

I took part in an exchange student programme this year, which started with hosting Belgian students in our country in February and then we went to them in March. Our visit there was part of the final meeting of two projects with students coming from 6 nations.

Although against my nature, I didn't read anything about the country I was going to and I didn't really prepare myself mentally for living with a strange family. And that actually turned out to be a great decision. I arrived with absolutely zero expectations so mostly everything that happened was a positive thing. My host family was absolutely delightful. They were really friendly and nice with me the whole time I was there and helped me with everything I needed. My host family lives in a small village near Waregem, so it took us about 20-25 minutes by bike to get to school, and even though I hate cycling, I must admit I enjoyed those days, when we went to school by bike.

My host parents really tried their best at communicating with me but as we always arrived home late this was not easy. I had more success with my host's older sister, who was studying to become a teacher. On our first full day, Sunday, we went to see the sea, which looked like something cut out of a mainstream movie, just with worse weather. We had some nice burgers there and ate Belgian fries with it (our hosts insisted that it was Belgian and were very upset if we called them French fries). On our way home I also had the chance to try their legendary waffles, which were delicious.

Monday was the first school day and I was stunned by the fact that 1500 students go to their school, which considering Hungarian numbers was very big. During the week, we had



project work to do and although we have done some in Budapest as well, the tasks here were nothing alike. Our project task in the final meeting was to create ideas for a new product and come up with some marketing ideas (e.g. a website) for it.

We did the projects in groups and because this was our final meeting, we had students from Germany, Estonia, Norway, Iceland and the Basque Country in Spain. We had to make groups that consisted of 3 Belgians and their guests, who all had to be from a different country.



This task sounds really simple and fun, but if you dive into it and you come up with an idea, what often happens is that you google it, and find out that it already exists. So you are back to zero and has to start thinking again.

Luckily we had a couple of guys in the group who knew something about making a website and how to come up with something visually pleasing.

On Monday evening we had the food court at school where each country presented some of their national delicacies to the others and the parents. In the afternoons we always had some programme organised for us so, we went to Gent, Brugge and visited a university in a nearby town, where we learned about how you can use already existing companies to help start-ups.



I wish to visit both Brugge and Ghent again and have a closer look at them, because they both looked fantastic. The weather was always a bit dark and cloudy but that just made the



whole country that much more beautiful. After every organised trip was over, we always hung out with others from my school but we also had the chance to get to know some of the other students as well. We Hungarians found the Germans the most fun to be around, contrary to clichés and beliefs about them. We joined each other, when we were visiting places or during the breaks between programmes and spent some quality time together.

Our stay in Waregem was a unique experience. I met lots of new people and worked on tasks I have never done before; all that provided a really good feeling. Spending a week away from home, without parents and with people of my age together in the same situation working together and achieving results together is going to be a long lasting experience.



Kristóf Csatai Hungary