

REPORT



Episode IV

Short-term exchange of groups of pupils

26 – 30 May 2022

Sankt Vith, BELGIUM

INTRODUCTION

24 students and eight teachers spent five days in Sankt Vith, Belgium, to learn about humanity and democracy, as well as the EU. The participants honed their intercultural communicative skills while working in transnational teams. They also improved their digital competence while creating new web content.

The exchange focused on a 2005 British black comedy film *Keeping Mum* (external text), and a TED talk, “Our democracy no longer represents the people” (task-based text).

Altogether 12 sessions were held, and the following agenda items were covered:

1. Belgian cultures and languages
2. The EU: history, institutions, developments, and values
3. A Robert Schuman tour

Language with film

4. Group discussions on the film of the exchange
5. Group discussions on filmmaking and blog posts on film literacy learning experience

Content with language

6. Group discussions on the EU
7. Group discussions and blog posts on democracy

Social activities

8. Teambuilding
9. Photo-hunting

The instructor-compiled and/or –generated texts (content resources)

10. Refugees as small entrepreneurs
11. Robert Schuman legacy
12. Europass



Our enthusiastic hosting team from Maria-Goretti-Schule

BELGIAN CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

The session was held by **Carmen Palm** from Maria-Goretti-Sekundarschule. We learned about Belgian history, the Flemish Region (Flanders) in the north, the Walloon Region (Wallonia) in the south, and a small German-speaking Community in the East Cantons. We also had a chance to pick up some typical greetings and goodbyes along with numbers and phrases to express ourselves.

Belgium is a kingdom in North-western Europe bordered by the Netherlands to the north, Germany to the east, Luxembourg to the southeast, France to the southwest, and the North Sea to the northwest. It covers an area of 30,689 km² and has a population of more than 11.5 million. Belgium is a heterogeneous country divided into French-speaking people, collectively called Walloons, a Flemish-speaking people, collectively called Flemings, and a small German-speaking population in the eastern part of the country. Sankt Vith, located in the Walloon province of Liège, represents this part of Belgium with around 9 thousand inhabitants.

THE EU: BITS AND PIECES

- Formation
- Government
- European symbols
- The Founding Members
- The Member States



THE EU: HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Institutions
- Europe and the wider world
- Discussion questions
 - Why would you go to another country knowing that you are not welcome there or even barred from entry?
 - What do you think are the reasons for people from the south and the east to move to Europe?
 - The EU tries to persuade other countries to respect democratic fundamental rights and freedoms. Does the EU have the right to do so?
 - How successful has climate protection in Europe been so far?

ROBERT SCHUMAN

- The European Coal and Steel Community
- The Schuman Plan
- The European Economic Community

Read more [here](#).



LANGUAGE WITH FILM (PART 1)

Film links technology with culture. As a contextually rich and authentic text, it supports self-directed language learning.

Keeping Mum inspired the participants to learn about British humour, including irony, sarcasm, deadpan, wit, self-deprecating, innuendo, banter, and puns. They also familiarised themselves with black comedy films. They discussed such themes of the film as family secrets, taking revenge, having priorities in life, and paying attention to relationships. The film reviews of the partner schools' student groups open on their portfolio pages as follows:

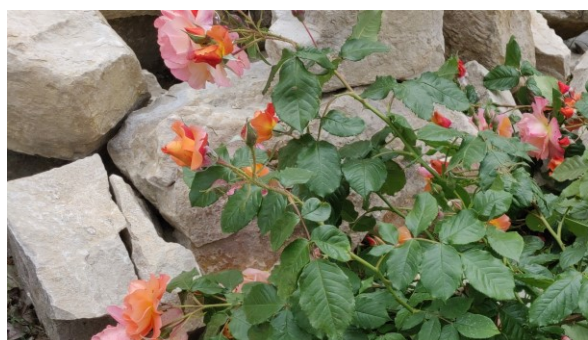
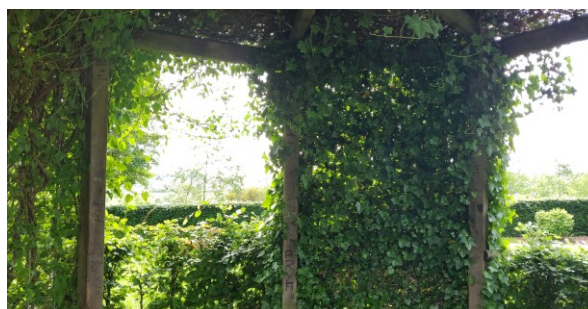
<https://griterasmusplus.eu/student-portfolio-iv-1/>

<https://griterasmusplus.eu/student-portfolio-iv-2/>

<https://griterasmusplus.eu/student-portfolio-iv-4/>

<https://griterasmusplus.eu/student-portfolio-iv-5/>

The transnational groups then focused on the main characters and presented their overall evaluations in front of the whole class.



LANGUAGE WITH FILM (PART 2)

The participants took a 16-question quiz on filmmaking to find out how much they already knew and what their knowledge gaps were. The teachers then helped everyone check their answers and fix any mistakes they had made. They learned about the five stages of filmmaking (development, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution) and the five elements of filmmaking (narration, cinematography, sound, mise-en-scene, and editing). The questions also included various film language techniques, settings, genres, shots, and camera techniques.

Before writing their thematic blog posts, the students discussed in their groups the following questions:

1. How conscious are you when choosing a film to watch?
2. Are you critical when watching a movie, or do you just like sitting back and relaxing?
3. How important is the content of a film to you?
4. What do you know about cinematography (camera work)?
5. What is your favourite film genre?
6. Who are your favourite film actors?
7. In what ways can film help you improve your language skills?
8. In what ways can film help you strengthen your intercultural skills?



CONTENT WITH LANGUAGE (PART 1)

The participants first focused on the European Union by studying two presentations done for them. They then worked on discussion questions as follows.

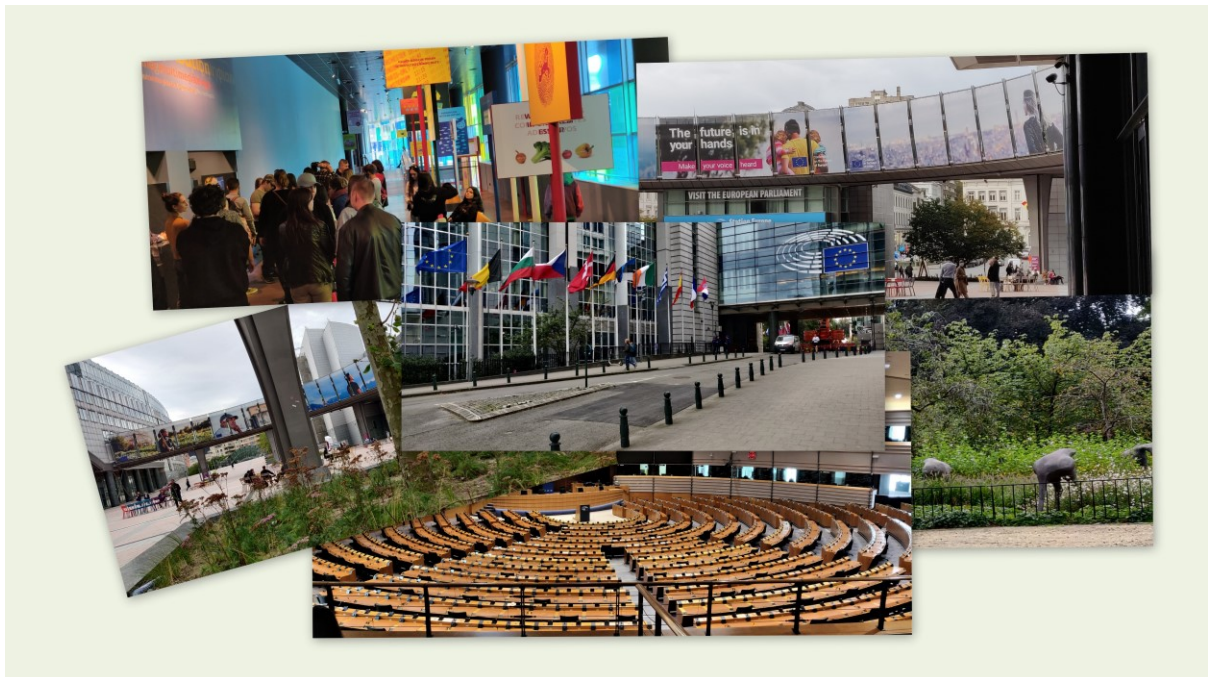
The EU: bits and pieces

1. When was the EU founded? Why?
2. Who were the founding members?
3. How is it governed today?
4. What are the "four freedoms" of the EU?

How does the EU work?

1. How many times does the European Parliament meet? Where?
2. What is the role of the European Commission?
3. Who runs the work of the Council of the EU?
4. What are the EU's interests in the world?

Finally, tall four transnational groups presented their thoughts concerning refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, different reasons for emigrating, democratic fundamental rights and freedoms, energy crisis, and the four freedoms of the EU.



CONTENT WITH LANGUAGE (PART 2)

This session was dedicated to democracy. In the beginning, the participants learned about six power ideologies, four power structures, and the primary forms of government. They then focused on Socrates and his hard questions about the rule by the people.

The groups listened to a talk by Lawrence Lessig, “Our democracy no longer represents the people”. While listening, they noted the reasons Lessig had to claim that democracy was only responsive to China, “Tweeds”, the White, and the Funders.

Before writing their blog posts, the transnational groups discussed the following questions:

How does democracy respond to people in your country?

What qualities are needed to be a good politician?

How often do you talk about politics with your friends and family?

How have your political views changed during your life?

If you were the leader of your country right now, what would you change first?

Do you believe that democracy is the best form of government?

How important is it to vote in a democratic election?

Read their blog posts [here](#).



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES



TEAMBUILDING
The participants had ample time to enjoy fun activities and free time in the evenings. This helped them bond in a playful way.

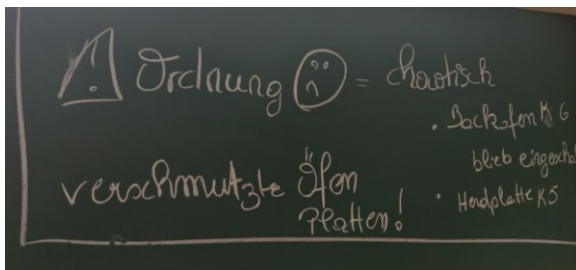
EXPLORING SANKT VITH

While the teachers were working on a draft of a final report, our students explored and discovered this lovely town's hidden corners.



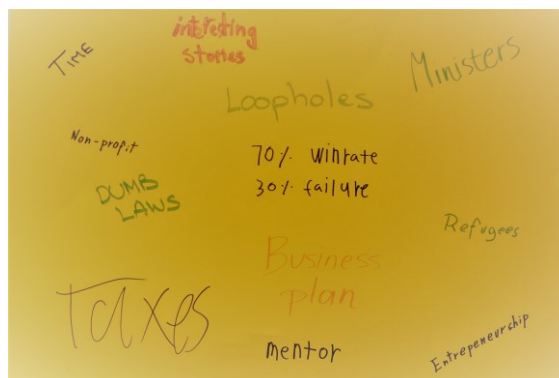
ENJOYING BELGIAN CUISINE

Our dinners together were truly memorable. Belgian fries and chocolate tasted terrific, but nothing was better than the homemade Belgian rice pie!



REFUGEES AS SMALL ENTREPRENEURS

Fabienne Colling introduced an NGO called Touch Points, which helps the willing refugees to Luxembourg to set up their own businesses. Our students then responded with thematic posters.



EUROPASS

According to Wikipedia, "Europass is a European Union (Directorate General for Education and Culture) initiative to increase transparency of qualification and mobility of citizens in Europe. It aims to make a person's skills and qualifications clearly understood throughout Europe (including the European Union, European Economic Area and EU candidate countries).

The five Europass documents are the Curriculum Vitae, Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Certificate Supplement, and Diploma Supplement, sharing a common brand name and logo. Since 2012 individuals have been able to assemble all Europass documents in the European Skills Passport. [Read more.](#)

HOW MUCH DID OUR YOUNG PARTICIPANTS LEARN?

On the last day of the exchange, the students took a final quiz to recall what they had learned and report their progress. There were 16 questions. The replies varied in length and language level, and some lines were rather funny. But they gave an honest picture of how much learning can happen during a 5-day typical student exchange programme.

First and foremost, we can conclude that the majority did learn about Belgium, the EU, democracy, and film. They reported learning how to write effective film reviews and growing a more critical film audience. Also, they noticed their progress as intercultural communicators.

The respondents knew about free movement within the EU and how to benefit from different funding programmes. Many realised how important it was to learn foreign languages and how lucky they were as young Europeans.

The results are available [here](#). All you have to do is to scroll down to Episode IV.



FINAL WORDS

Dear Inge Kohnen-Hoffmann, thank you so much for having us at your lovely school – Maria-Goretti-Sekundarschule.

We really appreciate all the hard work you did to make this exchange happen. Also, we would like to express our special thanks to Carmen Palm (Introduction to Belgium and its culture), English teachers Florence Fonk and Wera Schür, as well as PE teachers Nicole Michels, Louise Weynand, and Stephanie Hanf.

Most importantly, however, we cannot thank you enough, dear Jenny, Ina, and Monika! You see, holding an exchange can be a blessing in disguise...

It was a thrilling event because we came together literally at the last minute. In retrospect, though, we did the right thing because this exchange helped bring our project to a satisfying end. We accomplished all our tasks and produced plenty of outputs. We also went to places we would not have visited otherwise. And as always, our students clicked the moment they met – a sure sign of high quality.

When thinking back to Tallinn in 2018, we did not quite understand how to run such an ambitious project like ours. However, we can assure even the most sceptical among us that we did deliver against our promises. Our students had every opportunity to improve their language skills with film and content skills with language. They also created e-portfolios, which supported their digital literacy and web content skills. Finally, our already heavy workload grew even heavier, but we also experienced some joyous moments and a sense of achievement. And what can be better than sparkles in the eyes of our students and a sense of belonging ...

Yours thankfully

Triin Lingiene

