

## Cultural Barriers

### ERASMUS+ “BEAUTIFUL AS DIFFERENT”

Bulgaria 3<sup>rd</sup> mobility – Ventspils, Riga- Latvia

#### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize our impressions: the four videos presented- all very touching in different ways; the beauty we discovered everywhere we looked as we saw different cultures and new sights. This mobility inspired us all to be more open, adventurous and to accept our differences, because at the end they are what makes us human.

#### Day 1 (27.04.2022, Wednesday)

We were all quite overjoyed since it was our first day at the school and with the groups from the other countries.

The welcoming at the school was very impressive - the speech of the principal was warm and encouraging. The mini concert that we witnessed was wonderful – the mix of acapella singing and simple musical instruments that imitated certain nature sounds made the whole room magical. It was as if we were transported in a quiet, idyllic forest.

Getting to know the school was incredible. We fell in love with the building at first sight - it looked as if it were from a movie, as if we were standing in front of a medieval castle

The art exhibitions in the hallways, the pianos scattered along the hall and all the portraits of students, and their achievements made us feel so welcomed. Some things that really stood up to us were the cooking classroom with a functional kitchen, the big open foyer with colorful columns and full-length mirrors, the rooms where students can hang their clothes, the climbing wall that is freely available at all times during the summer. The overall feel of the school and the classes we got to attend was enjoyable.

After we had lunch at the school canteen we headed to an old castle - Lavonian Order Castle. The tour around it was quite educational. The best part, though, was the medieval games and costumes we were able to play and wear. It was like a trip to the past. The rich history of the castle made us feel like maidens and knights.

After the tour we had free time to explore the city. Our group took a stroll down the riverbank and the harbor. After that we visited the local park near our hotel.

The first day was filled with meeting exciting new people and visiting fascinating new places!



## Day 2 (28.04.2022, Thursday)

On the second day we went back to Ventspils State Gymnasium No. 1 in the morning to present our video on the topic and we watched some that were created by the other countries. We opened very interesting discussions and cultural barriers, stereotypes, and opening our minds to other cultures. We all definitely felt more understood after that.

Later we had an amazing lunch at the school cafeteria and we headed to explore Ventspils by bus. Firstly, we went to the Pārventa library which is stunning and unique and so unlike anything we've ever seen before. We got to see such a modern and astonishing building that left us speechless.

Secondly, we traveled to Lemberga hūte- the only artificial mountain in Latvia. The view was fantastic and all of us were amazed at such a clever way to dispose of construction waste.

Lastly, we went to the Ventspils House of Crafts. They showed us what classes looked like hundreds of years ago and we learned that it was not easy at all being a student back then. After all the fun we had in the class we made badges to keep as souvenirs to remember this unique experience. We then had some free time which we used to go to the beach and explore some more with the locals.

In the end, we finished off our amazing day having dinner with all the Erasmus students.



### Day 3 (29.04.2022, Friday)

Third day was our last day in Ventspils. We got up early and prepared our suitcases. With them we went to the school. Afterwards we went to a place everyone was waiting for impatiently - the planetarium. It was amazing. We saw an incredible film and then had a tour of the youth center in the same building.

After this great experience we went back to school to watch the last projects and play some Kahoot games, which were full of emotions. The lunch was the next thing to do and it was as good as the previous days.

Then it was time we go to a very special meeting - with the local council of Ventspils. He told us interesting things about the town and gave us big books about Ventspils as a present. Then we took our path to the Concert Hall. It was the most modern Concert Hall we have ever been to. After the hall we went back to school where we had the closing ceremony and a special programme from the orchestra. The Latvian group performed really well and it was nice listening to them. The headmaster gave us the certificates and we took a lot of photos. After we had some free time and we played national dances of each country. We had to be fast because we had to catch the bus for Riga. Almost everyone came to say their last goodbyes in hopes that maybe someday we will meet again. For sure we had a lot of fun and we were so thankful to all of the participants. After the long trip to Riga we finally got to our hotel.





## Day 4 (30.04.2022, Saturday)

Our first day in Riga began with a morning walk which continued through the whole day. Even though we walked so many hours we couldn't manage to see all the sights in just one day. After breakfast we visited the old city of Riga -Vecriga. It is quite cozy and worth visiting. We had a quick stop in a local café, which was located in the heart of the old town.

Then we headed towards the national library of Riga. Unfortunately, it was closed, so we couldn't see it from the inside. The next place we visited was a small, but beautiful beach where we enjoyed the sunset. Afterwards we had dinner and went back to the hotel for a deserved break.



## Day 5 (01.05.2022, Sunday)

On our last day in Riga we went to the Akropole shopping centre to buy some souvenirs and gifts for our loved ones back home. That actually happened to be a rainy day, so we spent a good few hours in the spacious modern building.

Later, we took a quick rest at our hotel and continued our journey by having lunch at a local kebab house called Kingu. We were really excited to try the Latvian equivalent of a food so popular in our country.

Then, we met with the Spanish group for one last stroll around Riga's beautiful center. We took some photos in the park in front of the Freedom Monument and after that we went separate ways.

A few months back one of our peers had made a Latvian friend online, so we wanted to meet him in person. Our teacher kindly suggested that we take him to dinner with us and we all agreed.

We all spent our evening laughing and learning more things about each other's countries, traditions, etc. For example, we were saddened to hear that we had missed the opportunity to see Europe's widest waterfall - the Venta Rapid. So that is only another reason to consider going back to that amazing place. Our whole visit there was wondrous and the memories we made will be cherished for the rest of our lives.

