



European Parliament Activity in Portugal

In this activity, a total of 48 students from 10 different countries came together to discuss school drop-out problems. Students who discussed the reasons for school drop-out and the precautions to be taken have made important decisions.



Preparatory Phase: Before the activity to be realized at short-term exchanges of groups of pupils, each country carried out a number of preparatory work within itself. First, a brief presentation was made to the students to introduce Erasmus projects. Information about the content, methodology and purpose of the work to be done had been shared.



Within the scope of the activity, each country first formed its own student parliament and discussed educational problems, reasons for schooling, measures to be taken to create a better schooling environment and to prevent students from dropping out of school. Their friends, who were elected by voting, were responsible for the management of this session. Especially risk groups students were allowed to participate in this work. These students, who expressed their ideas to prevent school drop-out and sought solutions to educational problems from their own perspectives, were actually able to express their own problems. The 3 students who were



active in the study and selected from the students in the risk group were offered the opportunity to transfer their education problems to the European Parliament simulation in Portugal.

Selected students have been given foreign language preparation and cultural preparatory training. Moreover, these students, who had never seen parliamentary work before, were allowed to monitor the work of the municipal councils in local governments in order to be informed about how the parliamentary work was done.



European Parliament Works:



The event was held at 'Escola Profissional Amar Terra Verde' in Vila Verde, Portugal from 29 February to 4 March 2016. An

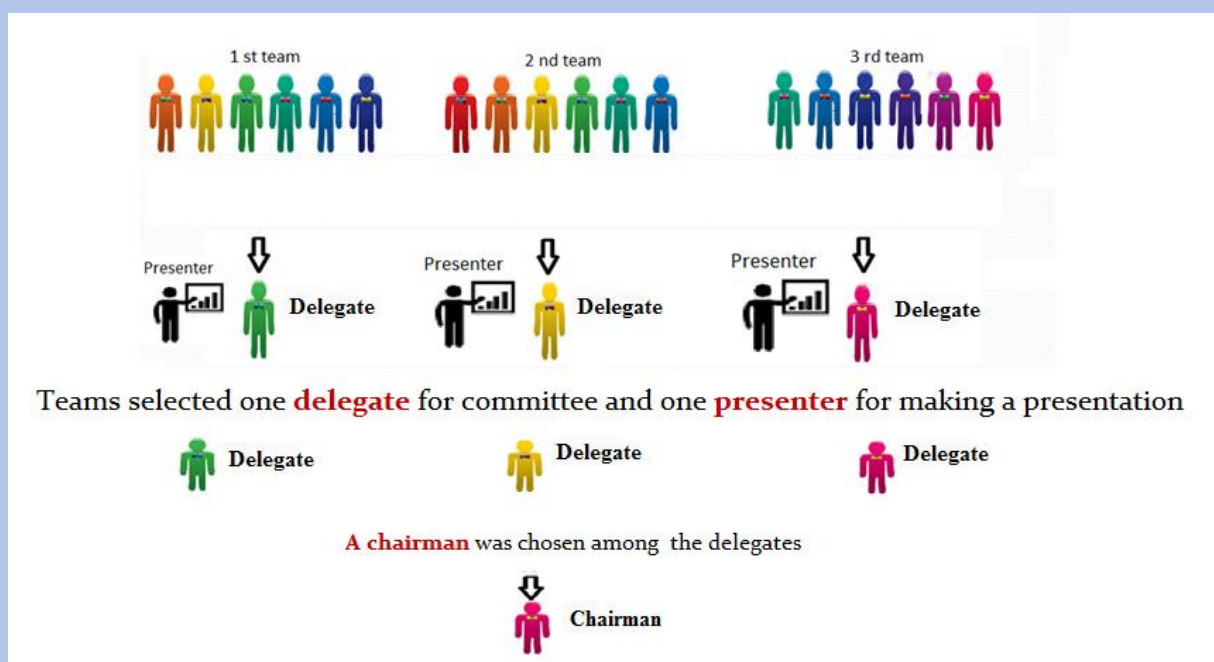
example from Euroscola was taken in the planning of the activity.

48 students from 10 countries participated in the activity. Participants and countries are as follows.

Countries	Accompanying persons	Number of Participants
Greece	2	8
Turkey	2	3
Latvia	2	3
Lithuania	2	3
Cyprus	2	3
Portugal	3	15*
UK	2	4
Bulgaria	2	3
Italy	2	3
Norway	2	3
Total	21	48

*Host Country

On the first day, the students who came together visited the school and the environment and got to know each other. Then, 3 different student groups were formed, with students coming from the same country in different groups. Students intensively discussed educational problems, school dropout reasons and the precautions to be taken. Students have turned their ideas into a



presentation.

Each group has selected a spokesperson to present their ideas among themselves and a delegate to manage the session. In total, 3 delegates selected a president among themselves. Thus, they conducted the session management with their chosen representatives.



Students' Determinations:

The students working in three groups shared the problems they identified and suggestions for solutions with other groups by transforming them into presentation under general headings.

Groups were briefly concerned with the educational problems of each country and then offered general solution proposals.

There are many factors that put a student at risk to dropping out of school. Many times not all risk factors apply to all students. Students choose to leave high school for a variety of reasons, but the decision to do so has serious long-term consequences. Here is the groups offers;

- ❖ All of the students combined have over 25% of the students drop out due to loss of motivation, no equipment, bad teaching skills from the teachers and not engaging lessons.
- ❖ Schools must carefully monitor attendance and notify parents immediately if students are missing school on a regular basis. Aggressive persistence, teacher support and engaging parents could be the key to making sure students show up for school and stay there.

- ❖ High schools need to seek a variety of activities to help engage all students. In addition, schools, teachers and administrators need to seek to create a community atmosphere to help students feel as if they belong. Parents can help by encouraging students to get involved in activities and develop talents and outside interests besides academics.
- ❖ While dropping out of high school may seem like the only choice for struggling students, many excellent options are available. Many factors that cause students to drop out of high school are preventable or manageable if administrators, teachers and parents work together to provide early intervention and support. The effects of dropping out are felt for a lifetime, both financially and emotionally. The decision to stay in school can be difficult, but is well worth it.
- ❖ Students learn in very different ways meaning that there should be a variety of methods in which each student can feel like their learning needs are being met.
- ❖ Work experience should be put in every learning curriculum throughout the globe so that each student can have an experience of what it is like to work in their chosen field.
- ❖ For those who choose to drop out or not attend school, the parents of that particular child should pay a fine, because they are allowing their child to miss out on an opportunity to learn new things and meet new people.
- ❖ In some countries in Europe like England and Latvia, parental irresponsibility is a major issue that poses a threat to the academic growth of young students. Parents fail to oversee their child's education causing the child to also not care.
- ❖ Dropping out of school is a process, and does not occur overnight. The process often starts prior to a child entering into the school system. Poor academic achievement as early as elementary school is a predictor of dropping out of school

- ❖ The government can impose and enforce a law where every parent is required to attend an individual parent meeting so that they can discuss the education of their child with teachers and tutors.
- ❖ In conclusion we have learnt that each country has at LEAST one issue which can cause an effect later on in their lives and may not allow them to have a good job or earn good money.
- ❖ This can also lead to a cycle where their children, if they choose to have any, may all so have this attitude towards education and may end up as drop outs, for drop outs have a big import within today's society.
- ❖ Facilities like libraries and computer should not have a time restriction so that students can visit these facilities whenever they have free time
- ❖ A law could be implemented and enforced where teachers have to attend training or seminars on how to build a good teacher and student relationship
- ❖ In the same way, students could be made to attend seminars on how to build a good relationship with their teachers.
- ❖ Struggling in school on a daily basis is the biggest reason most students choose to drop out of high school. When a student is held back due to low grades, it puts him at higher risk of dropping out.
- ❖ Poor academic performance is generally linked to drop-out rates. Students who have to repeat specific classes also face higher drop-out risks.



Meeting with a Member of the European Parliament Euro Deputy José Manuel Fernandes

School drop outs problem is growing increasingly and being a common problem of many countries. It is undoubtedly not wise to expect schools to solve this problem alone. Everyone from the local authority and politicians taking an active role to the solving this problem could be an important step. Therefore, meetings have been held with politicians and the local governments in order to inform them about the existence and the magnitude of the drop out problem.

In these meetings, following the general information on the scope of the Erasmus projects, they have been informed about the project goals, expectations and achievements. They also informed the project team about their working on educational issue.

Who is José Manuel Fernandes?

Euro deputy's José Manuel Fernandes (Vila Verde, July 26, 1967) is a Portuguese professor and politician. He has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009. He holds a degree in Systems and Computer Engineering from the School of Engineering of the University of Minho and attended the 3rd Year of Law Course at the University of Minho Law School. He served as mayor of Vila Verde between 1997 and 2009. He was head of the PSD party candidates' list for Braga in the 1999 parliamentary elections and a deputy to the Assembly of the Republic in the VIII Legislature, being part of the Parliamentary Group of the PPD / PSD. He was elected Member of the European Parliament in the 2009 European elections and re-elected in the European elections of 2014. The party he belongs to, thus integrates the Group of the European People's Party. He is the president of the PSD Braga District Political Committee and honorary president of ACES - Federation of European Cities and Sports Capitals. In 2015 he will act as rapporteur and negotiator of the European Parliament in the European Union budget for 2016 and was appointed rapporteur by the Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament for the European Fund for Strategic Investments (FEIE), also known as the "Juncker Plan.

(http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/pt/96899/JOSE+MANUEL_FERNANDES_cv.html)

His speech to the project group.



"Good Afternoon Dear teachers and students,

Congratulations to the promoters of this initiative, the courage to discuss such an important issue that the European Union needs to resolve.

Congratulations to the students who contributed to this reflection and to the conclusions reached on the causes and possible solutions to solve this problem of school failure and early school dropout.

Because we live in a developed Europe that is one of the regions where it is possible to better live better in the world, we live often the misconception that there are problems that are too old and linked to less developed communities, and so we created the idea that we do not have such problems in Europe.

But, in fact, early school leaving is a serious problem in the European Union today to debate. And it is a problem that affects its Member States as well as Turkey and Norway - being partner countries are also represented in this working group and European exchange.

The school leaving is a problem for the individual (for the affected person), and also to society and the economy. The capabilities and skills acquired at school are a minimum requirement for entry into the labor market and to success in the labor market. They are also essential to prepare young people for life as active and fulfilled citizens

Most people who left earlier the educational system, or training, are unemployed or inactive, and, consequently, in social and economic disadvantage. The early departure of education and training leads to the reduction of employment opportunities and the increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

The qualification of people, specially the training of young people, is a key priority of the European Union. Invest in education is to invest in the future, to ensure conditions for improving the quality of life, to create conditions to ensure more and better economic growth and social cohesion. In this global and highly competitive world in which we all live, the European Union outlined a strategy to achieve by 2020. It is a strategy to establish itself as a world leader. It is the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Europe 2020 strategy has a focus on youth and education, that deserve special attention. Youth is present in the five objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly in the field of education. In the European Union, we want to reduce early school leaving to below 10% and work for that, at least 40% of the population between 30-34 years of age completes a tertiary or equivalent education course. I was the rapporteur of the European Parliament for the EU budget this year and I was also involved in the negotiations for the Multiannual Financial Framework, which sets the budgetary limits of the European Union for 2014-2020. The amounts available for youth were raised in 40%, compared to the previous multiannual financial framework.

For the period up to 2020, the European Union provides the Erasmus + program, which funds projects in the fields of education, training and youth, including initiatives like this which brings together students and also teachers from different countries, such as Greece, UK, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Cyprus, Turkey and Norway as well as Portugal.

Erasmus + has a budget of EUR 14.7 billion for the period 2014-2020. Supports various sectors of education, training and youth. It aims to promote learning throughout life, enhance skills, increase employment opportunities, combating social exclusion, encouraging active citizenship.

By 2020, the Erasmus + will allow more than 2 million higher education students to participate in



mobility programs; It will involve more than 500,000 young people in voluntary work and youth exchanges; and will provide more than 650,000 opportunities for internships or apprenticeships abroad.

It will also allow that around 800,000 educators and professionals working with young people can contact with new teaching methods and learning abroad

Therefore, Erasmus + is a program that seeks to address problems that have been identified in this project "One is too many" that regards the need to provide students, more teaching experiences and contacts with the labor market, professional activities contacts, including experiences in other countries.

The goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools across Europe.

As this group concluded over these days, it is needed to motivate not only students but also teachers, school principals, the parents, the family and the community to solve common problems, such as the fight against inequality or the prevention of school dropout.

The school is a key player in the fight against school dropout. And, in this aspect, there is indeed a relationship that is fundamental: it is the relationship between the teacher and the student. But the school and the teacher can not work alone or in isolation. There are external factors that influence the level of involvement and student success. Thus, an integrated educational approach to combat and overcome school dropout is required. This integrated approach requires the involvement of the entire school community (top leaders and intermediate ones, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and families). Everyone should be involved in a cohesive action, collective and collaborative, based on strong cooperation with external partners and the community in general.

It is therefore with satisfaction and sense of responsibility that I received your reflections and conclusions.

And I will make them to be taken into account under the European Parliament's works, related not only to the fight against early school leaving, but also when it comes to measures to improve the quality and success of education and training in Europe.

It is up to young people to assume an active role to bring about policy measures and actions, including the level of appreciation of training and the promotion of the labor market. As done here at this Erasmus+ project, this should be attained through a real "structured dialogue". Young people should participate in the definition and monitoring of youth policies. Youth is a precious resource of the European Union. It is an asset and has a decisive role for the EU objectives to maintain and strengthen its leading position as an area that creates more wealth in the world and at the same time, where better to live in the world."

Besides this, please find attached the news in Braga's newspaper about our project and the presence of the eurodeputy. Although I'm searching for another one that has a bigger article on this subject.

Best Wishes

My best Regards



Meeting with Mayor of Vila Verde



António Vilela (<http://www.cm-vilaverde.pt/>) is Vila Verde's Mayor since 2009 and received the project's group at the town hall, welcoming everyone to the town and wishing the works produce the desired results.



The municipal government who are closely interested with the students group have listened also gave information about the work they have done for education.

Evaluation of Activity

Students' opinions were consulted to determine the success of the European Parliament activity carried out as a learning teaching training activity. For this, a survey was conducted with 38 students participating in the European Parliament activity. According to the findings obtained from the questionnaires;

- 97% of the participants in the activity are generally very satisfied with the host country's hospitality.

- 92% of the participants in the activity are very satisfied with the food provided by the host country for the students.
- 96% of the participants in the activity are very satisfied with the cultural tour that the host country provides for the students.
- 96.7% of the participants in the activity are very satisfied with the accommodation provided by the host country for the students.
- They were pleased that 87% of the participants were able to discuss educational issues on the international platform.
- 81% of participants stated that they can express their opinions about education problems.
- 93% of the participants stated that thanks to this activity, they are also acquainted with the educational problems of other countries.
- 73% of participants indicated that language skills have improved with this activity.
- 68% of the participants stated that this activity was the first overseas experience; therefore they will never forget it.

Survey findings indicate that participants are satisfied with the activity in general. In other words, the survey results show that the activity is successful. Educational problems identified by students are published on the project facebook page, e-twinning platform and project web page. It is hoped that this work, which is included in the project catalog, constitutes an example for similar works, is a source.

At least one person among students participating in the activity from each country is required to voluntarily write an essay. The essays about the students' feelings are engraved on the facebook page. The essay written by a student who came from Italy as a participant became the most admired essay. These essays are also included in dissemination tools.



One is too Many in Portugal

Students write about their experiences during the working meeting 28th Feb - 5th March 2016

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Federica Nobile /ITALY

”Cabin Crew be ready for landing”. My heart was beating fast.

I had never been abroad before. The Erasmus trip to Portugal was my first experience. I was so excited when the taxi was taking us to the hotel. Looking out of the window everything seemed so familiar. I immediately felt at home! Also the small room shared with my friends was comfortable. The “pastel de nata” at breakfast on the first morning reminded me of Lecce “pasticciotti” both of them delicious! I decided: I love Portugal!

Of course I enjoyed the beautiful places visited and the welcome of our hosts. Braga, the hotel, the central Avenida and its Garden where we walked up and down in the evening, the school where we spent most our mornings to exchange views about educational problems. I was impressed by the students who cooked and waited on our lunches. I ate ‘bacalau’ for the first time in my life, there. Never eaten at home when my mother had cooked it. Now she is happy: I am friend with “bacalau

This trip gave me the chance to build strong relationships with most of the students in few days. I will never forget the cheerful atmosphere and the laughs we had all together. This experience increased my knowledge of other customs, traditions, way of life and of thinking. I think we all contribute to break stereotypes or to make them stronger (like Italians and pizza!). When I was there I thought “I’m in the right place” or “That’s how I want to live!”: getting into touch with other cultures, travelling, learning new languages. Once I came back to Italy I started to appreciate also the simplest things because I missed them when I was in Portugal. I can say this experience has made stronger my emotional bond with my country too. When you miss something you become aware of its importance.

This trip has changed me, it has opened my mind and gave me the chance to visit some amazing places like Braga and Porto, two towns that will be in my heart forever both for their artistic and natural beauties and for the fantastic friend I met there. I left Portugal with the promise I would come back. I will do!

Federica Nobile’s essay was chosen as a best essay by international students in one is too many facebook group.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL by Elena Lefons /ITALY

The guys that participated in the project were all sunny, cheerful and nice. We took part in the activities with great sense of responsibility but at the same time cheerfully.

We were divided into three international teams. The member of each team described the educational problems in their schools and we all suggested what to do to make our schools better.

I felt very uncomfortable at the beginning; communicating in English on such an important problem made me feel inadequate but the support and the consideration of all the students in the team broke the ice and helped me to feel at my ease. We talked also about opportunity that schools give us, not only about problems.

The topic was very interesting and we realized we all cope with some common problems. The debate and the participation showed that we can still dream of a United Europe with common value. A Portuguese Euro Deputy spoke to us and said that Europe shows interest in Education and promotes projects like our Erasmus.

Every moment spent together was happy. Debate is a constructive tool we can use to grow up. Portugal is an amazing country; all the places visited were very beautiful and interesting. Students from ten different countries had lots of things in common. Maybe the most evident difference was one: food. Italian and Greek guys were always looking for news culinary experience... and the Portugal provided good food to taste.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Andrea MASSARI /ITALY

I had never been to Portugal before Erasmus+ meeting in Braga. No doubt it is one of the best experiences in my life. Portugal was a surprise, I would have never expected a so beautiful country: Braga and its old town rich in churches and beautiful old buildings; the romantic and picturesque town of Porto with its colorful shops, cafes and restaurants, the amazing tile murals inside the station, the glass of Porto wine at Ferreira wine cell; the breath-taking panorama from Bom Jesus Sanctuary. But a fantastic trip is not only beautiful places; the people you are with are the most important thing. What a great experience spending 5 days with so amazing people from 10 different countries! The same desire to meet and get to know one another! What worried me before the trip was communication. I thought “Oh my God! They will speak perfect English. Will I be able to speak and understand? I did it! Well. I could understand almost everything, sometimes I used the “say yes and smile” technique.

My ranked preferences of this experience ? New friends at the top, followed by improved English, pastel de Beléms (I felt in love with these cakes), the farewell dinner: it was the funniest and saddest moment. Why funniest?...I mean Portuguese wine is very good! Sad because I said goodbye to amazing people that probably I will never see again. The last preference: meetings at school and discussions on education, I realized that all countries have educational problems, not only mine. These are the top choices but I liked everything. I want to say thank you to everyone because each of you gave me something that I will keep in my heart forever! I love you, Portugal!

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Kotryna Lipavičiūtė /Lithuania

How I changed after the visit to Portugal

I was standing in the little market by the Rio Douro river and stared at a little snow globe, which I had just picked up from one of the sellers tables. It seemed so magic and special to me. As I shook the specious thing, snow fell on a mini Porto city, covering tiny buildings in white. “If you like it so much, you should get it” said Gabrielė as she was looking at some lighters. But at that moment my inner adult kicked in. “What is the use of it?”. I wondered wanting to put the snow globe down. “It would just collect dust on my bookshelf. Come on let's go”.

The sunlight emerged from the clouds and I couldn't help but smile, as we reached the end of the market and decided to rest on a wide stone fence by the river. Before I sat down I looked down at the water, gently moving by the stone wall and I thought, what it would be like if I just took one step forward. Dear reader, I'm sure that you have experienced this too, when you are standing on a very high place and just for a second you consider whether to jump or not? By just standing there I really scared my friends, who immediately told me to sit down. When I was safe and sound, that is when I relaxed on the stone fence, I still looked at the water. "I changed" I thought. The sunlight was gently stroking my face and I felt so blessed at that moment. "I'm not afraid anymore..." The wind blew mildly on one of the sellers embroidered white beddings and they gently flew up the air from their hangers. "Did I break out of the shell that was holding me back?" I wondered as I threw one of the pieces of shattered glass in the river. "I was always afraid... Now... Now I just want to live”

The plane had just taken off and the sun just started to come down. The clouds were in all kinds of colors, from purple to dark blue. Luckily, I was sitting by the window and I couldn't take my eyes of that amazing view. Dear reader, I think that you were expecting a typical writing of my experience, kind of like a school assignment of what kind of museums I visited, where I went and what I saw. I'm sure that you already know everything about this trip. What you don't know, is how this journey affected my inner state. When I was flying back home I had a lot of time to reflect, since my friends were dead asleep. Before Portugal I was trapped in a dull routine. I didn't feel alive, I felt like a robot functioning without any emotion or excitement. Any other activity that included something different would always frighten me and this fear wouldn't let me experience the best things in life. It was like I was living in a shell. This trip broke that shell. Not only I got to see amazing things and meet the best people, I also took part in something I was really passionate about and that is making a change in the world for the better. I'm proud that I had a chance to present my ideas about educational problems and also suggest some solutions. After visiting beautiful places, I decided to travel as much as I can. After I met so many different people, I wanted to learn about other cultures. After I took part in discussions, a strong desire to change the world for the better started to grow inside me. When my dad picked us up from the airport, I couldn't wait for the next day to begin. I was inspired not to be afraid anymore and conquer every single opportunity and live life to the fullest.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Arif Emre Aydoğdu / TURKEY

Great Days in Portugal

Before you set off on a journey you make plans, furthermore, you dream about it. My dream begins with taking part in an Erasmus project. When you take part in it, you also start the preparation process and targets for the future.

Many Turkish people do not get the chance to leave the country. And so, we don't have impressions of what out of the country before. While I was so excited for my trip to Europe, I was nervous too.

Before going, my impressions of Europe made me ask some questions to myself: “Is Europe really like as it was in the movies?” Of course, I realize that these aren't realistic, but it made me curious to what Europe is really like. As I said I was so excited to leave Turkey and travel, but I was also nervous for many reasons. I don't speak any other language except a little bit English. I was worried that I would not be able to understand people and they won't understand me or how I can adapt there. However those were only unnecessary concerns, when you get there. You realize that there is no need to worry.

Upon our arrival to Portugal, I had very complex feelings. This was my first trip abroad and I was feeling over the clouds! On our first day, all students came together at the hotel and all of us had the same thing in our minds: full of excitement and new friends.

One of the fantastic sides of the project is that you meet new friends, experience different cultures and language; however, I was curious about the European culture most. Normally, I already have this knowledge from the web, but meeting a European in real life was a different experience. After you meet and learn about their culture, you can have closer friendship and sincerity. I have showed Turkish greeting to some of these students. Afterwards they greeted me in that way whenever we came across.

This was really kind of them, as someone from a different culture was greeting me in the way we do here in Turkey. I also had many experiences in Portugal as well as the culture. While discussing the education system, we understood that the major problem was the lack of motivation. This is really important: If you do a job or learn something under high motivation and concentration you really enjoy it. However, when you are unwilling to do something, you can get nothing. This is what the education problem really is in most countries.

To sum up, with this project we both had intercultural and multilingual relationships and had the chance to compare the education systems of other countries and ours I believe that, people should participate in these kind of projects and support them more.

I never forget those beautiful days. Thanks for everything to everybody...

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Eva Petraki / GREECE

School Trip

On Sunday 28th of February, seven classmates of mine, our English teacher, our principal and I started our travel to Braga. It was a hard day for us while we changed 3 flights and had a long time on the road. We were also anxious about the foreign students we were going to meet. We had a feeling of insecurity because we were going abroad without our family for a whole week, an unknown experience for us.

Fortunately, everything went perfect and all of our doubts were erased throughout the excursion.

Portugal and the host school were fabulous. Braga is a very beautiful town, perfectly organized in architectural level. It has many astonishing churches and squares. We learnt every single street of the town center while we loved walking around. The school is a modern, big building that hosts students with international origins. We were impressed of the severe organization of Portuguese educational system and the opportunities it gives to all students to be occupied with many different fields of mechanic, arts and other.

We had various visits and activities. We were glad to taste the Portuguese cuisine and shop Portuguese handicrafts. The Bom Jesus Sanctuary region was breathtaking, had an amazing view and the atmosphere so sensational, we didn't want to leave. The aim of the Erasmus+, which was to raise European students' questions about our educational systems and propose measurements to help students so as not to drop out of school, is totally accomplished. I'm glad to be on the team whose project was highly voted to be sent to the EU. We were pleased to have plenty of free time to spend with students from the other countries every night.

We had unforgettable time with our foreign friends. This project made people from 10 countries came together, talk about their problems and hang out. We enjoyed every moment with our friends and we had fun like we knew each other for years. The last night, while the farewell dinner was one of our most enjoyable moments, it was the hardest one because we had to separate our paths. One day after – back to reality- we understood that this trip was unforgettably unique!

It's essential to thank our teacher Chryssa and our principal Roubini, the arrangers of the rest nine countries and the EU that gave us that memorable opportunity. We hope the EU never stops funding these multicultural school programs.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Margarita Stoichkova / Bulgaria

Portugal and the people I'll never forget

My trip to Portugal was one of the best experiences in my life. I left Braga with a lot of amazing memories.

I was thrilled as it was my first flight. Also, I was a little bit nervous and excited at the same time. However, it was not frightening at all.

When we arrived in Porto we had a scary taxi ride to Braga. The man was driving at “a little bit” high speeds but we arrived at the hotel safe and sound. At first I thought that the hotel was too small looking at it from outside. However, when I went inside I fell in love with the interior.

The second day we went to the school in Vila Verde. The school looked pretty good. We were divided into three groups and we had our first activities on the project. We worked on it three days and finally my group was voted with the best presentation (thanks to Kofi – our speaker).

While I was in Portugal I met lovely people. I was impressed by the way some of them spoke English. We could communicate without any problems. The students were kind and polite and I hope that we can keep in touch in the future.

The next morning was very rainy, but when it was about time to visit Bom Jesus Sanctuary the sun started shining. I was speechless as the church was on the top of a hill, and we could see the amazing view down the stairway to the city of Braga.

On the fifth day we went to Porto. The town is beautiful and so colorful. Also, we visited a wine cellar in Porto. We tried a special kind of wine and it was delicious.

The last night was our farewell dinner. All the students and teachers had a lot of fun dancing and trying delicious local food. The whole Portuguese week passed by so fast and the hardest moment came when we had to say goodbye. Most of the students cried, not only me.

All in all, I will never forget this nice trip and the amazing people I met in Portugal.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Guntis Celms / LATVIA

Good memories

This was the first time for me to take a flight, the first flight to Portugal made me feel uniquely dizzy because I don't know with what word specifically I could describe the feeling I had. I didn't look up for any images or information about Portugal so I would not mess up the unknown and unexpected.

I must confess, that on the first day when we landed and got to our hotel, I was put in a skeptic mood. But when we got to our room and met our roommate from Lithuania all changed but it was just a start.

In the next day, when we started to work on the actual task, I met more and more people, I may even call them friends now. We were split in 3 big groups and we had to choose 1 speaker for each group, no questions asked students from UK got elected instantly to be the speakers.

We advanced through the all problems which schools and education system itself has. We found out that we have a lot of common problems and that we can have a lot of fun discussions on what could be the actual solutions and so on.

Then we visited “Bom Jesus do Monte” (Bom Jesus cathedral), Porto and wine cellars, where we had a sip of wine, the taste of the wine I thought represent Portugal as the wine seemed to be unique with interesting mixture same as the structures and outstanding sights of Portugal that's something you cannot forget the same as the people with whom you have spent the time there.

When it comes to food it depends on the taste, but I do not prefer to eat fish. However, the way how the fish dishes were made in Portugal changed my eating habits just a bit and I could say that I enjoyed the food.

All week working together, improving our English knowledge, finding solutions spending free time together had been gotten us really close, which made us not willing to leave.

At the formal dinner we had enjoyment we had cheers, but the feel of leaving made everyone helpless in some way. Tears falling... from one side they were from happiness, but from the other side? The feelings what we had started to come out with an explosion but none regretted anything and the things we did together probably will stay with us and in Portugal for a lifetime.

I would like to end up by saying that this was the best time of my life so far!!!

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL” by Adele Roufhtvedt, Habibe Bayram and Amber Majid / NORWAY

Portugal

When we first heard about the Portugal trip we knew that we were going to be there and discuss school. What we didn't know was that we would be left with so many funny memories with so many amazing people.

On the way to Porto we already wanted to go home again, we had long hours at the airport and were just generally really tired. But I am almost confident to say that when that last day came and went we didn't want to leave. It had been worth all the tiredness and stress, because we had met so many different people and we had learned so many new things. The most memorable experiences were at the school, it's where we all had to meet and where we all learned out each other.

The long days in the cold auditorium is not the thing that stands out the most by memory, but it was certainly where we spent most of our time. The day at I remember the most was the day out in Braga, it was such nice weather and walking and looking at houses was a nice way to see some history.

The trip to Portugal thought me that there were people close to my situation, but in a whole different place in the world. I think it is really important to make international project like this for youth so that they will become aware of the world around them. Which is certainly what it did for us? I really hope I will see you all again one day.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL ACTIVITY

by Ruben Pereira/ PORTUGAL

The meeting here in Portugal was one of the best experiences that I had. I learned a lot about others countries because when we speak with different type of people, we learn habits, traditions and characteristics without realizing the importance of that at the moment and it was good to see some familiar faces.

But in the future this can give us advantage in the work, because we will need these skills to communicate with other people that can be really different from us and speak another language for example.

We are "obligated" to speak English so our language skills in English improve a lot and sometimes without realize was speaking English fluently and went to home speaking English too. I have always been participative in the English class but now I'm more confident in myself and now I participate more. The small things have value too. Sometimes when someone forgot a word the others try to help because we are there for the same and we don't need to be afraid of failing.

Overall the meeting was a way to become us even better and improve our future in Europe. The solutions that the groups gave are good if applied in the educational system.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL ACTIVITY by/CYPRUS

Unforgettable Experience In Portugal

The Erasmus trip to Portugal was a great experience and I would thank the EU for giving this opportunity. My trip to Portugal was one of the best experiences in my life.

I left Braga with lots of amazing memories. Our trip to Portugal was very long as we traveled via England. We left at 7 am Cyprus time and arrived at 11 pm Portugal time. The second day we went to the town hall and were welcomed by the mayor. The hosts showed us the traditional museum where we could see Portuguese traditional crafts. The school is in a modern building and has many technical subjects. At school we met many people from different nationalities. We could communicate in English. We made new friends and we learnt more about different cultures. Moreover we like Portuguese girls.

Braga has many old churches. We had the opportunity to visit Bon Jesus Sanctuary which is situated on top of the hill. The view was breathtaking. We visited the Douro River and the Atlantic Ocean where we took many photos. Porto is a beautiful and colorful city. We visited wine cellars. Their ports wine is delicious.

Last night was our farewell dinner. All the students and teachers had a lot of fun. We danced traditional dances. The local food was great. The whole week passed by so fast and the hardest moment came when we had to say goodbye. We took photos and they publish info about us in the local newspaper.

The project was planned very well and I would like to congratulate Mr. Pedro, Mrs. Sandra and Risabelt for the great work. I would like to thank our teachers Mr. Socrates and Dr. Louvaris for taking us. We had a great time. I will never forget this nice trip and the amazing people in Portugal.

MY EXPERIENCE IN PORTUGAL ACTIVITY by Kofi Afojoko/THE UK

Worthwhile experience

We came from different countries, but we share the same concerns. In Braga, we were united through the challenges that we, as young people, face in education today. In Braga, we represented not only our own school communities, but also a wider European community – a Global community. It's an enormous responsibility for us to carry on young shoulders, but carry it we did. Through a parliamentary setting, we placed ourselves in teams and, after identifying key issues troubling our futures, we debated them, considering them all from a range of perspectives in order to fully explore all options available to resolving these issues. These are not issues we've seen on television. These are not issues we've read about. These are issues we face, experience and suffer every day. These are issues that are unnecessary and we, the Erasmus+ team, have taken responsibility to move things forward. I'm proud to say that I was the speaker for my team and that we won the competition. It left us all with a great sense of achievement.

I've never been to Portugal before. I have done very little travelling in my life, so far. The opportunity to travel to another country, to meet people from all over Europe, whom I'm glad to now call friends, is something I will keep with me throughout my life. On this trip we made memories and they, more than anything, are the things I value most. It was inspiring to see that my peers, other young people, are not apathetic towards society or education, as Media might have us believe.

During this wonderful experience, I met very enthusiastic students from countries like Italy, Portugal, Greece and many others. The most amazing moment I had abroad was the time I had to spend with people like Dimitra, Georgia, John, Jason, and all the other Greek students.

We were able to visit the Portuguese team's school and gain an insight into their learning environment. I was thankful that the common tongue was English – it's made me realise that we need to focus more on languages, as we take it too much for granted that others will know how to speak ours.

While in Portugal, we visited the Bom Jesus Sanctuary and thankfully the weather was wonderful. It was picturesque with the views and its location high on the hilltop. We also visited a wine cellar, where we were allowed to try the wine! I was privileged to be trusted to do so.

The last day saw a celebration of the week's activities and successes, in the form of a farewell dinner. It was an exciting evening, but bittersweet as we had to say goodbye to our new friends.

When I arrived back on British soil, I was excited to get back to college to tell my peers what we'd discussed and to create a buzz on campus, getting other students to debate the same issues to create awareness. This has been an experience I will never forget. I feel very lucky to have been chosen as part of this project and it's motivated me to value education more and to try and impress this on others, too. I'm grateful to all of the others who took part for welcoming me so warmly and allowing me to be a part of the project. It really has been very worthwhile.

SOME MOMENTS OF PORTUGAL MEETING

