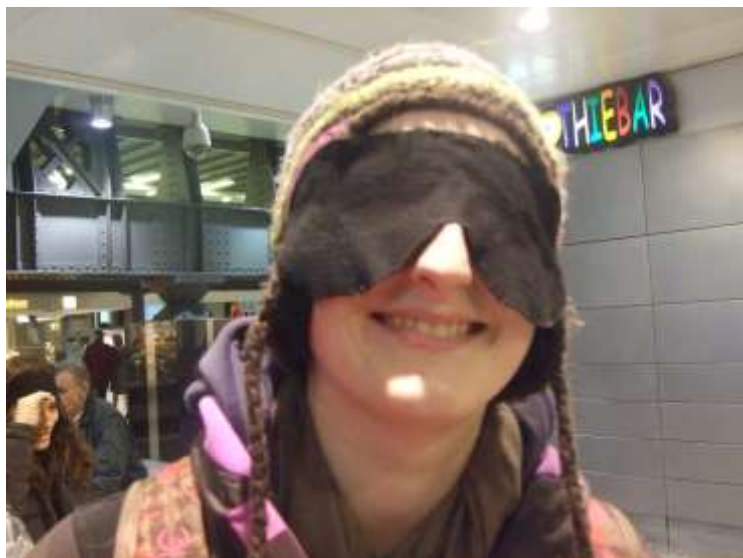


Personal reflection

Hello, I am Tana 20 years old and studying early education at high school in Malines. I heard of the program and I found it very interesting. I was curious to meet all the people from all over Europe. They all study to become a teacher but, I knew it was going to be really different in every country. I was so excited to leave for Namur but unfortunately I became sick and I missed the first week of the program. So it was a little bit difficult to step in to the program just before the weekend. I arrived on Friday, and I got a really nice welcome from the whole group. You really felt that it was a cultural group, and every person of the group wanted to meet new people and discover new things. I really love the idea of the program. Discovering new things, looking at the nature in a totally different way than when you are just walking in the nature. A bunch of activities, games, stories to do with the kids later on with my own class and during the practical experience when I am studying.

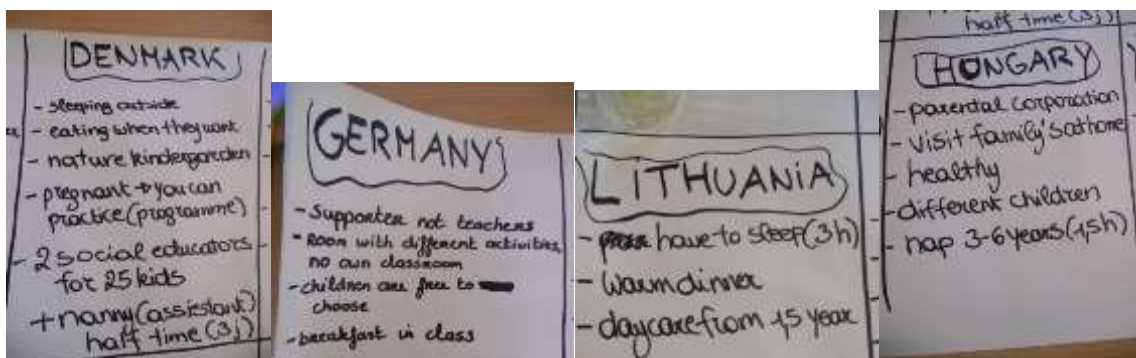
Before coming here we had to do a few things in advance. We had to prepare a PowerPoint presentation which explained our educational system in Flanders. It was interesting to pay attention to that, because I didn't really paid attention to it before. I am now going to look at the educational system in a really different way. Before I just took it for granted, because it is so in our country. Also we had to collect some pictures of the kindergarten class and the playground that represents our schools in Belgium the best.

At the weekend we went on an excursion with the whole group. On Saturday we went to Namur by bus. On Sunday we went to Brussels, and there it was really interesting to discover the city in a different way than before. We did a lot of things that are also nice to do with kids on different places. We had two guides but they both spoke French. So a student had to translate it in English. It was a nice experience the guiding tour in Brussels. I had already visited the city but not in this way. We paid attention to other things. For me we did a very new game to discover a place you didn't know before. It was about teamwork, trusting each other, exploring with all the senses except the sight. We had to search a partner and one of us was blindfolded. We walked along the streets and we really had to trust the other person because one sense was turned off. We walked on the market and I was blindfolded, first it was really scary and you have to get used to the feeling of not seeing anything. It is like you always took it for granted and now it is gone. Immediately you are searching for other ways to be safe at the market. You carefully walk on the street, you don't say anything so that you can hear better, you don't let go of the person next to you because she is your leading person. You get to taste different things and you need to remember them just about taste and feeling.



The best experiences for me were with the kids from the school in Gesves. We had to prepare a lot of activities in our group. Sometimes it was difficult to work with so many ideas and the different languages. But we worked well together and we ended up with very good ideas. We all used our imagination to create a story with a lot of games, stopping points and things to discover for the kids. The kids were really into the story. It was a story about Medusa, an old witch who had magic powers. She had turned the queen from the castle into stone because she didn't want to offer her food and shelter. The kids had to look for Medusa, but it was very important that they didn't look straight in Medusa's eyes because otherwise they would also be turned into stone statues. The kids were so different than when I am on teaching practice. Normally we don't go a lot outside with the kids, only to collect some leaves, take a walk in the forest, play in the snow, but not often. Most children in Belgium aren't used to going outside and to have so much space to do whatever they want. We gave them a lot of freedom to discover the park around the castle, to build a castle where they can live, to collect materials to make the castle more attractive, all of these things came from inside of the kids and that was really important to us. So they were motivated from the inside and they didn't have to do something they didn't feel like doing it.

The activity that impressed me the most in the whole program, was the activity with the PowerPoint presentations about the educational school systems. I was very surprised to hear about the systems in the other countries. Especially Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary,... The systems were so different than ours in Belgium. In Denmark there are small kids between 0 and 3 years old sleeping outside the whole day long in the daycare, even when it is freezing and rainy outside. I really can't imagine that it would happen in Belgium where it isn't normal to do that. But in Denmark they found it normal, and very good for the children to sleep in the outside air. In the kindergarten they eat breakfast together every day and they can eat whenever they want the whole day long. In Germany it is normal that the whole kindergarten school is located in different rooms. Each room has its own purpose and its own teacher. So you have a painting room, a reading room. So the kindergarten teachers in Germany don't have their own classrooms and group of children, which is the opposite of the kindergarten in Belgium.



During the program I discovered a lot of differences in the group of teachers in spé, but also a lot of similarities. It isn't because you don't speak the same language, come from the same country, same school, you can't work together, learn a lot from each other and make an influence on everybody's life. That's what we did, we were a multicultural group and we enjoyed every moment of it!



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