

Comenius Project

HOME SWEET HOME: discovering Poland...

The second meeting, for this school year, concerning the Comenius Project, was held in Poland: a group of nine students, from 2 cg, 3bg, and 3cg coming from ITCG "Fermi", Pontedera, together with two of their teachers travelled to Krakow and then to Cieszanów.

The journey, as the one in Turkey, was rather long, but again, it was a very precious moment to catch up with the colleagues we said "goodbye" in November in Istanbul and it was also a useful space to prepare and define the various activities we would perform the following days in Cieszanów, the town not far from the Ukrainian boundary which would host us. The students from our school, together with those coming from Capannoli and Volterra, managed to get in touch very easily and they quickly found out they could get along very well with each other! The feeling was set, the atmosphere was perfect to learn the notes and the lyrics of "Va', pensiero" by Giuseppe Verdi and our Italian Anthem, so that we could "offer" them as a present to our international partners, as a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Unification of our country. It was love at first...sound! The notes and rhymes of "Va' Pensiero" became the pleasing soundtrack of our whole experience in Poland!

Despite a very short night, we were ready to face the intense following day, excited by the presentations that were waiting ahead for us, and pleased by the very warm welcome of our Polish colleagues and Polish students. They were the first to perform: primary and junior students were involved in dances, music and presentations all delivered in fluent English. Everything was presented in perfect order and harmony, with great enthusiasm and efficiency, accompanied by curious looks and bright smiles. The atmosphere that we could breathe in the spotless and luminous classrooms and corridors of the school was that of "school people" happy to share a space with others, a common space that they felt as their own, therefore respected and loved.

In the afternoon it was our turn to show our works, based on "The House of the Future" and "The House in Art". We were interested spectators of amazing Eco-houses, houses which could float, houses which could fly, houses in the Space! Finally, we showed "our" rural houses depicted in the paintings of the Macchiaioli, then those taken from the "cabrei", covering a time span which went from the "Effects of Good Government" by Lorenzetti to the sharp and neat perspectives of De Chirico. Everything was presented in English, with some hesitation, but at the same time with great satisfaction for the achievement. It was a very busy day; nevertheless, we were ready for the "official" dinner held in our hotel, with the Polish colleagues and the Turkish, Hungarian and German partners, together with the European students who took part in this project. It was an exquisite and lively dinner, we exchanged presents from our different countries while our students, thanks to their English, could get to know their German and Hungarian peers, eager to have fun together!

The following day, after visiting the Lubaczów Museum and the oldest wooden church in Poland, the Radruz Cathedral, we gathered for our staff meeting, while

our students were involved in football matches, thanks to the kindness of the PE teachers of Cieszanów high school, who organized the activities and played with them! After a warm dinner at the school canteen, we left for Krakow, the final part of our journey.

The beauty and the rich history of the city put a spell on us: we visited the Wawel Castle, the Cathedral, the Main Square, the Royal Route, and then we went underground, to 132 metres under, to visit the amazing Wieliczka Salt Mine, a whole subterranean world made of salt, sculptures, architecture and art, which is part of the Unesco World Heritage.

On our last day of the trip we decided to undergo another journey, definitely harder than those we had done so far, that is to say a journey in the depths of human cruelty: the paths of Auschwitz concentration camp, the barracks, the miles of barbed wire, the execution wall, the crematorium, the cellar of tortures, the gas chamber, the mountains of glasses, those of children's shoes, the ashes, the hair, the railroad in Birkenau and the forest of chimneys. These are places, nowadays, crowded with visitors: nevertheless, we were struck by the deaf silence and by the silent pain of people who were witnessing with their angry eyes and with their dry throats what man was capable of doing, in a time which is really close to ours. In this religious silent, however, it is possible to hear the screams and cries of those people who were victims of this brutality: their screams are loud and they are pleading us not to forget. Never ever.

After a short sightseeing of the Jewish area of the city, we collected our bags, we said 'goodbye' to our partners, we thanked our Polish hosts for their extreme kindness and patience and we came back home, aware of being much 'richer' than before: thanks to the power of travelling, of discovery and of sharing. See you in Germany!

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