



# Immigration

ERASMUS+ “BEAUTIFUL AS DIFFERENT”

Bulgaria | 1<sup>st</sup> mobility – Salerno, Italy

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## Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarize our impressions and the new knowledge we attained following our participation in the Erasmus+ KA2 *Beautiful as different* project. The four videos presented showcased very successfully the different faces of immigration and helped us – the students – gain a better understanding of what life as an immigrant truly entails. The diversity of the shown content inspired meaningful and in-depth debates amongst the students about the struggles and the positives of immigration. These activities, accompanied by the tasks we solved afterward, did not only broaden our worldview but also brought our newly formed community closer, which allowed us to develop once-in-a-lifetime friendships with the other students. The whole experience truly helped us find the beauty in everyone's differences.



### ITALY – *PAINT* (15.02.2022)

The first film we watched was Italy's. Their work was well-thought-out and perfectly executed. This piece stood out from the rest thanks to its simple, but at the same time deeply meaningful and figurative plot, that depicted the journey of acceptance of a young immigrant boy as a newcomer in his new school. The problem was addressed through a lot of metaphorical references using both objects and the characters. We were impressed with the plot, the visual composition as well as the actors' performance.

What they used as a means to show the student's differences were apples - in the beginning, everyone appeared to have the fruit in the same colour, except the immigrant student. This was a reason for distress for the young boy. As the film neared its end, it was revealed that actually, every kid had a different coloured apple from the start, but they were all painted in the same, solely because the students just wanted to be like the others and fit in, without being judged. Despite it not being straightforward, this metaphorical use of apples perfectly relays the message of accepting diversity. It also amusingly breaks the stigma around the fruit. For example, in Christianity, the Forbidden fruit which leads to the *Fall of Man* is the apple itself. Also in Homer's *Iliad*, the trigger behind the *Trojan war* is Eris's *Apple of Discord*. 'The fruit of all evil' actually finds its redemption in Italy's movie, as its purpose is to symbolize the beauty of diversity.

The film's name *Paint* also says a lot about it. It makes us realize that the "paint" we all disguise ourselves with, often does us more damage than good. Being yourself is the best choice you can make. No matter where you are from, what your skin complexion is, or what beliefs you support - in the end, we are all equal, we are all the same, we are all human.



LATVIA (16.02.2022)

On the second day, we watched Latvia's film, a narrated story (with interview segments) about an immigrant family from Georgia. It directly talked about immigration, rather than showing it through metaphors. What caught our attention was the unique story of it – the reason for their decision to immigrate is for sure not the most common one.

They made up their minds to relocate after the father, who was an orphan and grew up with no knowledge about his predecessors, discovered that he was actually Latvian, not Georgian. The reason was a DNA test he took. The test also showed that he has a twin brother who lives in Latvia. The man wanted them to reunite, so the family decided to start a new life in the father's true home country. Their experience moving to Latvia has not been that difficult, because the Latvian government has been truly helpful ever since they've arrived – the family has been provided with free lessons in Latvian and they've received help with settling in. The son, who is quite young, has the help of his family and teachers.

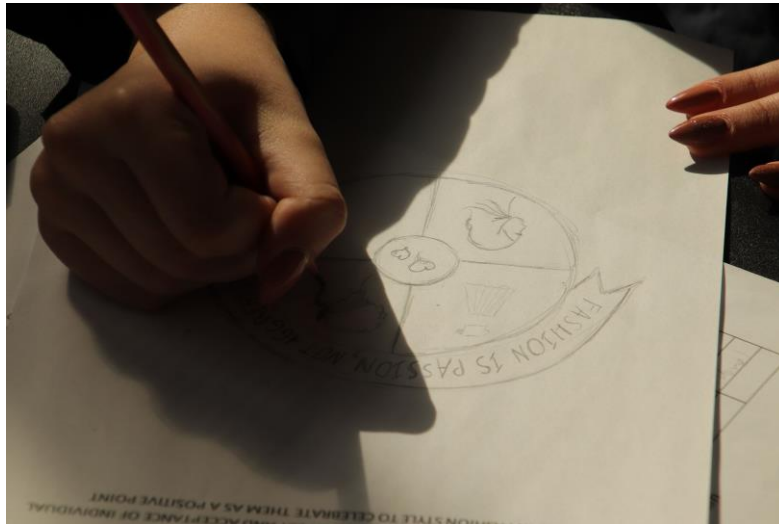
Our team liked the direct approach of the video and also the way they interpreted the topic through such a unique story.



BULGARIA – HOME (17.02.2022)

*Home* is about the story of a Vietnamese immigrant and also a school peer of ours - Choni. From the start, we aimed for our composition to be as clear as possible. The main component was the interview. By asking Choni various questions about his experiences, we gave him the opportunity to reveal himself, his story, and refute some stereotypes about the Vietnamese. As he has lived most of his life in Bulgaria, we mainly discussed how he manages to keep in touch with his culture and how he feels, living in a different country.

While working on this project we also gained some knowledge on aspects, not so tightly connected to the main topic. We mastered our teamwork - not only in the process of creation, but also during the discussions and debates. We learned a lot about how to be creative and innovative in the ways of presenting. And most importantly - the ability to accept our differences. Every one of the participants in this project respected the others' nationalities, characters, styles, and opinions. During this whole process, we, beyond doubt, learned a lot about the different aspects not only of immigration, but of life.



#### SPAIN (18.02.2022)

The final film we watched was from the Spanish group. It was presented under the form of a documentary, which got us introduced to the story of Fatma – a girl our age, who is a refugee from West Sahara. Their work stood out from the rest, because it showcased the harsh reality of forced migration, while also still being able to draw out positives in the end.

Plot-wise it was separated into two parts – the first one was concerned with Fatma’s difficult past and her journey to Spain. The second half was about her present life and her future dreams and hopes. Fatma shared that she has become an activist and is currently working towards helping others from her home country. What is more, she aspires to continue her education in the field of medicine and healthcare. From the interviews that were held with her teachers, we understood that she is a very bright child and although having had difficulties integrating at first, now she has become a part and an active participant in their school community.

The stories of the cast participants, their thoughts, and conversations were all inspiring and meaningful. What is more, the message was conveyed perfectly. We were amazed by Fatma’s strong will and admire her determination to study medicine – one of the most important and also difficult professions. The film shows that being strong and brave is not always easy, but in order to surmount the difficulties in life, we should never give up, because happiness is worth fighting for. Fatma’s story is the “living” proof of that.



## CONCLUSION

Despite the theme “Beautiful as different” being a topic that we are all in support of and have similar views in, we saw a variety of different methods, viewpoints, and artistic interpretations in the videos, with which all of us expressed our passion in this subject matter. We had very different approaches, some of us took a more artistic and non-direct way, while others took a more direct approach and more of a documentary-style movie. Some interviewed close friends, classmates, or total strangers.

What we learned during our stay in Salerno on this project is that even though the topic at hand was a straight-forward one, because of which we thought that our movies would have been similar, that was not the case. Our main position on the matter was the same, however, the execution of our expression of it in the movies varied. As cliché as it might sound, we are more different than we thought and our movies and the conversations we had after were proof of that. And that was OK because we were all understanding and respectful of our differences while also being able to freely share our viewpoints on different topics as well as the project theme. We established friendships and connections all while we pushed a topic about inclusivity and acceptance. If that isn't a job well done, we don't know what is!

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**We would definitely recommend it to other students since it was an amazing journey that we think everybody should experience!**