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THE “ACTIVE CITIZENS” OF THE 2nd PRIMARY SCHOOL



Erasmus+ *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*



United in Diversity! This is the European Union motto adopted by the pupils of the multicultural 2nd Primary School of Serres and turned into action under the umbrella of the Erasmus + program "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" in collaboration with 3 schools in Nicosia/Cyprus, in Skopau of Halle/Germany and in Oulu/Finland. The 2nd Primary School of Serres has a high percentage of Roma students (90%) and hosts a group of refugee and immigrant students, too. Therefore, the challenge of integrating students from socially and financially vulnerable background, with a tendency to leave school at an early age and frequent diagnosis of learning difficulties, into the learning process and into society through active participation in actions of the school and the local community, is a priority and an objective by itself for implementing European programs.

The main activity of the program was the cultivation of the spirit of active participation of pupils in various ways, such as expressing their views about their school, their city, Europe and the world and giving ideas about the changes they wish. The students of the four countries raised their strong "voice", gathered their ideas for changes in education, environment, poverty, research, culture and drafted a common memorandum in the form of a poster to be delivered to political representatives in the European Parliament. To support the memorandum, the pupils signed it personally and gathered signatures from the local community. Teachers, in the role of supporters and mentors, drafted a second memorandum asking from the four governments to increase the funds included in the four countries' budgets for education, since the qualitative and innovative education, equitable for all, is the basis for the best future that students dream of!

Students have become familiar with concepts such as democracy, dialogue, peace, rights and obligations, respect for diversity, but above all turned a mirror towards everything that concerns them and defines their personality and future

and their attitude to their family and friends, their school, community and ultimately Europe, the environment and the world they are dreaming to build.

In total, during the two years of the program, there were 12 joint teleconferences and 5 meetings in the 4 countries for the planning, management and implementation of the initial objectives, where our 9 students proved worthy representatives of our school and the Greek spirit and culture. The initial goals for inclusion and active citizenship were achieved through various actions, such as volunteering, social programs in collaboration with the special school, robotics, participation in actions of the municipality of Serres, contests, creative writing, interviews and collaborations with personalities of our city, landscape painting of the traditional buildings and the urban center of the city, actions against school and cyber bullying etc.

The students of the four schools were challenged to deal with an issue that concerns them and proceed to write a story in four parts titled "From Here and There", which they also illustrated, translated into English and recorded in Greek and English. Some of the issues raised by the pupils were bullying, acceptance of diversity, children's rights, war and peace, democracy, dialogue and many other traditional values. Experiencing the proximity to the refugee camp in Serres and the reception and integration in the school unit of eleven refugee children this year, the pupils of the 2nd Primary School chose to promote the refugee issue that concerns the whole world, Europe and Greece in particular recently. The students' wish to get to know each other's culture and to coexist, through collaboration and fun, was fully achieved. The story was so successful and loved by the students that they decided to dramatise and present it, along with the Refugee Integration Class students, at the central theatre of the town on the opening day of Mathetocosmos, the cultural week organized by the Association of Primary Education Teachers of Serres "Emmanuel Pappas".

On 24th May 2019, during the final meeting in Germany, the coordinating country, the Greek mission of three teachers and four pupils delivered the memorandum of the pupils of the 2nd Primary school in the hands of a representative of the European Parliament Mr Sven Shultz. Some of the students' ideas for future Europe are the protection of the environment and wildlife with a stricter framework of laws, serious dialogue between all countries to solve the refugee issue, the protection of stray animals and the prohibition of their exploitation for money, the sustainability motto for our forests "we plant

the trees we need, before we cut them", the formation of a permanent Teenager Parliament and the research for the treatment of fatal diseases.

Moreover, the cultural contribution of the Greek team was very successful and meaningful. We created a sailing ship with wood and cloth and an olive tree in collaboration with German students. The Greek cultural corner also stressed the request for the return of the Greek "marbles" back home and specifically the "refugee" sixth Karytida that asks to return to her family of five sisters in the new Archeological Museum of the Acropolis. German and Greek students cooked traditional Greek dishes , as well as Finnish and Cypriot, too. And of course the feast ended with... Syrtaki dance.

On Wednesday 12th June 2019 the Greek students said farewell to the project and their partners with an Erasmus event at the 2nd Primary School. The most important actions of the program were presented to all students and teachers of the school and the memorandum was delivered to the Director of the school Mr. Savvas Bermperidis, with the commitment that students' ideas for changes in our town and school will be handed to the new mayor of Serres in the beginning of the new school year. Among other things, children asked for a modern and clean town "friendly" to the environment, that uses renewable energy sources and encourages recycling, with sport centers and safe playgrounds for children. As far as schools are concerned, students need well equipped schools, with beautiful, comfortable rooms to make learning process attractive. Schools offering equal opportunities to pupils different but equal, included, active and happy, the future citizens of Europe!

The Erasmus+ project team of 2nd Primary School

June 2019