

Projektarbeit Erasmus+ 2022

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1. Introduction

1.1 Our Erasmus+ project course

Erasmus+ program is a program of the EU that supports education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The program has a budget of around 26,2 billion euros. It focuses on social inclusion, promoting young people's participation in democratic life and the green and digital transitions in Europe¹.

The project course at our school was focusing on a better understanding of the EU and an exchange with Finland. The course began with preparing presentations about the EU that covered topics like economy, diversity, culture, climate action and integration in the EU

After our "Europe presentation" we focused on preparing and carrying out the exchange weeks.

Our school has been participating at the Erasmus+ program for many years and gives students of the 12th grade (Q1) the opportunity to select the Erasmus+ project course at the beginning of the school year and participate at an exchange at the end of the school year. Because of Covid an exchange was not possible the last two years.

This year it was possible for an exchange to take place again and the "Kauniaisten Lukio" school in Kauniainen in Finland was our partner school. "Gemini College" in Ridderkerk in the Netherlands and the "Lieceo Scientific A.F. Formiggini" in Sassuolo in Italy also participated at the exchange. Our partner school is located in Kauniainen which is a small town in the south of Finland with around 10.000 residents. It is near Helsinki and surrounded by the city of Espoo²

1.2 This paper's question

This paper's question is about if and in which way the Erasmus+ project benefits your personal development. Does it have a lasting effect on your language skills? Do you really get to know a different culture? And does it actually help your personal growth? Those questions will be answered by the end of this paper.

2. Work in class

2.1 My "Europe presentation"

Part of the Erasmus+ program was to deal with the EU and to gain a better understanding of the alliance. To this end, we prepared presentations in small groups and dealt in depth with various

¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/> Zugriff: 06.06.22

²<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kauniainen> Zugriff: 06.06.22

topics such as culture, economy, diversity and much more. My “Europe presentation” focused on the climate action in the EU, how eco friendly the member states are and whether they are doing enough to protect the climate.

The presentation starts by talking about the EU’s contribution to climate change, then explains the Climate and Energy policy of the EU and uses the European Green Deal as an example and deals with the achievements in climate protection while taking a critical look at the European climate policy.

The EU’s contribution to climate change

The EU is the third largest greenhouse gas emitter after China and the United States, followed by India and Russia. In 2018, the EU emitted a total of around 3.7864 billion tonnes of CO₂ while Germany, France, Italy and Poland together accounted for about 57% of the total. The major emitters are spread between Malta with only 4.5 tonnes equivalents per capita and Luxembourg with 17.3 t of CO₂ equivalents per capita. Between 1990 and 2018, EU emissions decreased by 22,5%. Agriculture accounted for about 11% of the emissions and decreased by around 21% between 1990 and 2018. Emissions from industrial processes accounted for 9.1% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018, and have fallen by more than 23% since 1990. The Emissions from waste management, which account for 3.1% of total emissions, decreased by almost 33% over the same period. Energy production accounts for the largest proportion of total emissions, with almost 80%.

Climate and energy policy of the EU/measures against climate change

Europe aims to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. To accomplish that it has agreements like the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement. An example on how the EU is trying to reach that goal is the European Green Deal. The goal of the deal is making Europe climate neutral by 2050. The plan includes potential carbon tariffs for countries that do not curtail their greenhouse gas pollution at the same rate. An impact assessed plan will also be presented to increase the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2030 to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels. The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stated that the European Green Deal would be Europe’s “man on the moon moment”, as the plan would make Europe the first climate-neutral continent. The first climate initiatives under the Green Deal include:

- European Climate Law to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality objective into EU law
- European Climate Pact to engage citizens and all parts of society in climate action
- 2030 Climate Target Plan to further reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030
- New EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation to make Europe a climate-resilient society by 2050, fully adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change

Achievements in climate protection

Between 1990 and 2018, the EU was able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 23%, while its economy grew by 61%. The EU is the only major economy in the world that has adopted legislation for all sectors of the economy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

European climate policy under criticism

For the EU to take the lead in global climate action, it will need ensure a fair and inclusive transition with deeper democratic engagement. The efforts have suffered from significant deficits like clashing interest of member states for example because some of them still heavily depend on coal and industrial lobbies raising concerns about international competitiveness. Insufficient mechanisms for monitoring and compliance have handicapped the implementation of these policies. Another aspect is that the division between Eastern and Western Europe and Northern and Southern Europe hinder efficient decision making. Another problem is that populist parties are already mobilizing resistance to the necessary policies. Under these circumstances, the EU's traditional method of depoliticizing difficult issues and submitting them to long technocratic discussions is unlikely to deliver results

2.2 Our preparation for the exchange weeks

In preparation for the exchange week Selina and I prepared the “getting to know each other “ part of the second day of the week in Germany where we first met all together. We planned “speed dating” to get to know each other better in the short time that we had. We divided the Germans and Finns into pairs and let the German people sit on the outside of a circle and the Finns on the inside. Then two Finns and two Germans had two minutes to ask each other questions. When the time was up the Finns rotated to the next pair so in the end everyone talked with everyone.

The speed dating was a good idea because it cut the small talk and allowed everyone to ask personal questions. This led to a more relaxed atmosphere and helped to break the ice. We chose speed dating because it forces you to open up but still does not make you uncomfortable because you just have to talk in a group of four. We decided to keep the “talking time” quite short with just two minutes so there would not be any awkward silence and everybody would cut to the chase of what they are really interested in. To make everyone more comfortable we divided the group into pairs so they would be less pressure when talking to someone you do not know.

3. The exchange weeks

3.1 Exchange week 1 (in Germany)

The first exchange week started in Germany on April 26th which was a Tuesday when the Finns arrived at the school at around 8pm and went home to their host family. My exchange partner was Fia, a 18 year old girl from Finland. In the evening we ate dinner with my family and went for a walk we're we talked a lot and got to know each other a little better.

On Wednesday we had to be at school at 9am where our head teacher welcomed the Finns. After that we watched a couple of presentations about Germany and the following week. We were divided into small groups of around 6-8 people and went on a school tour. At noon we ate lunch in the school canteen. In the afternoon Selina and I had prepared a game to get to know each other better. We did speed dating where groups of four had two minutes to talk to each other and ask everything they wanted to know. Then we were introduced to the workshop about fake news that we had to work on during the exchange and started preparing our final presentation. At 3pm the workshop was over and some of us went down to Ronsdorf and spend some time together. In the evening we went bowling at the "alte Papierfabrik" and went to the Luisenviertel afterwards.

On Thursday we met at 8:50am at the main station and took the train to Cologne. We climbed up the stairs of the cathedral of Cologne and ate at the brewery pub called "Gaffel Brauhaus" at 2pm. After that Fia and I went shopping with some of our friends and left Cologne at around 5pm. In the evening we met with the rest of the Finns and Germans and hung out.

On Friday we had a workshop from 9am till 2:45pm where we finished and presented our accomplishments of the workshop. I was in a group with Fia, Celia, Selina and Konstantin and we prepared a blog and an instagram. One of them was fake news the other one was legit. After the workshop we made a tour through Wuppertal and rode the suspension railway from Barmen to Vohwinkel and back to Elberfeld where Fia and I took the bus home. After having dinner with my family we met with some friends.

On Saturday was the official "Family day" but most of us did not do anything with their families but went to Düsseldorf. We went shopping there and bought some delicious food. We went home at around 6pm and had to really hurry up because the Erasmus night was at 7pm. The Erasmus night was really nice because we saw a Diashow of the week and everyone brought food. After that most of us hung out again and we enjoyed the last couple of hours together.

On Sunday May 1st our exchange students left around 9am.

3.2 Exchange week 2 (in Finland)

Sadly I could not join the trip to Finland because I got Covid the day before the departure. But still I am going to give a short summary of the program in Finland.

On Wednesday May 11th the group arrived around 8pm at the Finnish school. After the welcome greetings everyone went home to their host families.

On Thursday everyone met at 9:30am at the school and the exchange students were welcomed by the mayor Christoffer Masar. The program for the week was presented and the short films from Germany, Italy and Finland were shown. From 10:30 to 11:30am the group was divided and worked

on the workshop. After lunch in the cantina the workshop continued until 1pm. Then there was some sport program.

On the next day, on Friday there was a full day trip to Tallinn in Estonia. After a 3 hour travel by ferry they arrived at Tallinn Old Town Gate at 11am. In groups they explored the city and had some time to go sightseeing and shopping. Departure was at 6:30pm and they arrived back in Finland at 9pm.

On Saturday there was another workshop at school from 10-12pm and after a light lunch they took the train to Helsinki where they stayed until the late evening and explored the city.

On Sunday was the "Family day" and in the early evening from 6-8pm there was the Erasmus+ night at school where pictures of the exchange were shown and Aada, Hakiim and Onni parented a dance.

On Monday the 16th of May the German exchange students took the plane back home.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Personal experience

For me personally participating at the Erasmus+ project was a great decision. During the course I learned a lot about Europe and the EU and especially the exchange benefitted me a lot. It was a real challenge for me because I needed to speak a lot of English which I am usually not that comfortable with. But throughout the exchange it got a lot easier and now many weeks after the exchange I still feel more confident speaking English. Because of the exchange our German group grew together a lot so it is a little bit sad that the project course is over now. During the exchange we made so many memories together and got more and more comfortable around each other. Many of us found new friends in the Finnish people and are still in touch with them. My exchange student Fia and I really hit it off from the beginning and talked a lot throughout the exchange which improved my English even more. I really hope that we stay in touch and maybe meet again someday. I think the Erasmus+ program is good for people who are good at English or are motivated to improve it. If you are interested in different culture and learning about Europe you should consider joining it. Even though there were some complications and a lot of stress I think nobody out of the program regretted doing it. Throughout the exchange week I improved my stress tolerance as well as my organizational skills a lot because there was so much to do and so little time. It would have been nice to have a couple of days more because time flew by. Because I could not join the week in Finland I missed a lot of experiences and memories but I feel like I still got a feeling of the Finnish culture and people. In the end I am more than happy that I was able to fully enjoy the program despite all of the stress and challenges. I hope that someday I will make a similar experience.

4.2 Conclusion/answer to the initial question

So does the program actually benefit your personal development? I think being part of the Erasmus+ project can benefit you in many ways. On the one hand it improves your English. Especially if you only know typical “school English”, getting out there and speaking to people from other countries can really broaden your vocabulary and make you practice to speak freely. In the end you not only profit from it in the short term in your regular English class but also later on in life when you might need to speak English at your job or want to travel the world. English is such a common language that will open many doors for you in your life. Even many weeks after the exchange I feel like I am able to speak more fluently and improved my pronunciation long term. On the other hand the project can help you get out of your comfort zone in particular if you have problems with talking to new people. Throughout the program you are forced to speak to people you do not know. After some time it gets a lot easier and is not overwhelming anymore. The exchange program can improve your social life because you get to know people that you usually would not have met and those different cultures, beliefs and behaviors will broaden your horizon. But I think that the program is not for everyone. You have to have an interest in the English language and be open minded. If you can not enjoy being with many people you do not know and have trouble speaking English the exchange probably will not be a pleasant experience. But I think for most people it is an enrichment that will benefit them in the long term. And even though this should not be the only reason to participate at the Erasmus+ program it also looks really good on your résumé especially if you want to work at a job where you have to speak English. All in all the Erasmus+ program will most definitely benefit you in some way. Some people might only benefit a little bit but some people will experience a change in their confidence and view on things.

5. Sources

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kauniainen>