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**LEARNING FROM THE PAST TO FACE THE FUTURE:**

**Cultural Heritage in Contrast with Modern Society**

***(2018-1-PL01-KA229-051241\_1 )***

**RIGA MEETING - OCTOBER 2019**

**REPORT ON THE MOBILITY**

From 14th to 18th 2019 the 3rd students’ exchange mobility of the International project Erasmus + Learning from the Past to Face the Future was held at Riga Zolitude Gymnasium.

**MONDAY**

After a warm welcome in the entrance hall of the gymnasium students had their first lesson on Arts, where they showed a perfect team work and creativity designing the posters about the countries.

Then the guests were invited to the conference hall for a fun ice-breaker activity. All students had their nametags which they had prepared at home before the mobility – with their first names on one side and runic transcriptions of them on the other side. During the activity students were divided into groups of six and given different inspirational quotes that were written in runes. Students had to use their nametags – and, of course, the help of their peers, - to try and decipher these quotes. By the end of the activity every group had a piece of ancient wisdom to share with others.

In order to introduce each other better all the participants of the project were given a worksheet to fill lthe activity “Find someone”. It was a real pleasure to watch them moving around and asking questions.

After that an excursion around the school was held for both the students and their teachers. They were invited into different classrooms, the library, the gym and also the local museum to get a good insight into everyday life of our gymnasium and also see how it has developed throughout the years.

A lunch break followed, and everyone was good to go on a trip to the “Lāči” bakery. Both students and teachers had a guided excursion to the baker’s factory, a chance to bake their own bread using the traditional recipe. The taste was really good and students got to know some facts about latvian traditional bread kinds and the procedure of how the bread is made.

The rest of the day they spend with thier host families enjoying the evening.

**TUESDAY**

The second day started with a lesson on Chemistry. Working in groups students made experiments, mixing chemicals, and gained some knowledge on the field of such a difficult but useful subject as Chemistry.

The workshop on Latvian posters was a great fun for everybody which was carried out by the help of IT. Using the Kahoot programme they were checked of how much did they get to know about the most significant landmarks of Latvia. And the usage of their mobile phones was reasoned there.

It is important to know at least some basic vocabulary when visiting a foreign country, that is why our guests attended a Latvian lesson for beginners. They learned how to greet others, how to express gratitude and excuse, how to ask for one’s name or introduce themselves, and how to bid farewell. By the end of the lesson our guests were able to engage in basic dialogues with their Latvian hosts, and we’ve also noticed that they were using simple words like “paldies” (thank you) and “sveiki” (hello) throughout the Erasmus week when meeting locals outside the school.

Later everyone had an opportunity to participate in a swimming lesson at our swimming pool, to see what our gymnasium has to offer in terms of physical education, and after a much-needed dinner break we were ready to visit the “Laima” factory. There we personally witnessed the magic of creating candies and learned the basics of it ourselves since we were invited to make a small but unique selection of chocolate candies with our own hands. After the confectionary workshop friendly “Laima” staff showed us around the factory and gave us a brief introduction to its history and legacy, as well as the significance of authentic Latvian products (such as “Laima’s” famous chocolate and sweets) in the international market.

**WEDNESDAY**

Wednesday was the day of our first big trip, and our destination was Ventspils. Fishermen's toughness and pertinacity cultivated through the centuries have helped people of Ventspils to bring their city to previously unseen levels of development over the last two decades. What was once a place nobody wished to live in has turned into a modern, tidy, flourishing city with a pleasant and friendly living environment, sprawling infrastructure and a vast variety of cultural, educational, sporting and leisure facilities – one of them being the planetarium, our first stop. At the planetarium we had an exciting educational session about the history of our planet, its highs and lows, and what parts of its past we must be aware of to prevent potential ecological troubles from happening in the future.

The castle of Livonian order – the oldest medieval castle in Latvia - was our second stop. It showcases the day to day life of the brothers of the Livonian Order, the castle’s transition into an Evangelical Lutheran church, then a Russian Orthodox church and later into a prison – a transformation as diverse as the transformation of Latvia itself, as the centuries passed. The students were surprised by these drastic changes in the history of just one single place, but of course it was the most exciting to just see authentic ancient bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens and to imagine what life used to be in the past.

Our next stop offered an even better insight into a daily routine of regular Latvian folks – we visited the Seaside Open Air-museum with many cozy Latvian houses, brought there from different Latvian regions for everyone to see. It holds more than 20 000 items, reflecting all aspects of the life of Latvian and Liv fishermen and farmers. Some of the exhibits are for obseration only, but some houses we were allowed to enter, and it was definitely the main highlight of the trip.

**THURSDAY**

This day was solely dedicated to the history of Riga. It started with a guided tour around the Old Town – presenting many important historical events and facts but also paying attention to legends trapped inside ancient walls. The guide covered main stages of the development of Riga – from its founding in the 13th century to the birth of nationalism in the 19th and independence in the 20th.

And as a smooth transition from the past to the bright future we crossed the Stone Bridge and moved on from the Old Town to the Castle of Light – the National Library. There we were divided in two groups – while one group was attending a workshop about manual printing methods, the other group was exploring the library itself, and then vice versa. Our guests visited various reading rooms, archives of Latvian folklore, art reading rooms, the audio-visual room, children’s literature centre, maps reading room, rare books and manuscripts reading rooms, etc.; and we even had the opportunity to hold an improvised meditation session since the meditation hall was vacant – everyone admitted that it’s really important to dedicate at least several minutes a day to complete silence and ease the mind.

Everybody had a chance to participate in the CAMPAIGN "A SPECIAL BOOK FOR A SPECIAL BOOKSHELF". The campaign was an opportunity for everyone to donate a book – of special importance to themselves – to the National Library of Latvia, also writing a message or personal story relating to the book on its title page. So all the project members left their signs and messages in the chosen book.

The certificates were distributed and the rest of the day students spend with their host families.

**FRIDAY**

The whole day was spent in Sigulda town. Project members had a guided excursion around Turaida folksong park and got to know some facts about the history of the area, national traditions, had a walk along Dainas Hills (with folksong sculptures), tried to hear the song in the Song Garden and felt the power of nature.

Then they visited Turaida Stone Castle and the museum. They had a chance to introduce the first laws held in medieval times and still actual today. Binocular in the Main Tower provided an opportunity to view landscape of the ancient Gauja valley and Sigulda at close distance. After the excursion there was a meeting with Chief Judge of Turaida who told his history and taught them how the meeting with an Archbishop was held in Ancient times. Then a writing workshop took place. Everybody enjoyed writing their names using Old Alphabet Signs.

The final visit of the day was to Gutman’s cave (The legend about Turaide Rose) - a tale from the Past gave us strength to follow the route the brave girls took meeting her beloved. Hiking was a great sport because we went 400 steps up and then the gifts were distributed and some farewell words were told.

Note! Some changes in the programme which are different from the ones written in the Project Application form were made due to the reason that some places of interest were too busy to host us, or would take too much time to reach.