



ERASMUS+ KA2 PROJECT, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS/EXCHANGES OF GOOD PRACTICES, YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS – LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE

In the framework of the Erasmus + project, KA2, *Strategic Partnerships / Exchanges of Good Practices, Young Entrepreneurs - Learning by Experience*, an *LTTA* meeting (*Learning / Teaching / Training Activities*) was held from 21st to 29th March 2019 in Mechelen, in Belgium. Several students and teachers from Estonia, Portugal, Greece, Latvia and Belgium took part in it. Five Portuguese students were involved in this meeting: Eva Morais, Rafael Alves e Rodrigo Vicente (12th B), Maria Silva (12th C) and Guilherme Nunes (11th B).

On the first day, we attended a Dutch class, which was quite interesting because it allowed us to learn some Dutch words, phrases and sentences. Then there was a speeddate activity that was truly an icebreaking one.

On the following days, all the participating partner schools (apart from ours, *Sint Romboutscollege* (from Belgium), *Mazsalacas vidusskola* (from Latvia), *Geniko Lykeio Volou* (from Greece) and *Tamsalu Gymnaasium* (from Estonia) presented the previously-done works. Our students presented them in a very nice way leaving it clear how committed they had been to carry out the tasks they had been assigned to. Such a situation was reason enough for all of us to be proud of. The multilingual student council as well as the social entrepreneurship workshop led to inspiring and creative presentations.

We had a guided tour in Mechelen, a city with an outstanding Flemish architecture. We climbed to the top of the tower (514 steps) of *St. Rumbold's Cathedral* (in Dutch, *Sint-Romboutskathedraal*), built in the 13th century. Rumbold was an Irish or Scottish (there's no certainty about his place of birth) Christian missionary who settled in the region. He died as a martyr in the 6th century becoming then the patron saint of the city. What a beautiful view we had from the top of the unfinished tower of this cathedral! Its two carillons, made up of 98 bells, ring out enchanting and varied melodies along the day. Marvellous! Mechelen has three very nice squares, one of which is the *Large Market* (in Dutch, *Grote Markt*) square. We also visited a chocolate factory/shop, where we could see a *chocolatier* making various kinds of chocolate. The Belgian chocolate is said to be the best in the world and we could reinforce that feeling out of our own experience!



We were taken to a brewery company to learn how the traditional Belgian beer is made. There are hundreds and hundreds of different types of it. It was quite a knowledgeable experience.

On another day, we visited Bruges (*Brugge*, in Dutch). This medieval city is known as the *Belgian Venice* because of all its canals. Its beautiful historic centre is a *UNESCO World Heritage*. We also got to know the *Wellington* museum, where several very interesting artefacts are on display and also where we could watch a 3D film related to Waterloo, the battle in which Napoleon was defeated. On the way back to Mechelen, we took a walk along the seaside town of Blankenberge, which welcomes, in the summer, many holidaymakers.

Antwerp, with its noteworthy *City Hall* at the *Grote Markt* (main square) and its well-preserved 16th-century-gilded houses is a remarkable city. The wealth of its merchants and manufacturers is still nowadays portrayed in those opulent and very well preserved houses, which conveys to the city a charming atmosphere and a real sense of its past financial and economic prosperity. In fact, in that century, Antwerp was worldwide known, for 40% of the world trade took place in its quays. We visited one of them and learnt about a legend related to the name of this city.

The cultural day we spent in Brussels was also a very interesting one because we were granted the possibility of having a clarifying guided visit in the European Parliament. Then we were enchanted with the very beautiful and amazing architecture of all the buildings around the *Grand Place*. No one could miss the famous tiny statue of the *Manneken Pis* as well as of the less famous but nevertheless also funny feminine version of it, *Jeanneke Pis*. Next to it, the *Delirium Tremens* bar displays more than 2000 types of Belgian beer!

One of the most ancient universities in Europe is the one of Leuven. In fact, the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* was founded in the 15th century. The *Groot Begijnhof* (*Grand Beguinage*) is nowadays owned by the university and many of its students dwell in its traditional brick-and-sandstone houses (few of them are timber-framed). It was built in 1205 and it was originally created to house *beguines* (religious women who lived in community without taking vows or retiring from the world). It went through flourishing and decline periods along the past centuries, but after being restored genuinely keeping its traditional traits, in 1998 it was officially recognised by UNESCO as a *World Heritage* site. The *Town Hall* of Leuven, built in the gothic style, is also beautifully imposing.

From the 18th century onwards, the brewery business flourished in Leuven. Nowadays, the headquarters of *Anheuser-Busch InBev*, one of the biggest and most successful brewery companies in the world, are situated in Leuven.



This meeting was, unquestionably, an added value to all the students and teachers that took part in it, not only because they tightened the bonds they had created in the meeting in October, in Portugal, and since then reinforced through the social networks, but also because it allowed them to get to know a cultural reality, which is, in many aspects, totally different from their own and exactly because of that, it showed up to be a very enriching experience. It must be added that all the Belgian students and teachers were very pleasantly kind as well as the Latvian, the Estonian and the Greek ones. In a nutshell, it was an unforgettable experience to all. Because of all this, on the departure day, the visiting students and teachers as well as the welcoming Belgian ones were sad because such an enriching week in cultural, social and learning terms had come to an end. Surely everyone had innerly grown up and felt thankful for such a richly enhancing lifelong experience.

Here are our students' opinions about this LTTA in Belgium:

“From the very beginning of this project I was super excited about visiting Belgium. When the time finally came, I couldn't believe it! The long-awaited week I spent in Belgium was everything I had dreamt about and I must even admit it widely overcame my expectations! I visited Bruges and it is the most magical place I've ever been to. It looks like it's part of a fantasy world. The enchanting buildings amazed me and I truly enjoyed the boat trip through the canals. I loved the city of Mechelen because of the feeling of comfort and peace it provided me. It definitely felt like a place I would like to live in. I also got to visit many other cities like Antwerp, Brussels and Leuven. In each one I got to experience a part of the Belgian culture and I loved it. The opportunity of seeing these amazing places with my own eyes is something I'm very grateful for but I would say the best part of this trip was getting to live my life in a completely different way from the one I have in my own country: I was a Belgian for a week. I loved to be a part of my host's family, I loved meeting new people from different countries and most of all I loved the fact that we could share our stories with others. It's amazing how this project brings together people who have really different backgrounds. It was one of the most fantastic weeks of my life and I'll never forget it. I made lifelong friendships that I'm grateful for. I want to visit this amazing country again!”

Eva Morais, 12thB

“This was without any doubt one of the best weeks of my entire life. Being granted the chance to live in a different country was truly amazing! It was also awesome to socialize with youngsters from several countries.”



Guilherme Nunes, 11thB

“This week in Belgium was a great experience! I really enjoyed Mechelen but I also loved visiting Gent, Antwerp and Brussels. I had a lot of fun in the tours but mainly in the free time because it was when we had the chance to get to know each other. With this experience I got to know a lot not only about Belgium but also about all the countries that took part in the project. This trip totally changed me and the best part was meeting amazing people and getting to know everything about them. I will keep in my heart not only great memories but also friends for life! Thank you!”

Maria Silva, 12th C

“I really enjoyed the trip to Belgium. Thanks to it, I had the chance to meet amazing people and learn a lot about the local culture. I also spent a very good week!”

Rafael Alves, 12thB

“I really loved Belgium. I met awesome people, had a good time, and....Yeah, I'm really looking forward to going to Belgium again!”

Rodrigo Vicente, 12thB