

Personal reflection by Meike Ihmels

When I applied to this project, my first aims were to see Barcelona, to get to know other people, to do something with children. I was curious about how the work with children would be, whether we would understand each other. It was a chance to see something different from the studies at home, and to cooperate with students from other countries.

But I had no real idea, what the program would be like.

We prepared our things, we booked our hostel and as fast as can be the day came to fly to Barcelona. So, what was the first impression? Our first stop was at the plac a Espanya. Just some words: big, crowded, expensive.

Later that day we went to Marti codolar, the place where we were going to live the next two weeks. What a nice environment to think about early childhood education: a big green park with lots of trees and things to discover. We met some of our new colleagues and we did indeed that: we discovered.

In the evening we got the first information of what the program was all about. Lots of information, and more and even more information the following days, till there was just as many information as rumors about them. It became stressful.

But it was not about the information, not about the work and the writing, not about getting to know about 40 new people and live and work with them, not about the totally new environment, not about the workshops that was stressful, it was all of that together and not having time for oneself to cope with it. So some of us took their time.



However, I really enjoyed to stay in this group, to get to know the people. In my case, this took a little longer because I always need time to defrost with people I don't know. But I saw, that after a little

while the group began to look after each other, took care, asked if someone needed help and spent the nights together. Suddenly, it was easy to communicate, to spend the whole day with each other, we became one

group. You could feel it the most, when we did the happening: going through Barcelona, doing “the ant”, and other really special things, that was something I couldn’t imagine to do. But I did it, for the group, and it was fun because we did it together. And I got more self-confident. Suddenly it was not embarrassing to do a hopscotch in the middle of plac a Espanya, or doing a “flash-mop” in the park Güell, because we did it as a group. Another point is that I learned a lot. For example, now I will always think of how to use more than one sense in an activity with children. How can I make them feel, see, hear, taste, smell the theme I want to show them, to let them explore it from different sides.



Also, I learned a lot artistic things, about new songs, new ways to work with paper and color, about traditional dances and some more about the countries that participated in this programme, about working with senses and exploring, about telling stories, about groups, and about Spanish kindergartens and a little bit

about Barcelona. Quite a lot for only two weeks.

We discovered the city really in a different way, and for that the programme was all about.

We got a close look, a look from different angles, a look from above etc. and we could use that and take it with us home. This is something I really enjoyed.

Never mind that we as the small group were all from other countries, we got to know each other, and worked together as a team, everyone got his place in the group, we worked in an effective and pleasant way. Working with them was easy and fun. In the way we prepared and made the meetings with the children one could see, that there was always a part of all of us in there. We decided together, prepared together, learned together. That was a nice feeling.

I really liked the first evening, when we all brought something special to eat out of our county, and I tried almost everything. For me that was a good start to come into a conversation. The evenings prepared by the different

countries were nice too, to get another point of view on the countries. But in my opinion the best time to come into a conversation and get to know with each other was the breakfast- and the supper time, because you



always sat with other people at the table. And of course the evenings, after all the work of the day was done.

So, how was the work with the children like? First I have to say, that I was very surprised that the children actually could understand us, even if we spoke in English. I had no idea that they have English lessons already.

Actually, thinking of activities for children you don't know was not easy. When I do an internship in a kindergarten in Germany I watch the children a long time and then think of activities. Of course this was not possible here.



But after meeting the children the first time, we already got to know them a little, and could assess their possibilities. So it was easier to find activities for them. But we learned also, that 13 Catalan children are not so easy to handle. They were so full of power, and they wanted to move. But I think, we worked good in our team and we came to a good result because everyone of us took a part in the activities and even if we had to improvise we decided fast and all together.

Another thing I saw was that the children in Spain are similar to the children in Germany, not in the way they were educated, but in the way they play, speak, act etc.

To put it in a nutshell, it was fun to work with the children and I take a lot of new ideas and memories about the activities with me to Germany.

To sum up, one could say that the two weeks were a great experience for me, I met new friends, got to know a city, got a sunburn, and learned a lot.