



Shared identity: how to build a stronger Europe beyond prejudice

Exchange in Turkey (February 2019)

During the first week of our project, the Turkish coordinator had arranged a first meeting, that met all the aims, we had in mind for our learning, teaching and training activities – most of all creating more understanding of the embedding of certain habits in a specific culture. The week began with a presentation of all our students in the House of culture in Uşak; the presentation showed a variety of music, dance and PowerPoint presentations of the involved countries. After this opening ceremony, the Turkish coordinator, his head master and the Dutch coordinator were interviewed by a local television station, that broadcasted scenes from the first meeting, clarified by these interviews. This gave us the opportunity to use the first activity also as a dissemination platform of our project's aims. Every country had sent 5 students and 2 teachers to Uşak; all students had hosts at the school, so all activities were integrated in the school activities on big scale. The lessons at school were completely in tune with the methodology of our project: to show that, in spite of cultural differences, there are a lot of similarities between us - concerning our needs and shared values. One of the lessons gave a historic overview of our cultures and led to a discussion about overlaps in habits, language and general behavior. Considering one of the most important starting point of our methodology, namely "learning by doing", the program aimed to give the students insights in the Turkish culture by letting them experience themselves possible differences and similarities. All activities revolved therefore around the general subjects of arts, art crafts, sports, food and wellbeing. In a special cooking class, all students were involved in preparing traditional Turkish food and during a visit to a weaving house in Uşak, they learned all about the hidden meaning in the old craft of tapestry weaving (f.i. the tree of life as a symbol for fertility and birds as symbol for life and the human soul). In the local history museum of Uşak, they could learn how the Turkish culture was influenced by other cultures. Next to that, we visited the ancient sites of Blaundus and Pamukkale (Hierapolis). To learn about the results of our first project week, we used two separate evaluation forms at the end of the week. The first was designed to give the Turkish coordinator feedback about the program (stronger and weaker points) and will be used to enhance further meetings during our project. The second form was used to discover, which two shared values could be appointed as the most appropriated reflection of our

stay in Uşak. By a large majority of votes, the visiting students chose 'hospitality' and 'friendship' as the most outstanding aspects of their experiences with the Turkish hosts. We can conclude by mentioning, that we see this as a perfect beginning for our project!