

‘ROTTERDAMESE’ FEEDBACK

The date and time was 21:00, 24th February 2013 when a small, yet comfortable airplane arrived at Václav Havel’s Airport, marking the end of a wonderful journey and a wonderful experience. It was absolutely clear to all of us that a detailed feedback would be required very soon. We were, however, surprised by our teachers’ generosity, as we’ve been given a whole week worth of re-adaptation and have thus been able to regain our lost strength, energy and vigour. Our task has been merely delayed, however. We have been asked to write about our experiences... and when a student is asked something, what can he do but respond?

And so here you have it!

What on earth is this EEYP?!

EEYP stands for *European Erasman Youth Parliament*. Still doesn’t say much, does it? Explained bluntly, EEYP is a conference; a meeting of young people interested in politics, economics, public oratory and getting to know people from all over Europe. It is a week of hard work and of almost endless fun. A week of insufficient sleep, baguettes for lunch, night-time (tea!) drinking on a boat, playing with swords, spears and maces hidden in cabinets just at your workplace and, last but not least, of listening to vocal concerts of the slightly intoxicated Irish delegation.

Should the reader’s reaction by some miracle be “How do I sign up?”, there is a response at hand. All you need to do is to write an application, pray and eventually be chosen by a committee of teachers. That’s how we got in, anyway.

And our participation itself?

We arrived to Rotterdam *in medias res*; meaning ‘in the middle of the thing’, though ‘late’ would fit better. Our austerity measures flight was comfortable, swift, hiccup-less and altogether had but one drawback, this being its timing. Yet not even our delayed arrival could stop us from being bewildered and amused by observing national idiosyncrasies that almost curiously matched our stereotypes. We found the Swiss all having watches and carefully watching time – getting nervous when anything got delayed. We found the Belgians all drinking dark ales and eating chocolate. The Irish ever merry and ginger, the British scarce and overwhelmingly witty, the Dutch all blonde and their speech rather guttural. But soon enough, hard work and quite intimate housing conditions let us have a look at their deeper selves, quickly raising the curtain, or any other kind of barrier between us, and making us think and act as... Europeans? Our national feelings actually disappeared so fast, we ceased to speak Czech even within our delegation. Speaking bluntly, we soon stopped thinking about the others as Irish, Belgian, Romanian, Swiss, German and Italian and started referring to them as co-workers, mates and friends. Still, I suppose that is the idea.

To get on with it; though (or because?) the work was extremely hard and demanding almost all the time; though the amount of sleep we got could hardly be called excessive; though the food was, well, Dutch; though we lived on a boat and the space in our rooms would be found insufficient even by pygmies; not even the grumpiest delegate could contradict the statement: “We have enjoyed it, thoroughly.”

For most (if not all) of us, EEYP was a life-changing experience – the best of all our holidays, a week of our hardest work. Within this week we have found more friends than most people meet in the whole year. We got to know different cultures, habits, mentalities; we learned how to speak in front of an audience and came to love it.

And altogether... learned that even hard work can be extreme fun.