

Newsletter – fifth meeting in Poznan, Poland

22nd – 26th January 2018



First day of the meeting in Poland

We all arrived at Poznan airport on Sunday afternoon. In fact, the Dutch and Norwegian teams met in Frankfurt, as they were on the same flight. We were greeted by Gosia, Ewelina and Ela, along with the host families. The students left with their host families to spend the evening getting to know each other, while the teachers were driven to their hotel before spending a pleasant evening in the old town.

Monday 22nd January

After an evening with the host families, we met at school at 08.00. First, we were divided into groups, and played some games to get to know each other, as the groups were made up of students from all the different countries. We made posters with our common interests, and had an activity to learn names. Then Ewelina introduced the project week and explained what we are going to do this week.



All the countries had worked on a task before travelling to Poland. They found out about how citizens, and especially young people, can get involved in decision making in their cities. They also took a survey of students and other citizens about areas in their city that could be improved. The results of the surveys and the other information were presented as a film made by each school. We watched all the films, which was very interesting, and then worked in groups. We used the information from the surveys we made in our home cities to find common areas for each of the cities. Each group chose one areas to work on, and we then made posters informing about these issues, for example pollution, public transport and clean energy,



International Evening

Later in the day we had an international party where each school had brought some food from their country. There was so much to choose from, for example, salmon, sausage and chocolate from Norway, pancakes, sausage and waffles from the Netherlands, sausage and bread from Germany, pirogues and salads from Poland, and cheese, quiche and cakes from Spain. There was a lot left for us to enjoy later in the week. The Polish students had some entertainment for us, and they also taught us how to dance the Polonaise.



After the formal part of the evening, the DJ took over, and we all enjoyed an evening of dancing and socialising before heading home about 20.00



Tuesday 23rd January

Today we had an early start, and had to be at school at 8 o'clock. The first point on the programme was a lecture by Bartosz Hordecki, PhD, who is a professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. The title of the lecture was "The art of discussion in times of media civilisation" and he told us about how the use of digital media has changed the way we communicate, and how this affects the way we discuss.

This lecture was to provide background for workshops on debating. During these workshops we learned about the rules of debating, self-presentation skills, persuasion and argumentative language.



We had to prepare arguments on an issue in groups and then some students presented the arguments. They were filmed, and given feedback on how effectively they presented their arguments.



After lunch, we went out of school to catch a veteran tram, to go on a “Bimba” guided tour through the city. Our guide, Marek, gave us lots of interesting information about the buildings and areas that we passed, such as Malta, the artificial lake area, the imperial castle and the cathedral. We were all given a bag of envelopes and at regular intervals we opened an envelope. Here there were photos of old buildings, a potato, a fridge magnet with Poznan's famous goats, and a badge with the colours of Poland. At the terminus, the tram stopped and we were able to sit in the driver's seat and take photographs.



The tram took us back to school for 3pm where we were collected by our host families, and went off to eat dinner and take part in various activities.

Wednesday 24th January

Our schedule today: A day outside of the school. Poznań city was waiting for us. And the start was literally very sweet. We visited Poznań's one and only "Croissant museum"- what a treat! We learned not only how to make the most delicious croissants ever, we also got to know a good deal about the city's history. The guides, who at the same time were professional bakers, were really amusing and had a lot of interesting stories to tell, not to mention all the advice they gave regarding the stuffed croissants.



Students were able to take part in the baking process, learning how to roll out the dough, cut triangles with a sword and squeeze out the very thick filling. Of course, the tour ended with a taste of the croissants.



Rain, wind, and cold temperatures – nevertheless, we did not give in and participated in a sightseeing tour in the old town of Poznań. Luckily, we were to meet Marek, the same enjoyable guide who already had made our tram-trip an amusing experience the day before.

And he did not disappoint us this time either. By choosing students to make his point clear what it meant to live in Poznań in former times, his presentation of historical facts became somehow very illustrative and vivid. He even put one of the students on the pedestal and let him play a convict in the Middle Ages.



Thus, he taught us how Poznań's hangman professionally got his job done when chopping off the convict's heads. We learned about the multicultural history of Poznań four hundred years ago and about the few months when Poznań was the capital of Poland ruled by a man who – untypically for that time – experienced real love and real hate in the relationship with his own wife, and managed to be the King of Poland, even though for only some months.





In the afternoon, we were invited to visit the city's council and had the opportunity to hear about the city council and about the youth council.



One of the students from the school in Poznan, Julia, explained clearly what her role has been, and then we were able to watch the beginning of a session of the youth council. As this was in Polish, it was a little difficult to follow, but we saw that a presentation was made of a proposal about large advertisement boards, and that members of the council were able to comment on the proposal and ask questions.



After this, we returned back to school, ready to spend another evening with our very hospitable host families.

Thursday 25th January

Today we started fairly early, meeting at School at 08.30. The first thing we did was to watch a mock debate. Teams from our host school here in Poznan, and another local school, team ILO and team VIII LO, competed in a debate titled "The voting age should be lowered to 16 in order to increase active citizenship among the youth". The teams both had good arguments, and it was a close debate, which for the audience was won by the negative side. However, the judges disagreed, pointing out the more consistent argumentation of the affirmative side, and awarded this team the victory.



After a short break, we were divided into two groups to participate in workshops about debating techniques and to prepare the affirmative and negative side for our debate tomorrow. We worked together to find ideas and arguments, and then chose the students who would represent the group in the debate tomorrow. For the affirmative team this was Esther, Francisze, Joan, Sindre, Fynn and Lourdes. For the negative team this was Joanna, Sarah, Piotr, Philipp, Pawel, Emma.

After an intense afternoon, we left school at 15.00 to join our host families for the evening.

Friday 26th February

Today was the last day of the project and it was today that the students would test out what they had learned during the week of workshops. The two teams had prepared their arguments thoroughly, and today the twelve students, six for the affirmative side and six for the negative side, were ready to present their arguments as convincingly as possible.



Schools don't do enough to encourage and develop active citizenship among the youth



The affirmative side



The negative side

Both teams had convincing arguments and answered questions from the audience thoroughly. The audience were rather divided as to the outcome, but it seemed that the negative side had more of the audience on their side.

Then it was time to wait for the jury to deliberate and then announce their decision. It was also difficult for them, and they were also divided, but the affirmative team were announced as the winners. The jury commended both teams for their performance, and pointed out that the affirmative team had followed through their arguments consistently, giving them the victory.

The official part of the project was now almost over. All that remained was to thank all the students for their participation and hand out the certificates of participation to all of the teams. After this everyone ate some lunch before gathering in the school entrance to take the tram down to town for an afternoon of bowling.







Saturday 27th January

Today everyone returned home after an inspiring and educational week in Poland. The German team had a very early start, as their flight was at 06.45. The Norwegian and Dutch students travelled to Frankfurt on the same flight, so were able to spend some more time together, while the Spanish left a little later. Everyone agreed that it was hard to leave the new friends they had made, especially the Polish host families who had made everyone feel so welcome in their homes.

For further details on the project, please visit the blog at:

<http://citiesinternationalproject.blogspot.no/>

Or the webpage at:

<http://goosemartin.wixsite.com/erasmuscities>