



ЦЕНТЪР
ЗА РАЗВИТИЕ
НА ЧОВЕШКИТЕ
РЕСУРСИ



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



VICHO GRANCHAROV SECONDARY SCHOOL
GORNA ORYAKHOVITSA
BULGARIA

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME A COMENIUS PROJECT - MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS



POLAND



ROMANIA



TURKEY



SWEDEN



ITALY



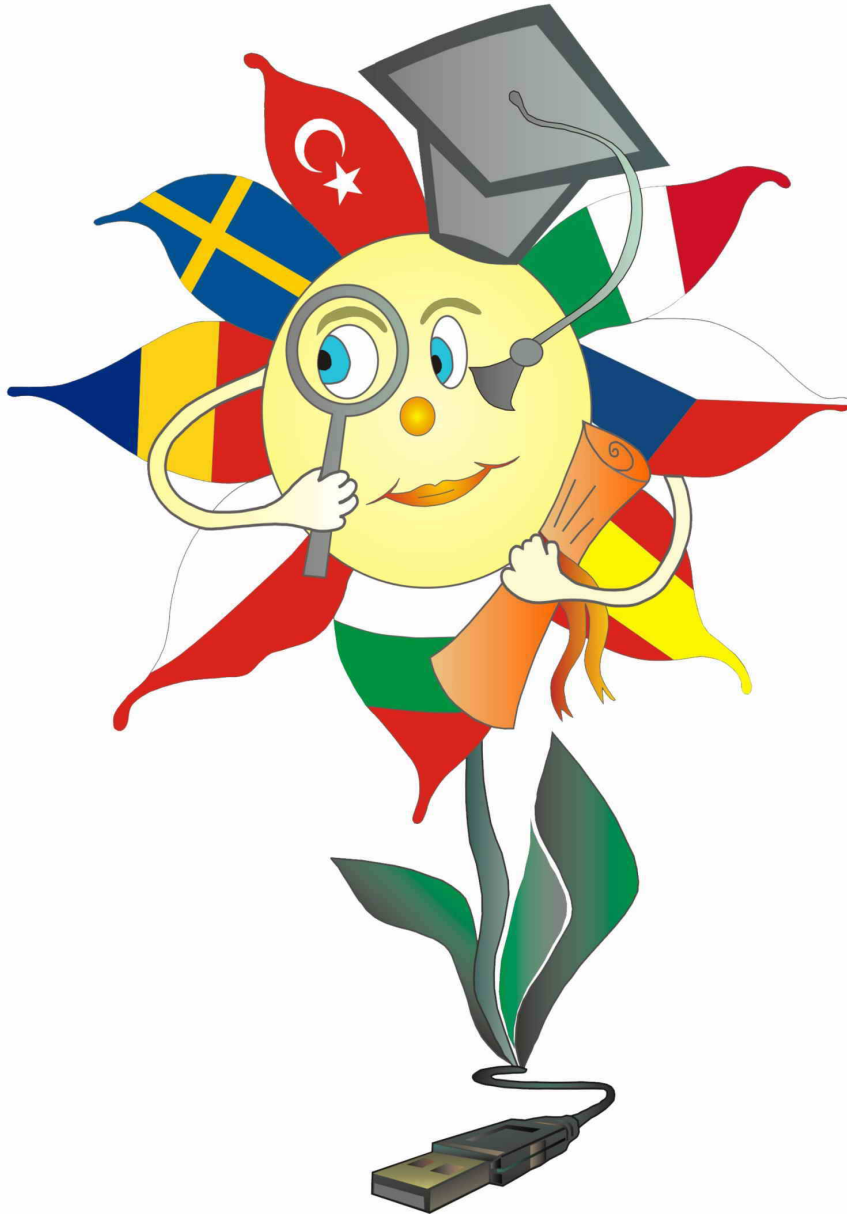
SPAIN



CZECH
REPUBLIC

TEACHING INNOVATIVELY (WITH FOCUS ON ICT) AND ITS IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

01.08.2011 - 31.07.2013



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COMENIUS

NEW EUROPEAN HORIZONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS COMMON WORK, COOPERATION, FRIENDSHIP



The European community has constantly pursued the goal of interchange, cooperation and mobility in the educational process. The partnership aims at employing various approaches to provide a qualitative and accessible to everyone education, which is adequate to the requirements of the labour market and to the social and cultural context of the European dimension framework. In order to achieve high performance, competitiveness and entrepreneurial spirit, innovative teaching methods will be applied, mainly the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), which provide the opportunity to present the school material in an attractive, creative and up-to-date way. One of the resulting products of the partnership- an educational E-platform- will grant teachers from all over the world access to free high quality teaching materials and strategies. Teachers involved in the partnership, and not only, will effectively discuss, investigate and use student-centred teaching, games, and, above all, ICT, with many of its possible applications. They will be encouraged to enrich their professional experience and continually acquire new techniques of teaching. Cooperation between teachers from different countries, of different school backgrounds, is a key element of this project.

The partnership also aims to be like a study of innovative teaching strategies as we will measure the progress seen in the students and the impact these strategies have on education in general.

The project has several aspects

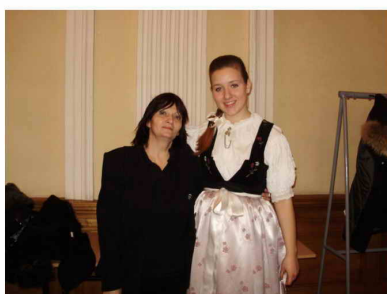


The cultural aspect of the project plays a role in building bridges between the cultural worlds of the partners. Cultural stereotypes are gradually obliterated due to cooperation and communication between so many partners. The European values, beliefs and objectives seem distant and abstract to students but, with the help of this project, they have become acquainted with some of them. This engendered the need for self-improvement together with the realization that working in a team, especially a team which is all across Europe, is a key element towards achieving the status of European citizen. All products and results of the partnership are beneficial for European cooperation: teachers and students from all around Europe organized exhibitions, contests, created activities and resources together in workshops, participated in social functions, chatted over the internet. In the end it does not matter where we are from, as we are all European teachers and European students working together to achieve common goals.

The most important one is the educational aspect. The use of ICT improved the quality and attractiveness of the educational process and made it more effective. Theoretical learning seems distant to the students. The innovative methods bring the learning material close to the students' world, their everyday life and interests.

The partnership has been also endeavoring to change teachers' approach to teaching and its results, but also to alter students' perspective on learning: it has shown that learning can be enjoyable and quite fruitful as there has been strong emphasis on practical teaching rather than mere theoretical teaching.

The partnership demonstrated and disseminated how creative teaching can be done in any subject, focusing on how sciences, foreign languages and any other subject can be taught by means of attractive games, role-play, projects, software, computer skills. One essential feature of this project is its lack of boundaries in terms of its cross-curricular scope, having in mind that some strategies can be applied when teaching any subject. Moreover, the partnership is cross-curricular in its intention to quantify and promote the use of ICT at all teaching levels. In addition, enabling teachers and students to make use of and enhance their digital competences is vital. The activities in the project have been promoting language learning and enjoyment of the linguistic diversity; they will also facilitate the inter-cultural dialogue and will foster equality in all aspects, a sense of civic duty, tolerance and respect for different peoples and ways of thinking. The communication and cooperation between the partners will be realized at all stages of the project. Some of the final products (a DVD, a book, an E-platform, a website, software, a documentary) will be popularized and disseminated in various ways, so that the European values and the good practices can become an important part of the education and training process.



The social aspect is very important for all the teachers and students. We worked together, enjoyed the cultural diversity, shared the European values and made friends for life.



- The E-platform which grants free access to a wide array of teaching sources
- The website of the partnership- a great dissemination tool - www.lbi.ro/teachinginnovatively
- Numerous teaching activities and resources(including educational software)- approximately 20 such activities done by each partner
- A social event-Photography exhibition entitled "My country and my people"
- Documentaries on the topic of teaching in each country and school which are in the partnership
- DVD entitled "European values and European teaching"
- Virtual banners to advertise the partnership
- A social event-Competition for the best banner to advertise the partnership
- A booklet with practical exercises for making English lessons more fun
- Volume 1 of a DVD entitled "Let us teach innovatively with ICT!"
- A common logo for the partnership
- Online diary on the forum of the website -
- Exhibition of teaching software
- A social event-a Science Film Festival
- Documentaries comprising interviews with teachers, students and parents
- A Magazine- a fruitful tool for dissemination - souvg.com/comenius
- Volume 2 of a DVD entitled "Let us teach innovatively with ICT!"
- An online evaluation tool to measure the impact of the partnership
- The development of more practical skills in all students involved in the project
- A better communication and cooperation between teachers and students from different European Countries
- A sense of achievement fostered by the participation in so many social events and workshops during the partnership
- Improvement of the didactic strategies
- The gradual obliteration of cultural stereotypes

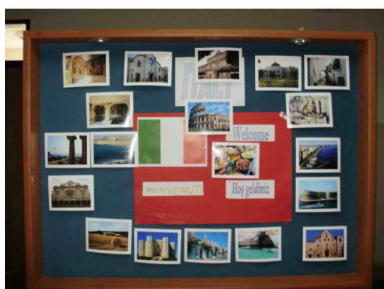
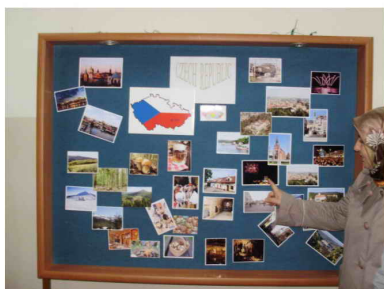


THE FIRST PROJECT MEETING 24.10-28.10.2011, GUDUL, ANKARA, TURKEY



In the course of the project there were organized a lot of joint activities. The first one took place in Turkey during the first visit in October, 2011 “My country, my people Exhibition”. Its goal was to present the natural beauties of each partner country together with famous architectural masterpieces and historical sights.

We all enjoyed the exhibition!



In Turkey each partner presented a film dedicated to the characteristic features of their educational systems.

We enjoyed the unique atmosphere of the charming and hospitable Turkey.

Here are the impressions of the Bulgarian students, who visited Turkey

That was the most wonderful week in our lives. The people there were very kind, polite and hospitable. The project helps us to exchange experience and to achieve a new modern way to study. We succeed to know different style of life from ours. It was interesting to know other culture and other people. Also we had the opportunity to practice the English language and tried to learn the Turkish language. We learnt that the Turks appreciate their culture, language and country. We love you all and we miss you, too.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Bulgaria.

Yoana Hristova and Vesela Angelova

THE SECOND PROJECT MEETING

19.03-22.03.2012

MOTTOLA, ITALY



Impressions from Alex Stoica, Romania

We left Bucharest at about 12 o'clock on a very sunny Sunday. The flight to Milan had no delay and during the time between our flights we walked through the airport. The connection flight to Bari was scheduled to arrive at around half past nine, but it was 15 minutes early. From there we went by bus to Mottola and everyone arrived at their hosts - tired after a very long day. The following day I got to talk with my hosts Gioia and Mattia - very warm and welcoming, they really made me feel like home. After having breakfast we started to walk towards their school but soon a friend of theirs called and said that he would drive us. Before stopping at school we made a stop down town because in that day it was the Saint Giuseppe and our driver had to buy some meat for the celebrations that were about to happen. When I arrived at school all my colleagues were there and we talked about the opening festivity that was about to take place. The national anthem of all the partner countries was played and 2 representatives from each country walked in with the flag and traded their flag for a traditional gift from the Italian students. Following the festivity, festival dances were played and slowly everybody got involved in them. The votes for the banner competition were cast and the banner that won belonged to one of our colleagues, Radu. After lunch the partners from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Turkey and Poland presented their software - all very interesting and we all learned valuable lessons from their presentations. After the presentations everybody went to their homes because a meeting was set for later that night. We met somewhere near the city center and roamed around the old city - with its beautiful, narrow, typical Italian streets. After a short while we arrived where the celebration of Saint Giuseppe was and we were a bit intrigued in the way it was celebrated: a large log was being burnt and "fava" beans were prepared. That night we ate focaccia from a very intimate shop near the center - I might say it was the best focaccia one could find. We returned home exhausted, but happy, after what proved to be a first, very productive day.

The 20th of March was according to the schedule a very busy day. We started early and presented the software we developed for this meeting - Radu and his teacher presented software for a Biology lesson, very interesting and easy to follow. Another colleague, Adrian, exhibited software for a Chemistry lesson which had a virtual experiment which I can say that was very well thought. Lastly, Mrs. Issa and I demonstrated the utility of the software we elaborated - a mixture between the very popular book Harry Potter and the latest addition to Facebook: Timeline. All presentations went very smoothly and it was again a success, everybody present taking part in the process of learning and understanding. After lunch we walked around the city, but not for long because we shortly headed towards the town hall - which was situated close to the center and had a very beautiful square right in front of it. When our teachers and us arrived the mayor gave a speech in which he was grateful for the visit of all the partners and that he pleased to see the school in Mottola engaged in such an important European project - a project that represents the future of education and in such tough times it is important for our countries to keep a close relationship. After the visit through the town hall we had lunch at one of our colleague's host. The meal was extremely good but at the same time there was too much food for us. Afterwards we headed back to school where the Czech partner presented the ideas for an online evaluation tool. We had a short break during which some of us went home to get ready for the upcoming trip to Taranto - a nearby city. On the way there we saw beautiful scenery and an image that was really impressive: the fields of orange trees that were still full of fruit. When we arrived in Taranto we visited a castle nearby - the castle was first built in the 7th century, and rebuilt several times. We could see the sea and while we were on the bus we passed by the beach. We sat down and ate a great ice-cream and watched the sun set. We walked around the city to a museum nearby where paintings and architectural findings, belonging to this area, were displayed. On the way home on the students' bus there was a lot more silence than when on the way to Taranto, showing that students were starting to get tired. When we arrived back in Mottola we had about an hour and a half to relax and get ready for the dinner in the Pizzeria. During this time I talked with my host Mattia about games, football, hobbies and almost anything that would be of interest to 17 year old boys. The pizza was very good and during that night we also watched a football match - quite a local derby I might add. Overall, it was a very interesting night filled with all sorts of interesting events. I returned home exhausted and even though I would have liked to stay up and talk with my host I was so tired that I fell asleep immediately.

8 The following day we had to wake up earlier because we had to meet at half past eight to go to Bari. The trip started smoothly and after a short while we arrived at our first destination Alberobello. We visited the old part of the city that had traditional houses in form of cones with signs of gods that represented wealth, health and so on. We did not have the opportunity to enter such a house because we were on a very tight schedule, but we managed to walk around the town to get a clear view of it. We left Alberobello and continued on our way to Bari still astonished by some of the scenery. When we arrived in Bari we walked to the center of the city, the old part of the city, and we saw how the old houses were built: in stone and on top of each other forming an incredible picture. We took a lot of photographs and then wondered around the center for quite a while both for shopping purposes but also for seeing more amazing places. Afterwards we left and walked to the bus that took us to an impressive church dating from the sixteenth century, we entered and visited the church and the tombs a guide explained to us how this church was uniting West and East and how both gothic and Renaissance elements were to be found in it. After this short visit we took the bus back home. When we arrived my hosts invited me to have lunch at their grandparents. The meal was extraordinary typical Italian pasta, best I have ever eaten, followed by cake a cake in form a heart for Mattia from his girlfriend for their 1 year anniversary. During the meal I got to talk with their grandfather who was a lawyer and had an extensive knowledge of history we talked about the Dacian-Roman wars and why our languages are sometimes similar and sometimes not at all. After the lunch we went home rested for about 1 hour and then had to go to school to fill some questionnaires about the meeting and what we would like to improve. Afterwards there was the awarding ceremony where every student host and student hosted went through an interesting process each of us had to say a sentence in our hosts' language and vice-versa saying things like "It was a pleasure to meet you" or similar things. After this ceremony was over I went home and changed for the party that was happening that night. The party was held in the school's amphitheater and Mattia, my host, was the DJ that night. Everybody danced and had a good time, but unfortunately we had to go home at about 12 o'clock. We then walked around the city for a short while then we headed home.

The following day almost all partners left, with the exception of Spain. I woke up late and had breakfast with my hosts and then started to walk slowly towards the school - we had a trip planned to a nearby town, Matera. We waited for our teachers to arrive and the trip started. On the way there we seen some breathtaking sceneries and the Italian teachers read a short description of the area and we learned that the valley was carved by a river which now is only a small stream. We saw an old city and how the houses were built on top of each other, carved into the side of the hill. After walking around the city for a while and seeing some traditional houses, we unfortunately had to go back to Mottola. When we arrived back in the city we went to eat to a restaurant nearby. After eating lunch we had a trip planned to the nearby caves, caves that are similar to those in Cappadocia. There we could see a monastery that was first built in the 7th century and while the centuries went by some modifications were made: a wall was demolished so that the church would conform to the Catholic rules. There were further modifications made and the walls of the church still had their original paintings. After the visit through the church was finished we headed back to Mottola and we rested for about an hour. Afterwards, my host and I went through the city to pick up my other colleagues and then we went to a nearby pizzeria to have our final dinner together. It was an enjoyable evening and we talked with some of the boys about some football players they knew all the Romanian footballers that play in their first league. When the dinner was finished, everybody went home and started to pack up, because the next day we had to leave early to catch our bus to the airport. I finished packing and I stayed to talk with my host: we talked about school and what we do in school, the differences in how the teachers teach and all kind of things related to school.

The last day was here. Time went by so fast, I did not even notice the days that went by. I knew I did not want to leave, but unfortunately that was the plan. I slowly carried my luggage to the car and got in. We rode to the bus stop and there were all my colleagues and teachers. I got out of the car said hello to everybody and went on and talked with my colleagues. You could see that everybody was sad, and some of the hosts cried. A lot of group photos were taken, but shortly our bus arrived and we had to go on our way.

The trip to Italy was a complete success: both academically and socially. Academically we saw some interesting approaches to lessons, each partner surprising us with their unique ideas that were all beautifully implemented. Socially, well what can I say, Italian people are great hosts, they have great food and the students are extremely sociable. Overall, I consider that from this trip I have gained valuable experience, and I enjoyed myself so much that if I could, I would go back there tomorrow.



Greetings from Poland!

9

For me the Comenius meeting in Mottolla was a great experience. I met a lot of nice people in Italy. Weather and landscapes in Mottolla were great. The organization of the whole event was also at a high level. Italian teachers were very nice to me and my friends. I hope that one day I can come back to Italy and meet again all of you.

Iwo

This trip was very nice. In my opinion Italy is beautiful country. I hope to be able to come back in the future. People were really nice. It was a great experience.

Dawid

As a whole, the project is a great idea where we might meet a lot of new friends, perfect our language and break the language blockade. We might learn something new, other culture, people, states, habits. The bad side of this project is only this that the organization wasn't at the highest level and students had nothing to do during the presentations, because that was directed to teachers and it was unnecessary for students. There might have been more practice lessons or more free time with hosts. About the trip the best moments were when we had the party with the Italians and on the last day at the airport when everybody was so tired and we were laughing at nothing. It's a pity that we must spend a lot of time travelling and we saw a little piece of Roma. In Mottolla there weren't any problems, the family was awesome, the food was great and the accommodation was at a high level. I didn't expect that the Italians would be so helpful to their guests. Everybody wanted to talk with us even if they couldn't speak English very well. When someone didn't understand some word, he/she asked a friend for help and the conversation was going ahead. The weather there was hot like in summer. As a whole, the trip was great for big! And I want go to something similar again.

Jan

These days in Italy were wonderful - sunny weather, delicious food and (the most important) amazing people, who were always smiling. Mottolla is a beautiful town, where the sky is blue and the girls are pretty. The presentations and the projects were very interesting

Jakub



Impressions from Silviya Petrova, Bulgaria



After our arrival in Bari my host family came to take me to their home. I was both worried and excited because I have been waiting for so long to finally see the family in whose house I would spend the next 5 days. When I met them any feeling of uneasiness disappeared. I saw the warmth and hospitality with which they welcomed me. During a delicious lunch we got to know each other. Everything was more than perfect. On the same evening me and my Italian sister went out and met the other people from the project. Then we walked around their town. On the second day it was the welcoming to all the partners, the banner exhibition and presentation of the activities which each country had made. After that we had a visit to the center of Mottolla and other landmarks in there. In the evening on almost every street of Mottolla there was a fire. This was because of the St. Joseph's day, which coincides with the Italian Father's day. There was a choir in the middle of one street, a lot of people going to church, happy children laughing next to the fire and diversity of traditional food, eaten on this holiday. The evening finished with new friendships and fireworks.

On the other day, after the activities at school were done, we all visited the authorities of Mottolla. After that there was a lunch and a trip to Taranto (a town near Mottolla). We visited an old castle. Then we ate the most tasty ice-cream ever. After that there was a dinner in a local Pizzeria and a lot of photographs. The other day started with a trip to Bari-an important seaport town on the Adriatic Sea. There we saw the sights of the town. When we came back to Mottolla in the afternoon, we had to prepare ourselves for the closing ceremony of awarding the certificates and for the big party after that. On this ceremony we had to say "Arreviderci" to our host friends and they had to sign on the T-shirts we received. It was maybe the most touching moment of the whole stay there. After that the party began and everyone started dancing. We had so much fun but we were a little bit sad because we knew that this would be the last night together. Early in the morning on the next day was our flight, first to Munich and then to Sofia. We had to say this time really "Goodbye" to our host families...

The Comenius project gave me the opportunity to meet new people from different countries, to improve my English and to think more creatively. I can't find words to describe how much I miss the people I met in Italy and how if I had just one ticket for somewhere, I would choose to go to Mottolla and see all these friends I left there!



THE THIRD PROJECT MEETING
04.06-08.06.2012
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN



**The impressions of Andreea Dumitru , English teacher at Colegiul
 National de Informatica
 "Tudor Vianu", Bucharest, Romania**

It is always interesting to observe what preconceived notions we take to most of the things we do, including the places we have the fortune to visit. Whether positive or negative, these preconceptions, usually based on a mishmash of articles read, opinions culled from other people or unverifiable rumours of uncertain source, will colour one's experience. It is therefore a tad embarrassing to admit that my perception of Sweden came from two sources, one more unreliable and fictional than the next. One was a favourite book I had read when I was a child quite an accomplishment, since it was one door stopper of a book namely Selma Lagerlöf 's The wonderful adventures of Nils in Sweden. Her version of Sweden, though highly idealized and full of talking animals it is a children's book, after all- still managed to encompass what it means to be Swedish, illustrating characteristic attitudes interspersed with traditional stories and myths. The second source, also fictional, is a series of detective novels written by Henning Mankell centered on Kurt Wallander. This latter filter boasts an even more tenuous connection to Sweden, as I had become acquainted with the written novels because of their BBC adaptation starring Kenneth Branagh. The Wallander works, both novels and tv series (mind you, there is also a Swedish tv series, as it should be) also do a very good job of revealing something about what it means to be Swedish and what Sweden is all about, from wondrous landscape, to social issues, to a determinate drive towards tolerance and multiculturalism. In my defense, I had also heard and/or read what probably most other people had, namely that Sweden, as one of the Nordic countries, is one of the best places to live in Europe, if not in the entire world. The Nordic countries never failed to appear on any surveys or lists analyzing quality of life, or democracy, or social protection. So you can imagine that, even though I was not expecting a mythical land filled with milk, honey and unicorns, I was definitely anticipating a superlative experience, when given the chance to be part of the team of teachers involved in the

Comenius project. It should be better, perhaps, if, after a convoluted beginning, I mention I don't intend to follow a chronological structure in my rapid recollections of having visited Stockholm. I'll have to resign myself to writing a couple of disjointed impressions, since attempting an exhaustive approach would definitely merit a novel treatment.

Another thing that characterizes most tourists and visitors to other countries even those, like ourselves, who went mostly for work related purposes is a state of quasiperpetual wonder. Anything that a Swede might consider just part of the daily grind is to me and other visitors, no doubt- a reason to stop, stare and ponder. Example in point: after arriving on a late Sunday afternoon, and enjoying a rather first startling contact with the city, as it was raining and cold after having just minutes prior been sunny and pleasant and thus sending me into a temporary panic regarding my choice of clothes (as my luggage was full of summer, not autumn items) on Monday morning we all assembled in the lobby and prepared to head for the school. Naturally, the first highlight of the morning was meeting the other teachers in the project, a reunion even more touching in the case of people we had previously befriended in Italy.

Once assembled, we headed towards the subway station, and waded through throngs of people, and construction equipment since, as luck would have it, the subway was being renovated - . And this totally mundane part for anyone living in the capital was a completely novel and interesting experience for me. The trains crisscrossing the capital, both under and above ground, are a wonder unto themselves, and definitely make it a lot easier to get around in a city build on 14 islands. I still remember what one of our Swedish hosts said and I'm paraphrasing that is you are always on an island in Stockholm, and you are forever crossing bridges, even if you don't realize it. Another thing that is likely to stay with me is the nickname given to Stockholm, "the Venice of the North", which I had never heard before.

The subway was our go-to means of transport for most of the days of our stay, and another special moment was taking the Blue line, the most recent addition to the network of subway tunnels, which had to be dug under all the other ones. Having to descend multiple levels did bring to mind the whole “descent into hell”, minus the unpleasant, hellish part, obviously. In fact, another thing which struck me as great was the fact the subway was host to works of art mural paintings, photography, statues which definitely made the daily commute much more enjoyable. Another tidbit that I will probably remember for a while is that, because of the previously mentioned works of art, the Stockholm subway system is considered the largest gallery exhibition in the world. And all accumulation of art started as early as the 1950s, simultaneous to the construction of the subway system! Not that the wonders ceased as soon as you set foot above ground. We were lucky enough mostly due to the very well organized program created by our Swedish hosts to have the time and the opportunity to visit a lot of striking sights. We went on a bus tour of the city highly appropriate, since the weather was more inconstant than inconstancy itself and were given the highlights, such as the numerous museums of the capital city, the house where Alfred Nobel was born, the Royal Palace and a general idea of what the characteristic architecture might be, as well as a deluge of interesting information about Stockholm and the people who live here.

On 6th of June, the National day of Sweden, we were able to visit the unbelievably crowded Royal Palace, and witness not just its wonders, but be only inches away from the soldiers and horses of the Royal Guard. The most surreal part of the experience was how friendly they were, and willing to talk to tourists, and probably answer the same questions over and over again. Friendliness also came into play when, on the very same day, we visited the Skansen museum, an open air museum and zoo, host to traditional Swedish houses andillage life recreations. Because it was the national day, everyone was there, making for a very crowded park, and yet, people were extremely relaxed, polite and mindful of each other's personal space. There were so many buildings and traditional houses and gardens to visit that probably we would have needed at least 2 whole days to cover the entirety of Skansen. What we did manage to see was more than enough, however, to give us an inkling into the Swedish way of life. My favorite building was probably the one of a traditional rural school, an even more endearing sight since you could see the old-fashioned desks and old books and maps used to teach kids in an undersized classroom. It was also nice to get a closer look at some of the sights spotted from the tour bus, such as the visit to the Stockholm City Hall, the venue of the Nobel Prize banquet. The guided tour was extremely informative, and it was quite interesting to see how each of the main rooms in the building had been designed around a certain typical Swedish architectural style. The story of how the impressive main hall, called The Blue Hall, actually does not have a single blue decoration, is a good explanation to why all buildings are works in progress amenable to changes. On Thursday evening we went on a lengthy boat ride in and

around Stockholm, which definitely made me realize that the city does indeed live up to its “Venice of the North” moniker. We ended the visiting spree on Friday on a high note, by taking a quick look around the Vasa museum which displays the only almost fully intact 17th century ship that has ever been salvaged, the 64-gun warship Vasa that sank on her maiden voyage in 1628. To say that standing in that museum, unbelievably close to an impressive warship, was reminiscent of being in a Pirates of the Caribbean film is to definitely sell the experience short. Coming back to the mundane, yet extraordinary experiences for tourists, there were several other small moments that made this an unforgettable episode in my life. I got to wonder the streets of the city late at night, together with my fellow teachers, and I never stopped being amazed by the fact that the last rays of the sun seemed to die only after 11 o'clock at night. It was on one of these wondering strolls through the city that I noticed what seemed to be an owl perched a top the roof of a building. This sighting led to a debate between myself and Iulia who needs no introduction on whether the owl was real or not. A subsequent sighting of another owl, this time on top of a public lighting pole, intensified the debate, and only seeing it the following day, in plain daylight, convinced us both that both owls were, indeed, for decorative purposes, and probably meant to confuse poor tourists like ourselves.

Jumping again back in the chronology of our visit, it was also nice to visit the Swedish partner school, and see many similarities to the Norwegian schools I had the fortune to visit during a previous Comenius project. It was definitely a bitter sweet moment for me to browse the well-stocked shelves and pleasant ambiance of the school's library which actually had students in it, busy reading, quite a sight for the sore eyes of a teacher who is unhappy kids don't like to read anymore - and to discover non-other than the book that had given me the first impression of Sweden, The wonderful adventures of Nils in Sweden, all those years before the advent of the internet and having a world of knowledge just a few clicks away. It felt like coming full circle in a small, yet satisfying way, as if fulfilling a childhood dream of visiting the land of the book. Coming to the end of this rather meandering compilation of impressions, I realize I have said little about the work we did there. I know my fellow Romanian teachers, Cristina and Corina, did a wonderful job covering the work aspect in their personal impressions, so I feel like I can perhaps be forgiven for the oversight. If I were to sum up my visit to Stockholm in just a handful of words, inspirational and life altering would probably be in the lead. Becoming part, if only for a little while, of the city, and being allowed, however briefly, in the midst of the Swedish people, thanks to our hosts, does truly change one for the better. It is another point in favour of continuing our work on the Comenius project, the current and the future ones, since it is clear through them we can achieve much more than just creating and improving teaching methods and activities. Perhaps in the long run, we can improve people as well, and make Europe a smaller place when it comes to barriers and boundaries of all kinds.



Impressive Days Blowings of North

With The Friendly Winds



Country of beautiful people and places. It was a very nice experience to meet in Stockholm a magnificent city which fascinates people with its beauty and history. Our friends Helena, Heydar, Elham, Ylva and Elisabeth and the others were very hospitable.

The meeting was fruitful in terms of connecting each other and sharing useful experiences. We as Turkish group again feel that we are very lucky to meet this group and share fascinating times each other.

Thank you very much for hosting us - such a beautiful and hospitable country and school...

Ebru Eroglu, English Teacher, Turkey

WONDERFUL AND UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS DURING THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL VISIT IN SWEDEN



An extraordinary hospitality from the Swedish colleagues, a well planned program for work and leisure activities during the visit. During our stay in Stockholm we witnessed the celebration of the National Day of Sweden on 6th June. My colleagues and I joined the celebrations at Skansen open-air museum, where we saw many flags, folk dances, music and speeches. We witnessed and participated in the celebrations around the Royal Palace with the royal family. It was very exciting...

We would like to thank our hosts for their hospitality!

Vanya Hristova

IT teacher from Vicho Grancharov Secondary School, Bulgaria



IMPRESSIONS FROM STOCKHOLM

The weather was a little bit cold and rainy when we arrived, but we had a warm welcoming at Hässelbygdsskolan school. We enjoyed a show played by the students, who sang and danced for us. It was a pleasant surprise for Elena and me!

Work Sessions were very interesting because we could talk with colleagues from Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Turkey and Italy about common problems and issues we deal with in our everyday work. We could also see live teaching activities from all those countries.

We could also enjoy the National Day at Skansen, the world's oldest open-air museum (it has a park, an aquarium and a zoo showing Scandinavian wildlife). And the entire Royal Family passed by in their carriage right in front of our eyes!!! We were astonished! This cosmopolitan city is full of energy and everyone seemed to enjoy whatever he or she was doing. We liked the visit to the City Hall very much (our guide was wonderful), Vasa Museum (dedicated to the world's only standing 17th-century naval warship) and the marvelous old city: Gamla Stan. One of the best ways to see this city is by boat.

Our kind Sweden hosts arranged one of these trips and we could travel between the islands belonging to the Stockholm archipelago. It was an unforgettable experience! It was possible for us to taste the typical Sweden food during all the week: delicious fishes, meats, salads, cheeses, etc. The best was smoked salmon (lax).

We would like to thank our hosts (Ylva, Elisabeth, Helena, Elham...) for their hospitality.



THE FOURTH PROJECT MEETING
21.10.2012-26.10.2012
VILLANUEVA DE LA TORRE, SPAIN



**The Comenius Meeting in Spain,
 Villanueva de la Torre**



I would like to share with you my impressions about the meeting in Spain. So here's the diary of the Spanish adventure. It was my third visit to the Iberian Peninsula and after travelling in Valencia and Barcelona areas, I got the opportunity to discover several places of the wonderful Castilla la Mancha, Don Quixote's "kingdom". We left, Alex, Vlad and I, early in the morning, on the 21st of October, from Bucharest to Madrid. We spent about 10 hours in the interesting Spanish capital, before being reunited with the rest of our group, late, just before midnight, when we took the last train to Guadalajara. Since the first meeting with our host at the train station had been quite formal at 1 a.m., I got the chance to better know the Spanish team, when we arrived at the school in Villanueva de la Torre where we were to do all our work on the Comenius project. They prepared a very nice welcome reception for us and we could already feel the warmth and the generosity of our Spanish partners, not to mention that we found ourselves close to the partners from the other countries.

After discovering many places of the host school during a guided tour and being impressed by the fact that every subject or related subjects had a special room so the teachers could work together and analyze their work in great conditions, we retired to a hall to enjoy a banquet and socialize with the school staff and all the partners. But it was time to start activities on the project, so we moved to another room to organize the competition for the common logo and to discuss about the online diary. Everything went smoothly, as all the partners showed much involvement and were hard working. I'm glad that one of the Romanian logos is still in the competition for the final logo of the project.

We, the teachers, returned to Guadalajara and visited together with the other teams, the most captivating places of the city. We also spent a pleasant time together during the Spanish style diner, tasting different kind of tapas. We continued the activities the second day with the exhibition and competition of software, also with the presentation of the booklet created by the Swedish team and the DVD, by the Romanian team. Once again, the communication between partners was efficient and we were pleased to obtain good results from our efforts. This could characterize the following activities as well, as we were productive when disseminating previous Comenius projects on Wednesday afternoon, and on Thursday analyzing the blog and the website and discussing about the next steps, common activities and last meetings in 2013.

We familiarized ourselves with the culture and the history of the region in a visit around Alcalá de Henares. We saw its medieval center where you can find representations of three cultures: Moorish, Christian and Jewish. Here's the birth place of the famous writer Cervantes and different editions of the author's books. We took some group pictures in front of the statues of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza outside Miguel de Cervantes's home. There is also one of the oldest universities in the world: Universidad de Alcalá, which consolidates the fame of the city. I was mesmerized by the visit of the historical city of Toledo where three cultures met and coexisted: Christian, Jewish and Muslim cultures. An important center of the former Spanish Empire, the city has preserved most of its buildings, so it offers an incursion in the past of the place and you can get enough of its beauty. The Cathedral is impressive and looks like a guardian of the city; it's very large and houses many artistic works. Toledo is also known for the metal industry and for the artist El Greco, who lived here. I had a great time in Toledo, where we found some time to buy souvenirs for our families and friends.

We spent the last day in Madrid; here we wandered the beautiful streets and we contemplated the collections of masterpieces in the Museo Nacional del Prado. I was honored to enjoy the company of my colleagues and students with whom I had an amazing collaboration; I must point out that Iulia is an excellent coordinator and I want to thank our host for the great organization of the meeting. It's been a fantastic experience and I'm impressed by the reliable people I've met, by the enthusiastic students and the constructive work handled during the meeting.

Alina Moraru, teacher of French at "Tudor Vianu", National High school of Computer Science



Spain!



Here we are, about to leave for Spain! The Comenius project became even more of a challenge for me when I participated in a “working” visit to Guadalajara, Spain. Guadalajara is an important Spanish city, situated in the La Alcarria region, and also the capital of the Guadalajara province. The city is about 60 km away from Madrid, next to the Henares River, and a very popular tourist destination mostly because of its numerous monuments.

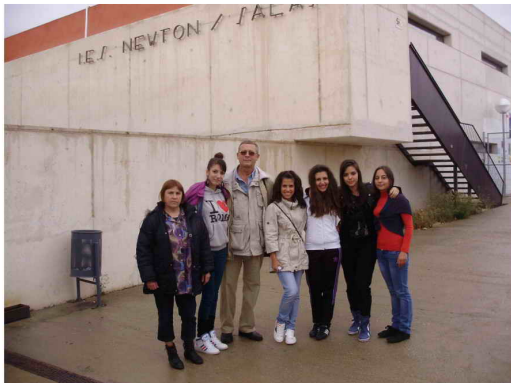
After a series of misadventures, mostly due to the airline we were flying with, we reached our destination, safe and sound. Our hosts welcomed us, and were rather glad and excited to see us, since, through no fault of our own, we had to delay our arrival quite a bit.

On Monday morning the first official working day on this meeting after a fast-paced breakfast, we set out on our short trip to the partner school, IES Newton-Salas, situated near Guadalajara, in Villanueva de la Torre.

I was most impressed by the newly built school, which could clearly offer students excellent opportunities to study and develop their personalities. Both teachers and students were very forthcoming in all our conversations regarding each country's educational systems. I think an important element in the organization of the school is the fact that all teachers of a certain subject have their own joined offices, where they can discuss and prepare all necessary class items. Equally useful was the fact that each classroom had its own overhead project, and teachers could easily connect their laptops and provide students with all necessary structured knowledge with just a couple of mouse clicks

Thanks to our hosts we were able to visit a series of wonderful places: Guadalajara, Toledo, Alcala de Henares and Madrid. All these places brimming over with history naturally trigger admiration and an uplifting feeling in the visitor's heart. Toledo, the city state, effortlessly wins you over, enchants you with its history, its beauty and architecture, with the warmth of its people, and the pristine state of its streets. It has definitely won me over, and I agree its renown is rightfully earned, and I fully intend to visit it again someday. Toledo isn't just a part of history, and of Spain, it is undoubtedly a part of the culture and civilization of the world. Words really fail me here, since this experience has been unforgettable. I want to convey my deepest thanks to all those who participated in this project and who dispensed with traditional borders in the interests of children's education.

Corina Dobrescu, teacher of Physics at “Tudor Vianu”, National High school of Computer Science



Hello everybody!

I would like to share my impressions about one amazing country- Spain. On the first day we were so excited, because of the anticipation of one wonderful experience. We were looking forward to seeing the settlement where we would stay for several days and meeting the girl who would host us.

On the second day we went on the school. The school is very nice and new. All the people there met us with pleasure and big smiles. Everything was very good.

On the third day we had a trip to Guadalajara and Toledo, where we had a great time with the other guys from Turkey, Poland Italy, Romania and Spain. We saw enormous and attractive buildings, we learned about the history of Spain. It was really interesting. It was already time for the last day there. Of course it was so sad, but also touching, because I met you guys.

We didn't want to come back to Bulgaria, we wanted to stay with the others. I am really happy that I could visit this beautiful country. I really enjoyed myself. And I want to thank all of you for these wonderful, funny and unforgettable days. I hope that one day we will see each other again!

Iulia Nedkova, Bulgaria



The meeting in Spain



The meeting in Spain was fantastic. I spent one of the best weeks in my life there. The contest for the logo of the project and the software contest were really interesting. I had a great time on the excursions to Toledo and to Alcala de Henares because these cities were full of magnificent historical sights. The people in the project were amazing. They were really kind and cheerful. Everyone was smiling at us. The atmosphere in the school was so cozy. I had a great time in the classes which I attended, the teacher and the students were interested about me and my country. I learnt a lot about Spain from them too. I will never forget my friends there and I am looking forward to seeing them in Bulgaria.

Mariyana Savova, Bulgaria

THE FIFTH PROJECT MEETING 21.01.2013 - 25.01.2013 CIESZYN, POLAND



My Impressions from Poland



The visit to Poland was nothing less than unforgettable. I was impressed by the hospitality of everyone and the way they treat each other. Everything about those 5 days left memories which will never be erased. All the different cultures I met, all those different people have left me with the impression that they're not too different from us.

The trip to Poland may have taken a long time but it was worth it. After the long flight, waiting and driving to Cieszyn we were accommodated by our hosts. When we got to my host the most delicious stew was waiting for us with a cup of warm tea. That's at 2:30 AM. After that we went to bed which had the most comfortable pillows I had ever rested my head on. The next day we went to the school which was in the project. Some important (and not so important) things were said and a small concert took place. After that we received some town maps and guides of Cieszyn. Later we ate some more fantastic food and went home.

Tuesday was pretty interesting. I got to meet most of the people from all the countries in the project and watched everyone's games and quizzes considering the English grammar and speech.

The fun part was later that day. We attended a surprisingly awesome party. When we got to the place where it was, we were welcomed by a two giant horse-drawn sleds with 3 smaller sleds attached to it. We got to ride of course and it was unforgettable. After the ride we got to cook sausages over the fire. I felt very cosy in the company of everyone around the fire. After that the party moved inside where there was more food and, of course, tea. There was lots of singing and dancing. When the party was over we went back to our host, played a round of cards and went to bed.

On Wednesday we went sightseeing. First we went to the Wieliczka Salt Mines near Krakow. There were lots of interesting things there like statues from rock salt, giant caverns and huge wooden structures dating back to the 13-th century. I made sure to document everything in photos. The mines are huge and we only toured 2 percent of them. We visited an underground cathedral there with various carvings of famous art and giant chandeliers with salt ornaments on them. Next up was Krakow. We visited the Vavel Castle and the city centre. The centre was crammed with shops and restaurants. There was even a club which had proof that the famous Italian football player Mario Ballotelli had visited it. Krakow was also full of Catholic churches and cathedrals. Also there were many statues. We bought some souvenirs, ate some pizza and went back to Cieszyn.

Thursday was the day we visited the Auschwitz concentration camp and learnt a lot about the European history and the hateful Nazi party. There is not much I can say because I was left speechless by the cruelty of the Germans back in World War II. So when the tour was over we returned to Cieszyn and received our certificates of attendance together with a delicious gift of mini wafers. After that was over, the fun continued as we went to the skating rink in the town which was enormous. I fell a few times but I was unharmed. Then everyone went in a restaurant where we had our goodbye "feast". We didn't sleep at all as we had to be up very early. We had one last soup before we left and then we were off back to good old Bulgaria.

*by Dean Terziev from 10-th "a" grade in SOU
"Vicho Grancharov", Gorna Oryahovitsa,
Bulgaria*

Thoughts on the Visit to Poland

For a man such as me, who had never traveled abroad, it was a brand new experience. Never before had I been on a plane and never before had I felt the luxury of the first class. The feeling of taking off the ground is amazing. Further more I saw the clean sky above the sea of clouds. Finally we were over Poland. There under us was the capital Warsaw which was really enormous and the end of it couldn't be seen. So many different people at the airport, many nationalities, cultures, religions. After 7 hours of doing nothing other than looking around the shops and solving crosswords, you start to get really tired but you can't sleep, you just can't. This strange side effect of prolonged exposure to boredom should be registered somewhere. We boarded the plane and we were over Katowice very shortly. There waiting was the crazy bus driver. He can drive without his hands while changing his clothes. As we arrived in Cieszyn we got transferred to our honorable hosts. My host's name was Polina, she was very nice from the start. After some time, late in the evening we arrived at her house. The only thought on my mind was to brush my teeth and get to sleep. On the other day we visited the "Nikolay Kopernik" school.

What got our group's attention was the fact that there was a printer on every floor and it was free of charge. We attended the movie presentation and in the end the Romanians won, the runner ups were the Italians and second runner ups were again the Romanians. The next day we visited Krakow. The city has a legend about a dragon that destroyed most of the city, but a hero rose against him. The way of his demise was by putting acid into the body of a dead sheep. The beast got thirsty and drank half the river. And then he burst from all the water in him. There are many cathedrals in the city almost at every corner. After sightseeing in the streets we stopped to restaurant and had lunch. There were bets on whether I would finish all the dishes I had ordered, but in the end all was well and the dishes were empty.

The next day we were on our way to Auschwitz, the German concentration camp.

Our group was terrified by the atrocities done there. The whole place was kind of spooky. Not a sound could be heard inside. The place was dead. You can actually feel the Cyclon 5 gas in the air.

The inhumanity that was there. This place stands now as nothing but a monument to the monstrous actions that humanity is capable of. I hope there will never be more camps like this. In general the Polish are very kind and hospitable people. They are different from us Bulgarians in many ways. Cheerful and polite you can quickly make friends with some of them if not all of them. The Turkish people and mainly Oguz Ozkan were very interesting people to talk to. Very polite and always ready to talk on all kinds of subjects. The final day was here and nobody wanted to go home. Yeah if only we could stay there, but when it's time to go it's time to go. The last party was very dramatical and funny. Some day maybe we will come back and see the Polish students again.

by Ivaylo Parnetsov, Vicho Grancharov Secondary School, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Bulgaria



The visit to Poland

Our meeting in Poland was exciting. I spent a great week there. We met great people that I hope to remain good friends with. We learned many interesting things during our visit to Krakow, to Auschwitz and to the salt mines in Wieliczka. There was organized sleigh riding. The sleighs were pulled by horses. Our Polish friends took us to a skating rink. This experience was great because I skated for the first time in my life. I'm glad I had the opportunity to meet such wonderful and cheerful people from 6 different countries! I will never forget this experience.

I hope to see you all again in Bulgaria!

by Denitsa Marinova, Vicho Grancharov Secondary School, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Bulgaria

Diary from Poland



Saturday, January 19th.

We got up at 7:00 am and everything was white, we went to have breakfast. Next we decided to go to visit the downtown of Prague. First, we went up to the Prague Tower and we could see the whole city. Then, we went to a park and had a snowballs fight: teachers against students, we won of course. Thirdly, we went up to the castle and we bought a bun, we were so hungry. Finally we crossed the Charles Bridge, it was very nice. After making a good route we decided to have lunch. Iñaki, one of the teachers, took us to a horrible restaurant: waitresses didn't hear anything and the food was not very good. To compensate the students we went to Starbucks while teachers went to the station to reserve train tickets. Then, at 4:00 pm, students and teachers went to the hostel to rest. Later, we went to the Black Theater to see a show. The first minutes of the play were so boring but then it was very funny. Then we went to have dinner a Mexican Restaurant. I didn't like it so much because it had a horrible sauce. After dinner we went to the hostel to sleep. It was an amazing day.

Carlos from Spain

Sunday, January 20th.

We started the day at 8 o'clock in the morning. Some of us had a shower and we went to have breakfast: cereals, sandwiches and Nacho's mother's cookies! They were awesome! Later, all the group, went to the Jewish Quarter and we tried to enter the cemetery but we couldn't because we should pay for the churches too much and we didn't want to see them. After that, we went to the Prague Eiffel Tower, in a special train; and another time, we couldn't enter because people were working in that. When we were going down, we caught some broken sleds and we had a great time, especially when Iñaki hit a girl with one. At 2pm we had lunch in a nice place and later we ran to the Hostel to take our bags and run to the train station. This train was very good because it had WI-FI and tables for playing cards. After 4 hours, we arrived in our Polish town and we met our families. It was a nice and cold day.

Rubén from Spain

Monday, January 21st

In the morning we went to the Polish high school, there was a welcome event. There were some musical performances, a Headmaster's speech etc.

We presented the ICT projects. We had a coffee-break in the middle with a lot of food and some drinks. Then the Polish students guided us in a tour around the city of Cieszyn, we visited the main square, the church and other interesting landmarks.

After that, we went to an Italian restaurant which make the biggest pizzas in Cieszyn, it was good!

Later we went to "Classic" and spent some time together. After that every one went to his host's house with his family to have diner and spend the night.

Marcos from Spain

Tuesday, January 22nd

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We got up at 6:00 and arrived at 8:00 at the school. In the high school we saw the videos that each country made, the Spanish were so embarrassed. We were the 5th. When the school tasks ended, the Polish students took us to a restaurant, the food was very good! The food was typically Polish. After the meal they prepared a visit to the town hall, the mayor, told us the story of Cieszyn. A visit we liked a lot! In the evening we rode horse-drawn sleighs, many people fell and we all laughed. We loved it! It was the best day we had a great. Then all the students went to our homes to sleep, because the next day we had a long day.

Nacho from Spain

Wednesday, January 23th

On that day, we had to get up very early because we had to take the bus to go to the salt mines. The bus left at 6 am in front of the school, it is too early for us but we wanted to visit it and at 5 am we were up. The bus ride took us 3 hours and we slept all the time. Then, we arrived in the salt mines and we started the trip. We could see how the people worked there and the different galleries of the mine and different chambers. Later, we took the bus and we went to Krakow. In Krakow we saw the monuments and interesting things of the city, the castle and the dragon statue. Later, we ate, we took the bus and we went at home. It was a nice day.

Víctor Ortega from Spain

Thursday, January 24th

On Thursday, we got up at 6:30 in the morning. We had to take the bus at 7:30 so we were 5 minutes earlier waiting with all the people. That day we had to go to the Auschwitz camp. It took us half an hour to arrive. First, we visited Auschwitz 1. We got a headset and a guide took us around the camp. She guided us through the buildings and explained it all. Two hours later we took the bus again to go to Auschwitz 2, the extermination camp. It was a hard experience and we learned a lot. We visited this place and then we came back to the school. When we arrived at school the Polish teachers gave us the certificates. After that, we went with our Polish hosts to an ice-skating rink and then we had dinner together with almost all the people from the Comenius project.

When we finished our dinner, we went to our respective homes to pack the suitcases because it was our last day in Poland.

Víctor Roberto from Spain

