

Meeting in Turkey - Personal feedback - German point of viewşş

According to the COMENIUS Handbook



Another country: Turkey, which has become rather popular as a tourist destination along the Mediterranean coastline, but the place where we met was completely unknown to all of us: the Aegean province of Uşak.

We discovered a region and especially the history of a region which dates back to ancient times – a great place to become acquainted with the roots of our common history and culture. Various civilizations left their marks in this area, and the history of Uşak can be traced back to the period of around 4,000 BC.

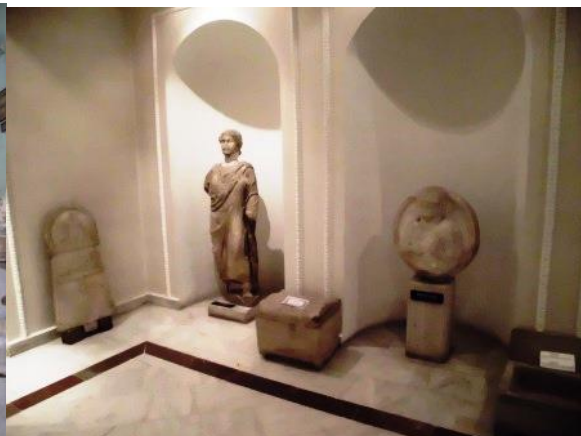
Today this city of not much less than 200,000 inhabitants is an important location for the production of textiles, leather and ceramics.

The first sugar factory of Turkey was founded here on November 26, 1926.

History and culture: We got an insight into the culture of Uşak when visiting the local museum and we saw impressive artefacts of ancient times in the archeological museum.



Uşak is the home of the first money of the world. Probably the most significant relics are the treasures of the Lydian kings, especially the famous Croesus.



But Uşak keeps track of present times, too. We were invited to visit the local university, a modern home for many faculties and vocational schools.



After welcoming at school the teams of each country presented the results of their research on the history of our regions according to our work schedule.



And after we had shared our knowledge it was time to relax and enjoy local specialties and flavours before we set off for a reception at the town hall by the mayor who informed us about the planning of the future development of the city.



During our visit at the Kışladağ Gold Mine we had another insight into nowadays economics of the Uşak region. The site is run by Tüprag, a wholly owned Turkish subsidiary of the Canadian-based mining firm Eldorado Gold Corporation with its head office in Ankara.

Tüprag A.Ş. was founded in 1986 to explore for and develop gold deposits in Turkey. The Kışladağ gold mine, which is located near Uşak, began commercial production in 2006 and is currently the largest gold mine in Europe, producing over 300,000 ounces of gold per year. With about 1,000 employees, the Kışladağ gold mine makes a considerable contribution to Turkey's national economy.

<http://www.tuprag.com.tr/en/about-us/who-we-are/9>



But then, on all our other visits, we deeply dived into the past.



Between 261-253 BC Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II, named after his wife Laodice. In 188 BC, the city passed to the Kingdom of Pergamon, and after 133 BC it fell under Roman control.

In Roman times Laodicea was an important cotton-growing region. Towards the end of the Roman Republic and under the first emperors Laodicea, became one of the most important commercial cities of Asia Minor as the city profited from being situated on major trade routes. It received from Rome the title of free city and once was home to Cicero in the year 50 BC. The ruins reflect early Roman settlement as well as the later Christian era.

Hierapolis, Pamukkale today, can be found at a distance of 8 kilometers. So even in ancient times visitors and pilgrims, who considered the healing waters being sacred, contributed to the wealth of the city.

As a world heritage site Pamukkale is today a popular destination for tourists from all over the world, and all of us enjoyed a relaxing moment there – no time to take a bath in the antique pool, just time enough for taking a sip from the healing mineral waters.



Another world heritage site and the historical highlight of our project meeting was the visit to Ephesus, Efes in Turkish. In ancient times it was one of the oldest, largest and most important Greek cities of Asia Minor and home to the Temple of Artemis (Artemision), one of the Seven Wonders of Antiquity.

First traces of settlement date back to 5,000 BC. From the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium BC Minoan and Mycenaean remnants exist. Around the 10th century BC the colonization by Ionic Greeks began.

Ephesus is also significant in connection with the development of Christianity: About 20 years after the ministry of Jesus, Christian teachings were brought to Ephesus on the west coast of Asia Minor. In ancient times, the town was right on the sea; by sedimentation, climatic and seismic changes to the coastline shifted to the west, so that the remains of the city are several kilometers inland today.

The town was one of the oldest Christian communities. Coming back from his second missionary journey about 52 AC the apostle Paul stayed there for a short while.

Legend says that after the ascension of Jesus, Mary settled with the group of women and the apostle John in a house near Ephesus where she taught medicine and the Christian belief. John is said to have died in Ephesus.



Seeing all these magnificent and breath-taking sites with remnants from centuries, even millennia back in time, we felt that the history of our countries is truly based on a common history of mankind. We changed the focus of our topic a bit, instead of presenting world heritage sites in our region we decided to present the history of our region. Our pupils did a great job to present the past of each region, fortunately the history of our region in Germany only starts in the middle of the 18th century ;).

Apart from the above mentioned slight change of the key aspect, we could in general follow our work plan. The programme for our visit was extensive, you feel the breath of history wherever you go and the sites are numerous.

In preparing our visit, pupils had no problem to deal with this topic and did some great research. Not all countries, especially as regards pupils, could take part in this meeting at the beginning of March, because of lack of time and/or money, as we are approaching the end of our project, different visa regulations or the tragic terrorist attack in Paris.

There was no panel discussion, but the participating teachers could share opinions on the present image of Turkey in western European countries with the vice president of the university and the mayor of Uşak.



<http://www.talis-teppiche.de/brand/wp-content/themes/talis-teppiche/timthumb.php?src=http://www.talis-teppiche.de/brand/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/talis-teppiche-occident-meets-orient-news.jpg&w=550&h=220&zc=1>

Among pupils there was not really a communication problem, my pupils could use the help of translation apps on their mobile phones or the good old dictionary, but to see the difference between Eastern and Western culture was a true challenge.

They had to cope with these differences from early morning until late in the evening. And yes, all problems could be solved, especially with the help of open-minded pupils, especially from upper grades, who were eager to learn about us and our way of life and were a great support in translating. Very hospitable, helpful and friendly host families did their very best to make our pupils feel at home and to help them in coping with and overcoming cultural differences. Intercultural learning was really demanding, and pupils had to work hard on their interpersonal communication skills, easy for some, very complicated for others, but they all managed, and finally this visit was not only the most demanding, but also a very rewarding one, as regards the development of intercultural competences. We hope that to a certain extent this is valid for our hosts, too. This visit opened my pupils' eyes to a country which is quite different from ours and real life is quite different from the kind of life they can discover while staying in Turkey as a tourist in a holiday resort.

Yes, the goals set for the pupils were appropriate during the preparation of the visit, but very ambitious during our stay. Bridging cultures is not easy, but we tried, hopefully successfully, awareness has been raised to accept other cultures and, above all, participating pupils really succeeded on a personal level and will share their experiences in their schools and thus be multipliers in our attempt to overcome stereotypes and prejudices.

I especially want to thank our Turkish coordinator Yasin for organizing a great stay with some special moments (not described in this report) and also Basak for translating nearly all the time and becoming the main contact person for my girls when they needed support in solving the above mentioned intercultural problems in everyday life.

And now, based on our intense insight into a non-European society, we all are better prepared for one of our last tasks – to find out and share what our countries have got in common.

As our project partners from Spain could not come to Turkey due to an exam period, we will communicate and discuss as usual by email, google drive and in our FB group. No problem to follow our schedule.

PS

COMENIUS-Handbook p. 32, CHECKLIST: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY IN A PROJECT
self-understood