

Erasmus+, KA2, Strategic Partnership, “Young Entrepreneurs – Learning By Experience”

LTTA (Learning/Teaching/Training Activities) in Mazsalaca, Latvia

On behalf of the project Erasmus+, KA2, *Young Entrepreneurs – Learning by Experience*, an LTTA took place in Mazsalaca, Latvia, from 3rd to 11th May, in which students and teachers of the partner schools from Latvia, Belgium, Greece and Estonia were involved, apart from ours, of course. One Portuguese 11th form student and four 12th form ones took part in this learning/teaching/training meeting.

On the first day, we visited the capital city, Riga. In the KGB (former Committee for State Security of the USSR) museum, we were all disturbed due to the many horrific atrocities committed there during the fifty-one years of the suffocating Soviet rule.

The long walks we took through the streets of Old Riga gave us the chance to enjoy the gorgeous and imposing buildings, with their exuberant architectural beauty in the *Art Nouveau* style. Once the 4th of May is a national holiday, being the celebration of Independence Day related to the Latvian people’s liberation of the smothering Soviet domination, we were fortunate enough to witness interesting celebrations alluding to that important day in the life of the Latvian people.

In Valmiera, at the local *Spring Market*, we appreciated the beauty of several handcrafted products made of various materials, such as wood, straw, bronze, silver, wool, etc.

At the Sietiniezis National Park, we went for a long walk. At a different park, we loved to see dozens of wooden sculptures. The unique and peculiar big-sized games, also made out of wood, managed to get the amusing participation of everyone. At night, we were awarded the chance to attend a show in which many traditional dance groups performed. All of them succeeded in fascinating us with their beautiful songs and costumes.

The canoeing activity along the Salaca River, the stroll through the park and the picnic (some of the delicacies were made on spot) turned out to be delightful occasions, as well as the singing performance of a Latvian colleague at a reasonable distance from a few rocks that, curiously enough, echoed back her lovely song. After the visit to a local *entrepreneur* (who produces many types of wine, taking advantage of a wide range of traditional Latvian berries), to a manor house and to an Art school, we also visited a museum in which thousands of little mice made out of amber, porcelain, metal, wool and wood were exhibited.

In Staicele, we went on a traditional wooden boat ride and, when it was over, we had the chance to try the art of weaving. Due to the project’s general theme, we also visited an herbal farm and a food factory. In the end of the day, we went to a beach in the Baltic Sea.

In Sigulda, the cable car ride offered us magnificent views. The bobsleigh ride was unique, mainly due to the fact that our students had never tried it before. On the same day, there was still time enough to visit a castle and a cave.

Previously, every student had presented the works they had already done back in their own countries (on *intercultural communication*, *social inclusion* and the translation of many texts into English from their school's websites). Once again due to the project's theme, the students learnt the whole process of candle and soap making, and carved jewelry out of silver which they brought home as pleasant souvenirs that they made themselves. On the last day, each multilingual group of participating students presented their own conclusions regarding the following topics: *Entrepreneurship*, *Culture*, *Gastronomy*, *People* and *Memories and Impressions*. The day ended with a lovely Mother's Day Concert with performances of not only various folk music and dance groups, but also one moving and perfectly-tuned children's choir.

The weather was a pleasant surprise: we were granted with very sunny and warm days.

The places we visited, the tasty gastronomy, the canoeing and bobsleigh experiences, the great respect for Nature, common among the Latvians, the kind and warm welcome we were given, on many occasions, enchanted us. On the final day, in Riga, there were, understandingly, many tears, hugs and smiles. In our hearts, a profound sense of gratitude towards the Latvians will always be present, for all of these memorable days.

We would like to add that, making the most of the six-hour layover in Barcelona, we also had the chance to visit this city.

We are already looking forward to the next *TPM (Transnational Project Meeting)*, in late June and early July, in Estonia. According to the peculiar characteristics of all *TPMs* set out by the EU, only teachers from all countries involved in this project can attend this meeting.

Here are our students' comments:

"This was a unique experience with which we could make new friends and learn how cultures are different from each other. Everything that we learnt along this week will also be useful for our future"

Bruna

"This was a very good experience for me because I really liked to meet other people and get to know another culture."

Filipa

"Both those who were involved in this project and those who weren't were very accepting people, and that was the key factor that made this experience truly one of the best."

Guilherme

“This Erasmus+ project gave me the opportunity to meet new people and know new cultures; it helped me to understand that people from other countries have different realities from our own.”

João

“Being part of this project was like a gift to me. It gave me the chance to discover a new country and to meet amazing new people. If I could, I’m sure I would repeat this experience.”

Margarida