

Erasmus + Mobility in DvM Humaniora, Aalst, Belgium 20.-24.1.2025

Meri-Tuulia Isotalo

Monday 20th January

Welcoming ceremony

Ice-breaking activities

Lunch in the school canteen

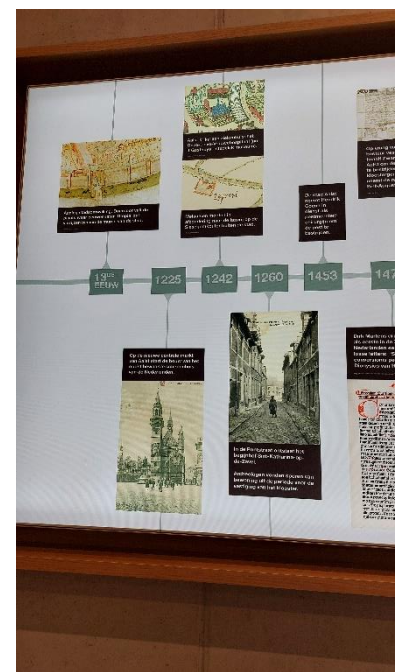
- Students chose in the beginning of the school year if they eat in the canteen or bring their own lunch. Lunch in the canteen costs 5 euros/day. Today we had tomato soup, lasagne and pudding. In DvM Humaniora there aren't many vegetarians so also vegetarian lunch must be chosen in the beginning of the school year and it is single-served. This is big difference to our school: every day we have warm, vegetarian food as a choice for everybody and it is not single served so there is less waste.



City tour in Aalst

Tour was really nice at this point of week: knowing the city better. Town is small but rich with cultural heritage.

- In decades before fast period in spring, there is a huge carnival in which everybody is participating in carnival dresses and masks or in the audience. We visited the carnival museum in an old, former hospital building. People elect the prince or princess of the carnival each year. One man has been the prince so many years in the row, so he was proclaimed as the emperor of the carnival. We had a piece of pie called "vlaaien" – the taste was something like gingerbread dough.
- New library and Academy of art, called Utopia in archaeological basis. There is a wall of history of Aalst. When asked library workers write poems on the window.
- Saint Martin's church built in 16th century. Church is under restoration so we could see just a small part of it.
 - First book printer in Low Countries was Dirk Martens. He started his first workshop in Aalst in 1473. His statue is on the Grote Markt, the central square.



Tuesday 21st January

Tour in the school

- DvM Humaniora has been catholic girls' school before, now it is free catholic school. One teacher told me that catholic schools have best quality and learning results (compared to public schools).
- There is an old part and a new (5 years old) part of the school. They have a quiet classroom for those who can't have their breaks in noisy areas.
- DvM Humaniora makes an own musical where students can play instruments, sing or act. It's shown in the big Culture Hall near the school. Musical is not every year.
- There are about 750 students in DvM Humaniora.
- Teachers have hours in the week so they can be substitutes to the other teachers and if a substitute is not needed, they can do other tasks.
- There's a kind of the hall where one teacher can have two classes in the same lesson when needed. One of our students participated this kind of lesson and he told that they just played games with computer. This is different in our school (and usually in Finland): we have a substitute teacher to whom we give instructions what to do with the students so they have educational lesson even when their own teacher isn't available.
- We had a chance to participate a French lesson. Students have to buy books by themselves. Some had an ebook (computers). Teacher had really nice contact with students. Students call teachers by their last name (and with mr./mrs.). Lesson was mostly working with the exercise book.
- The school has automatic taps and hand towel rolls in toilets -> less waste



Introduction of Belgian school system

Visit to Kringwinkel, recycling centre

- Quite same kind we have in Finland: People can bring things they don't use (or ask recycling centre to pick things), in recycling centre workers (long term unemployed, immigrants learning language or someone learning how to be in working life) sort them. There is a shop for selling these recycled things and the money comes back for use for workers and maintenance.

Free time: We had a recommendation of good waffle café so we had a delicious waffles (Brusselian sort, there is also the other sort from Liège) with ice cream, whipped cream and hot chocolate sauce.

Official dinner with the teachers

- First one of the starters were typical Belgian – pâté with sauce
- dessert – Dame Blanche - was Belgian dessert

Wednesday 22nd January

Swimming hall Aquatopia

- We had a tour in a swimming hall. It was recently renovated. They were closed only two weeks during the process in which they built new pools and technical stuff. (In my hometown swimming hall has been closed for two years because of renovating.) There is certain monitoring system which alarms, if there is still body in the pool (alarm goes straight to lifeguards) and they can also use cameras for developing swimming and jumping techniques. They have solar system on the roof, heat recovery and own water purifying and recycling system so they can use the water again. When the old pool was demolished, they saved the tiles for the new pool.
- time for swimming and having fun in the slides.

Visit to Brugge with Polish and Croatian teachers

- beautiful ancient city with canals
- We visited church Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk where is statue made by Michelangelo.
- Branches of trees were grown horizontally with wires in the park near the church where the bridge of Bonifacius is. I have never seen that kind of trees before.

Thursday 23rd January

Brussel

- First, we went to the visitor centre of EU Parliament. Tour was made with audio guidance. There were a lot of information of EU history, the history of different EU countries, parliament and decision making and members of parliament. The room there were screens you could see interviews of persons from different EU countries, was really nice. Musicians, activists, farmers etc.
- Lunch in Jourdan Square. I ate Belgian fries with tartar sauce. In Brussels you could buy fries from the kiosk and then go to restaurant nearby and eat there if you bought something to drink from restaurant
- City tour. Castle of the king Philippe is bigger than the Buckingham Palace in Britain. Main square rounded by magnificent old houses of guilds. Manneken pis, the statue of a peeing boy. Legend of the boy says he saved the town of Brussels from the fire by peeing.
- Walk through Beurs, the renovated stock exchange building, where there is a beer museum nowadays.
- We walked by the museum of Magritte, famous Belgian artist.
- We drove to the park where the Atomium is. Atomium was built for Brussels World's Fair in 1958 and wasn't meant to last. Today it is art centre and popular tourist attraction.



Friday 24th January

Student Council

- Students displayed the student council of their own country in different groups (groups were general organization, communication, environment & sustainability, participation &

collaboration, projects & activities). This wasn't easy task because our students didn't know precisely how our student council works. Assistance was ok so we teachers helped.

- Nice new ideas for our student council could be dance breaks for whole school and movie night at school.

Belgian Quiz

- Different questions of Belgium
- I learnt that also cartoon Lucky Luke is from Belgium (in addition to Smurfs and Tintin), biggest Belgian company is Anheuser-Buschs InBev which produces beer – shouldn't be surprising because Belgium is known by its beers)
- Motto of Belgium is "L'union fait la force" – Unity makes strength.

Eco-creativity

- We brought cardboard containers from Finland for this workshop, but the containers weren't same standard as Belgian containers. Luckily, they had some spare ones.
- We made wallets using those cardboard containers. I have never done these before.
- Another craft was a Lucky Doll made of yarn.

Evaluation and closing ceremony