

Final Report from the abroad business trip

Participants

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Name of the study visit: Blue School in Vardo

Country: Norway

City: Vardo

Duration: 06.06.2016 - 09.06.2016

Host organization: Vardo videregaende skole

Purpose of trip: to disseminate the results of a successful project "Blue School in Štiavnické Bane" and increase public awareness of the importance of the retention capacity of different habitats and applying it to prevent climate change, promoting the development of bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and Norway.

Way of financing: grant EEA and Norway

Programme:

06/06/2016 Crossing the borders Slovakia - Austria 7:15; arrival to Oslo 12:35; arrival to Vardo 21:24

07/06/2016 Visit of the host institution, presentation of the project results of Blue School and its implementation into the educational process, visit important sites in Vardo

08/06/2016 Tour of the host institution, visit of the municipal office and meeting with the Mayor, departure to Oslo

09.06.2016 Tour of Oslo, departure from Oslo 13:55; arrival to Vienna Austria 16:20, crossing the border - Slovakia 17:15

Course of the abroad business trip

We started our journey on the 6th of June 2016 at 4 o'clock a.m in Banská Štiavnica. We went by car to Bratislava. We arrived there at the bus station in Mlynské Nivy 6:30 a. m. At 7 o'clock we got on a bus run by the Slovaklines bus company. This bus took us to Vienna airport. After check-in there, we boarded the plane directed to Oslo/Norway at 10:20.

Check- in and security check at the airport – it was one of the first great experience for our pupils who haven't travelled by plane yet.

We had a 5 hour wait before we could transfer to the next plane (from Oslo to Kirkenes), so we had a lunch at a buffet. We boarded the plane to Kirkenes at 17:55. We arrived to Kirkenes at 20:00, and from there the next plane was waiting for us– the plane to Vardo. We arrived in Vardo at 21:24 and there we were greeted by Mr. Leif Haugom, project manager of the school in Vardo. He took us by car to the hotel. We went through the undersea tunnel, which was built like the first one in Europe. It measures 3 km and is 80 m under the sea.

Next day, 7th of June 2016, after having breakfast, we were picked up at 9:00am by Mr. Haughomand transported us to the twin school, where we were given a nice presentation/lecture on the town of Vardo and on their school system. This school is specialized in these areas: Cooking, waiter, machinery, mechanics, computer technician or preparing for college. After this presentation we had a sightseeing tour in Vardo. In Vardo, there lives around 2200 inhabitants. We visited a fortress which is shaped in an eight-pointed star and it was built in 1737. Nowadays, the fortress is a museum. This fortress is managed by an officer and four soldiers who ran a solemn volley during many important days (for example like king's birthday on 17th of May). After sightseeing tour we had lunch in the school canteen and then we had a presentation about our school and about the results of project *Blue School*. There were 43 teachers and students listening to our presentation. At first we introduced ourselves and welcomed all of them. Our pupils talked about Slovakia for a short while. We hope, that provided information about our country and was a good motivation for our new friends to plan their journey to Slovakia. The next part of our presentation was focused on introducing our school, our school system and about results from the project. In the final 30 minutes of our presentation, we showed them a documentary about our school.

We would like to continue our cooperation with this Norwegian School, that is why we invited this school to visit us - our school, our country in September 2016 (19th – 22nd of Sept. 2016), the time when we plan on opening 'Nature park- Aves'.

In conclusion of this meeting/our presentation - there was very interesting discussion about falconry, which is taught at our school. For our Norwegian audience it was something completely new, because in Norway, falconry is not allowed. 16 students from the audience also received small presents and leaflets from and about Slovakia.

Then we visited a local port/harbor. We could also see a ship called Hurtigruty, which came to harbour for one hour and carried tourists for sightseeing. When we finished walking, we went back to our hotel where we had a dinner. Later that evening Mr. Haughom took us to a fishing village - Hamningerg, which is 40 km from Vardo. It was a polar day, so it didn't feel like it was the evening. We went by car and we admired the beauty of nature – called tundra. You cannot see a tree higher than 15 cm far and wide. We also passed the sea. We stopped at the most beautiful sea shore/beach (according to local people) which is even cleaned by the pupils from primary and secondary school in Vardo. The water was too cold to swim, so we enjoyed breathing fresh sea air.

It was very interesting for us to see wild reindeers, which were nibbling near the road. We could also see inconspicuous plant/flower called 'cloudberry' which brings the sweetest fruits according to local people and they make a jam from the fruit. When we came into the village, Leif told us something about the history of this village which goes to the 17th century. Nowadays, this village is a very popular place for summer holidays. Going back we saw the highest hill Domen (156 m a. s. l.) with a cave, where the women in the past (in 17th century) did/organised satanic ritual and did meetings with the devil. Women like these were bounded and thrown into the water, because people believed in water – like a pure divine element. If the women rise to the surface of the water – it was a sign of their sorcery/witchery and then they were burned. We came back to the hotel at 21:00.

The next day, 8th of June 2016, Leif picked us up at 9:00. We went to visit the national park Kiberg, located about 10 km from Vardo. There, we were welcomed by the guardian of nature, Geir Ostereng. He told us about territorial protection and also about the protection of some of the most endangered species like: Arctic Fox, Snowy Owl, White-tailed Eagle. Since neither one of us have seen the eagle in the wild, we asked to have a chance and we went to try our luck. And luckily for us, we did see them, but the eagles are very shy animals, so we could not take a photo. Then we had lunch in the school canteen and we continued by visiting other schools and the school equipment.

We visited the school kitchen, where students cooked fish fillets and a local speciality – whale meat. We tasted it. This whale meat they do not export and they use it to prepare this kind of meat only on Sundays. We could see also workshops/rooms where the boys repaired the cars and the other machines. This school has 220 pupils in attendance. It means it is bigger than our school. We spoke also with some students because their knowledge of English is very good.

Our final steps in Vardo led to the town hall. We met with Mayor of Vardo. He showed us urban spa and the library. We took photos with the plaque of Maximilián Hell and gave a short interview to the Local reporter. And this was the end of our programme in Vardo. We came back to the hotel packed our suitcases and went to the airport. The plane to Kirkenes departed at 19:20. The weather was bad so we had an hour delay and we arrived to Oslo at 23:30. We had to stay in hotel Gardermoen, where we had reserved accommodation. Next we flew to Vienna on the 9th of June at 13:55. And we used the time to see Oslo. We had a chance to see some monuments accompanied by the Ambassador for the Slovak Republic in Oslo, with Mr. Kašický. At 13:55 we boarded the plane to Vienna and arrived there at 16:20 – Ten minutes later (16:30) we got on the busline, Slovak lines, going to Bratislava. We were in Bratislava at 17:30. There was a car waiting which was taking us back home – to Banská Štiavnica (20:15).

The results of the abroad business trip:

- Better knowledge about the country and about people living in Norway, found out many interesting facts about nature and history. It was very positive that our cultures have some common history.

- Meeting new people – it means establishing new contacts and friendships with teachers and pupils.

- An agreed future cooperation.

- Improving of language and presentation skills of our pupils and teachers and what is more - in English language.

- Increasing the attractiveness of our school, because of the cooperation with the town which lies behind the Arctic Circle.