



Students as decisionmakers – The Erasmus+ project LiSE

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“Erasmus+” is an international programme financed by the European Commission to foster cooperation and mutual understanding between schools, students and teachers within the European Union. This abstract gives a short overview on results from an Erasmus + cooperation (2016 – 2018) between schools from Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany and Portugal about “Living in a smart environment 2030 – Chances and challenges” (“LiSE”). Our project was designed to address inter-related issues within our broad topic through three pillars: future schools, smart cities and inclusion. The first two pillars of the project offered a wide range of different geographical aspects:

i) The use of geomedial software applications: We learned how to produce food and clothing origin maps, calculated our CO₂ footprint and learned how to reduce food waste; all aspects were accompanied by visits to either start-up initiatives or by meetings and discussions with specialists in their fields. The mapping was done by using Google Maps.

ii) The use of alternative energy sources on different latitudes (several visits to geothermal, solar and wind power-plants), which included solar cooking in Portugal and a workshop on the future of public transportation for the Munich City Council. These topics were mostly addressed during field trips, which took the students also to geographically interesting places, e.g. the polar circle in Finland.

iii) The shaping of urban realities starting with mapping and assessing the area occupied by green spaces around the school; this activity was complemented with an artistic perspective on how to create more green spaces until 2030. The demands of the students with regards to their future environments was collected in a document (“Charta of Varna”) during the Bulgaria meeting and meanwhile handed over to all five mayors of the respective cities and presented and discussed with politicians in a panel discussion during our final meeting in Munich.

iv) As a follow up of the project students from all schools planted trees in the vicinity of their schools, these activities as a kind of ongoing project are also mapped. In addition students from Belgium planted 1200 trees in Sint-Niklaas. And last November students from Portugal helped to plant 5000 trees (of a total of 21000) in a large voluntary campaign “Operação Montanha Verde/Green Mountain Operation” that counted with the High Sponsorship of the President of the Republic. Learning spatial thinking using different scales: green areas around schools, forests in each participating country, and forests in Europe as well as changing the environment for the better as the only reliable way to fight global warming. Students were encouraged to take up the burden and privilege of citizenship, to become decisionmakers in their own right.

However, the most important aspect and goal by and large was to promote geography and sustainability in upper secondary schools by promoting geographical thinking amongst students and teachers in general. This succeeded especially well not only with science teachers, but also with the art and language teachers, who took part in the project. They started to find hidden geographies in their own subjects, too.