

PORTUGAL MEETING – Erasmus Diary

BETÜL ECE (TÜRKİYE, İZMİR)

Monday

Monday was my first day in our Erasmus project and I was excited. We walked to school to get to know the city better and continued to do this for the rest of the days. When we arrived at school it seemed a bit small and I was a bit disappointed because there was no garden. The Portuguese welcomed us with warmth and friendly. They told us about the types of schools there and how they learn. Then they told us about the areas around us, the places we could visit and their famous food. When we went down to the cafeteria for lunch, we met other students from the school, chatted, and played games. After lunch, the Lithuanians came and we met them. then one by one we shared our thoughts and experiences about robotics. Afterward, we worked in groups on Arduino using a soil moisture sensor. We exchanged information while doing this, it was fun and good for language development. After finishing our tasks, we explored the city. The preservation of the historical structure and the architecture based on art attracted my attention. We ate, shopped and explored the culture in the city center and when it got late we returned to our hotel. I was a bit tired at the end of the first day but I think it was worth it, it was a fun and exploratory day.

Tuesday

Tuesday was rainy like every day. We walked to school again. When we arrived, Lithuanians were playing a card game, different from what I know. After watching them, we tried Pastel De Nata, a Portuguese dessert. It was crispy on the outside and filled with cream, it tasted very nice and we all liked it. Then I gave them the Turkish dessert “Pişmaniye”, their eating style was very funny and we had a lot of fun while eating it. Then we started our activities. We were divided into groups of 4-5 people and distributed to tables, each table had a different activity. We completed our Arduino activities together and we were able to do all the activities by switching places with those at the other tables. While we were doing these, a journalist came and took a photo of us while we doing Arduino. He took a group photo of our teachers. I was happy when I saw these photos in the newspaper on Wednesday. They gave us hand care to show us what they do at school, my hands were soft and the steps were fun. Afterwards, they wanted to do our hair, I waited too but they couldn't because time was done. When the activities were over, we decided to continue exploring the city and went to Braga Mall with the others. We did some shopping, then had dinner and went to our hotels. It was fun to use Uber during the whole process.

Wednesday

Early Wednesday morning we catch the bus to the Guimaraes. The villages, fields, and forests on the roadside gave a moody atmosphere. It gives a perfect picture When it's combined with rain. I was admiring them as we drove. When we arrived, before we entered the castle, the teachers gave important and interesting information about the history of Portugal, the meaning of the flag, and the castle. The place where the castle was built was well chosen, the castle itself was still majestic. After the castle tour, we went to the souvenir shops and bought a few things. Then we went to the city center. They gave us 1 hour to explore the city center. I tried different drinks. We had fun together and I took a lot of photos. I really liked the church in the center and the flowers around it, they added a different atmosphere. We took the bus again and this time we went to the University of Minho, which was quite big and had various areas for everyone. We visited the Informatics and Robotics department in groups and they gave us information about their projects, the main topics of informatics, and more. It was quite nice even though it was small. After we finished our visit, we went back to Braga. It was raining a lot but we went back to the city center and sat in one of the restaurants in the center. We went back to the hotel early because it was raining a lot and we got wet.

Thursday

We walked back to school in the morning and played various games - we even finger wrestled - while we waited for the activities to start. Then they took us to the conference room and Dr. Piet gave us a fun, thought-provoking, and instructive presentation. Even though I got bored at some times, he kept it dynamic by asking questions and even gave books to those who answered right. At the end of the conference, we received our certificates at the closing ceremony and took a farewell photo. We decided to go to a restaurant near the school for lunch. I wanted to try the Francesinha that all my Portuguese friends recommended to me. It was delicious and filling. Then we all went to the hotel and went to the city center. We found a nice souvenir shop and did our shopping there. We found an old castle with a library in it, which we hadn't seen before. It was evening and rainy, so we finished exploring and went to a restaurant where we had our farewell dinner. Dinner was quite fun and nice. Then we were invited to play billiards. we went there and played with everyone, it was a lot of fun. The logic of the game was simple but it required a lot of skill and I lost my first match. As it was getting late, we said goodbye to everyone there and went back to our hotel.

Friday

We got up early in the morning to catch our bus to Porto. In the city center, locals and teachers gave us a small sightseeing tour. The buildings in the city were old and artistic like most places. We went to the train station and then to the bridge. It was very interesting to see a train crossing the bridge. Some houses also looked like slums. After taking lots of photos on the bridge, they dropped us at a busy street with restaurants and gave us 1 hour to eat and walk around. As a group, we sat in the cafe with the cutest and perfect view. When we went to the gathering area, we saw 2 people jumping off the bridge. It looked very exciting and extreme and they looked like having fun. When we returned to Braga, it was time to say goodbye to Portugal, our friends, and the beautiful city. I was very sad at that moment. Afterwards, I had a nice time with one of my Portuguese friends in the city center and we went to a cafe with Turks and Italians. The cafe was very nice, after playing some games and having a drink, we got up and continued to visit the places we hadn't visited. It was very fun to be all together, Italians and Portuguese are very good at having fun. In the evening we said goodbye to everyone one by one and went back to our hotel. Since our flight was early, we quickly packed our bags and went to bed early. I was happy to see my family in the morning but at the same time, I was sad to say goodbye to this beautiful city and my friendships.

I am happy to be part of such an event like this. Experience abroad, practice English and learn more things, it was a great project.

Betül Ece Şen, Braga, 1.11.2023