

Tamara Grigoryeva, volunteer at the Peace Institute 2008-2009

My name is Tamara, I was born and spent most of my life in Azerbaijan. I was born just a few years before Azerbaijan gained independence, so as I grew up I could see all the stages of my country's development on its way to democracy and prosperity. There is still a lot to be done to bring Azerbaijan to a developed country level, just as there is still a lot to be done in my career. Four years ago I became a student of journalism faculty of Baku State University. I started working right after I got to university. Before I got to the Åland Islands Peace Institute I worked for Agency France Press and Azeri Press Agency, covering mostly Azerbaijan's foreign policy, which includes the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan's development in terms of economical and political reforms, US-Azerbaijan dialog, Azerbaijan's European neighborhood Plan implementation, Azerbaijan's role in energy security issues, etc.

My editors mostly enjoyed working with me, but still I think I must study more to become a more professional journalist. Especially it is very important being accurate and balanced in your journalism work, especially when covering things like the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement. I noticed that both in Azeri and Armenian media there is a lot of hatered propaganda, which is unacceptable! So that is one of the reasons why I got to the Åland Peace Institute.

I mentioned before I feel that there is a need to bring more tolerance and accuracy in my region and particularly my country. This year in February I have been on Åland for a week, and during that period I have met with lots of Ålandic journalists, editors and media experts. What I noticed is that most of these people were very patient, deferential and respectful and behaved very tolerant. The same with ordinary people we met during that week. I also notice that media in Åland has much more freedom and access to officials than journalists in Azerbaijan. And I liked the way Ålandic journalists approach international issues, the way they repors. Those reports are usually very accurate and don't offend anybody's integrity.

Mass media is a tool on which in many cases depend what people think and how people act. I would never say media is a tool of propaganda, but media very often helps people form their opinion. So I think after doing EVS in Aland I can come back to Baku where I will be able to help people understand that patient and tolerant approach to each other, to different nations and minorities is much better than xenophobia and hate propaganda, that only rationalism and indulgence, democratic reforms and pluralism bring to peace, real independence and prosperity. Maybe this is possible through arranging peace lessons and lectures at schools and universities, or maybe through journalism stories, but it is possible. I hope I will be able to do that and Aland Peace Institute will be very helpful in terms of bringing me to the right way.