France - a Comparison of Culture

A couple of weeks ago I was in France. I had a great time and I met a bunch of people. Our main objective was to learn about each others differences and connect through them. I don't think that the French hosts quite knew how to show us how their society and culture works. Though, I know that they unintentionally taught us a lot. But of course, if you don't know much about other peoples cultures it must be difficult to choose and pick from typical French things to show without boring the guests because they might be too familiar or too similar. However, there were many things that stood out to me, but none of them seemed to be anything that they intended to show us. For example, I noticed how the teachers started yelling at some kids. In our school the teachers correct us by talking to us. And during the lessons, it felt as if the students were taught instead of being involved in the learning process themselves. Some might think that letting students learn by themselves by reading a simple text, solving the problems themselves with only structural help from teachers, or even letting them out of the class room might seem a risky idea. It can be, though for my class it works perfectly fine. That's in fact what I'm doing right now.

Every country that my class will visit has its own subject or theme. France had “Religious Holidays.” They were very similar to the Swedish ones, almost identical. But one quite obvious thing was that they had a sort of multi cultural view on holidays. From what I picked up, Jewish holidays and other religious holidays were more common. Most likely because of the old French colonies and early history with influences from different parts of the world, as well as immigration. Of course there are many religious holidays that a lot of immigrants from around the world celebrate in Sweden too, but the normal Swede doesn’t see them as common, or you don’t hear as much about it. You might notice when someone is not in school because they celebrate something, and you might talk about it if you have a friend that has another religion, but you don’t acknowledge it the same way that I experienced it in France.

Simon Gerdman 8CD, Gröndalsskolan in Värnamo, Sweden

Friendship – the power of life

Two trips to Denmark and France are already past us. For the representatives from Primary School no 2 in Poland these were two amazing and unique visits. During the first one we had a chance to admire Copenhagen’s architecture, during a guided tour around Ørestad and inner city, and compare the educational systems. Throughout the second visit, we presented different holidays in our countries and also discovered various customs of celebrating Christmas time. Moreover, we could feel the climate of Paris during sightseeing the most marvelous places, well known on the whole world, such as: Basilique du Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre, Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris, Champs Elysées, Napoleonic Arc de Triomphe and the 19th-century Eiffel Tower. Also, in both countries, we didn’t miss the opportunity to try mouth-watering national cuisines.

But not only this made those visits such unforgettable. Those meetings helped us to perceive a real beauty in our diversities and made us aware of one thing. The most lasting bond, which people can create between them, are not the bounds of money but friendships, which doesn’t know any political or racial borders and has an amazing power of joining people forever.

Agnieszka Wargin, Polish coordinator

France - a Comparison of Culture

When the cominius project was held in Denmark our subjects were: History, architecture and monarchy. To present our subjects in just a few days, we decided to do a guided tour around Copenhagen. On this tour we saw famous sights like churches, city areas, important buildings and statues. After the guided tour, the students got to taste Danish food like “Smørrebrød” and Danish traditional Christmas food - a roasted pork, boiled potatoes and gravy. We had an amazing time starting up the project here in Denmark, and we hope everyone enjoyed their time here.

Best regards from Maja, Amalie, Emma and Sofie from Denmark

Bulgaria 2013

We’re going to Bulgaria, and we’re very excited. We’re looking forward to see the beautiful nature that was showed in the Asenovgrad video. The program for the trip sounds very exciting. We can’t wait to get there. We are mostly looking forward to seeing the mountains, because here in Denmark we only have “Himmelbjerget” (the sky mountain) and it’s only 147 metres high. We hope that it will be an experience we will never forget.

Best regards from Maja, Amalie, Emma and Sofie from Denmark

Portugal News

Participating in this European Project is something really fantastic. We have the chance to meet other students and schools, get to know other cultures and traditions, get to communicate in English and therefore practice the use of this language. But what is the best of all is to make friends all over Europe.

“The exchange experience was very gratifying” Iara

“Our host families were fantastic. We really felt at home!” Ana Raquel

“It was so funny to see that in the same continent we can find such different lifestyles.” Nair

“Whenever we take part on mobilities, we bring trunks full of memories to tell and to keep them as treasures!” Pedro

Emilia Gadjurova
Main Project Coordinator
Asenovgrad
Bulgaria

PIlegaarDSSkolen, denmark

Connect Through Our Differences
Our school always buys two Christmas trees: one for the Concert Hall, the other for the Chamber Hall. Usually our pupils decorate them: older children the big one, small children the small one. They hang lights and glass spheres on them. Judit, our headmistress said: Why don’t we put candies, too? Yes, it’s a good idea – said me. It’s a Hungarian unique. So we asked a group to wrap some up and hang on the smaller tree.

Discussing about our mobility we talked about presents to bring to France. Why not we bake ginger bread? – said Dóni. Oh yes – said Enikő – I live near the school, I can bring all the ingredients. Excellent idea. Let’s make a movie about it and present it in France. I can cope with the videocamera. Let’s start it on Thursday and finis hon Friday. We can use it for Christmas decoration, too.

So we prepared the candies and the ginger bread and then decided to bring some of both to France. The girls are very excited about this journey. I’ve never flown a plane – said Dóni. Nor me – said Enikő.

Balázs Juhász, Hungarian coordinator.
Ilga Stikute, student from Latvian team will be our leader in next visits. You are the best who give to and all project coordinators who were with us these days and of course our Latvian project coordinator Ms. M. Mickeviča.

In conclusion I can say that Paris is the city of all the possible mixtures, compatible and perhaps at the same time inconsistent.

City may be characterized by its monumental beauty. Each corner has a small café with its own charm and the lure. Almost every building has its own historical story. The only thing we can do is wonder - how one can create such beauty?! Concerning to the building has its own historical story. The only thing we can do is.

For our first mobility in Copenhagen Denmark, was exchanging different activities that have been diffused through the schools, allowing the kids themselves to have a chance to express their thoughts and ideas about diversity in Europe through art. In the Bundesrealgymnasium in Vienna’s 14th District we explored devising a logo that could express their representations of a connected Europe and of Austria.

I was surprised and excited to see them incorporating the symbols of the Resienrad (big wheel) in Vienna and instead of carriages to take the people in, there were stars, just like the European flag. So these once perhaps obvious, stark symbols were innovatively transformed into diverse expressions.

So in taking each country in turn starting with Copenhagen in Denmark, the class explored symbols that resonate with that city that simultaneously draw people to the country, connecting us, but with a feeling of difference.

Ancient symbols from Latvia have reworked themselves into contemporary designs on clothing, buildings and in people’s homes, so that they have become an ubiquitous throughout the Latvian cultural landscape.

In Bulgaria, ideograms were used for days of the week as well as ancient gods that similar to Latvia have seeped into every day cultural consciousness.

In Diego Rivera’s murals, people dominate the narrative, diverse, colourful with symbols from the Day of the Dead festival that is so intrinsic to Mexico celebrating the dead as well as more universal ones such as the dove of peace.

In Poland there is a strong symbol. The Kotwica (Polish for Anchor) was a World War II emblem of the Polish Secret State and Armia Krajowa (Home Army, or AK). It was created in 1942 by members of the AK Wawer “Small Sabotage” unit as an easily usable emblem for the Polish struggle to regain independence. The initial meaning of the initials “PW” was “Pomścimy Wawer” (“We will avenge Wawer”).

The Wawer Massacre was considered to be one of the first large scale massacres of Polish civilians by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland. At first, Polish scouts from sabotage groups painted the whole phrase upon walls. However, this was soon shortened to two letters, P and W, due to time constraints.

So that there was a mix between the different and specific symbol from Vienna and the broader connecting symbol of Europe. A ‘mischen’ (mix) between the two. As their confidence grew they experimented with the Viennese and European symbols further turning their creations into logos, first very detailed and accurate drawings and eventually pairing them down, to be graphic ideograms. (When finished their innovative logos will be uploaded here).

Once they had created their own ideograms it was easier this week to see how ancient and modern ideograms had been created in the eight different countries of the Comenius project. As a task we were to create images of diversity in Europe, since the theme of the project is connecting through our differences. We

We have been engaged in so many activities already with the Comenius project it is hard to know which ones to share with everyone. One activity that seemed to resonate with everyone were the symbols from each country. These have spurred a video from Austrian children, murals and indeed helped to design our wonderful logo. Here is a selection of the symbols that we shared with our students!

whereas others seemed self-centred and reserved, so to say there is no unified idea about them. Anyway everybody has to see Paris themselves, because it’s impossible to immortalize the feeling of concrete moment and to show it to other people.

We are very thankful to French partners for visiting nice Paris and of course our Latvian project coordinator Ms. M. Mickeviča and all project coordinators who were with us these days and will be our leader in next visits. You are the best who give to students such possibilities to visit other countries.

Iļga Stikute, student from Latvian team.
**Azulejos**

SZDSZ (republicans) could not find a common point, so they have hung up their differences. This time MDF (royalists) and the opposing FIDESZ and KDNP finally decided to use different but related symbols. The crest was the last symbol of the Hungarian independence for many years, but its meaning and usage were not clear. It resembles shields widespread in Hungary in the 14th century, but the flag in different regions in France (E.G. Hautes-Alpes department) is still used on the tricolor without the crest, and declared an independent crest, the royal one (which of course was constructed by the Austrian emperors earlier). This decision was that time a wise compromise between the opposing republicans and royalists. After having just a taste of the most salient symbols from each of the eight countries in the Comenius project, they were able to be inspired to create a mural that had not only a combination of these symbols on their tile or piece, but they were also able to create their own, symbolizing the spiritual heritage of all nations. Some of them mixed up ideograms in one token that they designed whereas others put the different symbols together in their completeness, so that they were connected through their differences on the mural, making it colourful and rich.

**Bulgaria is waiting for you to experience our colorful folklore traditions.**

Baba Marta Day

**Mobility to Bulgaria: 28th February - 4th March 2013**

All Bulgarians celebrate on March 1 a centuries-old tradition and exchange martensitsi on what is called the day of Baba Marta. Baba Marta (Granny Mart) is the name of a mythical figure who brings with her the end of the cold winter and the beginning of the spring.

“Martenitsi” are red and white coloured wristbands, or figurines, that symbolise health and happiness. They are given away to friends and family. People are supposed to take off their martensitsi when they see the first signs that spring has already come - a blooming tree or a stork. When the martensiti is taken off, some tie it to a tree - one that they'd like to be especially fruitful. Others place it under a rock and based on what they find there the next morning guess what kind of a year this one would be. Children usually compete who will get the most and often walk around more ornate than a Christmas tree. However, it always bears the same meaning - a lucky charm against the evil spirits of the world, a token for health and a sign of appreciation.

**Kukeri** is a traditional Bulgarian ritual. They scare away evil spirits, with costumed men performing the ritual. The costumes cover most of the body and include wooden masks of animals (sometimes double-faced) and large bells attached to the belt. Around New Year and Easter, the kukeri walk and dance through the village to scare evil spirits away with the costumes and the sound of the bells, as well as to provide a good harvest, health, and happiness to the village during the year.

Dinner. The pilgrim pleaded, “If I am innocent, that cockerel will get up and crow. The cockerel at once got up and crowed heartily. The pilgrim was released and went on his way. The teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the students met their French families, at which they were living for almost 2 hours. Here, after few minutes of waiting, came coordinator and the pilot, rustles calm and the plane. After reaching the airport, the teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the lunch at the school, we went to the Château de Versailles. The lunch at the school was on the plate. After the plane. After reaching the airport, the teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the lunch at the school was on the plate. After reaching the airport, the teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the lunch at the school was on the plate. After reaching the airport, the teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the lunch at the school was on the plate.

The third day was full of impressions! Definitely, Montmartre is worth seeing. Walking through the narrow streets that go up and down the hill creates different feelings. There are a lot of stores and everybody may notice that the most of the working people are representatives of other nationalities. Those people know the English language at the appropriate level, so breaking the stereotypes that in France, people don't speak English, and those who didn't were quite attractive to explain all the necessary things in French. We also couldn't miss the opportunity of enjoying the ride at the top of the Eiffel Tower. Gustav Eiffel's 380 m high “wonder” - the symbol of Paris, which brings together millions of tourists every year. While going up by the elevator, the heart striking view opened upon the city. Above were really strong and cold wind, and these day the thermometer showed -7. We noticed that security system there is high, and so it should be. In the evening, when it became darker the miraculous charm of the city came to life, it's obvious why Paris is called the city of lights. So we continued our trip by the boat, gliding along the Seine River, it was impressive when the Eiffel Towers lights began to sparkle. On the last day we also spent time visiting Notre Dame, watching its facade, and then the interior part. From the outside it seemed just in time. However, French people considered it freezing! That day we were watching each other's presentations, sadly we didn't manage to see all of them, because of the luck of time. After having the lunch at the school, we went to the Château de Versailles. The territory around the castle and the castle itself is just enormous. The famous Miroir hall which is known as the “heart” of the King Louis XIV palace, painted ceilings, golden decorations just didn't left anyone indifferent. Unfortunately we had too little time to see and feel all the magic of it.