Report on our meeting in Gaziantep

In the middle of Sunday night, Ertugrul met us at Gaziantep Airport and escorted us to the Teymur Intercontinental Hotel. We spent the Sunday morning on our own in the surrounding of the hotel. In the afternoon we ate Lahmacun together in the old town and visited a toy museum. The students were picked up and taken to the host families.

On Monday we were welcomed to the school with music and dancing. And there were ice breaking games in the gym. In the library, which Sercan had equipped on his own initiative - crowd founding via Turkish writers - with around 10,000 books, we could always relax with a coffee. After lunch at the school in Aktoprak, we drove to the old town of Gaziantep and visited the very old and huge fortress. We were also in the old town in the bazaar and in a hammam museum and in a house where Ataturk had lived. In a very old coffee house we could enjoy a pistachio coffee. In the evening we teachers were in a very elegant restaurant, which is also a state-supported food museum, and serves authentic traditional dishes.

On Tuesday the electric power went out in Aktoprak Anadolu Lisesi and we went to another school, which was just as modern and surprised us with as many creative design ideas as our partner school. This is where our content-related work began: Gökben (the Turkish English teacher) presented the situation of the refugees in Gaziantep and its twin city Aleppo, Syria. What impressed me most was the number of 500,000 Syrian babies born in Turkey in the past 10 years. You can download the presentation from the homepage. Nina (the Bulgarian coordinator) reported on the situation of the refugees in Bulgaria, whereby her own city is little affected, as it is located off the refugee routes. The last presentation was the German coordinator Susanne's turn with the German view of walls and borders. Afterwards there was only discussion in small mixed groups and the pupils presented the group results on the stage. You can download the films from the homepage. After the presentations we drove to the University in Gaziantep - a beautiful, huge, modern campus - where we had lunch first. After a coffee in the garden, we were greeted by the rector and accompanied by a member of staff Nur to the migration institute, where there was more information about Syrian students and their integration. The Erasmus office also presented itself there. In the evening we were taken back to an elegant restaurant in an old caravanserai. We ate in a beautiful courtyard, but it got surprisingly cold while it was still very warm during the day. The mayor of Gaziantep was eating there and she also greeted us briefly.

On Wednesday we were picked up by the bus and started towards Rumcale on the Eufrat. From Halfeti we went on a boat tour on the Eufrat, which was simply amazingly beautiful. Everyone was thrilled. Unfortunately we had to go back earlier than planned because the minister of education Yasin Tepe was waiting for us. He was very nice and very interested in the students' experiences. After many photos together for the press, gifts and coffee with baklava, the students went back to their families and the teachers went to another super nice restaurant with live music. It must be mentioned that everything was done for the students in the host families so that they felt comfortable, every wish was read from their eyes, but the girls were not allowed to go out alone in the afternoons and evenings. This is absolutely unusual for girls in Turkey. But they all arranged to meet in one of the host families one evening and celebrated a symbolic wedding. That was very exciting.

On Thursday we approached parting. But first the program took us to Aktoprak Anadolu secondary school, where many Syrian children are educated. In the school's prayer room, a very committed English teacher explained to us how she teaches the Syrian children in smaller study groups (normal are 40 students per class) the Latin alphabet, the Turkish language and also English language. A great challenge for the Syrian children, who excite us with “welcome!” and “Willkommen!” greetings. After a sporting competition in the school yard, in which Ertugrul fell unhappy, we went back to the Aktoprak Anadolu Lisesi. There we got lunch and a dance from Dursun to see. Afterwards there was the certificate ceremony and many pictures to say goodbye. In the afternoon we visited the Mosaic Museum, which exhibits the mosaics that were recovered in Zeugma before the   
Birecik reservoir flooded the area. The museum is the world's largest collection of Roman mosaics. The surprise farewell dinner took place in a garden colony. Görhan grilled for us and the three coordinators finally discuss important details of the further project planning.

* 1. We want to start an exchange about English books A1 / A2.   
     Please bring them with you to Resende.
  2. The meeting in Resende will take place from December 5th (arrival) to December 11th (departure). Please inform Dionisio as soon as possible how many students will be coming and how many single or double rooms will be needed so that he can find the host families and make the bookings in the hotel.
  3. The scenes showing examples of discrimination in everyday school life should either be played or brought as a movie. They should be short and easy to understand (4 - 6 minutes). For example, they can include a question for the audience on how to proceed to resolve the conflict. It may then have to be possible to present two or three different versions of the ending.
  4. In Resende we should already talk about the content, form and participants in the preamble.   
     Content means: What should be written in the preamble?   
     Form means: How should the preamble be presented at school?   
     Participants means: Who should be involved in the discussion of the preamble? Students, parents, colleagues, school management?   
     The actual work should then take place between the meetings in Resende and St. Pierre in the partner schools.
  5. We should determine as soon as possible when the meeting will take place in Reunion Island. Unfortunately, it falls into the rainy and hurricane season. I hope Alin can pick the best week in February and March for us. Alin proposes the week from February 28th to March 5th, 2022.
  6. The same applies to travel to Bulgaria. May is an exam month for many schools, making the date difficult. Nina offers that it is possible in her school from May 9th to June 4th. Which week suits you?
  7. Is it possible to travel safely again? From a German perspective, Turkey was a high-risk area. The situation in the German airport was certainly the most dangerous, everyone wore masks, but in the area of ​​security checks, no distance was observed at all. The planes were not fully occupied. Most of the time, the middle seat was left free. We felt very safe in Turkey itself. The school has taken many Corona protection measures: distance, mask, disinfection and daily measuring fever. Corona protection measures have also always been important in the hotel and restaurants. After arriving in Germany, all of our students and teachers took a rapid covid-19 test. We were all negative. But we were all vaccinated. All PCR tests carried out by the Bulgarian teachers and students were negative too.

We started our return journey in the night from Thursday to Friday.

Our very special thanks go to Ertugrul, Gökben and Görhan, who have accompanied us tirelessly.