

(Luckily not only) Once upon a time:

*a Student Mobility in Waregem, Belgium 28
January – 04 February 2023*

An insight compiled by *Balogh Orsolya Aletta, Béres Nándor, Csákány Blanka Emma, Horváth Zsófia, Jeremiás Vivien, Nagy Balázs, Ürmösi Rebeka Hanna, Rajnai Adrienn, Rékai Zsuzsa, Szabadszállási Barnabás*

*Chapter 1 Arrival
and Family day*

Our Erasmus team headed for Brussels Charleroi Airport on 28 January. Each and every host family met us at the airport and drove us to Waregem that is about a 1.5 hour ride. We spent the evening by getting to know the host family. On Sunday we had a “family day”. Below we introduce our adventures on this day:

Orsi's day



After our arrival we had the next day as a Family day. I was invited to go to a family lunch which was a bit intimidating at first because I met with my exchange partner's whole family which was about 15 new people and I am not keen on big family events but at the end I had a really nice day. First thing in the morning, I met Maxime, my exchange student's older brother and we had to dress up in elegant clothes because we went to an Italian restaurant called La



Rosa D'Oro. The food was delicious and the ambience

was nice.

I even talked with one of the waitresses in Italian after she told us that she's from there which was really surprising. After that we went over to Louis's aunt and we had coffee. At 5 o'clock we said goodbye and then in the early evening Louis showed me around Waregem along with his family.

Nándi's day:

After arriving to the family home on Saturday, all of us quickly went to bed to prepare for the next day. Some people like to sleep in on Sundays, but that was not the case for us. We planned a trip to Bruges with one of the other exchange student's family fairly early in the Morning. Emiel couldn't accompany us because he had football practice, so we replaced him with the family dog. We visited the seashore, which in my opinion was a lovely place, but the weather wasn't working in our favour so we opted to find a restaurant to eat at. Barni and I both tried some traditional belgian foods that was made out of cheese and potato, but i sadly don't remember the name. After that we said our goodbyes to the other family and headed for Emiel's football practice. We arrived just as they were wrapping up, so we decided to wait for him in the little bar next to the field. When Emiel finally finished

changing, I thought the day was over and we were going home. How silly of me. There was still one event we had to visit. The Waregem vs Bruges football match. Now this was something else for me. I have never been to an actual stadium or football match for that matter, but the crowd instantly brought out the inner fan in me and I started to chant with the people. After a long and eventful day we finally arrived home, to once again fall into our bed exhausted.

Blanka's day:

After our exhausting trip on Saturday we went to bed straight when we arrived home, so Sunday morning the first thing was to get to know each other better during breakfast. We talked previously about the programs my host family planned for us and I was excited to spend the whole day with them, while sightseeing in Belgium.

First we went to Knokke, which is a beautiful city on the shores of the North Sea. It was extremely windy and cold, but later that week we found out that Belgians are pretty much used to this weather, or at least they can handle the cold better than us, Hungarians. I found it amazing, that from the beach of Knokke, we could see the shores of the Netherlands and even England.

After a short, but very nice walk in Knokke, we headed to Brugge, which was a very important medieval town, and it still has its medieval buildings and sights today, as it is part of the world heritage. The city is like from a fairytale and the city hall was stunning. We ate famous Belgian waffles, which are delicious and for the rest of the day we just walked around the beautiful medieval streets of Brugge. For dinner we chose a nice, little restaurant, and I tried Flemish stew with fries. After we finished dinner, everyone was tired, so we went home and had a good night's sleep.

I enjoyed our family time and I was happy that I could stay with such a welcoming and open minded family for the rest of the week. We had lots of laughs and got along perfectly.

Zsófi's day:

On Sunday, my exchange student and his family showed me their village and brought me to a local football match. Once the game came to an end, instead of going home, everyone went to the cafeteria to take part in the social life there. I found that surprising, because they spent hours talking to each other while standing next to the bar table. After eating lunch, his sister, who had already moved out, came to visit and while the family was having a conversation, I was teaching my exchange student how to solve the Rubik's Cube. In the afternoon, we visited the local café, and walked around for a bit.

Vivi's day:

Since we arrived late on the previous day, we did not really have the chance to get to know each other with my exchange student and her family. After a relaxing sleep, I was ready to meet her mother and her sister.

We had breakfast and a really pleasant conversation. Her sister is 18 years old, so we could spend time together. We played a Belgian card game, which was really funny and exciting. It was a bit hard to learn it in the beginning, but then I was better and better, so eventually, I won the last round.

After lunch, we went to the Chiro. It is a youth movement in Belgium. The Chiro is for just girls. The kids from the age of 6 to 17 gather every Sunday and they play teambuilding games. The leaders, who are former Chiro members, figure out the games and do the all

organizational tasks. They separate the children based on their age and they play with them. It was a really funny afternoon and it was so exciting to see this activity. They have a wonderful community.

My exchange student plays volleyball. Now she can not play, because of her injury but we went to cheer for her team in the evening. I like sport games, so I enjoyed it very much. Unfortunately, her team lost, but they were fighting so hard. After the match, we went to a restaurant. It was a bit crowded because there was also a popular football game near the sport centre. The dinner was delicious and the company was also perfect.

Balázs's day:

The day after we arrived, on Sunday, we had a bit of time to spend with our host's family. In the morning, my host showed me around the house, as the previous day I we were so tired that we pretty much instantly went to bed. I then talked with my exchange student and his family. It was really interesting to get to know them, as I could experience what an other culture's mindset is like. We then had lunch, for which I had a delicious turkey stew with fries and they also gave me Belgian chocolate for dessert. After that we played boardgames and my host also showed me his video game console. In the evening we visited a local football team's match in the city's stadium. It was very exciting for me, as I have never been to a live match before.

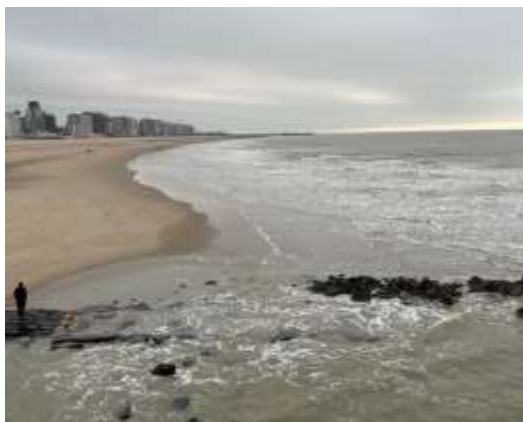


Rebeka's day:

The first full day we spent together was a **Sunday**. We woke up late because we stayed up talking and getting to know each other. By the time I joined them downstairs my pair's immediate family was already there. We talked a bit and then had lunch together. They then told me that they were planning to take me to the beach that day. My pair also told me that they mostly spend their Saturdays together with her family. We drove an hour to get to Blankenberge where the beach was. We walked down a row of shops, which was similar to Váci utca here in Budapest. We then went down to the water and walked along the coast until we all got hungry and went to eat



some waffles and have a warm tea or coffee at a restaurant called Bel'Air. After that we continued to walk along the coast until the Pier Blankenberge. It was past 18 and we decided to head back. We walked back to the car through that. Beautiful street. When we got back, we talked some more and then we eventually had dinner together. I had a very good time and enjoyed the company of her family.



Adri's day:

On Sunday, my first full day in Belgium, we spent the majority of our time at home. In The Morning we stayed at home and I got to know my exchange student a little better. Then, after lunch we went to the Chiro. The Chiro is a youth organisation in Belgium for girls to play together on Sunday afternoons. They first go there around the age of five and as they grow up they get different badges similar to scouts. When you are old enough you can become a team leader. My exchange student is a leader so we prepared a games for younger kinds and played with them all afternoon. An interesting thing I noticed during this time was that Belgians like to spend their free time outside. Then we went home and cooked some dinner together. We ate meatballs which I learned that Belgians really like. I had a great time with my host family and I feel that I got to know the culture a little better.



Zsuzsu's day:

I was really exhausted from the previous day, so my exchange student Rani let me sleep in a little. When I woke up around 9 o'clock I was served a delicious breakfast and coffee. In the morning I mostly talked with Rani and her family about various topics and I was also shown around the house. After lunch we drove to Brugge. I was taken to a local brewery called De halve maan. It was extremely fascinating to find out about the history of a significant beer and the different stadiums it goes through until it's done. After this we wandered around the city a bit more and I was lucky enough to try out the traditional



Belgium waffle, which was very tasty. We drove back to Waregem around 7 o'clock and had a delicious dinner at home. Later we ended the day with watching a series together.



Chapter 2

Our week day by day

Monday morning by Rékai Zsuzsa

The day started at 8.25 with an introduction from the headmaster of the school and the Belgian teacher who was the main organizer of the week. Shortly after this the presentations of each delegation followed. Everyone had to present their home country, the city/town they came from and the school they go to. Even though we Hungarians were the fourth in the order, we managed to captivate the attention of the others with our traditional folk dance presented by Rebeka and Nàndi. The program continued with the ice breaking games. Firstly the countries were divided into groups with their Belgian exchange students. We were first lead to a gym where there were two big beams standing.



Our first task was to climb over them with only helping each other and not using any other equipment and when everyone completed it we have to turn a mattress to the other side of it while there is a person on it. We were all a little skeptical about it since it didn't seem the safest thing to do but in the end it all worked out and we were able to solve the task. In the second game we were given the task to have everyone transferred to the other part

of the gym. Last but not least our third game was similar to dodgeball. There were no teams, the winner was the last one standing without getting hit by the ball. We were a little bit exhausted but had a lot of fun while getting to know each other. After these events we were really hungry but luckily lunch was the next program point.

Monday afternoon by Csákány Blanka Emma

After lunch we had our first project work. The Belgian students formed a circle and their exchange students an inner circle. We had to answer a few questions about our topic, diversity, in pairs. It was interesting to hear the different ideas and thoughts students had about difficult social questions and situations, for example sexism or racism. This work went on for hours until half past four and then we had two hours to prepare for the foodcourt.

We made mini sandwiches with fat and onions, pathé and winter salami. We also made kókusgolyó and put out some more Hungarian snacks like ropi or dunakavics. The Belgian parents were invited to the food court as well and the Hungarian food quickly disappeared, everybody who tried them, liked them. The Estonian and German table mostly consisted of chocolates, the Belgians served their world famous chocolates and cheeses, the Scottish cooked Haggis and the Norwegians made little tortillas with salmon. The Belgians also ordered a frituur which is very common in Belgium, they have these everywhere, it's like a food truck that sells fries.

We had lots of fun and tried each nation's food. After most of the samples were eaten everybody went home with their host families and with full stomachs.



Tuesday morning by Balogh Orsolya Aletta

On Tuesday we went to school, we had some delegation time and the Project work for that day was a cultural visit to the Mosque outside of Waregem. We travelled by bus and a really nice lady welcomed us when we got there. We were told that we have to wear a scarf on our heads inside the mosque so as to respect their religion everybody put it on. I

included this little detail because this week has been about diversity and accepting other people's opinion even if it doesn't align with yours.

Firstly, we played a game that was similar to Activity and we played it by forming international groups with the other countries. It was really fun, we had to explain different words, people or phrases or even describe them with our hands. Then, we met the Imam which is the mosque's spiritual leader and it can only be a male which I actually asked about during our visit. So, the Imam came and they showed us around the most important places inside the Mosque such as the bathroom where they have ritual cleaning sessions before praying which was something I've never seen before. Furthermore, we got to enter a praying room as well in which there is an enormous red carpet and you can only step on it without shoes. We learned about the mosque's most important functions and the Imam's responsibilities. He is a very admired person in the mosque because in order for a man to become an Imam he has to know the whole Koran (which is their Bible basically) by heart. He even sang us the calling for a praying session which was a unique experience. At the end of our visit we were offered some special snacks and some delicious chai tea which was similar in taste to the Turkish tea.



Tuesday afternoon by Rajnai Adrienn

On Tuesday afternoon we travelled to Gent. When we arrived it was raining unfortunately, but that didn't last long. We had to form groups of 10 and then we got the first clue for the city game. It was a competition between all the countries where we explored the city with our groups. We walked a lot and mostly went to see the street arts around the city. During the activity we stopped to take pictures and we even bought a waffle to enjoy while we were walking. After we visited all the the sights we went to a restaurant to enjoy a meal



together. At the end of the evening we walked back to our bus and travelled home.

Wednesday morning by Horváth Zsófia

Wednesday's morning started with project work, but we did not have any specific information about it in advance. We were gathering at 9am outside the Forum, waiting for instructions. When the teacher came, he told us that he would name different kind of categories, and if we feel that statement is true for us, we need to go inside the building. Such categories were: if you like science as a subject, if you play musical instrument, if you like Messi and so on. Each group was made of 8 people, and we were told to sit in silence. As the groups were starting to sit down on their assigned group-seats, some differences were obvious. Some had their bags and phones with them, but some were told to leave them outside. Once everyone was sitting, the teacher numbered the groups from 1 – 9. The groups with even numbers could freely roam in the room, get snacks, and go to the bathroom, whereas the teams with odd numbers could only do those things during the break. We needed to fill out an identification paper with some basic questions on it, but while everyone on the "even" groups received pens, the ones with odd numbers were given one or two per group. The teacher made obvious signs that some of us were privileged, but others – for whatever reason – were not. At the end, we gave in our identification paper, received somebody else's, and without talking to the others, we had to judge how they would look like based on their information. In the end we had to find our person, and talk to them, why we chose them. This game not only taught us about discrimination, but we could experience it firsthand.



Wednesday afternoon by Ürmösi Rebeka Hanna

Wednesday afternoon all of us were taken to separate programmes. These programmes included freediving, climbing and for us lasershooting. We got our guns and a cap which indicated the team we were on. After a few rounds playing we were taken to a different spot and were able to try a different activity on an adventure course. It wasn't compulsory, but most of us tried it anyway. We could also try ziplining. We had to gather at the bar there, which is in the same building the diving took place. We waited a bit for the bus and then headed home. Later that day all of us gathered for a casino night.





Thursday by Szabadszállási Barnabás

After the heroic battles fought over the cold fields of Campus College Waregem, the fellowship of the Hungarian and Belgian went to rest and eat some brussels sprouts. Some were enjoying their victory while others were crying deep inside because of their loss. Such is the nature of war.

The warriors had not much time to recover as the playing field was set and the tool of vicious competition was now floorball due to the decision of Estonia, the land of blonde girls and blue eyes. For some it was a game but we were not raised like that. Our blood and god would not let us crumble under the pressure of any foe. We played and won. Played and won. Against Deutschland, against Scotland and against België. But in the end we had to face ourselves, our kin, our mates of Belgium. It was a long struggle as no one wanted to give up; it is not in our nature. They were fierce men with minds and bodies of steel. The bell rang as it was 3 to 1 to them. Bitter was the feeling as we dropped to our knees in disbelief. A world has come to an end in our souls.

After that nothing was the same, not even when we danced, not even when the chairs became musical, which was magic only us, the Hungarians could do.

School was finished but the relationships of the Hungarian and Belgian were restored by the time we went to football match together. We were not exchange students anymore.. But 'boeren', together for Waregem. We lost. That day was about loss and dealing with it. We only became stronger that day. That is the only way we can overcome life, together.

The start of Thursday was an interesting one. The first part of the morning was meant to be focusing on discrimination, but that was cut short for technical reasons so instead we started the sport day. The idea of a sport day might not appeal for many, but I was excited to learn about new games. First things first, we cannot start exercising without warming up obviously, so the belgian students showed us a fun way to do so, in form of a little dance. As you can tell, although they were simple moves, the crowd struggled to keep up, but we warmed up nonetheless. The first deligation to show their sport was the norwegians. Their game combined frisbee and rugby. I know, what a combination. Now the way you play is simple. You can take only three steps with the frisbee, and after that you have to pass it to somebody else, in order to take it to the circle where you can score points. To say the least, I'm glad nobody lost a tooth. Many of the students were tackled to the ground, some were even burried under a pile of people. Ah fun times. That was an exhausting experience, luckily we had lunch after to regain our strenght and prepare for what came next.

Friday morning by Nagy Balázs

On our last day of the project week, the day started with the usual delegation time. Every nation had the opportunity to talk a bit with its own students and teachers. We Hungarians, discussed how everyone was feeling and what the relationship was like between the host family and the exchange student. Thankfully nobody had any problems whatsoever, all of us were satisfied with how they treated us.

After that, we hopped on our private bus, which took us to Brussels. Many of us were sleeping, as the previous day we visited a local football team's match in a stadium and were very tired. Making our way to the city, we touched Ghent as the highway leading to Brussels went through it. The ride took around an hour.

When we arrived, the bus dropped us off at the Parliamentarium, the visitor center of the European Parliament. There we had to undergo a very serious security check, similar to that of an airport's. When inside the museum, we got little devices with earplugs to put on. These guided us throughout the museum. You had to touch a phonelike device to specific points scattered in the museum to get access to its content. There were both texts and audio recordings about the history of the European Union. It was a good activity, personally I got a lot of new parts that I could put into my knowledge-puzzle.

Our next program was a short walk to the city centre, where we had lunch before our next activity, a sightseeing competition. During the walk we passed by the king's palace, which in my opinion has the most beautiful garden of the entirety of Belgium.



Friday afternoon by Jeremiás Vivien

Everyone had lunch with their exchange students and their friends. Most of the Belgians tried to introduce their cuisine to us. We tasted new meals every day and since I am interested in cooking, it was really exciting for me.

After lunch, we met at the Grand Place. During the time we were waiting for the other students, we took pictures of the breath-taking buildings around the square. These photographs were perfect to upload to the platform of the photography competition, which started on Tuesday and ended on Friday. We could upload all the pictures we took during these four days. They were separated into three categories (buildings, portraits, diversity).

When all the students arrived, the teacher told us the instructions of the next game. They made groups and we had to find ours. The exchange pairs were together but the groups were made up of different nationalities. It helped us to make new friends and to gain more knowledge by talking with other students who have various mindsets and cultural differences. It took some minutes and then our group was together, so we were the first who could start the game.

The point was that, every group got a list of places we had to visit and we were asked to make pictures of our group in front of the different tourist attractions. This way, we walked around the city and had a kind of sight-seeing. For example, we went to the Royal Gallery of Saint Hubert, Jeanneke-Pis, Manneken-Pis, and the Belgian Infantry Memorial. The city was really crowded, since we visited popular sights. It was not easy to take pictures but we managed the task really well. We also passed by other famous buildings, which were not part of the game, such as the Palace of Justice.

The game ended at five o'clock. We went to the Grand Place again and we walked together to our bus. Everyone relaxed a bit during the ride. The photography competition ended. When we arrived to Waregem, the teacher announced the winners. I won the

building category, so I got a really warm hoodie from the school. This was the perfect end of this wonderful day.



The end

