

06-06-2023

## International internship on the MS Galaxy Amsterdam

*In the first week of June 2023, the first short internship took place organized by the International Knowledge Platform of COA International. Four reception workers from Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway and Belgium came to the emergency reception location in Amsterdam, the MS Galaxy, to see how COA receives and guides asylum seekers. Sarah van de Meent welcomed them on behalf of COA and put together an interesting program for exchange of knowledge and inspiration.*

The program was diverse; the 'interns' took part in Dutch lessons, spoke with the organizations active on the ship, such as GZA (Asylum Seeker Healthcare) and Vluchtelingenwerk (the Dutch Refugee Council), and were given the opportunity to attend appointments with residents and to see team meetings. All with the aim of exchanging as much knowledge as possible about the reception and guidance of asylum seekers and to inspire each other. Read the experiences of Elke (Belgium) and Teresa (Lithuania) below.

### **Elke de Meuleneire – Fedasil, Belgium**

'My week internship at the Galaxy in Amsterdam was an incredibly interesting and educational experience. The balance between participating in the COA team, being involved in activities with and for residents and exchanges with various services about the practice in different European countries has been an eye-opener. It helps you take a step back and look at your own operations/processes and organization from a different perspective. I think that all participants will leave with a lot more knowledge, but above all a lot of inspiration, ideas and desire to translate these insights into their own organization. Thank you COA for this wonderful opportunity!'

### **Teresa Svecviciene – RPPC, Lithuania**

'As a representative of the Lithuanian RPPC organization, I want to express my gratitude for the invitation to analyze and compare my asylum system in relation to other EU countries. Through our discussions, we found common ground on topics including asylum procedures, accommodation, health, social services, education, employment, and integration. I noticed an area that could be improved in Lithuania, specifically the accessibility of medical and psychologist services. Enhancing access to such support would greatly benefit the mental well-being of refugees and asylum seekers. I want to thank COA for the opportunity to come together and inspire each other in our shared mission.'

The team in Amsterdam was also able to learn about asylum reception in other European countries. 'The system in Norway is very interesting for example. There is a reception center for highly motivated asylum seekers where they are offered a full-day program five days a week for knowledge development and integration. You don't need to have a residence permit to take part in this program. We don't know this system here in the Netherlands.' In addition, the international network has been strengthened by these formal but also informal moments of contact. The International Knowledge Platform will organize more international internships in the future after this successful exchange. Keep an eye on this website for the latest news.



f.l.t.r. Teresa Sveceviene (Lithuania), Pascale Felten (Luxembourg), Sarah van de Meent (COA), Ewelina Bernat (Norway) and Elke de Meuleneire (Belgium).