

Erasmus+ Trip to Athens 12th to 18th March 2017

Sunday 12th March

Each country arrived in Athens at different times. When we got to Syntagma Place, Alexandra the Greek coordinator was there to welcome us. It was great to see her, and we think she must have spent all day in the Metro station to wait for each partner school. The host families came on time to greet our pupils and it was lovely to see that everybody was getting a hug and a big warm welcome. For some of the German students this was a bit unexpected, they are not used to this when you greet someone. Some of our students were invited to a meal and some had their first sightseeing tour through Athens, and all that on the first day!

Monday, 13th March

After a short journey on the Metro and a speedy ride in taxi (though some taxi drivers did not seem to know where the school was) we were re-united with our pupils. They were all happy and relaxed, telling us about their great evening before. One thing became quickly known – Greek parents certainly want you to eat a lot a dinner time! They had made a real effort and teachers were a little envious.

After a walk around the school, guided by Greek pupils speaking good English, we met in the assembly hall to play a game called “How well do I know my own city”. Pictures with sights of all partner cities were shown to one pupil from that country, and he or she had to play a pantomime to enable the other pupils to guess which sight or place or tradition was shown.

There was a lot of laughter when it became apparent that mostly students from other countries managed to guess correctly, rather than the inhabitants of that particular city.

At 11 am it was break time, and teachers were spoilt in the library, enjoying cakes and biscuits and typical Greek food with spinach and feta. Nearly everyone used some free time to sit outside and enjoy the sun, watching Greek and other European partner pupils play basketball, volleyball and football together. Everyone had great fun, all students were included and it did not matter where you came from. That is a great example for a harmonic Europe – everybody is equal.



Then it was time to get to work: Every school presented their ideal city, or parts thereof.

Nearly all partners had been creative, engaging in handicrafts and making models out of different materials. Austria had their model packed up as hand luggage, and a pupil had to carry it! The model was a shopping haven, with modern elements created from copper and wire and lots of water and plants. France was extremely clever, having brought a fold-up model of their part of the city. Different little paper people were shown exercising, doing sports and having a good time in their city. Spain and Germany had made a digital model and films about the creation of such. German pupils had made a very futuristic version, using solar pods and spacy chute systems.

Some of their models were wooden and thus too heavy to bring to Athens.

The Greek school had been really creative – they had used architectural paper and cardboard to create flats and houses with a green environment, and this impressive structure looked just like an architects' model, but done by students! We were so flashed to see that the little windows even contained glass in different colours, streets had road signs and little plants and trees were growing on the model.

Greek had caught every moment of their building phase on camera, thus having several presentations on film.

All students made a good job of presenting their work and talking about their city. but the German pupils were very shy and only Paul and Eric were brave and talked loudly.

The next step was the creation of a building or part of our future city for 2020 in international groups, based on the models that had been presented previously.

In most groups were 2 students from Germany, France, Greece, Spain and Austria, thus constituting a great base for ideas and imagination.



Pupils had to talk in English, that was a little hard in the beginning, but soon inhibitions were lifted and we had a lot of European group work going on. Big decisions were made: Should a cemetery be created? Or maybe a super modern hotel? What about a chocolate house or a pink Barbie Tower for Beauty?

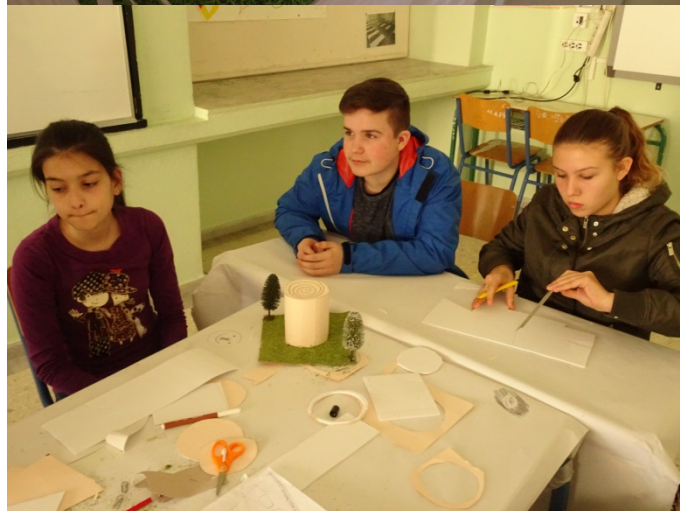
At 2 pm we had a break for lunch and went to a beautiful Greek restaurant, and had a chance to talk to our Greek colleagues and even the headmaster, who told us all about his school. During that time, pupils were at their host families' houses.

Very relaxed and having enjoyed delicious food, we got back to school. Work on the models continued till 6 pm, and rightly so our pupils were exhausted, some of them like France not having had much sleep, as they did not arrive till midnight on the day before.

However, there was no time to rest, for our students it was time to go to the host families, some were taken shopping, others enjoyed a meal in a restaurant and some even went to a fun park. Yet the most surprising thing for all German pupils was the nightly meeting in the park. Talking, laughing, and listening to music, playing football up to 2 am in the morning – for Germany unimaginable before. Some were worried it may be dangerous – but of course this is a country with great weather and a big part of life takes place outdoors.

Tuesday, 14th March

At 8:30 am we met at school and carried on with our international group work, trying to finalize the models and buildings. Slowly we could make out single buildings, such as a football stadium, a swimming pool with jumping board, a chocolate house with an entrance to eat your way through, a futuristic tower, a biscuit factory, a hotel and much more. All was fixed on a big wooden board, creating a unique aspect of our city of the future.





Our city of 2020 had been extended and grown in opportunity and quality, giving us an impression of what it would be like to live there. After Lunch we went to the temple of Poseidon, the bus had to take some really bendy roads and only the brave looked out of the window to watch the picturesque landscape others used the time to have a little nap. We were a bit worried about the weather, but this soon cleared up, just as we arrived at the mountain with the temple of Poseidon. We were divided up in two groups, Germany and Austria and France was teamed up with Spain. Some Greek pupils joined us, too.

Each student received four A4 pages of material, and had to listen very carefully to their guide, to fill in all the correct answers. We found out a lot about the history of this holy temple and the people that used to live there and the history of the area.

This temple is surrounded by pillars from all sides, and thus called a peripteral temple. It is built from granite and was built around the 5th century.

We were so lucky because the sun came out and we really enjoyed the view from the temple and the hill, taking lots of photos and relaxing in this special atmosphere. At the end each team got a historical game to take home, indicating important spots and marks of Poseidon`s temple.

Wednesday 15th March

This was an interesting but very long day for us. Teachers used the metro and students took a bus from school to get to the new opera house built by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

There we had two workshops in English, one concentrating on music and sounds in the city, the other was related to environment and protection. The group was divided and then we started immediately, so the prejudice that Greek people are too relaxed and never on time is just not true! In the music workshop we had to guess sounds, imitate sounds and collect ideas on a big poster. Each group had a chance to discover the unusual architectural building, finally taking the lift to the upper floor, where you can find an open space with a great view around Athens and also a sheltered café. Both groups met up in the adjoining parks, which made some of us very envious, as there is a modern running track, new

fitness equipment and modern seating to have a leisurely or sporty time. Every citizen of the city of Athens can use these facilities for free.

Then we took a bus to get to the shipping company called Spanopoulos Group. Sitting at a very nice harbor, a lady from the shipping company told us all about the ships, the jobs and training opportunities in the company and the history of the location. Following that, pupils and teachers were enjoying the sun, sitting in the pizza places and other locations around the harbor. Some even had to get their sunscreen out, as it was really warm!

The bus took us back to Athens. There the group was divided, Austria went to the National Archeological museum, France and Spain the National Garden and some monuments, Germany went into the old parts of town and looked at some buildings and relics of an ancient time.

Finally all pupils had some free time to buy souvenirs and presents for their family.

Thursday, 16th March

In the early morning we went by bus to a vineyard in Nemea, which has been appraised for its fine produce and has even got some awards from Germany and other European countries. Teachers had the chance to taste different wines, and unlike what some pupils may think, nobody was drunk, because the wine is tasted (you swirl it around in your mouth) and then it is spat into a container. So nobody actually swallows the alcohol! There were a few snacks for teachers and pupils had a chance to have their packed lunch and take photos in these beautiful surroundings.



Our next stop was Mycenae, about 90 km away from Athens. During the Bronze Age, Mycenae was a King's palace, a fort and a capital of the area of Argolis in the Peloponnese. Mycenae is also a part of the UNESCO World Heritage. Students heard stories about Agamemnon and his wife, who killed her husband together with her lover, as Agamemnon had wanted to sacrifice their own daughter Iphigenia to the gods and so she hated him.

Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon in the bath. Her son Orestes got his own back, never forgiving his mother for her deadly sin, so he ended up killing his mother. A very tragic family



story. The guide did a good job, fascinating students with her stories and speaking a good and clear English.

Students then walked up a hill, looking like a long row of ants climbing this historic sight.

Very few brave people climbed right up to the edge, such as Finja and Jasmin from Germany and Benjamin and Lukas from Austria. After taking a few pictures the courageous climbers found a way back down, and discovered even more dangerous and exciting aspects.

Big white nests hung in the trees, looking a bit mysterious, and after closer inspection we discovered lots of black things inside. Mr. Fuchs told us it was a type of caterpillar we should not touch, as it has hairs on the body that may make you feel some itching. It is called the "Wandering caterpillar" because it walks in long rows and lines all across the paths and walkways.

Last point for this day was the town of Nafplio, an idyllic place with many historic buildings and located at a harbor. Unfortunately, it was raining and so teachers fled to a café, talking and enjoying some moments of peace.

We went to the Harvard digital Library, attending an informative talk on information about Harvard, its university and the selection process of applicants.

Did you know that every year about 30500 students apply to study there? But Harvard can only take about 3050 new entrants each year. We will be very interest4ed to see if anyone in our Erasmus+ project manages to study there in the future.

At night, students met again at the park, and students were used to long nights and little sleep by now. It became quite normal, to go to bed at 2 or 3 am and to get up at 7am.

Friday, 17th March

Students and teachers met at the Acropolis Museum on that morning, only Austria was a little late, as they had already had a walk up to the monument. We had a guided tour in English and were very impressed with all the pillars and columns exhibited there, but there could be many more time pieces. So what has happened? Many parts of Greek history are in the British Museum in London, because in

1799 to 1804 a Lord Elgin had just simply removed the historic pieces from the sides and transported them to England by ship. Greece would still like their property back home, but so far not much has happened.



The museum is an awesome building, with great bits of architecture and wonderful views up to the Acropolis.

Students were fascinated by the ugly head of Medusa, the figure with the piercing eyes, so scary that your blood will run cold. And what about the little owl, that is often seen on Athene`s statues? It lives around the Acropolis, nesting in the crevices of the stones and it is of course the favorite bird of the goddess Athene, as it is the bird of wisdom.

All of our Erasmus+ group then enjoyed a leisurely lunch in a Souvlaki restaurant, talking and enjoying each others company. In the evening we had a final celebration. Parents and teachers had created a really big food buffet, covered in delightful Greek specialties. The headmaster made a speech and then he opened the buffet – the queues were really long to get to the wonderful food. Greek pupils performed the Sirtaki and that got everyone into a mood for dancing. We all had to learn and dance this special Greek tradition. Then everyone danced and had fun. Last pictures were taken, hosting plans for Germany confirmed and everlasting friendship was sworn. It was a memorable night and of course there were tears in the end. Even some boys could not stop their tears. Our pupils had enjoyed such warm and kind hospitality and were made to feel at home and belong to the family. We are really grateful for this special experience and say a big thank you to Alexandra, the teachers and the headmaster and the whole school community, especially the parents.

Saturday 18th March

In the morning we met Alexandra again at Syntagma station, and all parents delivered our students on time to catch the metro to the airport. It was a tearful goodbye, but many students will see each other again when they travel to Germany.

A big thank you to all who made this week possible. Greece is Great!