

A JOURNAL OF AN EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE

“We Are All Human Beings”

by Diego Garrini, Liceo “Bagatta”, Italy

After four international meetings I can state I'm really satisfied with joining this project. It has permitted me to get closer to an unknown reality, which is the reception world, and set me free from a great deal of prejudices and wrong ideas, which are common in the Italian minds. In fact, before this project I didn't know how many migrants had tried to cross the Mediterranean sea and lost their lives, following their hopes and dreams of freedom, or how a refugee camp works or how terrible and unbearable their conditions of life were in their countries of origin.

All this has made me develop a new sensibility towards the phenomenon of migration. First of all, notice that I've used the word "phenomenon" and not "problem" or "crisis", as most people say, because I think these terms would dehumanize them, by reducing them only to an obstacle to our country's development.

We shouldn't never forget they are all human beings, animated by the same feelings of joy, grief, fear and anger and, as an asylum seeker said when we interviewed him for the project, even if their skin is black, their blood is red, exactly as ours. His words struck me and made me feel guilty for the scorn and the indifference a great part of society harbours towards them. This contempt will never stop spreading among people till a xenophobic, narrow-minded and racist mentality survives. This is the first impediment to integration, which nowadays is inevitable in such a world whose foundations are multiculturalism and multiethnicity. This is an irreversible process which is useless to stand against, so the only thing we can do - and to me is the right thing - is to favour it. We must knock down the wall of diversity.

“I have listened to dramatic stories and I am not the same any more”

by Giulia Dell’Olio, Liceo “Bagatta”, Italy

Dinghies that sink near the Libyan coast, lifeless bodies that surface (emerge) from the water of Mediterranean Sea, sightings of large boats full of people squeezed as sardines, landings at Lampedusa: these are the typical everyday news on Italian newspapers. Every day, a lot of us, Italian teenagers, while we have dinner in our safe and comfortable houses, we hear from the 8 p. m. newscast about this situation. But, totally concerned on our hectic life, the most of us, is not concerned about it, is not interested on it and, having listened to it millions and millions of times, starts to believe it normal. Fortunately, there are project, like the one in which I took part, that help new generations to open their eyes in front of reality.

Thanks to the Erasmus+ project “Refugees and frontiers”, I had the possibility to be personally involved in this situations.

I’ve listened to Nigerian women talking about their own dramatic stories. Persecuted in their own country, forced to escape, they told us how difficult and agonizing was their journey towards Italy: they crossed first the desert and then the sea, always squeezed, with no water, with no food, with no cares, but with the constant danger to falling down and die.

I’ve also met many young men who leaved the same situation. I’ve spent some days with them, we’ve talked together, we’ve exchanged ideas and opinions and, at last, I’ve found out how similar we are, joined by the same passion for music and sport. But what struck me the most was reading in their eyes, despite all that they had had to face, the joy of being here, the will of reclaiming their life and the faith in a better future.

Moreover, we also have learnt how gaining the “refugee status” long and difficult is. In fact, it is not allowed to everybody and ones who don’t have the right requisites are forced to leave Italy. So, this is not an “invasion” as many unaware people sustain. Too much is the ignorance about it. Italians need to become conscious about the superficiality of the circulating news, they need to learn to recognize a true news from a fake one, they need to be well informed, and they mustn’t let themselves carry by the stereotypes and the prejudice of society: that’s what I’ve learnt.

Thanks to the project, we also visited situations beyond Italy, as, for example, a refugee centre in the Netherlands and another one Kyos, Greece. This proves that it’s a European question: only the whole united Europe can face it, the single country has not enough instruments and skills to do this.

“Just try to get into their shoes...”

By Valentina Pizzocolo, Liceo “Bagatta”, Italy

"If I cut my skin it comes out red blood, if you cut your skin it comes out red blood."

This is what a guy from Nigeria told us during a meeting organized for the Erasmus project

"Refugees and Frontiers: Keep Europe United."

We often hear newscasts, journalists and politicians talking about migration, but we don't really know how dramatic the situation is.

68,5 million of people from Africa (Nigeria; Gambia; Lybia; Sudan) and from the Middle East (Iran; Iraq; Syria) were forced to escape from their house because of war, political persecutions and ruthless exterminations. The most part of them remained in their own country, but about 28,5 million of people decided to run away from a destiny of sure death, challenging the fate, beginning a dangerous travel, in inhuman conditions that doesn't give them the security of a real safety, but only a little possibility.

To be more tangible, from 2016 to 2018 more than 332.800 people moved to Italy and about 8700 died during their hard and cruel travel through the sea and the desert.

When they arrive in the new country, far from home, maybe alone, after abandoning their own life and after unbelievable experiences, they find prejudices and barriers built by people who don't want to know their stories and sufferings.

"They are here to steal our jobs"; "They receive thirty-five Euros a day in Italy"; "They pretend to be poor but they have enough money to buy a phone...": This is what we think and say when we see them, ignoring that they are here only because they want to live as a human being has the right to live.

When you are about to think something against them, just try to changes the roles.

What would you do if you were in their situation?

How would you feel after leaving behind all that belongs to you, such as your country, your home and probably also your family?

Wouldn't you like to find someone willing to help you?

This is what the Erasmus project taught us, taught me. We all are the same: my blood is like your blood; my life is important as your life; my rights are undeniable as your rights, as their rights.

The power of equality, on which our society should be built on, is in our hands, we only need to understand that.

“It is not enough to feel compassion...”
by Virginia Stucchi, Liceo “Bagatta”- Italy

Sometimes we act as judges before knowing the truth. We forget to compare our ideas with the events and we don't care to analyze deeper what is happening around us.

The Erasmus + project has helped us to develop a critical conscience. With my classmates I have had the opportunity to meet migrants who applied for asylum. These people escape from war, poverty and oppression. They leave everything behind in search of a better future. They have no choice.

These stories made me think. Too many times we misunderstand their needs. It's not enough to feel compassion or to be sorry for them. All of us have the duty to do something concrete. We have to work on ourselves to overcome our prejudices and groundless fears. Even if it could seem useless I think that it's important to go against the spread of indifference. Reading essays, meeting refugees and others European students make me conscious about the necessity to do something concretely in our daily life. We have to work on ourselves to overcome our prejudices and our unfounded fears.

I also started to be suspicious about the proposal of easy answers for great themes. When we try to reduce the complexity of the phenomenon of migrant flow to Europe inevitably important details will be lost. For example we don't never forget that immigrants and refugees are normal person. They have their dreams, their flaws, their weakness like all of us. We can't classified or stereotype them.

We can't close our borders and our eyes. My generation has grown up with the awareness of being part of a bigger homeland and conscious of its benefits. We need to be careful and to protect ourselves from ignorance and fears. Cooperation, sharing, integration must be the key words to build our future. If we don't work together we risk to lose our humanity and the principles of our culture too.