of their rights, and being responsible and active citizens. YIC's Youth Houses, located across Armenia, host activities based on the methodology and principles of open youth work. The Youth Houses offer young people aged 13-18 years old a wide range of educational and entertainment services to increase their civic activism and employability. The Youth Houses are also a safe place for self-expression, leisure, and socializing with peers.

Since 2017, YIC has been licensed as the Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps Info Centre in Armenia.



PROJECT LOCATIONS

The project will be implemented in Gyumri. Most of the activities will be implemented in the **Gyumri Youth House open youth centre and YIC office**. The Youth Centre is open from Tuesday to Saturday, from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm for all youngsters between 13 and 18 years old who want to participate in the initiatives organized by YIC. Furthermore, volunteers will visit other Youth Houses run by YIC in the towns of Armavir, Ejmiatsin and Gavar to organize one day activities for local youngsters. Travel to other cities will be organized with the support of the YIC coordinators.



THE ACTIVITIES

From April 16th to May 15th 2025 a group of 15 volunteers from Italy, Ukraine, France, Poland and Armenia will be staying in Gyumri organizing different workshops and activities for youngsters which may include:

- ✚ Artistic activities (e.g. art, music, crafts)
- ✚ Cultural activities (e.g. language, cultural presentations)
- ✚ Thematic workshops
- ✚ Sport activities

The main target is the young people between 13 and 18 years old, in the city of Gyumri. Furthermore, volunteers will visit other Youth Houses run by YIC in the towns of Artik, Armavir, Gavar and Ejmiatsin to organize one day activities for local youngsters. Travel to other cities will be organized with the support of the YIC coordinators.



➤ EUROPE DAY EVENT (May 9, 2025)

Organization of different activities and events in the frames of **"European Week"** finalizing with a public celebration/event on the 9th of May, 2025.

The activities may include:

- ✚ Promotion of European youth programmes such as Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps programme.
- ✚ "European club" presentation of European culture, history, cuisine, etc.
- ✚ Workshops on different topics
- ✚ Own initiatives ☺



! Note: Working hours for volunteers will be from Tuesday to Saturday from 11 am to 6 pm. The Youth Houses are also open to young people on Saturdays, to give everyone, even those who work, the opportunity to participate in the initiatives. The Youth Houses are open from 2 pm to 6 pm for the young people. Volunteers will have their weekly days off on Sundays and Mondays.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

We are looking for **3 volunteers** from each country to participate in the activities organized by YIC in Armenia. The project will last 30 **days** (30 days of activities + 2 travel days*) and the activities will be hosted in the city of Gyumri.

Here is some information that will help you to understand if this project is right for you:

- ✓ Participants must be **between 18 and 30 years old**.
- ✓ Participation is open to young people from: **Italy, France, Ukraine, Poland and Armenia**.
- ✓ Participants must be interested in **non-formal education** and **youth work**.
- ✓ Participants must be **flexible** and with a **great spirit of adaptation** to new contexts with deep cultural differences.
- ✓ Participants must be able to **work in a team**.
- ✓ Participants must be interested in **working with children and teenagers**.
- ✓ Participants must be **highly respectful of the local culture and religion** (including dress code, especially for women, and conduct).
- ✓ We are looking for someone active, creative and enthusiastic 😊

!! Note: All participants must own a valid **passport** that respects the conditions for traveling to Armenia. Don't forget to take your passports with you as you will not be able to travel to Armenia only with your ID cards.



TRAVELING TO ARMENIA

Arrival at Yerevan Zvartnots Airport (Armenia):

The majority of participants will travel to Armenia arriving in Yerevan Zvartnots International Airport (<http://www.aia-zvartnots.aero>). Most of the international flights land during the night or very early morning so depending on the time of arrivals of all the participants, YIC will organize a transfer to Gyumri for the entire group (the ride is about 1,5-2h). You will just need your passport when passing through the Customs/Border area. Since 2013, you don't need visa to enter Armenia if you are a citizen of the European Union Country or Ukraine. Inside the border checkpoint area and in the arrivals hall you can also exchange money. Wi-Fi is also available inside the airport.

Arrival at Tbilisi Airport (Georgia):

If flights to Yerevan are very expensive, you can try and check flight for Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia. Georgia is a bordering country with Armenia. The transfer to Gyumri might take a while so consult first with your sending organization about your travel plan.

If you arrive during the night, which will be the most likely, stay at the airport during the night. There is Internet and a good place to sleep at the airport (on the bench/grass, nobody will say anything!)

In the morning, you can take a taxi to Ortachala Station or take the bus 37 (starts at 7.00am) to the city centre and then a taxi to Ortachala. The taxi from the airport costs around 20 GEL and from the city centre between 6 and 10 GEL. For the bus, you must have 50 Tetri (0,50 GEL). The taxi drivers are always trying to increase the prices, so try to deal the price before you get in. Think twice when you get information from the Information Point as they will try to push you to travel by their taxi company and you will end up paying more than it's necessary. At the airport exchange approximately 35 GEL, you won't need more. If you exchange more, you can always use it when you will come back to Georgia.

From Ortachala Station, you can take a mini-bus directly to Gyumri at 10.30am (25 GEL), or to Vanadzor at 9.00am (18 GEL) and then a marshrutka (shared taxi) from Vanadzor to Gyumri (800 AMD=1.5 Euros). Marshrutkas from Vanadzor to Gyumri are running all day. The overall trip will take 5,5 hours approximately.

At the border you will just need your passport. Since 2013, you don't need visa to enter Armenia if you are a citizen of the European Union Country or Ukraine. Inside the border checkpoint building you can also exchange money.

* Depending on the arrival schedule and number of people arriving at the same time a transport might be arranged by the hosting organization to transfer the group to Gyumri.

THE ACCOMMODATION

The participants will be hosted in the city of Gyumri in **individual apartments** shared between **two or three volunteers** (divided by gender). The apartments are studios fully equipped with everything you need, including a kitchen, private bathroom and washing machine for laundry. All apartments are located near the city center, about a 5-10-minutes' walk from Gyumri's main square. Near the apartments it is possible to find supermarkets, pharmacies, banks etc. There is Wi-Fi and bedsheets and towels are provided.

Upon arrival, the participants will be asked to sign an **accommodation contract** where they will declare to be responsible for the reimbursement of any expense related to broken furniture or tools or any damage inside the apartments.



FOOD AND POCKET MONEY POLICY

Volunteers will receive 6 EUR per day for pocket money and 5 EUR per day for food allowance to cover the cost of food during their volunteer mission. The volunteers will be responsible for the preparation of their own meals: the apartments are all equipped with a kitchen, fridge and everything needed for cooking (pots, pans etc.)

TRAVEL BUDGET

All participants will have a travel budget of €500 to reach the project location.

The travel budget can include all the means of transport necessary to reach the destination (planes, trains, buses). Airplane tickets must be booked for the roundtrip.

Participants are responsible for booking their own tickets (with the support of sending organizations if necessary) and will be reimbursed only after providing all travel documents to their sending organizations (booking confirmation emails, boarding passes, train or train tickets, bus). Participants must send all digital travel documents via email and retain all original paper documents that must be sent by post. If the participant does not provide all travel documents, he/she/they will be reimbursed only up to the amount confirmed by the travel documents in his/her/their possession.

In case the tickets are booked by the sending organization, the participant will have to sign a declaration in which he/she/they takes/take responsibility for reimbursing the sending organization in the event that the tickets have already been purchased and the participant is no longer available to travel and join the project for unjustifiable reasons.

!!! Note: No visa is needed to enter Armenia if you own a national passport from the countries included in the project.

INSURANCE

Cross-border participants will be registered in the **HENNER insurance scheme** which will become their primary insurance during the stay. Registration of participant to the insurance is made by the coordinating organization Amaita Intercultura.

Local volunteers will be registered also but will only receive complementary coverage as they already have access to the national healthcare system.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- During your stay, sheets and blankets will be provided in all accommodations. Towels will be provided too but bring your own if you need.
- **Bring all the medicines and personal hygiene items you need** and promptly **notify your sending organization if you have any particular pathologies** that require particular attention.
- Armenia is home to a high number of **stray dogs**, especially in the cities. Most of the dogs are microchipped and have been vaccinated by municipal authorities but many are not yet vaccinated. The dogs are usually curious and will get close to you. It is therefore **necessary to keep your distance, not pet them and avoid disturbing them** to avoid accidents. We suggest that you **consult with your doctor to evaluate the administration of the rabies vaccine** before departure. The vaccine is not mandatory to take part in the project but it is recommended. Please discuss it seriously with your doctor or health provider as rabies can be a fatal disease if contracted.
- **All participants must be in possession of a valid passport** and this must comply with the rules of access to the country. Please check the website of your Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure your passport is valid for travel to Armenia. Furthermore, **if you have a European passport, you will not need any visa to enter the country (including Ukraine)**.
- It is possible to **change Euros into local currency** at the airport (of both departure and arrival) and in Gyumri. Credit card payments are possible in most of the shops. However, you might need cash to pay in small shops. Remember to activate the international payments option on your debit card to ensure it works abroad. In the shops US dollars and Euros are not taken. However, there are many places you may exchange money in. The ATMs are widely spread. In public transport and local shops, they take just cash.
- Armenian society is considered relatively conservative: **please wear appropriate clothing and be aware of your behaviour** (especially for women).
- Bring your own laptop to work or to use in your free-time.
- Bring an extra phone to get an Armenian SIM (you can also use your current phone and just exchange the SIMs or have e-SIM).
- Plug adapter (check online the difference between the plugs in your country compared to Armenia).
- Money, exchange rates and banks: Exchange rate approximately: **1 EUR = 400 AMD**

The volunteers can either use their bank account (from home country) or withdraw money from ATMs in Armenia or in most cases pay with a debit card (VISA, MasterCard are most common). The money transfer and cash withdrawal rates may vary from one bank/ATM to another.

When exchanging money in cash (in Euro) volunteers can use an online app (rates.am) to see which bank offers higher rate and is located in Gyumri and do accordingly. Although it is generally safe to exchange money in exchange points, the rates are not significantly different from banks and banks are more secure options.

Local supermarkets include: OK Supermarket, Karona, and Basen. All supermarkets will accept payment by cash and card. Outdoor markets and fruit and vegetable vendors typically will only accept payment in cash, but their goods are cheaper than those found in the supermarkets. The supermarkets opening hours are typically 8am-10pm. Smaller markets and the individual vendors may open later and close earlier, around 9am-7pm.

Useful links:

YIC Website: <https://yic.am/en/>

YIC Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/YICArmenia>

YIC Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/yicngo/>

YIC YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/YICArmenia>

Gyumri Youth House Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GyumriYouthHouse>

Gyumri Youth House Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/youthhousegyumri/>

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