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From October 22 to November 3, 2024, we participated in the Erasmus+ project (in)dependent in Romania, Sarata Monteoru, and Buzau.

Our journey began on October 22, 2024. We left from Tryavna to Romania, with our first stop being Bucharest, where we stayed overnight. When we arrived, we started exploring the city, enjoying the architecture, and visited a few shops.



The next day, we woke up early to arrive in Sarata Monteoru. When we arrived, we settled into our rooms and had some time to explore the hotel and the town. The other participants arrived in the evening, and we had the pleasure of meeting a few of them.

On October 24th, the morning started with breakfast and an outdoor warm-up to get moving and relax. After that, we entered the meeting hall, where we began with icebreaker games – we drew each other and tried to guess interesting facts about the other participants. That's when we learned that everyone would have a secret friend, to whom we were supposed to give a handmade gift or simply be kind throughout the time. Then we received a lecture about the rules we needed to follow while staying at the base. After a short lunch break, we were gathered to announce our first team task – to interview locals and create a short video. We were divided into groups, each including at least one participant from each nationality. The first evening was also our first intercultural night, during which we had the opportunity to try traditional foods and drinks from different countries. This time, the countries represented were Italy, the Czech Republic, and Latvia, and each team prepared an interesting game for the others.



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On October 25th, our first task was to divide into groups and create a poster related to addictions in our countries. Each person researched information about their own country and learned something new – whether it was about their own country or another. After that, there was a lecture from police officers about the dangers of different addictions and the consequences for people who break the law. In the second part of the day, we presented our posters to everyone, sharing interesting facts from our research. (Did you know that bingo is one of the most popular addictions in Spain?) Then we gathered in national teams and prepared short skits presenting different types of addictions and the stereotypes related to them in our countries. This led to our second intercultural evening! This time, the countries represented were Bulgaria, Serbia, Spain, and Greece. Again, there were fun games and the opportunity to try traditional delicacies from these countries.

On October 26th, the first part of the day was dedicated to getting to know people with whom we hadn't spent much time before. The trust games were fun but also required full trust in your partner to feel secure. After that, we, along with the group, headed to the forest, where we had to create Land Art – a work of art made entirely from natural materials. We gathered everything we could find to create something interesting that would tell a story or convey a certain feeling.



Then, again in the same groups, we were given a fun but challenging task – to protect an egg. We had to come up with and build a structure from the materials provided to us that would protect the egg when dropped from the second floor. Our last activity for the day was World Café. This involved a series of discussions at different tables, each discussing a specific type of addiction. We had 15 minutes at each table to share thoughts, answer questions, and discuss moral dilemmas. After that, we switched tables and continued the conversation with a new group until all the topics had been covered by everyone.

On October 27th, the day began with a meeting in the common hall and team assignments for our next task – to prepare and perform a play related to an assigned addiction. We had from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM to prepare the scripts and rehearse, after which we presented our plays to the other participants. The second part of the day was spent preparing for the intercultural evening. This time, each national group had to present not their own country but another country. The Bulgarians were assigned Romania, so we decided to create a poster presenting the different stereotypes we know or have heard about Romania.



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On October 28th, this day was dedicated to creating comics, specifically Grassroots Comics – A3-format comics with four panels that convey a social message or draw attention to a particular injustice. We had almost the entire day to create our stories, with everyone choosing their own topic. At the end of the day, we organized an exhibition of all the comics, where participants viewed the works and discussed them together.



Comics by Raya Petrova and Radostina Ivanova

On October 29th, the morning began with debates, during which the room was divided into two sides – 'I agree' and 'I disagree.' We were given various questions and had to express our position by standing on the corresponding side or the line in the middle if we didn't have a firm opinion. After that, we were given a new task – to create a short film related to a specific addiction. In addition to the film itself, we had to prepare posters and take fun pictures related to it. The entire day was spent coming up with a script, assigning roles, and preparing for the shooting. The evening was dedicated to Romanian culture – we tried traditional dishes and learned a few new dances.

On October 30th, we gathered in the morning to discuss our progress on the films. The day continued with shooting the scenes and finalizing the scripts.

On October 31st, the day was entirely dedicated to the final details – editing the films and shooting the last scenes. In the evening, we all gathered to watch the finished films, discuss them, and laugh at the fun pictures and posters that had been created for them.

To conclude the evening, a Halloween party was organized! Everyone had transformed with costumes and makeup, and the night was filled with dancing, music, and lots of fun.



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On November 1st, it was time to head to Buzău, but before that, we made a stop at the *Mud Volcanoes*. We spent about an hour there, exploring and enjoying the unique natural phenomenon. After arriving in Buzău, we settled into our rooms and had free time until the end of the day.

On November 2nd, we met our local guides, who took us on a tour of the city while we carried out different tasks. We walked through the center and the park, where we learned interesting facts about the history of Buzău. In the evening, we all gathered for the farewell party. The moment came to reveal the secret friend each of us had received at the beginning of the program. Everyone gave their secret friend a certificate of participation in the project. Additionally, there was an opportunity to write sweet messages for the others on sheets with their names. It was a night full of emotions.

On November 3rd, in the morning, everyone said their goodbyes and headed back to their home countries.

This experience was incredibly inspiring for us! We learned a lot, made new friendships, and gathered priceless memories. We believe that everyone should experience something like this at least once in their lifetime!