

# PORTUGAL MEETING – Erasmus Diary

*TALHA ARDA (TÜRKİYE, İZMİR)*

## **Abstract**

This story is about my time in Portugal for a project that lasted a week. It's all about how each day felt and what I experienced. At the start, I wasn't sure about Esprominho School, but once I got there, I was surprised by how nice it was. Each day was full of activities, like working with Arduino and exploring Braga, Guimares, and Porto. The best part was meeting students from other countries. We did a lot together, learning about each other's cultures and making new friends. As the week went on, it was tough to say goodbye to everyone. I felt a mix of emotions - happy for the experiences but sad that it was ending. This trip really changed me. It made me see things differently and I'll always remember the good times and the people I met. It was an amazing journey that I'll cherish.

## **Monday**

I was very excited because it was the first day of our project. We woke up early in the morning, had breakfast and set off for school. The weather was generally not sunny any day of the week, so the gray tones of the weather gave me a different energy. When we arrived at Esprominho, the students of the school took us around to introduce the school. At first, I was prejudiced because of the lack of a garden, but when I saw the classrooms, I realized that my thoughts were wrong, it was a really nice school. There were separate classes for all kinds of professions and all classes were able to work at full performance. After visiting the school, the session that was the beginning of our project started. At first, I couldn't control my excitement and couldn't speak comfortably, but with the help of my friends I overcame my excitement and the session ended with us sharing our feelings. When we left the school, we stopped by the hotel before visiting Braga. Braga was really beautiful, I especially liked the square. In the evening, after we did our shopping at the supermarket next to the hotel, we gathered as a group in the room where I stayed with Deniz and chatted. Our first day was really nice as I expected.

## **Tuesday**

After we finished our breakfast quickly, we started walking to school. Our team was complete when our Italian friends who were unfortunately late yesterday arrived. At first, our teacher Lino told us what we were going to do with Arduino and we were divided into teams of 4. Stations were randomly created and our task was to complete each station. While we were completing them, it was time for lunch. After we had our lunch, we played cards with our Italian and Lithuanian friends and since it was a Lithuanian game, it was a bit difficult for me to understand but I enjoyed it. Afterwards, teacher Lino asked for some volunteers, and I raised my finger, but when I arrived I was surprised, teachers and students were ready to give us a facial massage. It was really relaxing, I almost fell asleep. When our teachers told us that we were done for the day, we decided to go to the shopping center. After walking around there for a bit, we took an Uber back to the center of Braga. Braga had a really relaxing atmosphere and gave me a very different energy. When it got dark, we had dinner and then went back to the hotel to get ready for our trip to Guimares.

## **Wednesday**

In front of Esprominho, the shuttle waiting for us to go to Guimares was slowly filling up by students. Since I love driving in rainy weather, the journey was a pleasant one for me. When we first arrived in Guimares, we first visited a castle in the area and our teacher Lino gave us some general information about the Portuguese flag and history. I listened with interest as I enjoyed learning about the history of other nations. Then we visited the inside of the castle, it still looked very durable even though hundreds of years had passed. I bought a miniature representation of the castle from the souvenir shop right at the exit of the castle. After that we went to the city center, it was really lively. The streets had

a different atmosphere and I really enjoyed walking around. I saw a cute dog on the balcony of the house but when I was about to take a photo of it, the dog ran away. So I whistled for a while for the dog to come back and finally I succeeded. I had the chance to take a nice photo of the dog. We were free in the city for a while and I had the opportunity to visit that beautiful city. Afterwards we went to Braga's Minho University. We listened to a presentation on artificial intelligence and visual processing. I was very interested in the robots there and I had the opportunity to take a look. When we got back to Braga, we decided to go to the city center again. I went to the Braga football team store to buy some gifts for myself and my cousins. But it was raining so hard that even an umbrella couldn't save us and I was soaking wet. I am writing this with a smile because I wrote this when I got back to Turkey, but I was a bit scared that I would get sick while I was there. We had dinner and went back to the hotel.

### **Thursday**

When we came to school in the morning, we were all a little sad. Today we were going to receive our certificates and this reminded us that the project was slowly coming to an end. Before the certificate program, we listened to Dr. Piet's presentation and I was generally interested in the topics he talked about. When we came back to the hall where we gathered to receive our certificates, we saw that Esprominho had prepared some gifts for us. We took a photo together with our certificates and went to a restaurant close to the school at the invitation of our Portuguese friends. They recommended Francesinha, a Portuguese specialty dish. I really liked it. I liked the food culture of Portugal in general. We said goodbye to our Lithuanian friends as they will be leaving us tomorrow. After stopping by the hotel, we called an Uber to go to the shopping center, where I bought some gifts for my brother and we went back to Braga. This time we looked at places we had never visited and I think we completely explored the center of Braga. We went to a gift shop that our teachers recommended to us and bought some magnets. I felt relieved that I had completed the list of people to buy gifts for. In the evening we had a farewell dinner and during the dinner I had the opportunity to chat with my fellow Lithuanian friends. After dinner we left the teachers and went to an entertainment place with all the students. I enjoyed playing billiards and foosball and most importantly I was excited every moment to be able to somehow connect with friends from different nationalities. However, the time to leave was slowly coming. We left the venue and went back to the hotel and went to bed as we had to get up early on the last day of our project.

### **Friday**

We woke up knowing that it was our last day, so there was a sadness in all of us. We boarded the bus to Porto and our journey started. After a pleasant 45 minutes, we arrived in Porto and the pleasure we felt started to increase. Porto was really the most beautiful city I have ever seen. After taking some photos in the square, we crossed the bridges over the river that divides the city into two parts and went to the opposite side. After a general tour of the city, we had some free time and I wandered around a bit more to observe this beautiful city. We had lunch in a restaurant and without realizing that the time had passed, we crossed back to the opposite side. However, we couldn't find the shop we wanted and we had to hurry back. I think we needed more time to visit Porto because it was just an amazing city. But unfortunately we had to go back and then our Italian friends invited us to a café in Braga. We had a very pleasant time in the café and then the two teams started to walk around together. Today was one of the days I had the most fun during the trip. In the evening we said goodbye to our Italian friends for the last time and went back to the hotel to prepare our suitcases. I had lost everything during the project in Lithuania and although my friends and I still joke about it, this time I managed not to lose any of my belongings. Even though this was the funny part, it was important for me. Seeing my friends in Lithuania again, practicing my English and most importantly seeing a new culture was priceless for me. But all good things must come to an end and I think each of us went to sleep knowing that.

***Talha Arda Bülül, Braga, October 2023***