Project Erasmus+’s feedback and reflection

**Has the project offered you an occasion to reflect on the horror of the war and the necessity for peace? If yes, explain how and give a feedback on the project activity that has just finished.**

The project focused the student’s attention on the Unknown Soldier’s ritual in different countries (belonging to the Allies, WWI) and particularly in Great Britain. Analysing its various aspects, the ritual allowed to understand how it influenced people and the culture of a country. The students’ work started on December 2016: the teacher entrusted groups formed by two students with tasks that had to be completed during their Christmas holidays. Some groups extracted the key information of chapters of the book “The Unknown Soldier”, written by Neil Hanson and published in 2005 in England. Other groups surfed the web searching information about fixed arguments. Is must to say that during all the project there was an alternation between group and individual work, so students had the occasion for developing other competences in addition to the European ones. The sequent students’ tasks were alternated between school and homework: students focused their attention on the English project “Letter to an Unknown Soldier” (it started in 2014 and it will finish in 2018). The project’s purpose is to attract people’s interest on the themes of the First World War in occasion of its centenary: people who want to participate are asked to make a letter addressed to the “Unknown Soldier of Paddington Station” and each student had to analyse a letter chosen according to his preference. The next step was a general reflection about rituals and war memorials: at first students understood the importance of rituals in human history and life and then they studied the reasons behind the building of a war memorial that originally promoted the war and then they became symbols of peace. The research permitted to join two aspects of the ritual of the Unknown Soldier. After this synthesis of arguments, students studied the history of the British Unknown Soldier, from the birth of the memorial’s idea to its concretization and the figures that mostly influenced the ritual and the war memorial in Westminster Abbey. The history of the Unknown Soldier has been analysed under every aspect and moment, the key figures of this history were David Railton (creator of the idea), Herbert Edward Ryle (Dean of Westminster), Brigadier General L. J. Wyatt and King George V. In the last week of February, the class went to London where students saw through their eyes the places of the Unknown Soldier ritual; obviously, students considered the itinerary the key moment of the project! But the excursion wasn’t only an exciting experience under the students’ feelings, it was also an occasion of reflection about the Unknown Soldier’s history and the theme of the war. When they return from London, each student wrote a comment about the places inherent to the project Erasmus they visited during their permanence in London (in other words the Imperial War Museum, Westminster Abbey and the Cenotaph. Then the teacher assigned to different groups of students two tasks: some groups had to make a research about the history of the French Unknown Soldier and the other groups had to synthetize the history of the American Unknown Soldier. After this research students could compare their results and share the similarities between these rituals and the British one they previously studied.

I can affirm that the project offered lots of occasions to reflect about fundamental themes as war and peace. Indeed, it is one of its aims, in addition to the development of a European sense. Each step, each research and each work of the project brings to understand the reasons of the project’s birth. Through the history of the Unknown Soldier, I understand also the importance it had for people, even if behind this war memorial there was a political convenience. Indeed we studied the feelings of the English population for this event: there was a massive response because all people identified their beloved in the Unknown Soldier and it underlined the necessity for peace for the population. Another occasion of reflection was the analysis of a letter: the letter I took in exam was particularly refined because the writer made a real poem, so he spent a lot of time for the realization of the “letter to the Unknown Soldier”, indeed he identified the Unknown Soldier with his friend and comrade that died in the Second World War, so he used the poem to speak about war and peace and even if from the poem a sense of patriotism appears, it promoted peace. For me the most important occasion of reflection was the visit to the Imperial War Museum in London: through its itineraries and exhibitions, the museum allows the visitor to understand the influence and the impact that war creates on the population. This effect is specially created by the First World War’s itinerary that illustrates all the aspects of the war.