REPORTS FOR THE ERASMUS 2024 EXCHANGE

Report on the First Day of the Erasmus Exchange, 4th October 2024

Introduction

This report is intended to summarize the activities of the first day of the exchange week. The day started with icebreakers to get to know each other. However, after the initial fun, the real work started. The day's workshop aimed to introduce the Finnish exchange students to Slovenia and its history and show them around Koper, where they were staying for the week.

Workshop Outline

The workshop was around two hours long. Firstly, the students were given some material to read quietly. It was seven pages long. Each page was dedicated to a different period in the Slovenian history: the prehistoric time, the antiquity, the Middle Ages, the early modern era, the two world wars and the time after them. Later, the students were divided into five groups and given the task to summarize one of the historical periods. After an hour of preparation, the students presented each period to their peers. Because of that, the learnt information will not be forgotten as early as it would have been without the presentations.

New Language Learned

The students learnt new vocabulary related to the history of Slovenia and its people. Terms such as commerce, cultivation, province, humanism and independence were used in the reading material and were mentioned multiple times during the day. Learning these words was helpful to the students, as they developed their ability to talk about history in English.

Knowledge Acquired

Throughout the workshop, the students were taught many interesting things about Slovenian history. They learnt about the people's origins, what economic activities they developed, their culture (including the language, religion, art, architecture etc.). In addition, they found out how historical events affected life in the past and what kind of impact they have nowadays.

The workshop highlighted the historical and cultural borders that shaped Slovenia over the centuries. Students learned how Slovenia's location at the intersection of Germanic, Slavic, and Romance cultures created an interesting blend of traditions but also led to changes of the borders between the countries that were present in this area. These borders were not just physical but also linguistic and cultural. The students also discussed the challenges posed by borders in language, with Slovenia historically adopting and adapting words and expressions from its neighbouring nations.

Students Outputs

Before ending the workshop, the students presented their work as mentioned before. As the workshop was short, the final projects did not include any visual parts. Each one of the groups only read what they had written on their papers. However, the main points of the given information were useful later in the day, when the Slovene students showed their exchange partners around

the city, as the places visited during the tour were connected to the historical periods about which they learnt.

Recommendations

To encourage students and make learning about history more interesting, future workshops should be extended, so the students could discover and research the information by themselves. That way each student could choose a historical period that they like the most and deepen their knowledge on that topic.

Report on the Erasmus Field Trip: Ljubljana and Bled, 5th October 2024

Introduction

This report gives information on the first field trip of the week, the visit to the capital of Slovenia Ljubljana and one of the most well-known tourist sites Bled. After a short drive, the students arrived to Ljubljana and climbed the hill to the Ljubljana castle where they attended a guided tour. The day's activities were scheduled in a way that the students could explore the cultural heritage of Slovenia.

Activity Outline

The first activity of the day was a guided tour of the Ljubljana castle, as mentioned before. It was called The Time Machine and the name was justified by different actors dressed in historical clothing who each presented a time or purpose of the castle. There were Romans who first built the city of Emona, there was Saint George who, according to the legend, slayed the dragon that once lived in the city. There were also two members of the Habsburg family, who at that time ruled over the Slovenian territory. A French soldier presented life during the reign of Napoleon and the Ilyrian provinces and a prisoner told the students about her time in the prison. Lastly, Ljubljana's mayor presented his plans to make Ljubljana a great city. Although the tour was intended for younger children, the students had a lot of fun and therefore remembered more information.

After the tour, the students were left alone to explore Ljubljana's most important cultural sites and buildings such as the National Gallery, the City Hall and the Parliament Building. Seeing those buildings showed the students how diverse the city's architecture is.

Later, after another bus ride, the students arrived to the Bled Lake, which is an important tourist site in Slovenia. The lake has a little island in the middle, which is also the only Slovenian island. When anyone visits Bled, they must try the kremšnita cream cake, which is often considered one of the most recognizable Slovenian deserts.

New Language

The students acquired new knowledge mainly about history, specifically about the different periods of Slovenian history (the rule of the Romans, Habsburgs, Napoleon…). Phrases such as independence, Carantania, Austrian empire, Ilyrian Provinces and Yugoslavia were very useful in deepening the students' knowledge on those topics.

Knowledge Acquired

Slovenia lies in the centre of the European continent. No one seems to agree to which part it belongs to. It is either Central, Southern, Eastern or Southeastern. This means that there is not a fixed border between different regions, which blend into one another. Slovenia's terrain is also very diverse. Slovenia has everything, from the sea to the mountains, which causes many differences between regions. One example of this are the different types of climates that are present in our country. The mediterranean climate is present in the southwest of the country, from the coast of the Adriatic Sea to the Karst edge (which is a region in Slovenia where the surface changes from limestone to flysch. It is a border between the Karst region and Istra. Because of the pressure caused by the collision of the African and Eurasian tectonic plate and the formation of the Alps, the surface layers are broken and even stacked on each other making the signature high stone walls). Summers are dry and hot; the temperature is always over 25°C. Droughts are more and more common. Winters are really mild; the temperatures are usually around 15°C. The most amount of rain falls during the winter months. This is also the climate type in Koper. The continental climate is the climate type in most of the country. The difference between the two climate types is that in the continental climate the temperature differences between the winter and summer are bigger than in the mediterranean climate. Another difference is that the precipitation peak is in the summer, not the winter.

Student Outputs & Recommendations

The whole day was intended to expand the students view on Slovenia's history and show the exchange students a little bit of our country. However, the new information that they learned was useful in the following days, during the workshops.

In my opinion, this was one of the best excursions I have ever been on and definitely the best one in this year's Erasmus project. For future years, students could depart from Ljubljana earlier, that way they would have more time at Lake Bled to walk around and enjoy the scenery.

Report on the Erasmus Field Trip: Karst and Trieste, 7th October 2024

Introduction

On Monday, the students went on a field trip to the Slovenian region Karst and the Italian city Trieste. The excursion aimed to show the differences between the Slovenian coast and Karst terrain and the cultural differences between two neighbouring nations, Slovenia and Italy.

Outline of the Day

After taking the bus to Črni Kal, the students went on a short walk to Podpeč. There, they climbed up the tower, on top of which was a viewpoint, from where they could see the Karst edge. Later, the students visited the village of Hrastovlje and its church, famous for the fresco called the Dance of Death. They attended a presentation about the importance of the fresco.

Later, the students were taken to Trieste, a really important border city between Slovenia and Italy. Trieste is a pretty big city with over two hundred thousand inhabitants. There they visited the church of San Giusto and walked over to the Square of Italian Unity (Piazza Unità d'Italia).

Knowledge Gained & Student Outputs

During the presentation in the Hrastovlje church, the students learnt that the inspiration behind the fresco Mrtvaški ples is likely the plague or the black death. It symbolises the border between life and death. They were informed about the meaning of the painting, which is that every human is the same once they die, regardless of the amount of money they had while alive.

Visiting Trieste helped the students understand the effect historical events had on the different development of Slovenia and Italy. Trieste became a Roman colony in 177 BC and retained its importance through various rulers, including the Lombards, Franks, and Habsburgs. In 1382, it came under Habsburg rule after tensions with the Venetian Republic but maintained significant autonomy, including being declared a free port in 1719. The city's strategic location made it a vital Austrian port, especially after the Vienna-Trieste railway in 1857. However, its multicultural character, with Slovenes forming a significant part of the population alongside Italians, Austrians, and others, led to rising national tensions. These escalated in the early 20th century. After World War I, Trieste was annexed by Italy, losing its prominence as Austria's second city. Under fascism, Slovenes faced forced Italianization and cultural suppression. After the second world war, territorial disputes between Italy and Yugoslavia led to the creation of the Free Territory of Trieste, eventually annexed by Italy in 1954. Today, while the borders remain the same, historical tensions occasionally resurface, highlighting the enduring impact of Trieste's borderland identity.

All of the knowledge learned during the day was used during the preparation for the final presentations the next day.

Recommendations

I wrote this report based on what my classmates told me about this excursion, as I was not able to go. For the future Erasmus projects, I would recommend that all students should be able to go on all of the field trips, that way they could make the best of their limited time with their exchange partner.

Report on the Workshop Day of the Erasmus Exchange, 8th October 2024

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the workshops from the second to last day of the exchange week. The day began when all of the students arrived to school. Each student chose a different workshop to be in. the options were geography, art, philosophy, history and biology. This report focuses on the history workshop, which I chose.

Workshop Overview

The workshop lasted from 9 to 12, with a half hour break in between. To start, the students listened to a brief presentation about Slovenia’s history during each historical period. After, they were divided into pairs- one Finnish student with one Slovenian- and given a topic to research. They were all about Slovenian borders after the first and second world war, when gaining independence and now, at the time of the European Union. They were given reading material in the form of different history books for studying history at the gymnasium.

New Vocabulary Learned & Knowledge Gained

The students also acquired new vocabulary related to Slovenian history. Terms such as *minority,*

plebiscite, territory, municipality and *treaty* were introduced through the reading material and were referenced multiple times during the day. The students learned about the battles the Slovene people had to fight in order to obtain their land and the way it affected them and future generations. Furthermore, they explored how environmental borders, like Slovenia's position between the Alps and the Mediterranean, influenced historical and cultural developments.

The workshop emphasized not only physical borders, such as those drawn after wars and independence, but also cultural and linguistic borders that shaped Slovenian identity. Students discussed how historical events, such as the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the breakup of Yugoslavia, affected the lives of those living on either side.

Student Outputs

The students presented their work at the end of the day. Each individual workshop had about fifteen minutes of presentation time. Given the short amount of time to complete the work, the final projects were not accompanied by a visual presentation, such as powerpoint. Everyone only read aloud their prepared notes. The presentations highlighted the layered nature of borders, emphasizing their impact not just on geography but also on identity, governance, and community interactions.

Recommendations

The only thing that could be improved is the reading material that the students were given. Because it was in Slovene, the exchange students from foreign countries could not understand it, so the Slovene students had to first translate and then explain the material to their partners, as they were not familiar with the topics.

Report on the Erasmus Field Trip: Strunjan, 9th October 2024

Introduction

This report is about the last day of the Erasmus exchange. The students had a fun day ahead of them. First, they hiked from the town of Izola to the beach in Strunjan, where they did all sorts of interesting activities.

Daily Outline

The hike was around an hour long. The students walked for 4,6 kilometers. The height difference that they had to climb was only 80 meters. Because the hike was not really physically demanding, the students had the opportunity to socialize and talk about many different things.

When the students arrived at the Strunjan beach, they first had a short break, after which they danced the dances that they had learnt the previous day. The Finnish and Spanish students also showed some of their traditional dances, showing some of their culture to the Slovenian students.

Then it was time for the Slovenian picnic. Each pair of students baked or cooked some food for everyone to eat. There were many different dishes, some of them were traditional Slovenian foods. The exchange students could try some of this food, for example the famous Slovenian dessert potica.

Student Outputs

Because the day was spent entirely outside of school, the students did not make any traditional presentations.

The hike and the picnic were an excellent opportunity to observe natural and environmental borders. As the students walked along the coast, they observed the sharp divide between land and sea—a geographical border that is always changing due to erosion and climate forces. Additionally, the cliffs of Strunjan, a unique coastal form shaped by natural processes, showed the invisible boundaries between ecosystems.

The cultural borders were also explored through food and dance. The Finnish, Spanish, and Slovenian students crossed linguistic and cultural borders by communicating in English and introducing one another to their traditions, showing how such boundaries can be overcome through mutual respect and curiosity.

Recommendations

The day was a fun way to show the exchange students a large part of the Slovenian coast. Nonetheless, the outside picnic was not ideal, as there was a lot of wind and it was weird getting the food from the little wall. For the future, I would recommend traditional “Slovenian nights” which were done in previous years, as they are also a good opportunity for the students to present their weekly work.