



Erasmus + project 2021-2022

Nannestad vgs and lycée Simone Veil de Valbonne in France



The 11-year-old exchange program between Nannestad VGS and Lycée Simone Veil's initial aim was to create a transnational learning environment for foreign language learning. Its goal has evolved towards working together in the target language on a common project. In recent years, the two schools have worked together on the topic of climate change and the environment, comparing the policies of the two countries on different issues: local initiatives, tackling the problem of plastic pollution in the ocean and looking at sustainable energy sources and means of transport.

In the light of the current refugee crisis and the rise of immigration hostile parties in Europe, we chose migration and the integration of refugees for our 2021-22 project. The particular interactive nature of the project was born out of a meeting between teachers Anne-Lise, Karen and Hilary in France in fall 2021. It was inspired by the graphic novel *L'Odyssey d'Hakim* by Fabien Toulmé, where the main character Hakim visits a high school class in France where he recounts his escape from Syria to France and answers questions. We saw the opportunity for a project that went beyond what we had achieved with previous projects, wherein students had carried out theoretical research in their respective countries. By

facilitating a more empirical approach by working thematically and linguistically with the topic to prepare the students for interviewing refugee minors, we hoped for a more authentic and humane dimension to an issue too often reduced to distant news stories.

Before starting work on the common project of migration, eTwinning was used as a transnational learning platform on which the students made contact and posted profiles, thereby enabling the teachers to match the penfriends and the students to get to know each other. We also began searching for films, books, and news articles relevant to the subject to gain knowledge and build vocabulary in classroom situations. In addition, we looked for charities that could help us gain a better understanding of migration and facilitate getting in touch with refugee minors that our students could interview. Our students then worked on presentations about Norwegian and French migration politics and prepared questions they wanted to ask the refugees. This was delicate and there were many discussions about what type of questions to ask and how to make the interview as respectful as possible.

The first activity took place in France where the French students gave presentations on immigration policies in the EU, the electoral system in France and the attitude of different French political parties to immigration, as well as charities helping immigrants. An invited speaker was Alimou, who shared his story as a former unaccompanied refugee minor from Guinea and willingly answered students' questions. We also visited a class of young refugees who the students interviewed in small groups and to whom they gave a presentation on Norway. The students then explored historical aspects of migration and the role of migration in art through visits to Musée des explorations du monde in Cannes and Musée Chagall in Nice.

In Norway, the Norwegian students gave presentations on the different immigration policies of the country's political parties and a history teacher gave a lecture on the history of migration in Norway. The Red Cross came to school to speak about their work in terms of helping migrants integrate in Norway, and we heard the testimonies of former refugees from Bosnia and Iran. Some students also interviewed former refugees from Iraq and Syria. A Sami student at the school gave a presentation on Sami culture and the discrimination that the Sami people have suffered. In addition to attending various classes, the students also attended a workshop at The Intercultural Museum called 'Anatomy of prejudice' and visited the Norwegian Parliament, where they could ask an MP questions about Norway's migration politics.

As expected, one of the results of the project has been enhanced linguistic competence among the students, who made clear advances in their target languages. The enhanced focus on an interactive aspect also showed clear gains in terms of the students' intercultural communicative competence, as they had to navigate a variety of cultural encounters, from living with a host family and attending school in a new country to interviewing refugee minors with empathy and sensitivity, making them feel that with communication, "there are no barriers between countries." Their eagerness to connect across cultural borders helped many overcome their self-consciousness in speaking a foreign language.

The project also increased the students' knowledge and understanding of a complicated and challenging global issue that is the plight of refugees. Through classes and workshops, visits to museums and the Storting as well as talks by visiting speakers, the students got to study

the issue from historical, political and cultural angles. From being asked to examine their own and society's prejudices at The Intercultural Museum in Oslo and to debating immigration and integration with a real-life MP to having preconceived ideas about migrants tested in their encounter with refugees in both countries, the students also had to make full use of their critical thinking.



På Stortinget der stortingsrepresentant Grete Wold svarer på spørsmål fra elevene

All these results have been in evidence not only in conversations with the students, but also in their brochures and blogs, which have been published on the schools' websites and, at Simone Veil, shown on Open Days. The teachers published updates during the exchange also shared on the schools' websites, and we are in the process of sharing other results such as transcribed excerpts from the testimonies of young migrants and their research on politics and migration. Such a dissemination has inspired other departments in the school who want to embark on their own projects.

One benefit of the exchange more in evidence this year than before has been the lasting friendships that have been formed, with several students visiting each other twice over the summer. One French student is even envisaging studying at a university in Norway! Another heartwarming benefit has been students testifying to their experiences of personal growth: for one student, it was life-changing, helping him "become more myself" and "be able to start a second life that is really mine" through meeting "incredible people with whom I feel really close to".