

France - a Comparison of Culture

A couple of weeks ago I was in France. I had a great time and I met a bunch of people. Our main objective was to learn about each others differences and connect through them. I don't think that the French hosts quite knew how to show us how their society and culture works. Though, I know that I they unintentionally taught us a lot. But of course, if you don't know much about other peoples cultures it must be difficult to choose and pick from typical French things to show without boring the guests because they might be too familiar or too similar.

However, there were many things that stood out to me, but none of them seemed to be anything that they intended to show us. For example, I noticed how the teachers started yelling at some kids. In our school the teachers correct us by talking to us. And during the lessons, it felt as if the students were taught instead of being involved in the learning process themselves. Some might think that letting students learn by themselves by reading a simple text, solving the problems themselves with only structural help from teachers, or even letting them out of the class room might seem a risky idea. It can be, though for my class it works perfectly fine. That's in fact what I'm doing right now.

Every country that my class will visit has its own subject or theme. France had "Religious Holidays". They were very similar to the Swedish ones, almost identical. But one quite obvious thing was that they had a sort of multi cultural view on holidays. From what I picked up, Jewish holidays and other religions' holidays were more common. Most likely because of the old French colonies and early history with influences from different parts of the world, as well as immigration. Of course there are many religious holidays that a lot of immigrants from around the world celebrate in Sweden too, but the normal Swede doesn't see them as common, or you don't hear as much about it. You might notice when someone is not in school because they celebrate something, and you might talk about it if you have a friend that has another religion, but you don't acknowledge it the same way that I experienced it in France.

Simon Gerdman 8CD, Gröndalsskolan in Värnamo, Sweden

Friendship - the power of life

Two trips to Denmark and France are already past us. For the representatives from Primary School no 2 in Poland these were two amazing and unique visits. During the first one we had a chance to admire Copenhagen's architecture, during a guided tour around Ørestad and inner city, and compare the educational systems. Throughout the second visit, we presented different holidays in our countries and also discovered various customs of celebrating Christmas time. Moreover, we could feel the climate of Paris during sightseeing the most marvelous places, well known on the whole world, such as: Basilique du Sacré-Cœur in Montmartre, Cathedral Notre Dame de Paris, Champs-Élysées, Napoleonic Arc de Triomphe and the 19th-century Eiffel Tower. Also, in both countries, we didn't miss the opportunity to try mouth-watering national cuisines.

But not only this made those visits such unforgettable. Those meetings helped us to perceive a real beauty in our diversities and made us aware of one thing. The most lasting bond, which people can create between them, are not the bounds of money but friendship, which doesn't know any political or racial borders and has an amazing power of joining people forever.

Agnieszka Wargin, Polish coordinator



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

NEWSLETTER**Connect Through Our Differences**

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EDITORIAL

I'm really very happy to be the coordinator of our wonderful "Connect through our differences" European project!

We have had so far two amazing sojourns in Denmark and France. Students and teachers experienced cultural diversity, learnt a lot and made new friends. They started to broaden their horizons in terms of understanding foreign values, cultures and customs, which is the aim of our common project.

I'm proud to say that students, teachers and parents are as enthusiastic as ever to participate in the activities, to learn more about our partner countries! The impact of the project is even stronger than expected.

In our first newsletter we present some articles to show the French and Danish cultures, seen through the eyes of other cultures.

We have all, already made the first steps in our journey towards building our knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity and differences.

**Emilia Gadjurova
Main Project Coordinator
Asenovgrad
Bulgaria**

PORTUGAL NEWS

Participating in this European Project is something really fantastic. We have the chance to meet other students and schools, get to know other cultures and traditions, get to communicate in English and therefore practise the using of this language. But what is the best of all is to make friends all over Europe. "The exchange experience was very gratifying." lara "Our host families were fantastic. We really felt at home!" Ana Raquel "It was so funny to see that in the same continent we can find such different lifestyles." Nair "Whenever we take part on mobilities, we bring trunks full of memories to tell and to keep them as treasures!"

Pedro

**PILEGAARDSSKOLEN, DENMARK****Cominiusprojectindenmark**

When the cominius project was held in Denmark our subjects were: History, architecture and monarchy. To present our subjects in just a few days, we decided to do a guided tour around Copenhagen.

On this tour we saw famous sights like churches, city areas, important buildings and statues.

After the guided tour, the students got to taste Danish food like "Smørrebrød" and Danish traditional Christmas food - a roasted pork, boiled potatoes and gravey.

We had an amazing time starting up the project here in Denmark, and we hope everyone enjoyed their time here.

**Bulgaria 2013**

We're going to Bulgaria, and we're very excited. We're looking forward to see the beautiful nature that was showed in the Asenovgrad video.

The program for the trip sounds very exiting. We can't wait to get there. We are mostly looking forward to seeing the mountains, because here in Denmark we only have "Himmelbjerget" (the sky mountain) and it's only 147 metres high. We hope that it will be an experience we will never forget.

Best regards from Maja, Amalie, Emma and Sofie from Denmark



The organization of mobility in France, 2012-2014 Comenius

As part of our Comenius Project 2012-2014 "together through our differences," the French delegation had decided to receive all partners from Monday 17 to Friday 21 December 2012. We chose this date because it was the most coherent with our theme: the celebration of traditional and religious festivals. So that we could visit Paris just before Christmas and enjoy the atmosphere of the French capital at that time. We had already participated in a Comenius project the past two years so we knew what to do and especially not to do to organize mobility at the best. Based on our experience, we started on this adventure with desire and motivation!

The Christmas period is very touristic so, we had to make reservations early in the year. So we met at the beginning of the year to allocate each other the different tasks. Many teachers invested in these preparations and so we started to book the hotel and buses, to think about the program and to book visits.

Meanwhile, we also had to work with the pupils. Every Monday at lunch time, I led a workshop for volunteer pupils. According to its class, its possibilities and desires, each pupil could be involved in the activity he wanted: work on future productions (Denmark, France ...), various constructions, origami, painting, crafts... pupils advertising ... worked fine, we quickly ended up with 40 students! Two teachers then came to me to lend a hand! The workshops were very lively, but it was really nice to have more and more students who wanted to invest themselves in the project. And it was also interesting to see pupils from another angle, to allow some who had learning difficulties to succeed otherwise and be happy working on a school project. I think it was also interesting for them to see their teachers in other circumstances than class. They saw us tinkering, painting, fail to make origami ... So they saw us as normal people!

As the date of the coming of our partners approached, there was more and more excitement at the college. Teachers and students prepared the welcome show and had more and more ideas: singing, acrobatics, films about traditional and religious festivals... The parents of primary school and college also shown very good will: to fetch the delegations, to assist with various activities, to welcome Partner students at home. The children were also very excited to receive their "correspondent". The Saturday preceding the start of the festivities, teachers, parents and students involved in the project even came to the school in the morning to finish all the works!

This experience was truly rich for all those involved: teachers, educators, parents and students. We shared everything during this period: the good times, the laughter, the excitement, the help, and the ideas to put together and sometimes at the last moment, but also moments of doubt and stress. We wanted to be part of a new Comenius project to share with our European partners. But we did not expect to share that much together. This experience has helped create more links between teachers, but also students and parents and it gave a positive boost to the school. The teaching staff and educational staff is sealed and it is always nice to feel supported and helped.

Marianne Crogny, French coordinator.

Christmas time in our school Preparing for the French mobility

Our school always buys two Christmas trees: one for the Concert Hall, the other for the Chamber Hall. Usually our pupils decorate them: elder children the big one, small children the small one. They hang lights and glass spheres on them. Judit, our headmistress said: Why don't we put candies, too? Yes, it's a good idea – said me. It's a Hungarian unique. So we asked a group to wrap some up and hang on the smaller tree.

Discussing about our mobility we talked about presents to bring



to France. Why not we bake ginger bread? - said Dóri. Oh yes – said Enikő – I live near the school, I can bring all the ingredients. Excellent idea, let's make a movie about it and present it in France. I can cope with the videocamera. Let's start it on Thursday and finis hon Friday. We can use it for Christmas decoration, too.



So we prepared the candies and the ginger bread and then decided to bring some of both to France. The girls are very excited about this journey. I've never flown a plane – said Dóri. Nor me – said Enikő.

Balázs Juhász, Hungarian coordinator

Bulgaria news FRENCH STYLE CHRISTMAS FAIRYTALE



Our fairytale has started not long ago - on the eve of the greatest Christian holiday – Christmas.

Like every fairy tale, ours has started quietly as our plane took off from Sofia airport, in Bulgaria, directly to Paris, the capital of France. Two hours later we had landed in this fairytale country.

It seemed to us as if many fairy creatures and elves waited for us at the airport and from there all together, we directly headed to the Factory for young, deserving citizens, in other words – to the Saint Mary Primary School in Clamart near Paris. And we had also the surprise of many friends from the French hosting families meeting us there. We all felt somewhat intimidated; everything was new and different for us. It is everyone's dream to visit Paris and for us this dream had come true at Christmas time. What impressed us was the unique and friendly ambience.

Moreover, we were more specifically impressed with the hospitality of the French hosting families and school kids. We felt like as though we were at home! It was a nice surprise for us! There was the warmth of so many shared moments, of so many smiles and good feelings! We have enjoyed every moment we spent in France – the moment around the lovely Christmas tree that all children had decorated with toys from the different countries, the moment when Christmas songs were sung by the French children, and when we saw the amazing Eiffel Tower with its Christmas lights, reflected in the sky like magic stars. It soared up so stately and proudly above the city, impressing it with its power and grace.

Our walk along the Champs-Elysees bathed in Christmas lights is unforgettable for us.

Paris is a fabulous place. You can meet so many people there of different origin and culture. So many different religions coexist and celebrate together their differences!

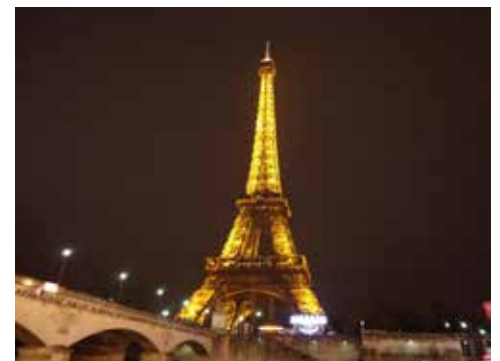
Every one of us felt extremely lucky when we met the French Santa Claus. He was as smiling and as good-hearted as his Bulgarian counterpart...

Santa told us incredible stories and gave us nice presents.



Miracles happen at Christmas time – our pleasant time spent in France was one – fabulous, colourful, exciting, new, different, full of new friendships, new impressions of a whole new world, of the traditions and customs of a country, having a dazzling capital and rich with its warm and cordial people. We have lived a real miracle indeed!

**Daniel, Donna and Nikola,
Asenovgrad, Bulgaria
December 2012**



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quite small, but in the inside the wide aisles and the vaults of the ceiling made it very spacious. Also the colourful stained glass „blinded” eyes and created an indescribable sensation. Champs-



Elysees, and the Arc de Triomphe – looked fascinating, maybe it seemed so because of all those decorations. The alley is full of stores of famous designer clothing and accessories.

In conclusion I can say that Paris is the city of all the possible mixtures, compatible and perhaps at the same time inconsistent.



City may be characterized by its monumental beauty. Each corner has a small café with its own charm and the lure. Almost every building has its own historical story. The only thing we can do is wonder - how one can create such beauty?! Concerning to the people we came across, most of them were filled with positivism and they were very helpful,

whereas others seemed self-centred and reserved, so to say there is no unified idea about them. Anyway everybody has to see Paris themselves, because it's impossible to immortalize the feeling of concrete moment and to show it to other people.

We are very thankful to French partners for visiting nice Paris and of course our Latvian project coordinator Ms. M.Mickeviča and all project coordinators who were with us these days and will be our leader in next visits. You are the best who give to students such possibilities to visit other countries.

Ilgā Stikute, student from Latvian team

We have been engaged in so many activities already with the Comenius project it is hard to know which ones to share with everyone. One activity that seemed to resonate with everyone were the symbols from each country. These have spurred a video from Austrian children, murals and indeed helped to design our wonderful logo. Here is a selection of the symbols that we shared with our students!



For our first mobility in Copenhagen Denmark, was exchanging different activities that have been diffused through the schools, allowing the kids themselves to have a chance to express their thoughts and ideas about diversity in Europe through art. In the Bundesrealgymnasium in Vienna's 14th District we explored devising a logo that could express their representations of a connected Europe and of Austria.

I was surprised and excited to see them incorporating the symbols of the Resienrad (big wheel) in Vienna and instead of carriages to take the people in, there were stars, just like the European flag. So these once perhaps obvious, stark symbols were innovatively transformed into diverse expressions.



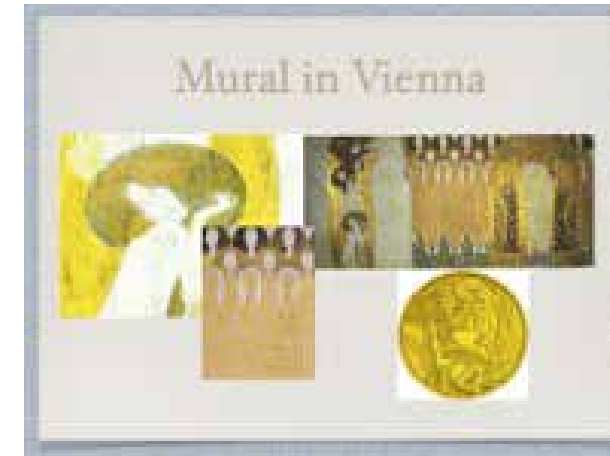
So that there was a mix between the different and specific symbol from Vienna and the broader connecting symbol of Europe. A 'mischen' (mix) between the two. As their confidence grew they experimented with the Viennese and European symbols further turning their creations into logos, first very detailed and accurate drawings and eventually pairing them down, to be graphic ideograms. (When finished their innovative logos will be uploaded here).

Once they had created their own ideograms it was easier this week to see how ancient and modern ideograms had been created in the eight different countries of the Comenius project. As a task we were to create images of diversity in Europe, since the theme of the project is connecting through our differences. We

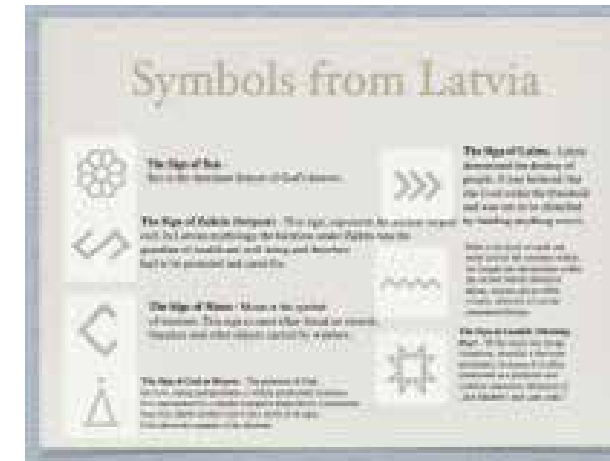
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explored the murals in Vienna particularly at Secession, looking at the use of narrative in linking the symbols, and ideograms.



In Diego Rivera's murals, people dominate the narrative, diverse, colourful with symbols from the Day of the Dead festival that is so intrinsic to Mexico celebrating the dead as well as more universal ones such as the dove of peace.



So in taking each country in turn starting with Copenhagen in Denmark, the class explored symbols that resonate with that city that simultaneously draw people to the country, connecting us, but with a feeling of difference.

Ancient symbols from Latvia have reworked themselves into contemporary designs on clothing, buildings and in people's homes, so that they have become an ubiquitous throughout the Latvian cultural landscape.

In Bulgaria, ideograms were used for days of the week as well as ancient gods that similar to Latvia have seeped into every day cultural consciousness



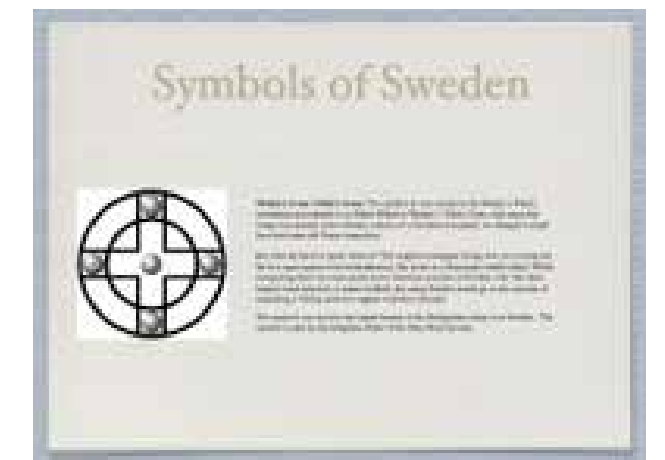
In Poland there is a strong symbol: **The Kotwica** (Polish for Anchor) was a World War II emblem of the Polish Secret State and Armia Krajowa (Home Army, or AK). It was created in 1942 by members of the AK Wawer "Small Sabotage" unit as an easily usable emblem for the Polish struggle to regain independence. The initial meaning of



the initials "PW" was "Pomścimy Wawer" ("We will avenge Wawer"). The Wawer Massacre was considered to be one of the first large scale massacres of Polish civilians by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland. At first, Polish scouts from sabotage groups painted the whole phrase upon walls. However, this was soon shortened to two letters, P and W, due to time constraints.



The Grunwald Swords (Polish miecze grunwaldzkie) were a gift presented by Ulrich von Jungingen, the Grand Master of the Order of Teutonic Knights to King Vladislaus II of Poland and Grand Duke Vytautas the Great of Lithuania on 15 July 1410, just before the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg). The gift, a pair of simple bare swords was a formal invitation to the battle.

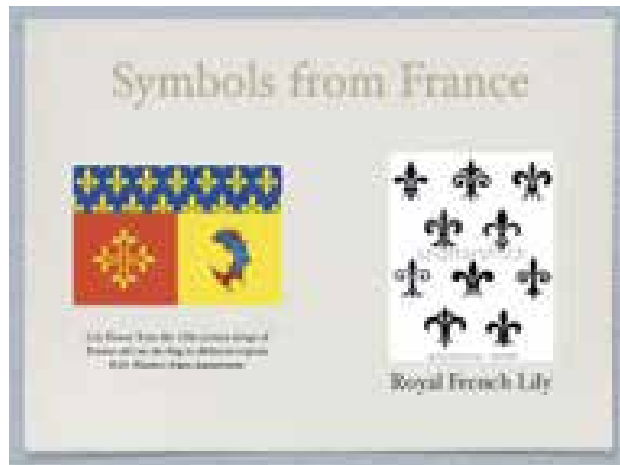


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Azulejos are tiles, richly decorated in a variety of coloured patterns are a signature motif throughout Portugal. Whereas **Fado**-represented by the guitar-a melancholic song, originating in Portugal and echoing across Iberia, has become a salient part of the cultural make-up of Portugal. The cockerel is probably one of the most popular symbols of the country, The legend dates back to the 14th Century, and like all legends, each narrator adds his own flavour. In Barcelos, a small town in Portugal, a passing pilgrim, who was on his way to São Tiago de Compostela (in Spain), was wrongly accused of theft, for which the penalty was death. Feeling threatened in a foreign village, he only had his faith to call upon. He appealed to "Our Lady" and St. James the patron Saint of protection) that justice be done. The pilgrim found his way to the Judge who was to decide his fate. The judge was about to commence eating a roast cockerel for his

declared the flag of Hungary being redwhite-green (Kossuth) tricolor without the crest, and declared an independent crest, the royal one (which of course was constructed by the Austrian emperors earlier). This decision was that time a wise compromise between the opposing republicans and royalists. After having just a taste of the most salient symbols from each of the eight countries in the Comenius project, they were able to be inspired to create a mural that had not only a combination of these symbols on their tile or piece, but they were able to create their own emblems. Some of them mixed- up ideograms in one token that they designed whereas others put the different symbols together in their completeness, so that they were connected through their differences on the mural, making it colourful and rich.



dinner. The pilgrim pleaded, "If I am innocent, that cockerel will get up and crow. The cockerel at once got up and crowed heartily. The pilgrim was released and went on his way. **Woden's Cross / Odin's Cross:** This symbol is very similar to the Woden's Wheel, sometimes also referred to as Odin's Wheel or Woden's / Odin's Cross. It has some old Norse connection as the five spots appear to be hemispherical, like rivets in a Norseman's battle shield, this is a Viking symbol. The symbol has been used by the largest branch of the Bridgettines today in Sweden. **Lily flower** from the 12th century kings of France is still used on the flag in different regions in France E.G: Hautes-Alpes department The coat-of-arms of the village of Csabaszabadi follows the traditions of classical Hungarian civic heraldry and both in form and design it resembles shields widespread in Hungary in the 14th century This crest was the last symbol of the Hungarian independence for republicans, since the complete crest is the symbol of the royalists Hungary. That time MDF (royalists) and the opposing FIDESZ and SZDSZ (republicans) could not find a common point, so they have

Bulgaria is waiting for you to experience our colorful folklore traditions.

**Mobility to Bulgaria: 28th February - 4th March 2013
Baba Marta Day**



All Bulgarians celebrate on March 1 a centuries-old tradition and exchange martenitsi on what is called the day of Baba Marta. Baba Marta ("Granny March") is the name of a mythical figure who brings with her the end of the cold winter and the beginning of the spring.

"Martenitsi" are red and white coloured wristbands, or figurines, that symbolise health and happiness. They are given away to friends and family. People are supposed to take off their martenitsi when they see the first signs that spring has already come - a blooming tree or a stork. When the martenitsa is taken off some tie it to a tree - one that they'd like to be especially fruitful. Others place it under a rock and based on what they find there the next morning guess what kind of a year this one would be. Children usually compete who will get the most and often walk around more ornate than a Christmas tree. However, it always bears the same meaning - a lucky charm against the evil spirits of the world, a token for health and a sign of appreciation.

Kukeri is a traditional Bulgarian ritual to scare away evil spirits, with costumed men performing the ritual. The costumes cover most of the body and include decorated wooden masks of animals (sometimes double-faced) and large bells attached to the belt. Around New Year and before Lent, the kukeri walk and dance through the village to scare evil spirits away with the costumes and the sound of the bells, as well as to provide a good harvest, health, and happiness to the village during the year.



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Under the sky of Paris

From time to time in my thoughts emerge the landscapes of Paris, French words, or the people I have met here. Since the return only few days have passed, but I have strange feeling. It may be curiously, but not so long ago I didn't know much of it, but now I feel that I have been too quickly separated from the place I have just started to get to know... Maybe this is just a first impression, because it's impossible to discover Paris in 5 days.

Speed 850 km/h, height 11 km, - 50°C behind the aircraft and than... through the porthole green fields, roads and river appears. Aircraft lands quietly and the applause, which are devoted to the pilot, rustles calm atmosphere of the plane. After almost 2 hours and 50 minutes we are in the capital city of France. Great! Here we have +1 hour, thanks to the time zone change.



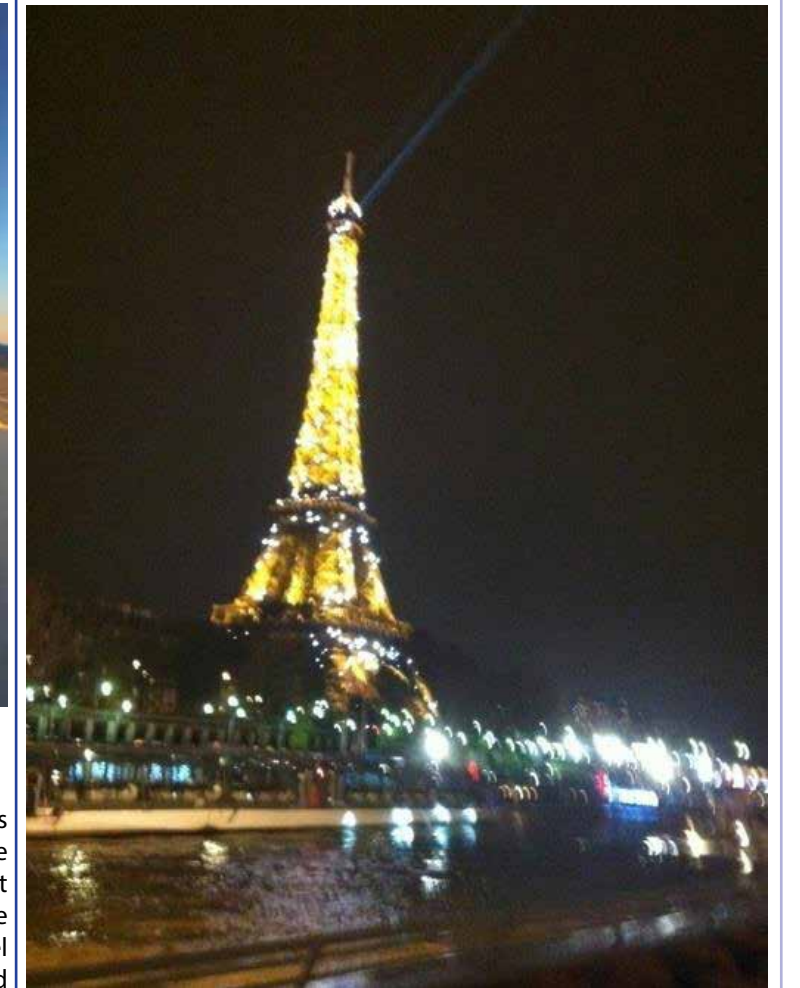
I have heard people describing Paris airport, all I can say - it was enormous. Anyway it wasn't the one in which it would be impossible or too difficult to get around, on the contrary - quite clearly laid out signs and directions, however the area is undeniably huge. With the help of some people we were able to reach our destination - Hotel du Trosy. Here, after few minutes of waiting, came coordinator and



the teachers and pupils were accompanied to the school, where the students met their French families, at which they were living all these days.

The morning of the second day wasn't cool or cold, it was

just in time. However, French people considered it freezing! That day we were watching each other's presentations, sadly we didn't manage to see all of them, because of the luck of time. After having the lunch at the school, we went to the Château de Versailles. The territory around the castle and the castle itself is just enormous. The famous Mirror hall which is known as the "heart" of the King Louis XIV palace, painted ceilings, golden decorations just didn't leave anyone indifferent. Unfortunately we had too little time to see and feel all the magic of it.



The third day was full of impressions! Definitely, Montmartre is worth seeing. Walking through the narrow streets that go up and down the hill creates different feelings. There are a lot of stores and everybody may notice that the most of the working people are representatives of other nationalities. These people know the English language at the appropriate level, so breaking the stereotypes that in France, people don't speak English. And those who didn't were quite attractive to explain all the necessary things in French. We also couldn't miss the opportunity of enjoying the ride at the top of the Eiffel Tower. Gustav Eiffel's 300 m high "wonder" - the symbol of Paris, which brings together millions of tourists every year. While going up by the elevator, the heart striking view opened upon the city. Above were really strong and cold wind, and these day the thermometer showed +7. We noticed that security system there is high, and so it should be. In the evening, when it became darker the miraculous charm of the city came to life, it's obvious why Paris is called the city of lights. So we continued our trip by the boat, gliding along the Seine River, it was impressive when the Eiffel Towers lights began to sparkle.

On the last day we also spent time visiting Notre Dame, watching its facade, and then the interior part. From the outside it seemed