

Erasmus+ - Creativity & Digital Competences

In 2018 when the staff from the five participating schools in Northampton, Amberg, Budapest, Porto and Riga collaborated on our project submission entitled “Creativity and Digital Competences for the 21st Century” who could have foreseen how relevant these skills would become during the Covid-19 global pandemic? We have seen in our own school community how staff and girls have embraced the challenges, honed our digital skills, thought outside the box and produced the most amazing creative pieces, beyond anything we could have imagined. Our Erasmus+ project should now be drawing to a close, having hosted our own mobility in April 2020. Obviously this did not take place, however, our project has been extended and we hope to share more about this with you in the Autumn term, together with a virtual exhibition of our project on Inspiring Women. Below are some of the reflections from our Erasmus+ ambassadors, whose disappointment about our cancelled mobility just made them even more determined to connect with their friends across Europe:

Words can't express the immense disappointment felt when the prospect of not hosting the final mobility of the High School's first Erasmus+ project became increasingly likely. Although we were prepped with our agenda, our inspiring female exhibition was ready to go and the spectacle of our Bollywood routine really was coming together (the “closing ceremony of the Olympics” as Mrs Hill described it) unfortunately didn't quite happen. For the group, including myself, who were lucky enough to travel to Riga back in October not being able to reunite and show the much-anticipated Northampton way of life to our international friends was most disappointing. I had also spoken to many friends at school about our Erasmus friends and I was so excited for them all to meet each other. However, a real-life reunion just wasn't meant to be. Nevertheless, thanks to zoom calls and Instagram chats our friendships haven't faded! Indeed, just a few weeks ago I surprisingly received a box parcel from Elza, my Latvian friend who hosted me, full of my favourite Latvian chocolates and treats aswell as a painting of the Turaida Castle we visited together with a heartfelt message on its back - it really made my GHL day! In return, I have sent a parcel full of Elza's British favourites, particularly shortbread and teacakes - hopefully it successfully makes it to Riga!

Daria

In October last year I was invited to take part in the Erasmus trip to Latvia, while I was apprehensive as I was the only one in my year going, I accepted. It was one of the best experiences of my school career. From learning about the culture and heritage of Latvia to making friends with people from different countries it was the most eye opening experience I have had. It made me understand different cultures and languages a lot more as well as be able to make friends and attempt to learn their language.

Saturday morning at around 4am rolled around so quickly and we were in the airport saying goodbye to our hosts repeating to each other this won't be the last time you see us, the last thing we said before catching our flight was "see you in England".

When coronavirus devastatingly ripped through the world, the likelihood of being able to hold the closing ceremony of the Erasmus programme slipped further and further from our reach.

While we were all sad we were not able to host the mobility here as well as show our friends from Riga, Portugal, Germany and Hungary our school and our culture, we were able to find an alternative. We have faceted a lot since we left Riga and plan on seeing our friends once we are able to. I know I have made friends for life on this trip, not only from Riga, Portugal, Germany and Hungary but also from Northampton. I went to Riga not knowing the girls in the years below me too well, I came away from the trip with new found friendships which I know I will keep for a long time. I want to thank Mrs Hill and Mrs Diez for taking us to Latvia and also for putting so much of their time into the project. It was a trip and an experience I will never forget and I cannot wait to see all my friends again soon. While I am sad my Northampton High School experience has come to an end and I am moving on to new challenges, I know I have a good set of skills behind me as well as friends for life thanks to Erasmus.

Claudia

Back in October 2019, I was lucky enough to spend a week in Riga, Latvia as part of the Erasmus+ program. From learning key skills for the world of work, exploring the amazing city and not least building relationships with people from across the continent, I certainly came back from Riga as a more rounded individual. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had.

In Riga, we lived with our Latvian hosts and were joined by students from Germany, Hungary, and Portugal. Perhaps the most eye-opening part of the trip was how we were able to forge such strong relationships with people who were strangers to us just a week before. As we cried our goodbyes at 4am in the airport, we were all holding onto the fact that we would see each other again soon in April when we were due to host a mobility in Northampton.

Unfortunately, coronavirus had other plans. Although it did not come as a surprise that the April mobility had been cancelled as Covid-19 tightened its grip on the world, we were devastated by the news.

It was hard not to think of what we would have been doing, who we would have been with again when the scheduled dates of the mobility rolled around. On the day when the group of girls from Latvia were meant to arrive, we organised a zoom call for us all to come together virtually. We had all been in touch since our meeting in October but seeing everyone's faces, albeit through a screen, was really uplifting.

Over the past couple of months, I have looked forward to the zoom calls and group chat conversations with our long-distance friends, sharing how we spent our lockdown days and reminiscing over our unique memories and experiences from Riga. I think it is extraordinary how

our friendship, kindness, and support for one another can extend beyond the screens and lagging audio.

Finally, I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has made it possible for us to have such a close-knit community that we can rely on to brighten our days in this strange and difficult situation. I am so grateful to have Erasmus for making the tough times we are facing more bearable.

Anisha