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I am Michaela, a Social Work Student that has been on placement with Europia, a voluntary organisation that works towards empowering, supporting, training, and representing European Nationals. Although they are based in Manchester, Europia have a staff team that work all over the world.

Being a part of such a diverse and inclusive team has been an amazing experience and I believe has helped me grow so much as a person. I love the way that everybody's individual achievements and individual strengths are recognised and celebrated throughout the organisation which creates a real sense of team spirit.

Whilst on placement with Europia I have had the opportunity to be involved in many projects. One such project is the I-heart wellbeing project that is currently being run in a high school. This has been something I have especially enjoyed being a part of as I believe that wellbeing of children is super important especially in the backdrop of a Global Pandemic.

I have been lucky enough to be a part of projects to engage the Roma community too. This has been through a Roma Book Project and a Roma Women growing together project. The Book Project was in partnership with Equanimity Education and its aim was to provide book sets for younger and older children most in need through the pandemic. This not only was a wonderful thing but also a positive way to engage the Roma community and increase the brand recognition as a trustworthy charity.

I have also had the opportunity to be a part of the Roma Women Growing Together Project whereupon Europia supplied propagators, compost, and seeds to start growing herbs and a Facebook Group whereby people can share their progress and share recipes and such like.

I got involved in various other things like an opportunity to volunteer in Moss Side during the surge testing. Delivering and collecting Covid tests from the most at-risk areas and working alongside the Health Development Coordinator for that area. This was great to be making a difference and shows how many different avenues that Europia explores to extend their reach in helping others.

I have had the opportunity to be a part of the Health and Social Care department and be able to be part of the process which offers emotional support to those who need it most. I have also spoken with therapists speaking various languages and been a part of recruiting them to provide a more inclusive service to those Europia supports.

As well as this I have been able to be a part of both the Roma advocacy Project and the Welfare Advice Team where I have provided one on one support with people with lived

## Europia

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experience and have learnt where to make referrals or signpost clients to external agencies or internal services that Europaia provides.

Europaia, offers support and advice on benefits, housing, EUSS, human trafficking and more. They also work with other organisations to further expand their reach and empower. Europaia strives to create healthy attitudes towards health and managing integration for Eastern Europeans and is the only charity of its kind in Manchester. They do many campaigns, offer services and resources to promote health such as the Roma and Romanian flu vaccine program. This charity also has a Europaia Emergency fund created to help European Nationals to buy things such as food and medicine by giving them between £30-60 if eligible. Europaia also provides all its resources in various languages such as English, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, and Russian. For women, Europaia has a Partnership with Rochdale that offers free online workshops on healthy relationships, healthy boundaries, trust issues and raising confidence and self-esteem.

As well as all the above mentioned that Europaia does, it also focuses on acquiring research to understand the communities within which it works and finding what the barriers to helping are to identify and break them down to build healthy relationships within communities. For example, the 'Central Eastern European Distrust of Charitable Organisation's: Finding Solutions to Increase Inclusivity and outreach.

I have learnt so much on this placement including things about self. I have learnt about anti oppressive practice, inclusivity, and knowledge on how to reach out and gain trust of those who may not have had the best experiences in life leading them to mistrust. I have had a chance to liaise on zoom calls with professionals such as GP's from across Manchester as well other organisations such as Salford CVS and VCSE and be a part of discussions about the Mental Health plans set out for Greater Manchester. It has been a fantastic opportunity and I have gained a wealth of knowledge.

I have had an amazing time on placement with Europaia it has opened my eyes to issues that people face that before my placement I was blind to. To any future students I would say to just get stuck in and do not be shy. All Europaia team members are so supportive and approachable and will do their utmost best to provide any support you need.

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