

*Gimnazjum nr 1 in Gdynia*  
*Heroes and Cultural Identity Comenius*  
*Project - from students', parents' and*  
*teachers perspective - our reflections*

***My reflections on Norway – by Gosia Pietrzyk***

Our adventure with Norway started on 16th October at 4.45 p.m. We met at Lech Walesa Airport in Gdańsk and got on the plane. After one hour we reached Copenhagen, after two hours we saw beautiful lamplit Oslo. We reached Trondheim at 11 a.m.

Every day we went to Brundalen videregående skole where the teachers meetings took place. Personally I was impressed by the Norwegian hospitality and attention. Thanks to them our visit in Norway was more interesting. We saw a ski jump - to be honest we were interested in seeing it. We visited a very impressive cathedral – where the Norwegian kings are crowned. The biggest surprise was snow. Supposedly we were whiz-kids because we saw the first snowfall this year. I remember very special place – Røros – I have unforgettable memories: a snow-flakes battle with Einar (Norwegian biologist) and a “skiing competition” .

I'm more self-reliant because of his trip. People who I met I will always remember. Despite the fact it was dusk and very cold and all goods were very expensive I always feel happy when I think about our visit.

***Our reflections on Norway and Turkey – the report awarded  
by European Commission – Agency in Poland  
by Karolina Grobelna and Daria Kałużna***

**In Vikings' and kebab's countries**

We have opportunity to participate in Comenius project meetings – in Trondheim and in Istanbul. Here is our reflection on trips to very interesting but totally different countries.

**Beginning and the end**

All things were rolling like in an American movie. I had heard about a competition by accident and took the fastest decision in my life – participating in the competition for the most interesting presentation. The main prize – visit in Norway attracted my attention. At the beginning I doubted to be a winner but hard work really paid off. I was a runner-up! On 16th October I got on the plane to Norway. That visit changed my opinion.

**Stubborn patriots who love fish?**

The Norwegians are called stubborn patriots who love fish. My visit to Norway changed my mistaken opinion. In spite of stereotypes regarding the Norwegians I saw hospitable, open, helpful and loveable people. We broke a language barrier because of their special sense of humour. Trondheim is a multicultural town. I met there people from the whole world – even from Poland. I came across tolerance. It didn't matter which your religion is, what your colour of skin is and which party you are a member of. It's very important for me. I appreciate it. I think we should follow their example. Despite of multiculturalism there aren't racism accidents.

### **Polish vs. Norwegian system of education**

We were impressed by Brundalen videregående skole. We saw lessons and had possibility to get to know the Norwegian system of education better. Their lessons are different from ours. They learn practically – we only theoretically. Norwegian school is well equipped. Teachers are on good terms with students who respect them. Uniforms aren't obligatory but student's clothes aren't provocative. There aren't any religion lessons in Norwegian schools. I think it's better – this is your private matter if you believe in God.

In my opinion Polish system of education is impractical. I envy Norwegian students.

### **„Do you speak English”?**

I was surprised by Norwegian knowledge of English. Nearly all could communicate in English. Learning English is very important for Norwegians. Students are very good in using this language. During my visit to Norway I had possibility to check my skills and improve my English.

### **Trondheim ski jump**

Bicycling is very popular in Norway – this is a hobby and some kind of entertainment. You can see a lot of places where you can borrow a bicycle. A lot of Norwegian students go to school by bike. The Norwegians are interested in skiing. The competitions in Trondheim are very important for its inhabitants – even Norwegian king participates in this event.

Adam Małysz broke a Trondheim ski jump record. Małysz is famous and respected in Norway.

### **What trolls do in the evening?**

There are a lot of very interesting places in Trondheim: cinemas, theaters, museums. Darkness is very depressing so there must be places where you can go in the evening. One day we were in science museum which was different from Polish museums. We could touch everything and experienced. We learnt a lot of very useful things.

### **Nidaros and Røros**

Thanks to our partners we had possibility to see Nidaros cathedral where the Norwegian kings were crowned. We visited very interesting place – small town Røros. I got to know more about Norwegian history so I could tell my class about it.

### **Every country has its own customs**

It's a well-known fact: every country has its own customs. Norwegians are characterized by their care for environmental protection. Public places, forest, mountains are very clean. They comply with speed limit. We were going to Røros by car on empty road very slowly. A teacher explained that fines are very expensive in Norway.

### **On the other side of Europe**

When I was in Istanbul I had an opportunity to look at Turkish teenagers' lives. At first glance it wasn't different from Polish youth life but it was only a pretension.

*Who gets up in the morning then goes to... Turkish school*

An alarm clock went off. Being sleepy I got up from bed. Together Bushra and I prepared to school. She was wearing a nice, black uniform unlike me, I was only a guest in Turkey.

We went to school by school bus. When I came to bus a smiling driver made me welcome. All students wanted to shake my hand. I felt very well because I met a lot of people. I appreciated it.

*The teacher's not so black as he is painted*

We reached the Istinye Lisesi school . Bushra showed me to the front of the school. The students stood in rows. The meeting with principal started. After this meeting we went to class where I met new colleagues. The lesson started. The teacher checked the presence and made me welcome. I found out that last exams are the most important in Turkish school. I realised that Turkish school isn't as strict as Polish. I was surprising how short Turkish lesson is. Every country has its customs!

*Let's have fun!*

Lessons finished about 1 p.m. Youth had their spare time they didn't need to do any homework. Bushra got changed and we went with her friends to the coast of Bosphorus, to the restaurant. There were small tables and big colourful cushions. It was very nice, I drunk ayran, spoken to my colleagues. We had a good time. I found out how Turkish people spend their spare time. The only one thing which I didn't like was smoking of nargilla. I don't approve of smoking.

*Everybody is different but everyone is equal*

When we were in Trondheim and in Istanbul we had an opportunity to meet people from different countries. Thanks to those meetings we know that it doesn't matter where you are from, what religious background you are, to enjoy yourself. Everyone can be who she/He wants. There is a Real value of our Europe in this variety.

## *Slovakian memories*

All together – me and my colleagues – the winners of Comenius school competition visited our southern neighbours – the Slovaks. This is a very interesting nation, there are a lot of kind and fantastic people. I'd like to start from the beginning. At 2 p.m. we took the train and started our long trip to Bratislava. We reached this town in the morning. This charming city fascinated me, especially marvelous buildings, mews and statues which were everywhere! Apparently the Slovaks like and can enjoying themselves. Bratislava was only the starting point to our trip because we followed to Nitra – the town of Cyril and Methodius. This old town is very special because of historic buildings, the old castle and fantastic people.

I was lucky staying in hospitable Mischka's house. I made friends with her family, colleagues and pets. I got to know more Slovak customs and the best delicious food. I had an opportunity to feel a very special guest because I celebrated my name day with international group drinking tasty fruit cocktails.

Every day we met students and teachers from partner's school and took part in trips for example to Spania Dolina and a cave. I spent time with my old friends who I had met in Istanbul and with new ones. There were students from different countries who have the same dreams and hobby like my. I was very happy when I met Monika - Slovak girl who loves everything which is Japanese. I could polish English and Japanese.

It was a real pleasure to scour in shopping malls, small gothic shops and the public garden where we could come across deers.

This Comenius visit confirmed myself in the belief that it's worth working on projects because it's very special experience and

contact with people from different cultures let us break stereotypes.



**Parent's reflections on the  
Project – by Jagoda Kałużna**

In my opinion Daria's participation in Comenius Project is a major step towards her social development. Firstly, it lets establish relations, secondly, it teaches work in a group, and thanks to this project my daughter uses different tools and most of all ICT. The project develops creative skills and cooperation between teachers and pupils, which will be useful in further school-life.

The participation in competitions broadens mind, teaches openness regardless of origin, opinions, culture. The pupils have a possibility to be responsible and self-reliant. The presentation and dissemination of heroes is a promotion of school and us. Thanks to our daughters' participation we have got involved in the project too.

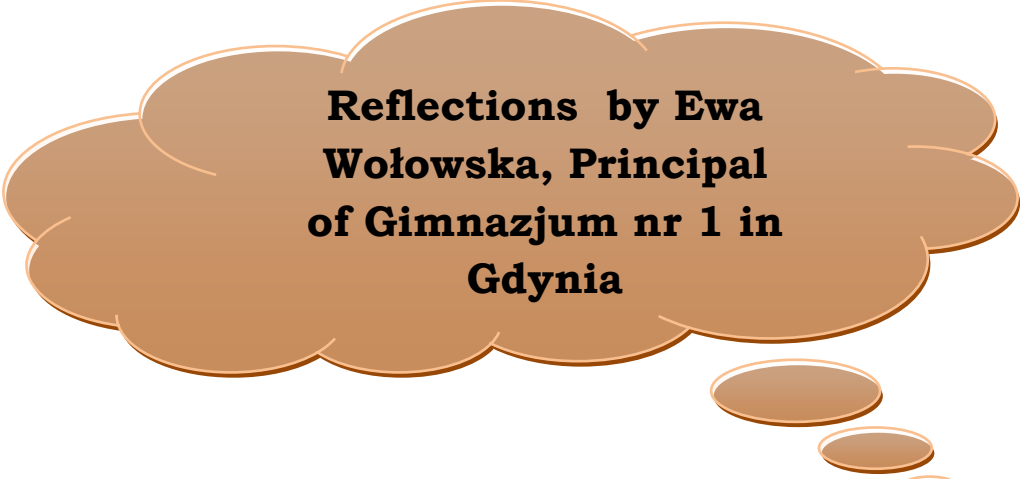


**Teachers' reflections – by  
Oktawia Gorzeńska**

The Heroes Comenius Project has transformed our school-life. Thanks to this project we have come to a real cultural dialogue with people from different schools and countries: Scotland, Norway, Slovakia, Turkey and Italy.

The project has involved students, teachers and parents. The students had a possibility to prepare projects, exhibitions, the web-site, and vote for their favourite heroes, take part in competitions and then go abroad and meet friends from partner schools. The teachers have filled a main topic in curriculums and gave students chance to work on very interesting issues. The most interesting matters for my students were stereotypes and identity. They have prepared a lot of films which showed us this problem in very interesting, sometimes funny way.

A great involvement of pupils, teachers and parents is evidence of project success. It was disseminated in our community and in broader forum – was chosen by Polish National Agency as example of a good practice. I'd like to thank you all colleagues, students and parents for successful cooperation.



**Reflections by Ewa  
Wołowska, Principal  
of Gimnazjum nr 1 in  
Gdynia**

John Amos Comenius wrote that “The teacher should take all the things into consideration to open students minds and use them adequately to circumstances”. In my opinion the youth from Gimnazjum nr 1 in Gdynia have followed the European way and found an intercultural dialogue. I am sure that the teenagers realized that united Europe doesn’t mean losing our own culture and identity.

I am glad that Comenius Project contributed to the increasing of standard of teaching in our school and was included in school curriculums.

I would like to thank the involved teachers, students and parents for a very hard and persistent work on the project. I hope that intercultural contacts will bear fruits in the future.