

Erasmus Project: The Common Basis of Our Modern Democracies

9 February - 15 February 2020

Veszprém

reflections on the events of the week

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Everybody in Veszprém was looking forward to welcoming our guests from Düsseldorf and Valenciennes on 9 February. The enthusiastic group included the twelve students involved in the ERASMUS project, the host families and the teachers.

The different groups prepared for the events differently. Parents of the host families were prepped for their roles at the parent meeting on 29th January, and of course they were being continuously informed by Viktor Király before the arrival of the groups. They had to process a lot of information concerning different aspects of life from allergies to language knowledge and lifestyle questions. For some students getting in touch with each other was difficult, but finally they managed to solve all problems.

The students involved in the project were active participants in the organization of the programme. They were delegated specific tasks, which made it easy for everybody to know what their duties were. As I present the events of the days in progress I will recognize their efforts. Nevertheless, I have to state at the beginning that I am grateful for everybody who took part in the implementation of these beautiful 6 days, I am sure that it will remain an unforgettable week in our lives.

On Sunday evening (9 February) we were hoping to receive our guests at around 8 pm outside Lovassy. The bus company reported that they could fetch both the German and the French group at the right time, and they arrived at Lovassy on time. Enthusiastic and curious hosts were waiting for them and took them to their homes immediately in order for them to be able to get up the next day to be prepared for the week's work.

On Monday we started the programme at 9 am. Gál Zsófia was always there for me to help with the coordination. Our headmaster welcomed the guests and we listened to our French students' presentation. We also informed them about the planned programme. After the break there was time for the international groups to work together and discuss what they had achieved by that time, and they thought their tasks would be for the week.

We went to the canteen to have lunch. We knew that the lunch would cause inconveniences for all nationalities, and for our group as a whole: it was impossible for us to sit down separately thus feeling more comfortably, and of course canteens are not for culinary explorations, sometimes the meals offered are really weird for the foreigners. We had a student, Mayer Anna, who was responsible for the canteen stuff, and I have to admit, she worked hard all week long to make the international group understand what they could choose from and what the best options might be. I am absolutely sure that without Anna's help it would be far more difficult for all of us to get through the lunch every day.

The programme for the afternoon was a sightseeing game designed by three girls of the Erasmus group : Barta Luca, Kovács Klára and Gulyás Csenge. They had been working on the project for weeks and were really excited to make it work properly. Unfortunately the weather decided not to be helpful: it started to rain heavily and it did not stop. I had to make a difficult decision: either to cancel the program or to have the students go out in the rain to carry out their missions. I chose the second option, and I did not regret it, although I know that many students did not enjoy it thoroughly. In spite of all the hardships I do believe that

it was more interesting to walk around in the rain than it would be to sit around at the school. I believe that what the girls created is really something extraordinary and it was our pleasure to be part of the experience.

Tuesday started a little bit earlier: at 8am. We invited members of the Student Council to speak to us about different aspects of the student organizations. They gave nice speeches and then the project students had the opportunity to speak to them in small groups. The French and the German students were very curious and I think it was a useful experience for all the students. However, sometimes I felt, that we would not need as much time for the free conversation as sometimes the students were simply running out of topics.

The second programme point was a visit to the City Court, where two very kind judges guided us. They talked about the role of the judiciary branch of government and also about the courts. We could sit down in a courtroom and could imagine what it is like to be there at a trial. We also paid a visit to the former prison that was located under the ground in the same building. Personally I found the visit to the prison unnecessary and a bit boring, but I understand that it would be difficult to entertain us in the courtroom for an hour.

Tuesday afternoon was the time for the families to spend together with their guests. Some hosts decided to organize programs together: went bowling or to Lake Balaton. The teachers went to Tihany and Balatonfüred and watched the sunset over Lake Balaton, which was followed by a delicious dinner.

On Wednesday we started our day at the City Hall, where the mayor welcomed us and talked to us about the role of local governments and the election system in general. Our mayor was very enthusiastic all the way and the students asked him a lot of questions, so it seemed that some of them were really interested in the topic. To my surprise some of the Hungarian students told me later that they enjoyed this programme very much - more than they had expected - because they heard a lot of interesting things, which they found useful. I am happy to have received this feedback, it raises a lot of questions which will be interesting to think about. I really hope that the French and German students also found the experience useful.

As one of the international project groups chose the relationship of art and democracy as the focus of their attention we visited the Art House to have a kind of creative programme after lunch. We spent about 3 hours there, which proved to be a little longer than necessary. Although there were wonderful ideas about arts presented to us, I think that the programme became a little bit boring sometimes and the students often lost interest in the tasks. However, at the end of the programme they had creative tasks and that made them a little bit loosen up. I am not sure if this programme helped the 'art group' in any way, but at least it was something different.

The groups had special time for dealing with their projects every day, by Wednesday each group had made significant progress. I could see that they started to be more and more confident about their projects and groups.

Thursday was the day of the trip to Budapest, which was to be one of the highlights of the week. Earlier we had planned to visit the House of Terror at 10:00 am and The Parliament at 15:00, but as we progressed with the organization we had to alter the program as the House of Terror became only available from 12:30. We knew that the two programs were very close together on time, but did not want to cancel any of them. In spite of the 12:30 appointment, the Hungarian students voted for starting the day earlier, as they wanted to spend more free time together with the guests. Everything went well in the morning: everybody had some free time and then we visited Hero's Square together. Unfortunately, at The House of Terror, we lost a lot of time at the cloakroom and at the check-in, which resulted it not being able to get to the Parliament in time.

To many people's great disappointment, we were not allowed to go into the Parliament, we could only imagine the insides from the outside. Anyway, it meant that everybody had a lot more free time, which was not bad news for the students, so in the end, I think that it was not such a big failure.

Here, I have to mention, that all the students were very reliable the whole week. Nobody was missing any appointment, everybody showed up on time, we did not have any problems with student behavior.

At the same time, I would like to say thank you to Balázs Petra and Kupcsik Csenge, who were responsible for the day in Budapest, and who were key figures in the implementation, I could rely on them all the time.

Friday was devoted to the project. We started work at 9 am, and the international groups worked together to outline their duties for the upcoming months until we go to Valenciennes. The groups also had to summarize their ideas and give a short presentation before the Farewell party in the afternoon. I have to admit, that the presentations were very interesting and I was very proud of all the four groups for the work that they had done throughout the week. On the basis of the presentations I truly believe that we are going to have outstanding products at the end of the projects that we can all be proud of.

And then.... the Farewell Party began..... . I think nobody had expected anything like that. The party was awesome, I think everybody just had a wonderful time. Galambos Réka and Kovács Klára were responsible for this event, and they did a great job. They had to prepare food and drinks, they also had to organize the place to be suitable for our purposes. They got some help from Balogh Benjámín, who prepared the Just Dance room. But I think all the Hungarian students helped them: Jónás Péter and Hajdu Nóra helped a lot around that afternoon.

It was a time of pure joy, without obligations, and the students could really enjoy it.

That was the time, when we had to say good-bye, as we knew that the German students were leaving next morning, and only some of us would meet them in the morning.

Saturday started with the German students leaving for the airport, it was sad. Later, we met the French students for lunch, at a nice restaurant. We could talk, but everybody was very tired and exhausted. Even Pegán Ágnes was tired, who was eager to take photographs all week long, as she was responsible for documenting the events. While were waiting for the bus, the students started to dance outside as the weather was beautiful and quite warm. Finally, the French students left at 14:00.

I think everybody needed some time to relax and of course we had to make up for a lot of things we missed at school during the week. On Monday we met the students and discussed our experiences. All in all, I think we are all satisfied with the week and looking forward to meeting again in Valenciennes.

For me, the most interesting question is whether I put too much pressure on the Hungarian students by making them responsible for specific things. On Monday they said, that it was very difficult for them to live through the week knowing that they were responsible for certain things, and they were really anxious how the events would unfold. I hope I did not ruin their week by granting them the responsibilities.

At the same time, I have to express that the whole week was a group effort of 14 people: 12 students and two teachers, and all of us can be proud to be part of the experience.