

For the CIF Sweden Newsletter:

Dear lovely CIF Sweden Members and Fellow Participants,

Reflecting on my experience with the Sweden International Professional Exchange Program fills me with immense gratitude and warmth. My time in Sweden was not only perfect and beautiful but also profoundly enriching.

During the program, I felt that we were privileged to engage with a diverse group of social work professionals, each bringing unique perspectives and expertise. The exchange of ideas and practices was incredibly inspiring and has significantly broadened my understanding and approach in my current role within the humanitarian field.

Experiencing Swedish culture up close, living with Swedish families, and participating in their everyday lives was incredibly educational and priceless, creating countless unforgettable memories. During all this time, together with our dear CIF family, guides, lovely host families and valued my CIF journey friends I mean other participants, we celebrated the arrival of spring together, attended bonfires, participated in 1 May Day marches, enjoyed numerous Fika breaks accompanied by delicious Kanelbullar, learned and tested Kristina's special and yummy nettle soup which consisted of nettles carefully collected by her, indulged in plenty of butter and crispbread (Knäckebröd), and relished many other tasty dishes with lingonberries. Of course, lingonberries :D

Returning to my routine life after the program, I found myself equipped with new skills and insights. I observed and learned many things in Sweden, some of which I started implementing immediately, while others I had overlooked or

neglected. I have now decided to integrate these aspects more fully into my life: Being flexible yet organized, embracing simplicity and aesthetics, prioritizing loved ones and making time for them in my schedule, feeling connected to nature -even when living in a capital city like Stockholm-, showing gratitude for what nature provides, valuing breaks and turning them into rituals respected by everyone, where one can be both close to loved ones and maintain personal boundaries, living authentically and respecting each other's space and decisions..

After the program, I felt more outgoing, courageous, an international person and Social Worker, and more open-minded. I began to follow developments outside my country, especially in Sweden, more closely. I celebrated Midsummer from Turkey, making a Midsummer cake like the one my dearest last host family, Marie-Anne, made for us. Thanks to my first host family, Hector, I was able to witness some of the midsummer celebrations from afar. I played games about Vikings and ships with my dear son Çağdaş, and Pippi and Moomin became part of our lives.

My birthday coincides with Sweden's National Day, and I celebrated this beautiful day with all my dear CIF Sweden friends. Even though it was online, we felt very close and connected. During the Turkey-Portugal match, Marie-Anne and I supported Turkey together 😊

Looking ahead, my wish is to see the continuation and expansion of such impactful exchange programs. They play a crucial role in fostering global solidarity and shared learning, which are essential for social work services and addressing the multifaceted issues our world faces today. I hope that future participants will find their experience as transformative and inspiring as I did.

Thank you, CIF Sweden, for this incredible opportunity. Also, especially thanks to dear Åsa, Sune, Natalie for unforgettable Väjjö CIF program.

I look forward to staying connected to further deepen and develop our relationships and contribute to our shared mission of making a difference in the world.

Warm regards,

Nihan BARUTCU TABAK

Social Worker (+90 551 417 77 83 /

nihal-bartucu@hotmail.com)

Some shots from the program:

We are:

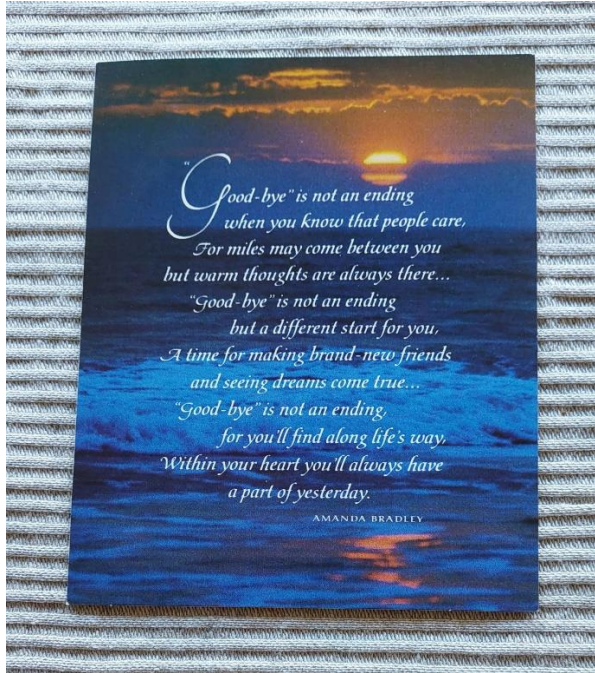


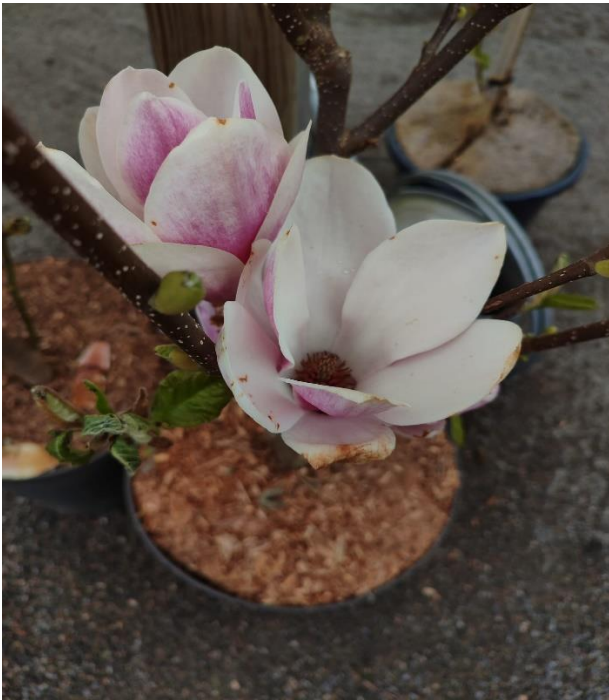
My CIF diploma which is on the head corner of my house and library



After returning from Sweden, it's lovely Fika time with Turkish coffee









REFLECTIONS ON MY PARTICIPATION IN THE CIF SWEDEN PROGRAM IN APRIL – MAY 2024

AMELIA from SPAIN

My first words about the CIF Sweden 2024 program are ones of gratitude for the excellent organization you have carried out in this professional exchange, both in the capital of the country, Stockholm, and in the city where I later spent two weeks: Växjö.

The reason for this gratitude, which I now share with you, stems from the fact that, from our arrival in your country, we were presented with a superbly structured schedule. It included explanations of public policies in Sweden, from a general overview to more specific details. This gradually allowed all the program participants to understand how the welfare state model in Sweden currently operates, and how this model can differ not only from that of my country but also from the models of my fellow program participants. This was a constant theme throughout the four weeks we spent there and is, ultimately, the key to this professional exchange. Because it is not just about understanding the host country, in this case Sweden, but also about understanding and learning from those of us who come from Finland, Turkey, India, Greece, Tanzania, or Spain.

Regarding how Sweden is governed, the system was not unfamiliar to me, as in Spain (and fortunately in other countries too), we have the same organizational structure to exercise legislative power (nation, region, and municipality). However, despite the same breakdown of levels between both countries, in the explanations provided in Stockholm by Ulrika at the Parliament, Marie-Anne, Lokta, and Anna at Socialstyrelsen, and Erik at SKR (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner), I found a subtle difference in how my country implements its public policies. In my view, Sweden demonstrates the same power at the municipal level that regions in Spain have. This made me reflect on how political decisions are currently being made in my country and how citizens engage with them (with a certain level of disaffection in the case of Spain).

From my perspective, the closer the citizen is to their legislative power, the more involved the individual becomes with the community in which they live. This slight shift in the power structure of the government in Sweden, despite the shared hierarchy, was something I found appealing. This led me to think, and I continue to believe, that Spain could benefit from reaching this level of understanding and execution of its welfare state, especially now that there is so much focus on the debate surrounding the legislative power of its autonomous communities/regions. Hopefully, the day will come when the voice of the people (the municipality) has the same presence and strength that I witnessed in Sweden.

In terms of how people mobilize to ensure that public policies meet the needs of citizens, the examples we saw of how third-sector entities work in

coordination with the Swedish welfare state's efforts are very similar to the role these entities play in my country as well. I must highlight that I thoroughly enjoyed the visits we made in Stockholm to PositHIVa Gruppen, , Wilja Gruppen, Stockholm City Mission, Lidingö Stad, and Fountain House, as well as the visits I made in Växjö to organizations like Save the Children, Diakonicentrum, and the Swedish Red Cross.

I have fond memories of all these visits, but in the specific cases of Lidingö Stad, Diakonicentrum, and Fountain House, I became aware of the importance of following the person-centered intervention model, which has been much talked about and promoted recently in the region where I live. However, in my opinion, we are currently only focusing on the theory of the model, not on its well-executed practice.

I remember that in the case of people with functional diversity, like those we visited in Lidingö, for example, activities were adapted to the person, not the person to the activity. This contrasts with my region, where people with mental disabilities work in gardening, and those with intellectual disabilities in assembling parts or cleaning services. But what happens if I am a person with a mental illness who does not like gardening? In my region, there would be no other option for protected employment in that case. And if I don't do that job, my only option, unless I secure a regular or public job, would be to stay within the four walls of my home.

As for other lessons I have learned from the four weeks I spent in the professional exchange in Sweden, I would highlight the following reflections:

- In Sweden, there is a discussion about violence in relationships, and "relationships" includes all types of partnerships. This is a different approach from the current concept we have in Spain, where political and public discourse is focused on and regulated by laws against gender-based violence or violence against women.
- Before coming to Sweden, I had never heard of the Barnahus model. But upon returning to Spain, during one of the coordination meetings I had with the child and family program of the social services in the neighborhood where I currently work (I am a social worker in the health center), my colleagues from social services informed me that the regional government was training them in this new model. So, I was pleased to know that by the time they train the health staff, it will no longer be a new concept to me.
- The child-centered needs triangle, which serves as the foundation for the three levels of intervention in Sweden's health and social services system, is now a document I have as a supplement to similar work notes I was already using in Spain.
- From the visit we made to Familjefrid in Växjö, where Monika kindly hosted us, I remember several valuable pieces of information:

- The work they do with the emotions of their clients and how they help express them using simple objects. Examples of activities include:
 - Plastic cups with faces representing emotions, which you arrange based on how you feel, like a Russian nesting doll.
 - Colored strings representing emotions that you untangle.
 - The dynamic of the emotional color circle.
- The information she shared about the different wheels of violence and non-violence.
- The questionnaire she provided on how to manage anger (very simple but highly effective).
- The document *The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (2020)*, a real gem that helps me understand the differences and reasons for cultural clashes.
- I also have fond memories of the visit we made to Rinkeby and Tensta in Stockholm. It was very inspiring to hear the stories of the people who work in both neighborhoods (Malin, Annica, Maria, and Iman) in such a complex situation as the gang wars between drug trafficking groups and the increasingly younger minors being used to carry out these attacks.

In short, the value of the knowledge gained from this exchange of professional and personal experiences in a different socio-cultural context, such as the one offered by the CIF Sweden program, has allowed me to continue improving as a social worker on a professional level. And on a personal level, it has reinforced the importance of being mindful of respecting others, no matter where they come from.

Thank you to all the people involved in CIF Sweden for the work you do year after year, especially the families who volunteer to host the participants. Their role is crucial in this professional exchange because you not only share their daily life and customs but also discuss the visits you make each day and learn from their opinions as well. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.