

MY 9 MONTHS IN STOCKOLM



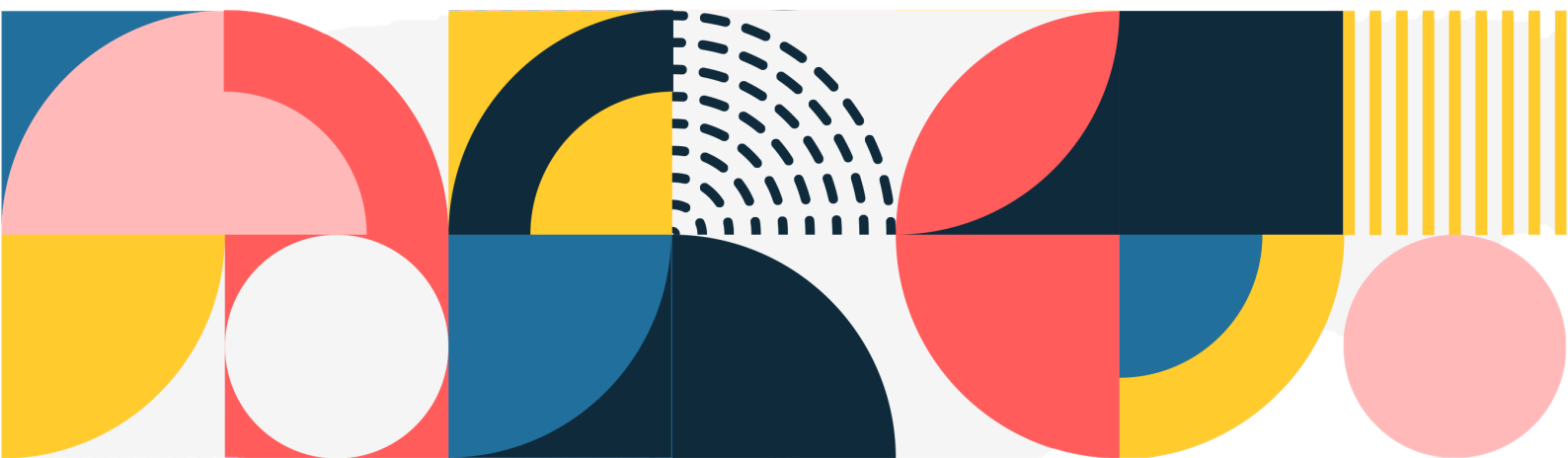
Hello, my name is Alfonso Beltrán. I'm twenty four years old and I'm from Spain. I'm was the Posithiva Gruppen volunteer in 2020. In Spain I've been volunteering in Imagina Más (HIV organization) for more than three years now, offering my help at hospitals to newly diagnosed patients, distributing information and collaborating in events with the association, while also attending courses and guidance to help people, widening my knowledge about HIV.

I came here to help other people along with the entire PG team. And I think that despite all the changes that the pandemic brought, I have been able to do something to help and it has not been a bad experience, on the contrary, I have created a new life in these 9 months.

Text and photos by: Alfonso Beltrán Quintero



MARCH



I made a move, I said goodbye to my friends with dinners, parties and many conversations. I spent the last days with my family and to prepare for this great trip, this great change in my life.

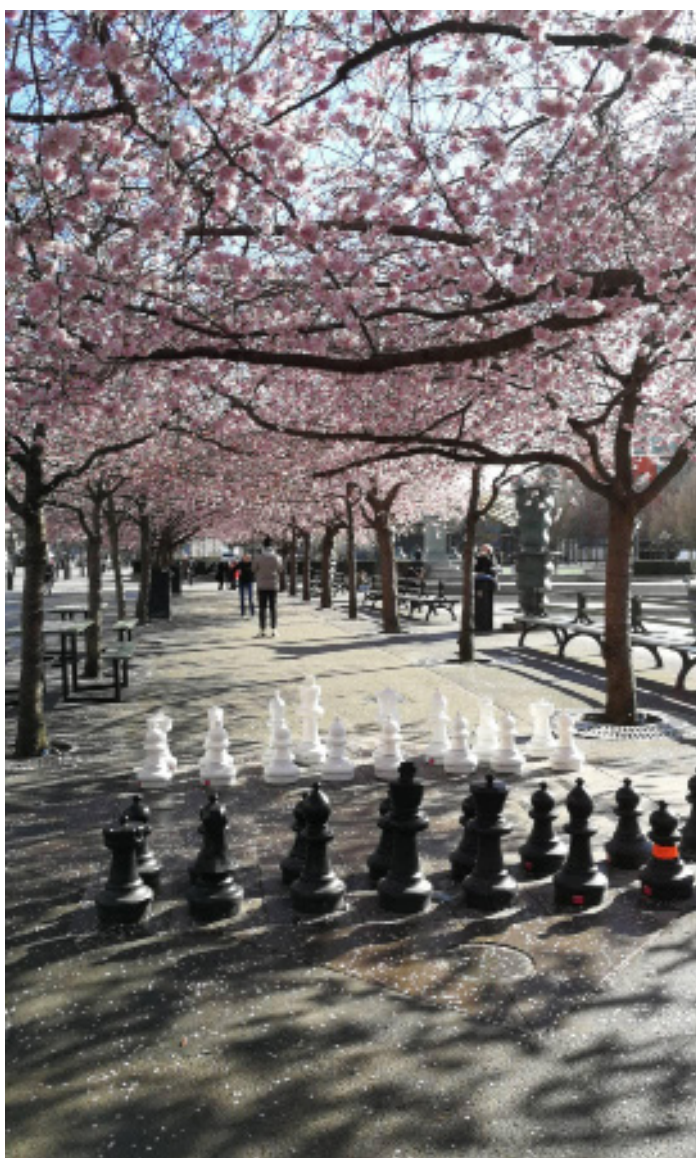
I left Spain in the middle of the pandemic, the streets were empty and I was afraid of missing my flight, I wasn't calm until I landed in Stockholm.

I came nervous, wanting everything, hoping to meet new friends, new culture, new country, but the first weeks I spent almost entirely at home. I blamed the covid for it but it really had more influence that I was shocked all the time. Change, I couldn't assimilate it as I thought I would.

Even so I started working, I made friends very quickly with the assistants at the dinners and with some of my colleagues, I ate out in many places with new friends, I tried salmon, a typical dessert "Semla" Polish food and a lot of cheese.



"Johanne and Me"



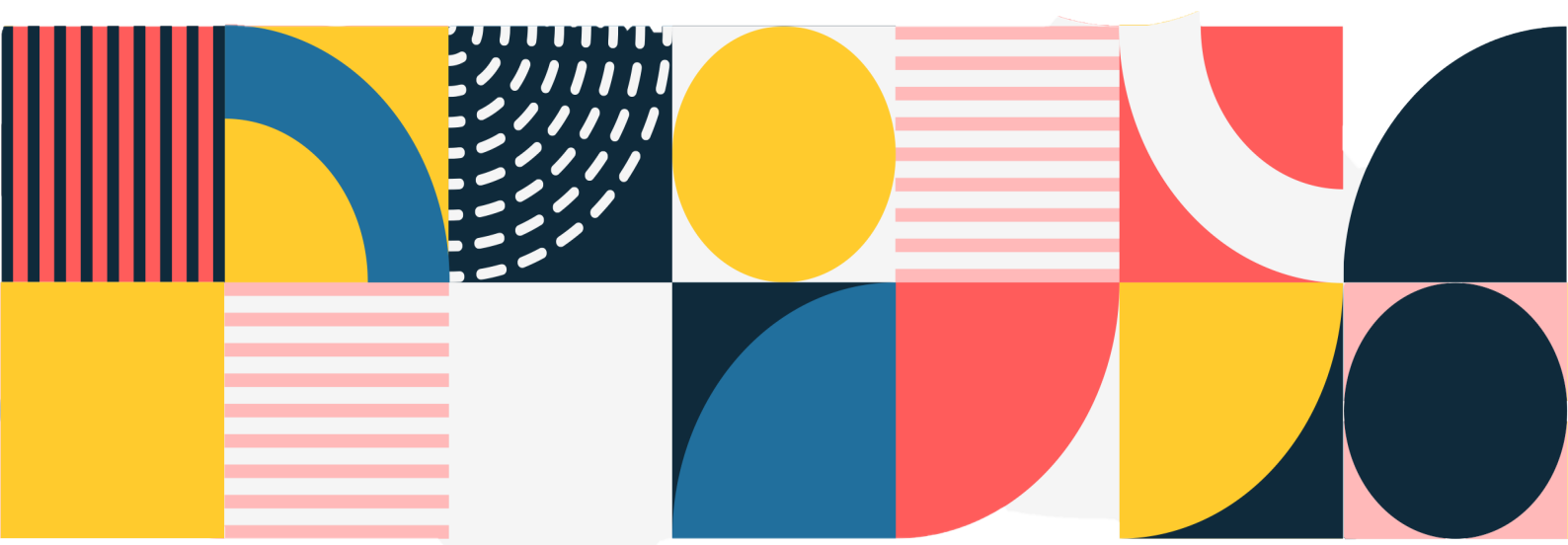
“Kungsträdgården - Stockholm”

I explored what I could but the weather was terrible, lots of snow and cold, atypical for me who has always spent the month of March under the Spanish sun. Still the cherry trees of Kungsträdgården blossomed and were the most precious flowers of the season. I like snow but I couldn't enjoy it because of everything that was going on in my mind.

Making this change entails creating a new file cabinet in your brain where not only new things and food appear, how to deal with the mixed feelings also appears, how to endure so much change and something that was very important for me: how not to get carried away by memories.

It is hard at first, it is like a roller coaster, it starts euphoric on the rise but then you realize that everything is going down, everything is adaptation, effort, struggle, when you get to the bottom is when you lift your head and think: if I don't do it now, I will not be able to do it, admit that it was not what you expected and then again you are recovering the desire and the euphoria of the beginning, but this time you know what you are facing.

APRIL



This month begins with more work, helped by my colleagues with a magazine about the coronavirus. In addition to this project, we developed a learning plan to monitor my progress, with objectives such as "Speak English fluently", "Know myself better" and "Develop my Adobe skills". We will follow up the learning plan every month to see if progress has been made, or whether it is difficult or impossible. The support activities in our premises closed during the period mid-March – April, but the activities re-open in May.

I also assisted another organization who shares their administration with PG: Kvinnocirkeln Sverige (KCS), an organization by women living with HIV in Sweden, making their new folder. All these activities were very useful for me to continue developing my skills with adobe programs, and thus not lose habits. Once a month we meet all the colleagues online (meeting) to make a report of the month, each one talks about their field of work.

Hiv och corona

Fakta, råd och svar
på frågor

PG+ POSITHIVA
GRUPPEN

Så skyddar du dig själv och andra

Tvätta händerna ofta med vatten och rikligt med tvål i minst 20 sekunder.

Tvätta alltid händerna när du kommer hem, till ditt arbete eller annan plats efter att ha varit ute.

Tvätta före du äter, när du ska hantera mat och efter toalettbesök.

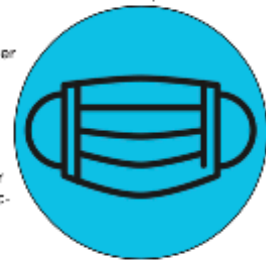
Handsprit kan vara ett alternativ när du inte har möjlighet till handtvätt.

Täck munnen och näsan med en böjd armbåge när du hostar eller nysning. Dvs hosta och nys i armvecket.

Stanna hemma om du känner dig det minsta sjuk.

Har du symptom ska du försöka låta bli att träffa andra människor.

Undvik nära kontakt med sjuka människor.



Symtom

Covid-19 ger en allmän sjukdomskänsla med ett eller flera av följande symtom:

- hosta
- feber
- andningsbesvär
- snuva
- halsont
- huvudvärk
- muskel- och ledvärk
- illamående

Behandling av covid-19

Det pågår forskning för att ta fram såväl behandling av covid-19 som vaccin mot coronaviruset SARS-CoV-2. Antiretrovirala läkemedel som används för behandling av hiv liksom flera andra möjliga behandlingar testas i väl utformade kliniska studier. Eftersom dessa försök fortfarande pågår är det för tidigt att säga om antiretrovirala eller andra läkemedel är effektiva vid behandling av COVID-19.



"Small informative magazine about covid-19 where there is a brief explanation, symptoms and protection, a conversation with a specialist, where to find more information and relevant contacts."

On the 14th and for the next two days I participated in a “welcome seminar” with other ESC volunteers and coordinators from the National Agency MUCF. It was nice to see everyone and to be able to share experiences. Some were volunteering on farms and others in cities helping the elderly and in schools.

The seminar was not done as it was originally planned: to go to a hotel. Due to the pandemic we could not do anything other than an online meeting. I am more about connecting with people, I do not like virtual meetings, not even calling by phone, but I can spend hours talking about any topic if I have the person in front of me.

Outside the world of work, the weather was still bad, In the end of April the weather improved a bit and I was able to go out more, went to new bars and restaurants with friends, and visited parks where a change was clearly seen in everyone’s personality, they were happier, they went out in groups and it did not seem that there was a global pandemic. The truth is that the break that Sweden offered compared to my country was appreciated, so I took advantage of the first rays of sunshine and temperature improvement and I started to go out more.



“Folder for Kvinnocirkeln Sverige (KCS)”

MAY



Along with the learning plan work, every month I submit a form with my work hours, in order to keep track. At first it was difficult for me to complete my hours since I did not work in the office and with work from home and studying English, I could not complete them. But once the weekly dinners resumed and more work was to be done in the office and with the youth group, they were easily completed. Dinner Wednesdays consist of hosting the office so that PG members get dinners that function as a safe space where they can interact with each other. These dinners are only for gay men who live with HIV. You work in pairs, you don't always work with the same partner, it depends on availability but you always work in pairs. My tasks were to prepare the rooms so that the members could have dinner following the covid regulations, serve dinner, collect it and clean it. When everything is ready I would sit down to talk to the members.

Even at this time with the Ung&Hiv (Young&HIV) group, is a youth activity by PG + and Noaks Ark Stockholm, where young people aged 18-30 living with HIV meet every month for social and knowledge-based activities. We have not met much in person, almost everything is held online apart from the occasional movie night at the office. Movie nights are one of the activities that we program for the youth group, the office is offered as a meeting point, food is ordered (normally pizza) and the room and the movie are prepared according to the regulations of covid.

But on May 8 we went outside to do a "fika". A fika is a little lunch like a sandwich or coffee with cake, and it was nice to take advantage of the sunny hours.



"Movie night in the PG's office"

PG also had a pleasant surprise for me, they were going to interview me for the next issue of the posithiva gruppen magazine "Posithiva Nyheter", to talk about my background, my life and how I ended up in Sweden. The communications officer administers the magazine and she was the one who interviewed me, in English, and then translated it into Swedish. It was very liberating to talk in detail about the beginning of everything, when I was diagnosed and how I felt at that time when I remembered and narrated all those experiences, many memories came to me and I realized that almost all of them were wonderful, so much so that I said "if I could go back in time I would not change anything".

For the magazine they took pictures of me and one of them I edited with photoshop to look like I was flying above the sofa, the assembly was easy and I had fun doing it.

One of the things that began to surprise me the most were the sunrises, the month began with dawn at 4am and evening at 11pm, something unthinkable for me.

As during previous months, I took advantage of trips with friends to city streets and parks, and it was beautiful to see the young birds. I photographed and filmed them as a tourist arriving for the first time in a city.



"Edited with photoshop by myself"

POSITHIVA NYHETER

Nummer 2 2020

POSITHIVT PORTRÄTT:

Alfonso

SEX

Ensamsex, tillsammanssex
och att hitta tillbaka till sexliv

Tandläkaren
svarar på frågor
om hiv och munhälsa

CORONA

Hur kan man tackla oro och ovisshet?
Hur påverkas personer som lever med hiv globalt?

PG+

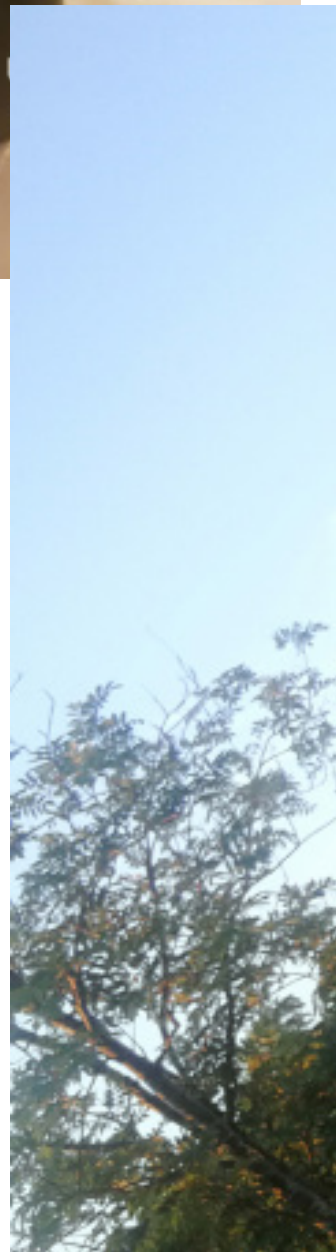
“Posithiva Nyheter cover. Text and photos by: Ronja”

JUNE





And what was my favorite date in all of Sweden so far arrived, MIDSOMMAR, an incredible party where I went to Lapis again with friends and I saw that the sun never set, the water was ideal, and everything was beautiful, they showed me the tradition of the flower crown, the dances, the bonfire and forging friendship with a group of people who are the best friends I have been able to make here, without a doubt it is a date to enjoy the beauty of Sweden.



We continued with new graphic design projects such as illustrations for a report about “PG’s AIDS 2020, in the World AIDS Conference. I like all these projects and they make my work very enjoyable, it is appreciated to work on something you like. The meetings with my social mentor and tutor also continue. I come from some jobs where there is not this type of follow up and care for the worker so it is something that culturally shocks me.

June 6th is the national day of Sweden, this year due to covid there was not a great celebration but in the office a lot of food was prepared and we decorated it with blue and yellow flowers. After working one Friday at the beach of Lapis, you can bathe or swim even though the water is cold, that contact with nature feels good.

“Midsommar and national day of Sweden celebration”



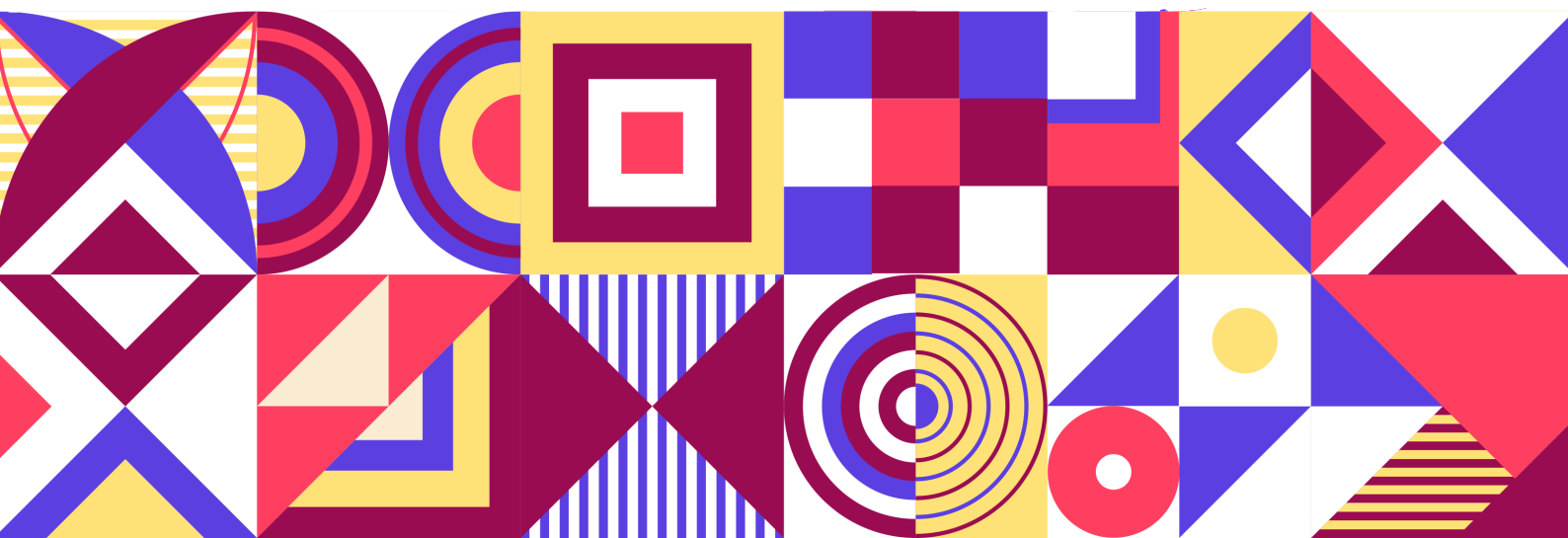
I also helped pack the magazine where my photo appeared on the cover. It was a strange and pleasant feeling to see my face many times printed. I know it is for a normal magazine but it made me feel like a famous person. I asked a lot about the magazine, such as where it would be sent, where it could be seen, and if I could take many copies.

This month I started to go out a lot more, to lakes, beaches, archipelago, other cities, and country houses. Nature at this time is incredible, it seems that it screams at you to immerse yourself in it and spend days and days seeing its green forests and the blue waters, everything floods you as if you had never seen such vivid landscapes. So much so that nature itself gets into the city: next to my house I saw several times deer pass at night and early in the morning, foxes, mice and many birds.



“Packing the magazines in PG’s office”

JULY



With Young&HIV we prepare another movie night that month. In this case we chose a horror movie and returned to order pizza, the result was good and after finishing the movie we spent a while talking to each other. My colleague couldn't come to work this time

Another project I had this month was a task ordered by Posithiva Gruppen's staff chief, organizing Posithiva Gruppen's archives together with another young person. It sounds boring but it was a very fun hours, we had to open each box, select what was to be thrown away and what was to be stored, and to put it back in the deposit.

My personality is a mess but inside of me I know where I have everything stored, so this type of activity for me was like a mission in a video game and the truth is that I had a good time thanks to this little knock.



"My point of view"



“Summer day with friends”

The only thing that made me sad about this month was that pride could not be celebrated. for me it represents a lot and one of the things I wanted most when coming to Sweden was to see how pride was going to be done here. When I saw the Madrid Pride Parade for the first time, I understood what it meant to be proud of who you are, to love who you love and to enjoy the freedom as anyone deserves, for that reason and for a thousand stories, I love the pride month.

AUGUST



With the Young&HIV group we did an activity almost directed by me, a pole dance class, it was fun and something out of the ordinary in the group's activities, it did not have the reception that I would have wanted because the participants were leaving the activity and others canceled the same day. but we left the class happy.

I was commissioned to do the illustrations for PG's AIDS 2020, at first I sent some examples of illustrations but they were too complex and did not like it among my colleagues, I started to simplify and created some squares for each top of the page, each color tried to be representative for each of the titles. This was the end result and received good reviews.

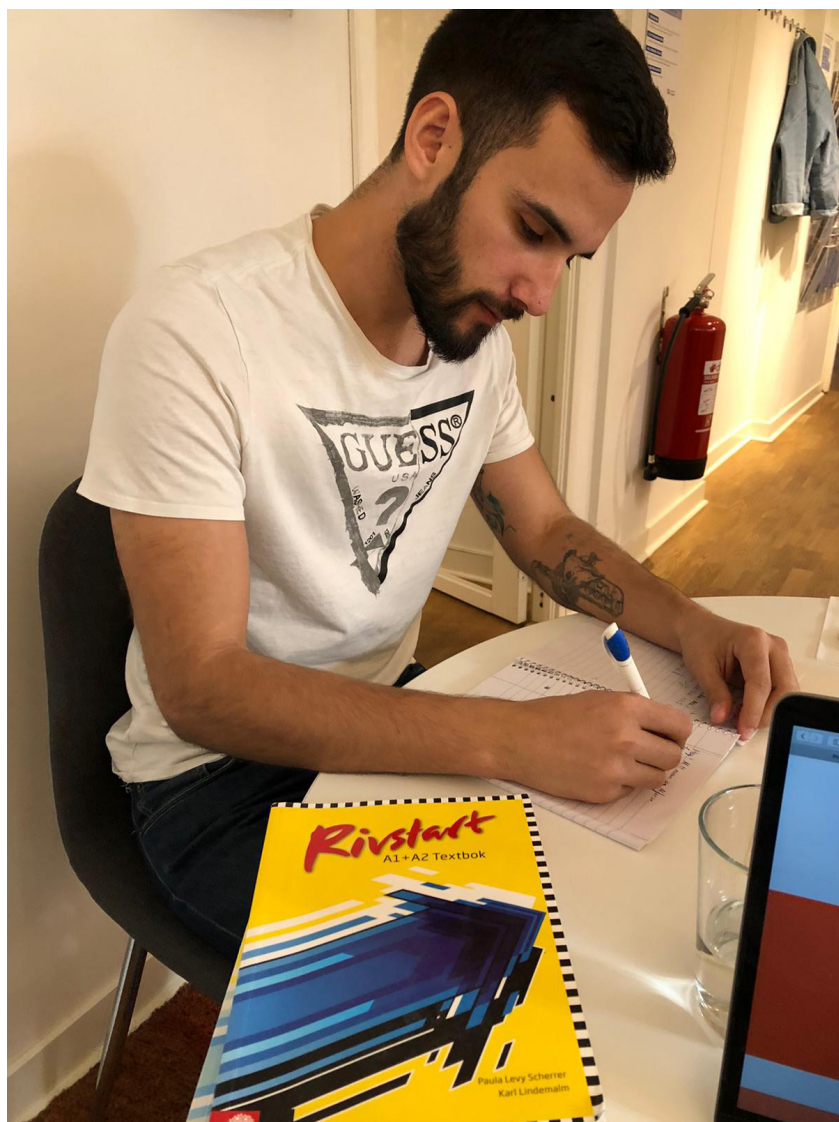
I came back with new ideas for the KCS roll up, with examples of how the KCS women had to position themselves to take the photo and what the texts and logo would look like.



“cover page for PG's AIDS 2020”



“chapter page for PG's AIDS 2020”



More meetings were given with the group of young people and I tried to improve my work routine, since these summer months took a toll on my work, I became more lazy, I did not follow a rhythm because I was very distracted by the Swedish summer .

* I had a lot of problems with the SFI (Swedish For Immigrants) classes, they wouldn't let me in without a Swedish ID and it was all denied on their part. In the end I gave up and stopped trying even after getting help from my coworkers.

August was not a good month psychologically speaking, August is the birthday of a large part of my family (cousins, sister, father, best friend) and I congratulated everyone from a distance, it is hard to be away from the family at this time and more so being my very close and warm family.

“Swedish private lessons with Renato”

SEPTEMBER



This month began with my return from vacations in Spain.

As soon as I arrived I began to lose my sense of smell and a friend from Spain called saying that he tested positive for covid, so it was clear that I was also going through the virus. luckily I only lost the ability to smell and nothing else, although I could not go to the office and I did not leave home much those two weeks that lasted the Symptoms.

When I fully recovered I went back to work in the office and on the 17th PG staff chief invited me to a “Positiv Plattform” (an educational weekend for people living with HIV organized by PG) in Umeå for several days, it was great to be able to see another city, the car trip allowed me to see all the way (almost half of Sweden) and the city was beautiful, small but I knew how to get lost in the forest and in the museums when I had free time, I will speak little about the conference because it was almost all in Swedish and I learned rather little, but it was interesting to talk with participants during the meals, to know a little more about their lives.

My advice is that before the months go by you start to practice Swedish, at work I could speak Spanish and English and that made me not too interested in starting to learn but despite the fact that everyone speaks English, important matters, the Plattform, are given in Swedish, therefore it is better to learn it as soon as possible.



“Photograph taken in Umeå”



If you have the opportunity to travel you always have to do it, the experience that one gains by doing these trips is not achieved from home no matter how much imagination or studies one has.

Right after this trip I had the second and last evaluation seminar with the other ESC volunteers in Sweden. I thought exactly the same thing, that it was a pity not to be able to see each other in person and get to know each other better, the activities were good but something was missing, even so I was glad to know that everyone had done so well and knowing what they did all these months.

The PG's staff chief commissioned me to make two posters for the office, both about the maximum capacity of people in each room, it occurred to me to make the posters a little funnier and I put music groups saying the new regulations in Swedish.

This month I made a chef friend who loves to cook for his friends and every weekend we spent at his house, Mexican, Peruvian, Cuban food, mixed with Swedish food... everything and delicious, I love to eat.

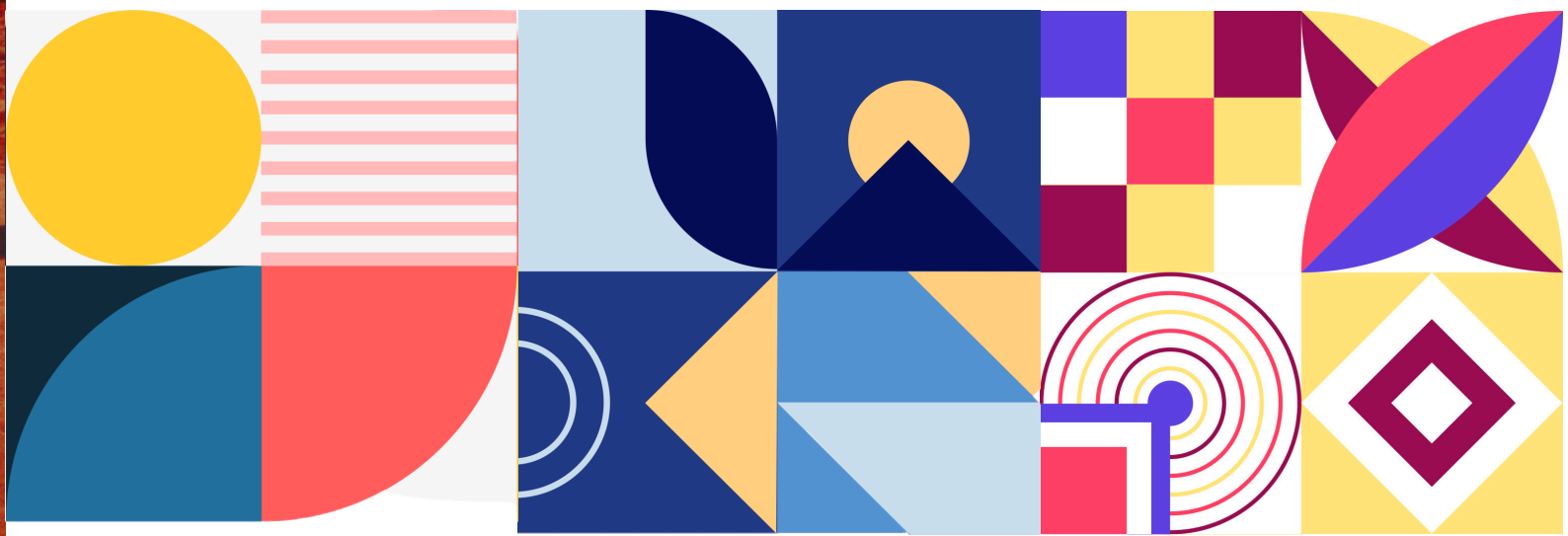


"Blondie say: no more than 8 person in this room "



"Muse say: no more than 8 person in this room "

OCTOBER



On the 16th I attended a very interesting women's conference organized by Posithiva Gruppen's programme area for women (KN) and KCS. At least the part that was given in English seemed very informative, I met some lovely women, these sites are great both for information and for expanding the circle of friends.

Another conference I attended was with the Young&HIV group to talk to young people living with HIV about the group. My role was to talk about the volunteer project and a little about myself and that I was a volunteer in Spain before coming to Sweden. It was fun to see young and dynamic faces, we practically came back dancing on the bus, very good energy.

It is coordinated by the Karolinska Infection Clinic nr. 2, Huddinge and 42 young people aged 18 to 26 participated. We introduced them to Ung & Hiv and that some of the participants joined the Ung & Hiv activities afterwards.



I was the manager of an activity this month. It was a group art class where we did some activities related to art, such as painting a moment of your life but only expressing feelings with paintings, it was a fun and liberating activity, 10 people attended and two of them online.

"Teaching the class in the PG office and one of the paintings"



This month I barely stepped foot in my house because on the 23rd I went on a cruise for several days with the members from PG, it was a lot of fun and a very happy way to disconnect, the views from the cruise ship were so wonderful that they stayed in my memory like the trailer of a movie that I want to see in its entirety

This month I visited Uppsala, a city near Stockholm, a city with a lot of history and 100% recommended to visit because it is beautiful.

“Cruise to Härnösand”



NOVEMBER



This month begins with bad news due to the growth of covid in Sweden and new restrictions that force the cancellation of dinner and all physical activities and the closure of offices. Although some activities were changed for online meeting that continued to function.

On the 14th I prepared together with a colleague an online activity for the group Ung & Hiv that dealt with the corona pandemic and HIV, we invited Pernilla Albinsson, a nurse at Karolinska Hospital Huddinge, who spoke about her will lecture on HIV, research conducted in the field and answer questions about HIV, medicines, side effects etc. We invited young people living with HIV from other countries such as the USA, France and Spain and they spoke about their experiences. All participants were able to share and interact in the conversation. This was the only physical activity I did with my colleagues because we went to the office to prepare everything.

Together with my colleagues we continued the Swedish classes, this time online but they were useful and enjoyable



Basfakta om hiv

Pernilla Albinsson
sjuksköterska

I continued and finished the project of the months, a project similar to a diary about everything that I have worked and lived as an experience in Stockholm. From projects with PG and KCS to describing feelings towards this country and its inhabitants. It was a liberating project and I was able to execute some more of my skills with adobe, plus this will be seen by future volunteers and it will be a base for them to collect their own experience in PG and give it their personal touch, so I am very happy to be the first and open the way for the rest of the volunteers.

Also this month is where everything is darker but at the same time brighter, all the houses are illuminated with Christmas decorations and stars, the shopping centers are temporary works of art and traditions and particular smells of these festive dates are already beginning to be seen. .



“Mall Scandinavia Christmas decoration ”