



Learning/Teaching/Training activities
Meeting in San Juan de Aznalfarache (Spain)
20-26 March 2017

Monday 20 March 2017

A) Visit to the City of San Juan: The mayor welcomed us.

B) At school: welcome by the Headmistress, students presented their research.

San Juan de Aznalfarache is a city located in the province of Seville, Spain. According to the 2006 Census (INE), the city has a population of 20,121 inhabitants.

Although being a commune, San Juan is in the metropolitan area of Seville, located on another bank of the Guadalquivir River. The city is connected by two road bridges and a pedestrian area to the Triana district of Seville on the Isla de La Cartuja.

The day following our arrival, Monday, March 20, we went to San Juan de Aznalfarache, where the mayor of the town welcomed us and thanked us for our participation and wished us the best for the meeting. In particular, his invitation was intended to illustrate the main activities and resources of this country. It turned out that the Spanish economic level, but especially that of Seville, is based on the cultivation of oranges and rice production.

After the meeting we moved to the yard, where we took group photos with the students from other nations, our project partners.

After visiting the commune we went to the IES Severo Ochoa Institute.

This school is named after Severo Ochoa, born on 24 September 1905 in Lueca, Asturias. His parents were the lawyer Manuel Severo Ochoa and Carmen de Albornoz (sister of the politician and next president of the Spanish government in exile, Álvaro de Albornoz). After his father's death when Ochoa was seven, he and his mother went to live in Malaga where he studied. He immediately demonstrated interest in biology and focused on the study of biochemistry. He received the Nobel Prize in 1958 for research into the synthesis of RNA. RNA or ribonucleic acid is a molecule implicated in various biological coding, decoding and regulation genes. RNA and DNA are nucleic acids that together with proteins and carbohydrates make up the three major macromolecules essential for all known forms of life. Always in the town hall we were offered a breakfast, based on typical products

derived from oranges .Finally, we moved to the school lecture hall where we were welcomed by the Headmistress and where the students from the partner schools, attending the meeting, presented the research done during the classroom lessons related to the agri-food product chosen and experienced with local reference companies. In my opinion, each and every presentation, though with some difficulty due to the speed of English presentations, has allowed us to expand our knowledge of the typical products of the countries of our partner schools and of their economy, but also of the way they do research at school and how they chose to present their work.

San Juan de Aznalfarache, Tuesday 21 March 2017

During the week of the San Juan meeting, one of the most interesting visits with regard to the subject and the activities of our project "Erasmus + Green Skills for Social Agriculture", was certainly the visit to the Arroz SOS rice mill facility, where a good quality rice is produced, another typical product that clearly represents the agricultural identity of Andalusia. Within the factory, the largest in Europe, we have been shown silos and other large machinery in which a large amount of rice is processed daily through various stages.

1. In the cleaning the paddy is subjected to accurate checks to determine the varietal purity, moisture content, defect rate and product yield. Subsequently, by means of special plants, impurities are removed from the raw rice such as stones, earth, straw, dust and external bodies.
2. At this point the paddy starts the refining process, which takes place in two stages: the PEARLING, during which the outer casing of the paddy is removed, formed by the parts that cover the seed. At the end of this process, the product is called pearled or Whole Rice, which retains all the nutritional properties of rice; the second stage consists of the POLISHING. At this stage, through the use of machines called polishing machines, a film is removed, the pericarp, placed below the outer shell, the husk. The rice, passing through four polishing machines, undergoes various treatments until it becomes white as we know it. Lastly, the SELECTION is carried out according to the size and the optical effect so as to achieve a greater uniformity of the product: in fact, through the use of sophisticated machinery, the grains lacking in size and colour and the broken ones are discarded and destined for the zootechnical market.
3. At the end of the processing stage, and after a further check cleaning, the rice is ready to be packaged in the different types of packaging.

Before leaving the factory, our guide, gathered us into a room where we were invited, under his supervision to "cook" in the microwave oven some rice with pieces of cheese and salami. We all liked it, including teachers, and it was not bad at all! Before leaving, each of us received packs of rice and red and white quinoa, along with a small useful shopping trolley. At the exit we made a picture wearing the white overalls and the protective goggles we were given at the entrance. In the afternoon we went by coach to La Dehesa Rice field, a paddy field and a natural ornithological reserve where we lived the bird watching experience.

In this particular area, consisting of a series of green expanses with low shrubs and few trees, we were able to admire storks in their natural habitat. The striking feature was the unusual position in which stork nests were built in high places, even on structures like electric current poles. During the afternoon we ate outdoors, so that we could immerse ourselves completely in the environment, admiring the species of birds that populated it, obviously without disturbing the animals.

Being in contact with nature as we did, we did live a unique experience that gave us a complete peace and harmony that unfortunately in the city's chaos today are hard to find.

Animals that were not frightened or annoyed by our presence are obviously accustomed to humans and this means that in respect of wildlife and the environment it is possible to come into contact with wild animals such as storks and live unique experiences.

A comment about the rice factory

The visit to the factory "ArrozSOS" has made us understand that getting a good quality rice and in large quantities means that you have to work hard and pay attention also to the small characteristic details of the rice grains. I personally admire the factory workers and appreciate them for the great commitment to their daily work and throughout all our experience inside the factory, showing us patiently every small and large scale passage.

San Juan de Aznalfarache, Wednesday 22 March 2017

On the third day of the Spanish meeting, all the teachers and students of the European partner schools of the project, accompanied by their Spanish guests, spent a whole day in Seville, the artistic and cultural capital of Andalusia, on the Guadalquivir River, very close to a town of San Juan de Aznalfarache, home of the Spanish school IES Severo Ochoa. The visit started from the Alcazar Palace, which our guide indicated as the Royal Palace, where the Spanish Kings are still staying when they come to the city. Originally it was a great fort of the Moors, then destroyed after the Christian conquest of Spain and rebuilt on the ruins of the Muslim Alcazar by Pietro I of Castile in 1364. It is

actually made up of three main palaces: the first is the oldest building built in 1300 after the Gothic style; the second, the central body, also called the palace of Don Pietro I king of Castile which was built by Mudeca, an architect who built in the Muslim style, from which the name "mudejar" to the architecture that characterizes it. The patio, called Patio de las Doncellas, is decorated with colorful mudejar plates. Inside, two doors allowed the king to have two escape routes; even inside the walls are decorated with stones of many different colours that were carved with a special knife, the Alicatado; the third building, built in 1400, is characterized by a peculiarity that other palaces do not have, or it contains, scattered, or rather, almost "hidden" throughout the palace twelve doll heads but only two have been found. Always in the Alcazar, near the Patio de la Monteria, is the "Negotiation" building, built to regulate and promote commerce with the New World, the Americas, after the discovery of Cristoforo Colombo, in fact there is a room where Christopher Colombo's expedition was negotiated with Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.

Afterwards we went to the garden, about 60000 metres long, built by Vermondo Resta in the past was used to grow fruit and vegetables. We then walked to the Tower of the Giralda, the bell tower of the cathedral, whose name comes from "turning", in fact at its summit there is a statue of bronze that represents faith and that once turned to the wind direction. Now the name "Giralda" indicates the whole Tower, while the statue is called Giraldillo. The cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in Spain and is made of bricks recovered from Roman and Arabian buildings.

Before going to the plaza de Espana, we crossed a famous Spanish quarter called Barrio De Santa Cruz where the walls once contained aqueducts.

As a last stop we visited "Plaza De Espana", the most famous square in Seville, a splendid square, semicircular, grand, spectacular that gives the feeling of an infinite space interrupted by a large fountain in the center. A canal surrounds it and you can have fun crossing it in small boats. The canal is crossed by 4 bridges representing the four ancient kingdoms of Spain, all around the walls a series of benches and ceramic ornaments form spaces, especially "illustrated" niches where the capitals of the forty-eight provinces are represented by maps, mosaics depicting historical events and the coat of arms of the provinces placed in alphabetical order. The square is located in the centre of the Park of Maria Luisa, a very well-kept public park, thriving with tall plants, meadows, flowering bushes and walkways.

I was particularly impressed by the explanation of the third palace, Alicatado, in particular I was intrigued that there were twelve "hidden" doll heads; it was also great to admire the beautiful garden, really well kept. I started with the idea that I would get bored, because I do not really like guided tours but I changed my mind, I was not bored or tired at all, it was also fun to visit the royal

complex, observe some peacocks that were free in the garden, two of them even climbed up a pergola of wisteria and took the flowers to eat! In Spain, where I had a lot of panoramic views to get the whole square and then show them to my parents. As soon as we arrived we asked our teachers if we could take a ride on the boats crossing the semicircular canal stretch of the square; afterwards some students and I went around the park Maria Luisa, we also wanted to take one of those bicycles driven by four people but none of us were of age so we walked on.

When we arrived at the square, it was really nice, there was a young girl who was playing the violin very well, then she started playing a song that immediately relaxed me, then beside her there was another street artist playing with some balls, making them slip and giving them a "flying" effect. Many people wanted to take pictures with us because they said that we Italians are nice people, we even made a photo while jumping in front of the fountain. On my way back to Pisa airport, my mother immediately asked me why I was sad, she thought that during that week I did not have fun. On the contrary it was the opposite: I was sad because I was sorry I had to leave Spain. I showed her all the pictures: the ones at the castle, the videos of Consuelo feeding the ducks and all the selfies of that day, with a lump in my throat.

San Juan de Aznalfarache, Spain

Thursday, March 23

On the morning of Thursday, March 23, we attended, together with the Bulgarian students, a "workshop" on how to make soap with orange aroma and air fresheners always with the same fragrance. We went to the Chemistry lab, we arranged ourselves in couples and two teachers together with two female students, gave each couple a beaker and a stirrer. First, we combined caustic soda and water, then olive oil and stirred for more than a quarter of an hour until a homogeneous mixture was obtained. Finally we added the orange essence to perfume and put everything inside the molds. Soap can be used after a week. We also prepared an "air freshener" by combining kitchen salt, dye and orange essence.

In the afternoon we went to Tocina, and after a break where we had lunch each on our own, we went to the "Guadalquivir Orange Farm". Oranges are grown in a totally biological way: no insecticide or pesticide, the grass is also grown to retain more moisture and substances for the plants (though at first sight the land seems to be abandoned and neglected). On the contrary, it is a great way to safeguard the environment, and even if it can initially lead to a loss in product quantity, the quality increases in the long-term.

San Juan de Aznalfarache, Friday 24, March - IES Severo Ochoa School

The morning of Friday, March 24, was partially devoted to the vote for selecting the best Logo for our project. The selection was made on 18 logos, they were the 3 best logos that each school had already selected. For the first vote logos were shown on screen twice so to choose with more certainty, then each participant was given a leaflet on which each one had to write the number corresponding to the chosen logo, then placed it in a box, and at the end of the first vote all the cards were read aloud. In the second vote we had to vote among the 3 logos that had received more votes: the Italian, the Bulgarian and the Greek ones. The winning logo was the Bulgarian one, very close to the Italian one, represents 6 hands, under each hand is the flag of each country, while the hands support the food that each country has chosen for the project. Bulgarian friends made comments on their logo and received a basket from the Spanish school with products derived from oranges.

After that all the students from the 6 partner schools of Erasmus + went to the school library for the Round Table.

The afternoon was spent on an outdoor event, in the school yard, and some recreational activities that took place in the conference room. For the Culture Fair, Spanish students had set up stands, six of which rebuilt with billboards, brochures drawing the costume traditions of each partner country. The purpose of this festival was to illustrate the cultures and traditions of the countries of partner schools and European schools in general; in the stands there were also the food and the objects typical of the different cultures created by hand by the Spanish students. The students from each partner country of the project shared the spirit of the party and also we Italian students joined in wearing ancient Roman clothes!

Playing activities started with the boys from Romania: one of them played "Seven Years" at the piano and continued with a traditional song of their country; the Hungarian boys sang and danced a typical Hungarian dance; the same did the Greek students who danced some typical dances with a short video in the "background" in which was documented the extraction and processing of mastic, the quality product chosen by them; Spanish students danced flamenco and finally we Italians prepared an online quiz about the city of Volterra where all the students of the Erasmus+ project were present.

Finally, in the afternoon, the orange tree plantation was held: the students of each partner school planted an orange tree in the school garden, watering and adding new soil. Partner students have been photographed next to their orange which will bring the name of their school.

It was a day full of events and emotions, spent just in the intercultural, European atmosphere according to the Erasmus +tradition!

Hospitality in the family

In almost all the families that hosted us Italian students participating in the meeting, we were generally four. For about half of us, the families were close to school, the other half were a little further away, and went to school on foot, by car with parents or by bus. In all the families the mother cooked for us, the father only in some cases; they always cooked according to our preferences and sometimes they cooked typical dishes (churros, gazpacho, typical salamis). In the evening, at dinner, we talked about our lives, where we live, school life, family, but also about what is normally done during the day, our hobbies, sports and how we spend leisure time. There was the problem of language, more or less we managed to understand each other. As for the accommodation, we slept together with the guy / girl who hosted us and in some cases we had a room just for us. On Saturday, our last day we spent the whole day with our host family. We stayed at the shopping centre, eating out, visiting Seville, watching a movie or a volleyball game. Initially, before leaving we were anxious about the unknown "family" for fear of not feeling at ease, but after a while, we felt at ease, joking and laughing with them without any problems; only in one case, a girl felt extremely alone and in a quite uncomfortable place; a few days later she was placed in another family and she had no problems. In the end, when we left we were very sorry to leave because we were very fond of all families. In fact we actually exchange mails and together we remember the good moments spent together.

Presentation of the most significant activities of the meeting

During our the meeting in San Juan de Aznalfarache, Spain, we had several activities and participated in some intercultural workshops.

An activity that surprised and really moved us was when we were required to play in Spanish some poems by both Spanish (Garcia Lorca) and Italian authors (Erri de Luca) in pairs or small groups: in Spain, in fact, the Feast of Poetry was being celebrated in those days. I really think it is a very good and interesting initiative that would be worth repeating even in Italy. The dramatization of the texts was made by each partner student together with his Spanish guest who taught him to read and speak in Spanish and how to recite it in front of the video camera. At the time of filming, we were in front of the large "welcome" panel in the school hall, sitting or standing, with a small microphone pinned to the shirt, and were recorded while, without reading,

we played the poem we had learned. Poetry has also helped us begin communicating, establishing a friendly and confidential relationship with all the other partner students and also with other pupils in the school.

Another interesting activity was what we did in the chemistry lab where, with the ingredients that the Spanish Chemistry teachers gave us, we made orange soap and an orange-scented "air freshener", the orange being in fact the agro-food product chosen by our Spanish partner.

That is why we visited a farm where they cultivated high-quality organic oranges in a small village not far from San Juan. We went walking around among scented orange trees, loaded with red oranges, peeping through green and shiny leaves. A great naturalistic sight, like the visit to the Deseha nature reserve, along the Guadalquivir River, an oasis for storks and flamingos: on giant trees the storks had built their big nests and it was all a continuous coming and going into their nests and then flying off with their big wings in the air. And in the meadows cows and sheep were grazing. We walked along the marked trails, went for a picnic with the sweet wind shaking the trees.

Another beautiful activity, certainly noisier and more lively, was the Cultures Fair, a cultural festival organized by students of the Institute. In the outdoor stands, in the large courtyard of the school, on panels and billboards were exhibited drawings, maps, plastic or paper reconstructions related to history, traditions, customs of ancient peoples, but especially the ancestors of the partner countries. It is for this reason that European students had brought traditional clothes to wear in the festivities. On this same day each partner school, and also the Spanish school, planted a small orange tree with the name of their school and country: it was a way not to forget this experience and to tie all the partner countries together.

The meeting

Before the departure we were all in touch with the students who would host us during the week in Spain. This calmed us down as a bit of concern for what was waiting for us was there. In the previous months we had worked hard on the project, putting the maximum effort, both individually and in group. Even on the plane we made sure everything was ready and that each of us knew their part. Knowing that we were prepared made us more confident and aware of what we were about to do. As for the language we expected that at least the boys would speak English and so it was not one of the issues that worried us any longer. What was making us nervous was the thought of talking to so many people and having the capability to be understood, to make sense of the work done. We

were also committed to think about what gift would be most appropriate to bring to host families, from typical products to be eaten to handicrafts from Volterra.

The first day was the most complicated to deal with because the impact was not easy. We were welcomed warmly, but no one spoke English and there were initially obvious communication problems. We were immediately assigned to families and immersed in a reality with very different habits, especially with regard to meal times. We felt so tired, and the first one was a very long day, started early and ended late. On Monday morning we were very nervous because of the presentations and the impact with the school pupils was not very positive. We perceived a very superficial attitude on their part, especially when we were on the bus: they were looking at us with odd faces and little laughs, talking to each other thinking we did not understand anything. At school when we were all together, we felt more protected from these looks and we were busy working on creating a good impression. The presentations went well, everything was smooth and we were happy with our work. We thought our presentation was better than the others because we did not read and memorize it. In the afternoon we began to deepen the relationship with the families. In almost all cases, getting friends with the host families was easy, and even with their friends! We were almost all the time together even during the free moments, as everyone was part of the same group. Language has become less and less a problem, and we have communicated with an "Italian-Spanish" hybrid language. If we all talked slowly, there were no problems! The parents were very affectionate and treated us as their own children

They prepared food for us according to our tastes in addition to the typical dishes, they proposed to wash our clothes and took care of us all over and without ever making us feel out of place. The following days were easier because we soon got confidence with the environment. The visit to the factory was interesting and at some moments even fun. On Wednesday we took the metro in Seville: the city is beautiful and we laughed so much on our boat trip on the canal in Plaza de Espana. We did a lot of photos all together. The program included a workshop in a Chemistry lab, where we created air fresheners with orange and soap dispensers: it was a real job that kept us really busy. A Bulgarian girl surprised everyone because she told a teacher to be silent: we think that we have always been respectful and we behaved well. The place where the families were located was about forty minutes away from every place we visited except the school that was very close. Many funny anecdotes to tell: on the day of the visit to the orange grove there was a horse that was grazing quietly and at some point, obviously annoyed by our presence, started running and created a bit of confusion. It was actually funny!. Instead, during the visit to the rice-field we had to wear protective clothing, headphones and glasses and we all looked like aliens: we looked at each other and burst

out laughing, so did our teachers. Days have passed faster and faster, because they were very enjoyable. The weather was changeable: the first days were hot, while at the end of the week the temperature had significantly lowered and there were also thunderstorms. In fact the last day we made the presentations of the places of origin we beat the teeth from the cold. Among other things, sorry to admit it, (even if we had done good) it was so obvious that the other countries had done a more pleasant job than ours..

Everyone presented typical dances and songs, while what we proposed was less involving. We spent the last two days at home and were somewhat ruined by the rain. Despite this we enjoyed their company because we knew that we would soon have to leave. It was amazing how all of them were generous: they gave us a lot of gifts and we too have reciprocated by taking some presents to them. The day of departure was very sad, with the awareness that so many people would never meet again. Probably, and that is what we are hopeful, we will have the opportunity to host our new friends in Italy and we will do it with the same warmth they showed us in Spain. At the airport we took some pictures of the group, including parents and teachers, and it will be nice to remember this experience by looking at them. When we came back we experienced a lot of emotions: tiredness, nostalgia, pleasure to be at home. Friendships are undoubtedly the most positive aspect of the experience: we continue to communicate and keep in touch through social networks. The fruits of the work done have been good, and our group has proven to be united and balanced. We have come to the conclusion that the Erasmus project in general is very complex and not easy to organize: we have had moments of crisis and discouragement almost to the last moment before leaving, but we all believed in it, consistent with the commitment made starting from the first day. Returning home, we think how we sometimes felt under pressure and at certain times to carry on the job was hard. It was not a lack of will in carrying out the commitments, for we know that the project is long, but because of the desire to work in a more peaceful, coordinated and harmonious way. The experience was positive, interesting and instructive. It put us to the test as students, but above all as people and we believe we were up to the situation.

Students participating to the meeting and authors of the Diary

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