

Disembarking Asnieres, Paris

The sixth travel of the Erasmus + MAP group was the finishing line of the project. Six students and three teachers went abroad accompanied by their German, Italian, Lithuanian and Spanish friends.

The arrival at the airport of «Charles de Gaulle» was the beginning of a new trip and the end of an amazing experience. We met again familiar faces, good company and fabulous smiles. The reunion day was exactly what that week needed to start with good mood, humor and no shyness.

Monday:

The headmaster gave a speech to welcome us and we had a tour around the school. First, the French school facilities are not identical to the Greek ones. The building has two floors, and capacity of one thousand students. Moreover there is the gym, the chemistry room, the instrumental room, dance classrooms, the library equipped with computers and the auditorium. As for the outer spaces, there are plants and colored flowers, such a pleasure to the human eye. Also, the school has an athletic field and an indoor court of football-basketball-volleyball.

At the time we were in the auditorium we listened to a debate starting with a presentation by the Greek principal (Mr. Merkouris) in which refugees and activists attended too. The conference was about the refugee crisis and measures taken to outface it, as well as the refugees' personal experience, as the program itself is about refugees and immigrants.

In the afternoon, we participated in a football game alongside refugees. In the court no one could tell who is which one, because there were no "labels", no discriminations and above all every player had his own team to back him up.

Tuesday:

Apart from the fact that we did not have so many workshops as in the previous trips, the hours that we spent at the school were full of hard work and funny moments. In the morning every country had to prepare a board on which they would describe, from their perspective, the program. On 11.30 a.m. when the bell rang, we left school and headed to the canteen (weird hours for a Greek citizen to have lunch – we usually have lunch around 2pm) because those hungry kids had to be provided with energy for what was coming next.

So, in the afternoon we walked around the streets of Arabic, Asian and Jewish districts, we had an "ethnic" tour. Those districts were completely different from each other and the Parisian ones but they have managed to coexist.

Wednesday:

We had visitors from other schools and guided them through the exhibition about the program we had prepared in the school's aisles. We had the chance to inform them about the refugee crisis, share our experience and what we gained from our participation in the Erasmus.

The tour continued in the local library, where an exhibition had been prepared with some workshops of the program. The library is a quiet place with a wide range of books, magazines, newspapers, even CD/DVD, which we can borrow at any time.

In the afternoon we visited the museum of immigration, in Paris, where the guide took us back ages ago in order to fully understand immigration and discuss about the immigrants nowadays. The conclusion was that this phenomenon will continue to exist as long as people seek a better life.

Thursday:

Last but not least another ongoing workshop was the creation of a song. The "artists" of the programme, with the help of an expert and the good will of the teachers, did their best and they managed to move us with the wonderful lyrics. The Greek participants helped with both lyrics writing and the melody.

And what if the weather was windy and a little bit rainy? It did not stop us from visiting the Musée du quai Branly, the ethnographic museum located in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower which presents around 3,500 pieces of art divided into geographical areas: Oceania, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Friday:

The Erasmus team created a book that portrays the work of the two year project. MAPBOOK was under development in Spain and Lithuania by the students with the help of the German teachers. After being printed and handed out to every participant in Paris, they travelled to Greece and they are now available in the school library for you to read them and see the work of 6 different countries with a common goal.

One of the workshops that needs to be mentioned is the theatrical play in which participants of the program played for us in the school's auditorium. Despite the limited time they had to prepare it, the kids worked hard and the result was great. The script writer was a French participant that managed to place it in our days and imprinted the struggles of the refugees efficiently. It showed us that sometimes those who are not a part of the struggle see every effort as a problem that needs to be "dealt" with, because they are not in their shoes. The kids' performance was terrific.

Our last night in Paris had to be one of the kind. And so it happened. A boat was waiting for us at the Seine ready to sail. Even if the party was inside the boat, some of us had a great time on its deck with nice friends, a light breeze (that is why we were all sick the day after!!) and the magnificent buildings on the banks of Seine. It was an unforgettable night when students and teachers danced to the rhythm of songs and tears of happiness were all that we could cry.

Paris: A new world...or maybe not?

The beautiful sights of Paris are well known to all of us. First of all, there is the famous Eiffel Tower, which we saw the night of our arrival, a night when a dream came true.

Notre Dame: Magical, scary, stunning, medieval, even musical, were some of characteristics we gave it. Its architecture and the well-known "gargoyle" took a special place in our hearts. As long as someone walks into its beauty is swept away. The statues, the light that came in through the colored stained glass and the ecclesiastical instruments created a stunning atmosphere when praying. I will never forget that stained glass window which took me to another place filled with hope and life, as well as the candles that were lighting up the mystery behind every statue's face.

Montmartre: The Greek team "climbed" one of the highest hills - an old suburb of Paris-, which is 130m high –by teleferik to be exact. That does not change the spectacular view that only a panoramic photograph could capture: the endless Paris spread on our feet. Just like every other tourist we did not miss the chance to take pictures in front of the Saint Pierre de Montmartre church.

Some of us saw the *Triumphal Arch of the Star, the Louvre, the French Revolutionary, Square Concord* with the obelisk and the fountains. We crossed the Seine too many times and learned our way through the French subway better than the Greek one.

Even if France is known for its raw meat, ducks and frog's legs we all tasted the French cuisine, meaning croissants and quiche lorraine, madaleine de proust and their bad smelling but tasty cheeses. Some of us liked them but other almost puked in the sight of the roast beef.

A great THANK YOU to our parents, the school and our teachers, Ioanna Palaiorouti, Mania Christi, Maro Triantafyllou and our headmaster Aggelos Merkouris. The Erasmus + MAP may be over but the journey has just began...

Dimitra Sotiria Psychogiou

You can travel with us in France through this video made by us here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxCUXeAj5iw>

Here are the impressions of the Greek participants:

The trip to France was a nice experience. We learnt more about refugees in another country. Also I liked very much the museums that we went and the hospitality was perfect!! The sites like the Eiffel Tower and the Notre Dame were my favorites of this trip. When we arrived we came into contact with a different lifestyle because they had a different program from us. Also the beauty of the country was amazing and the nights were breathtaking.

Sofia Chrisanthi Belegri

For me, the trip to France with the Migration Analysis Project was more than a mere experience. It was a lesson and hands-on practice to brush up on all of my people skills and abilities. My knowledge upon the migration crisis has been vastly extended and now I've managed to put together all the pieces of the puzzle. I befriended new individuals, I interacted with different personalities, and once again, just as in any trip with the Erasmus, I came across various and peculiar points of view. I truly believe that we are the generation that we will make a difference in the foreseeable future! Programs like this teach life lessons better than any teacher or philosopher ever will using words. Words and theories don't change the world! Actions do!

Petros Karakostas

The Erasmus project has taught me a lot of things along the way. Not only did I learn to work more efficiently in team projects, but most importantly I learned so many things about the world I live in. This project has shed new light for me, led me to new ways of thinking, and showed what humanity really looks like. I can't say that what we did will help all these people whom we studied so much for, but at least now, after this research we -the participants of this project- will be able to walk in this so called society and stand up shamelessly for all those who can't. I believe that this project has taught us, above all, about humanity and that there should be no boundaries and standards when it comes to accepting people. Everyone has their own suffering and we should be able to lend them a hand one way or another.

However, personally this project helped me understand other things too. For example, meeting so many people from other countries without knowing anything about them and learning along the way, that was truly fascinating and beautiful. It's quite impressive how - even though we're all so different- we shared the same interest considering that we all participated in this project. Even though we didn't know anyone at the beginning, came to belong in the same team, we had a place to belong to in this short while, we fitted right in. We might have gossiped, argued, had fun, been disappointed, made friendships, relationships, etc but in the end, even all these were part of the project. You may wonder how, but this is only proof that we can interact, work and build relationships with people who are completely different from us, because all of these are part of our everyday life. Maybe I'm not so close with everyone in this group, but I know I for sure that I love everyone. And yes, maybe "love" is an overrated word that shouldn't be used so lightly, but that's exactly why I'm using it. If wishing for everyone to be happy and take the best path for themselves in their life means you love them, then yes, that's what I call love, and that's why I love everyone. This whole thing may sound cheesy and weird in a way, but I don't really care if it does cause it's how I really feel after all.

It's been great for me to spend time with you all. This experience was truly a blessing and helped me so much in many ways. So, thank you all, I wish you the best and a lot of happiness. Please be safe and may we even meet again sometime!

Sosanna Nikolakopoulou

Those seven days which we spent in Paris, was a unique chance given from the program and we could call it as a "life experience" without exaggerating. The memories of this week will never fade away, just like the friendships that were made along the way. Now we know that a warm hug is waiting for us in every corner of Europe, from people who share the same worries and concerns of the daily life as we do, with same interests and the most important from people who dream exactly like us. They dream of a better future, a future where people will not be apart and Europe will be a big neighborhood. A future that the European brotherhood will dominate against our times...

Iasonas Anagnopoulos

"If you don't try it, you won't understand it" that is what my grandmother says in only one sentence, just as simple and smart as that. For me, the flight Greece-France was a dream coming true, because I strolled through the alleys of Paris, I tasted the French cuisine, I was guided to museums and because I saw Paris with my own eyes, touched it with my hands. I became a small French girl. How can someone not feel the connection between them and the city, when it is given to them with only one hug? That is because Paris is a hug itself. During one week I was living in a special world that was really difficult to leave behind. But, I befriended many people, I have a home with a cup of hot tea waiting for me, I have one or two friends, one French who is from Cuba, one Italian whose parents have divorced, one German who comes from Turkey, one Spanish that has a peculiar taste in clothing and one Lithuanian with long and white as the snow legs. Daily, simple stuff. Because that is what the program taught me. I was taught not to differentiate, not to put labels, nonetheless not to consider myself above all. We are all one and that is what matters. We are one voice. And this voice is screaming out loud to all of you "old people": 'Save what is left because we are changing the facts'

Dimitra Sotiria Psychogiou

It's truly amazing how easy it is to meet so many people in such a short period of time and be so close to them that you do not want to leave. At first I was so enthusiastic about this trip and it turns out that my enthusiasm was due to the visit of a beautiful city with long-way back history and I am grateful that I participated in the last and unforgettable visit of the program. Paris as a destination, is preferred by a large part of the world's population, a dream of life, because it is surrounded by imposing sights and high rise buildings that have

preserved their beauty over the years. The roads are quite clean in most places, and everywhere there are walkways for passengers and cyclists, unlike Greece. As for the French cuisine it is as tasty as the Greek. Furthermore you can find small and large patisserie shops in every street corner where you can buy French desserts.

The hospitality was just great, the family accepted me like I was a member too and it made me feel as comfortable as if I was in my own home.

About the program, I was able to understand more clearly how difficult it is to be an immigrant or a refugee these days and that they have to face a great number of dangers and obstacles that will stigmatize them for the rest of their life.

I have nothing else to say except that my participation in this trip and the program in general was one of the most important experience of my life not only because I saw this amazing place up close, but because I made very important friendships that I hope will last forever.

Maria Stribel