



## Shared identity: how to build a stronger Europe beyond prejudice

### *Exchange in the Netherlands*

Because we believe that ignorance about each other's cultures triggers prejudice, we wanted to show the Dutch culture 'from the inside'. We did this by focusing on the various aspects of Dutch culture: the Dutch trading history (visit to a VOC ship), Dutch art (Van Gogh) and by zooming in on the multicultural society ("Superstreet" in Rotterdam's world museum). All these activities gave a good insight in Dutch cultural and social life. We also used these angles for the special art classes. The special painting technique of Van Gogh was the basis for the drawing lesson, in which all students painted Dutch windmills after a visit to Kinderdijk. In our art and music lessons, the Dutch students, that normally attend these classes, were responsible for the practical requirements of these activities. The planning and performing of the lessons became a shared responsibility by choosing this didactic approach. Another example of 'shared responsibility' is the preparation of the mini-songfestival at the end of the week. All countries prepared their contribution to our 'Europe-song' beforehand in their singing classes. Therefore, we changed the lyrics of Madonna's song "like a prayer" into different chorus lines (in all the countries' languages involved in the project). The end result was a kaleidoscope of different languages and cultures and a symbol for European cooperation on the micro-level. Here too, both practical preparation and technical support (light, sound and presentation) were arranged by students of the Dalton lyceum themselves. Our project also led to a better understanding of the Dutch schooling system and modern didactic insights, also by visiting the "onderwijsmuseum" (museum about education) in Dordrecht. Here, the teachers of the involved countries, learnt about the advantages of a self-directed learning process, in which the focus is mainly on increasing personal responsibility and promoting independence in the learning process). In total, around 100 people were involved in the practical implementation of our project (students, parents, art class, choir class, technical support and song festival presentation). The results of this activity were: more understanding for cultural differences, strengthening independence in learning processes and finally experiencing essential similarities in expectations, dreams and wishes when it comes to European cooperation. For our closing meeting we also invited the local alderman for education - to underline the importance of good cooperation in Europe, also at municipal level. The highlight of the week was the song contest we prepared beforehand (a few months before the official song contest in Rotterdam) because music clearly offered the space to strengthen already

existing bonds between our students. Soon after this fourth meeting our schools were closed due to corona, and the song festival in Rotterdam was postponed to the following year.