



• Visegrad Fund

## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM Let's Break Our National Stereotypes

**The International Visegrad Fund** is an international organization based in Bratislava founded by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—the **Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland, and the Slovak Republic** in 2000.

The purpose of the fund is to facilitate and promote the development of closer cooperation among citizens and institutions in the region as well as between the V4 region and other countries, especially the Western Balkans and countries of the Eastern Partnership. The fund does so through grant support of common cultural, scientific and educational projects, youth exchanges, cross-border projects and tourism promotion, and through individual mobility pro-grams (scholarships, residencies).

The project **Let's break our national stereotypes** is about learning about V4 partners, about finding out what we have in common and what is different. Students from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary will meet, deal with tasks from history, religion, industry ... and experience everything in person.





- **The project's partner schools are:**
- *LSG o.p.s., Letohrad , Czech Republic*
- *Buday Cizterci Szent Imre Grammar school ,Budapest, Hungary*
- *School for gifted children and Grammar school, Bratislava, Slovakia*
- *Janusz Kusocinski Secondary Junior High School, Kalisz, Poland*

5. 10. – 10. 10. 2014 LSG o.p.s., Letohrad, Czech Republic

3. 11. – 8. 11. 2014 Buday Cizterci Szent Imre Grammar school, Budapest, Hungary

30. 11. – 5. 12. 2014 School for gifted children and Grammar school, Bratislava, Slovakia

18. 1. – 23. 1. 2015 Janusz Kusocinski Secondary Junior High School, Kalisz, Poland



## Introduction

Do you happen to know what is the national food of Poland, what is a typical school day like in Slovakia or what do Hungarian people think of the Czechs?

A large quantity of other similar questions could follow the ones mentioned above or at least, such questions occupied our minds before the beginning of the project called *Let's Break Our National Stereotypes*.

When we thought about possible answers to these issues, it occurred to us clearly that it had more or less all turned into a guessing task. At that particular point, it became obvious that we were facing the fact how little do we know about our closest neighbours.

Awkwardly enough, if given these questions about countries like the United Kingdom or the USA, we would probably be able to give more accurate answers than about Poland, Slovakia or Hungary. Of course, it sounds rather strange that an average person living in a country in the middle of Central Europe knows significantly more about two countries from which s/he is separated by thousands of kilometers than about countries surrounding the one which s/he comes from.

Realizing this, we decided to take part in the project supported by the International Visegrad Fund to enhance knowledge about the neighbouring countries among both students and teachers.





## **Aims of the Project**

Students' and teachers' exchanges are normally considered as a suitable method leading to better understanding among the individual countries which are taking part in those projects. Our project involved Slovakia, Poland and Hungary which provided a fascinating opportunity to experience a detailed insight into their habits and traditions.

Moreover, there have always been tight bonds among these countries in terms of common cultural and historical background as they formed various alliances and even governments pursuing certain



political goals among the so-called great powers. These ties were also enhanced by the ongoing trade within the individual countries.

Due to the rich common historical and cultural background, it was thought that this project could be regarded as an occasion for its participants to follow and explore these traces of the forgotten cultural and historical mutuality. It was believed that this could serve as one of the major motivating factors among students and could spark their interest in the project.

Subsequently, children and teenagers are naturally willing to explore the unknown, and as it was already stated above, our knowledge about the other countries involved could not be described as profound or deep.

Ironically, this drawback was turned into an advantage in terms of increasing students' interest in the project.

As the students were intended to stay within the host families during the particular exchange programmes, it would give them a unique opportunity to witness everyday life of people from a foreign country. They could also experience different habits and traditions, at least to some extent; for instance, various kinds of meals, slight differences in every day's schedule and life etc.

Furthermore, it should be also stated that most part of the programmes took part in schools, thus it could be also considered as a chance to see and experience various teaching methods and styles in the particular countries. Consequently, students were able to compare individual educational system and spot any particular differences in them. This part represents a vital chance for the participating teachers as well, as they could compare and learn some new approaches towards teaching during the stays.



Last but not least, it should be mentioned that participating in the project was also a chance to improve English language skills among students as English was chosen as the major communicative language.

The aims of the project could be divided from a different perspective as well. They could be described in terms of three basic categories as each subject expects and follows diverse goals, aims or outcomes; namely, the school institutions involved would pursue goals concerning matters of education and teaching in general, for example exchanging experience regarding school structure, school day organization etc.

On the other hand, participating teachers would pay more attention to individual lessons and teaching methods used sharing their opinions with their colleagues of similar school subjects. Students would probably find fascinating the hosting country itself, not mentioning the concern about their partners who they exchanged with.

At the beginning of the project, there was an air of tremendous expectations and great curiosity. We wondered whether all the events planned would fit into our tight schedules, and whether we would be able to minimize possible failures and hitches which may have endangered smooth running of the project. These second thoughts resulted in a slight feeling of precariousness which accompanied us at the start of the project. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned curiosity and hopes granted the courage required for the beginning.





## **Letohrad Meeting 05/10/2014 – 10/10/2014**

The first project meeting took place in Letohrad in the beginning of October. We, as organisers, had a great responsibility to ensure everything goes as smoothly as possible.

All the groups arrived on Sunday, a day before the actual program started.

On Monday morning all the groups gathered at school eagerly waiting for the official start of the program which consisted of official welcoming and ice-breaking games. Then a guided tour of the school followed. During the guided tour they saw everything that the school had to offer to its students. After that the visitors made their way to the town hall where they were officially greeted by the mayor of Letohrad and they were given commemorative gifts. It is worth mentioning that the official meeting with the mayor was accompanied by the musical performance of the students of our school.

After lunch they saw the sights of Letohrad like the Baroque chateau, the plague column and the church with unique sgraffiti.

Then the most important part of the day ensued. All the groups assembled at school for a workshop during which the participants presented their posters describing national stereotypes of the countries involved.



Tuesday morning we walked to one of the main sights of the region which is the Orlice Stronghold where a guided tour was organized.

The Orlice Stronghold is an example of pure Renaissance architecture. The visitors admired renovated interiors.

In the afternoon a cooking session was held. Students, in two separate groups, decorated gingerbread and made potato pancakes, one of the traditional treats of the Czech cuisine. Then a Czech Oscar winning movie was projected with the discussion about communism era in the Czech Republic and Visegrad countries afterwards.



Wednesday was characterised by sports. In Letohrad there is a one of the best biathlon centres for the youth athletes in the Czech Republic. The guests could experience shooting as well as in-line skiing.

Various sporting disciplines were organized in a local gym. They especially enjoyed a game called Kinball a great invention from Canada. Students also learnt how to dance Polka - the Czech national dance.



A whole day trip was scheduled on Thursday. Students and teachers visited the most significant sights of the region. The tour started with the visit of the church in Neratov which was largely damaged during the era of communism. Fortunately, it has been

successfully reconstructed and serves its purposes again. Then the Hedeč Cloister followed being one of topmost places of pilgrimage in the Czech Republic. During the communism period, it served a place where religious officials, nuns and priests were interned. Nowadays, a museum has been opened there which provides information about the murky past. Last stop was made at the place called Zemská brána which is considered to be a fascinating natural phenomenon.



Thursday finished with a farewell dinner organized for the participating teachers.

Friday started with the last event on the schedule; the visit of local Museum of Handcrafts which is widely recognized in the whole



Czech Republic. After the visit, it was time to give a farewell to students from Slovakia, Poland and Hungary.

The five days passed rather quickly and we were delighted that all the events planned were managed according to the schedule. We had a wonderful time hosting the students and teacher from V4 countries and were looking forward to the following stays.

## **Students' Reports on the Hosting Programme in Letohrad**

### **Anička**

Thanks to Visegrad project we have opportunity to experience in person what we have in common and what are differences among us and Polish, Slovak and Hungarian students. The project is helping us to learn to communicate with people from other countries in English. Communication with Hungarians was the best. The only way of speaking with them was English. They are very friendly. Slovaks are very nice too, but mostly we speak with them in our languages because we understand each other well and it is easier. Polish students talked to us very little, so I don't know what they are like. I think that the project is very useful for us.

### **Kamila**



## Visit of Hungarian student Katica

The visit of a Hungarian student in our place was organized thanks project called Let's break our national stereotypes. Students from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary came to our country and stayed for five days. I hosted a very nice girl called Katica from Budapest. She speaks very good English and she talked a lot, so I had a great time and improved my English.

We had a school programme. This included for example a visit of Orlice Stronghold, Letohrad church, Earth Gate. We also visited Králíky, where we went to a lookout tower. I liked a lot the trip to Neratov church, which is unique, because it has a glass roof. We watched film Kolja, we cooked potato pancakes and decorated gingerbread. The foreign students also saw our lessons at school. We also played with the Hungarian group a game called 'Chubby bunny'.

Out of school programme I with Katica visited a church in Klášterec nad Orlicí, we went for a walk together, we were riding our horses, we had dinner in Žamberk pizzeria, we watched a film together and we also had a dancing party in our house. We were talking a lot.

During the week we became friends with Katica and I am looking forward to a trip to Budapest.

## Maruška

Week with Hungarian students was very beautiful. I was afraid, because it was my first exchange visit. Hungarian students were kind and grateful. Programme was very funny and interesting. I liked biathlon center and games in the gym. Reproof was super. Teachers with other country were good and festivity. Trip was very nice and interesting on Thursday. I did not like parting,



because it was very quick. My sensations are very good. It was wonderful week.

## **Doubravka**

### Visegrad 4

On sunday we went to česká třebová for our guests .it was very thrilling .

However i got someone else. It was a big suprise . Never mind.

The hungarian group was super, they participated in our program .the polish group wasn't so enthusiastic and the slovak group was always very tired and sleepy .we had a good program. The best day was when we went to the biathlon centre where we tried this great sport.the other day we visited some sights .i also enjoyed one day when we danced polka and played kinball .it was super .

It was great to meet hungarian people and their customs . They were very friendly, funny and easy going .

I think that the visegrad project is a great idea. I am happy i joined this project .

I look forward to visiting Hungary in november.

## **Cilka**

### Polish visit

At the beginning, when I signed up to the exchange stay, I thought that the only reason is not to go to school and visit Poland. But I liked our school programme as well as the programme we have prepared ourselves. I learnt a lot about Poland, mainly about the town Kalisz. Kalisz is a town from which the group have arrived.

Together we visited one museum, two churches and the fortress Orlice. We enjoyed ourselves very much





playing bowling, going shopping, eating in restaurants.

But unfortunately the time spent together went really fast and now I am looking forward to our visit of Kalisz.

## **Amy**

### Visit Polish

When I found out I had a Polish girl I cheered. I thought that I could speak with her easily and if we had some problems, we could speak Polish and Czech. We were quite shy the first day after her arrival but we became friends. We played a few games and it was better. The following five days were very exhausting. The program was managed well and when the program finished, we went with the whole Polish group somewhere to entertain. It was hard to agree where to go. So it happened that we came home late and we did not have much time to know each other better. One day she taught me their version of game “prší”- they call it “macao”. Their version is better than ours in my opinion. A day of departure was sad because I enjoyed talking with someone who does not speak or understand Czech.



## Budapest Meeting 03/11/2014 – 09/11/2014

The first trip abroad was planned to Budapest. The weather forecast for Budapest looked promising and we had heard a lot about the beauty of the city. Late autumn had already arrived to Letohrad before our departure so we certainly welcomed the opportunity for warming up down south. Thus we were rather looking forward to visiting the capital of Hungary.



We went to Budapest by train but due to some troubles, which had occurred earlier that day, our train was delayed. Therefore we arrived to the city on Monday as it was scheduled but slightly later



than expected. We were warmly welcomed on the station by the Hungarian students and teachers. Later that day, teachers taking part in project were escorted to a beautiful apartment in the city centre where they were served a delicious dinner. Students went with their host families to their homes to spend their first evening on their own.

Tuesday started with a general assembly of all the participants inside the school building. We were given a sort of “guided tour” round the school during which we met and greeted the school headmaster. We really enjoyed walking through various corridors which gave the impression of a wonderfully looking theatre. Our students immediately fell in love with the atmosphere which was generated not only by the historical building, but also by the city itself.

After the tour we went to visit the Buda Castle and sights within its area. There were some tasks and assignments prepared for students which made the visit and walking even more enjoyable. Students were supposed to discover some basic facts about the famous Buda Castle and its sights. The sun was shining and the weather was extraordinary for that time of the year. We learnt a lot about the historical buildings and Hungarian history during the walk. Then we went for lunch and it had been our first meeting with the school canteen which our students fancied and described as very neat.

In the afternoon, there was a Hungarian movie about water-polo and Soviet occupation during 1956. Water-polo is considered one of the most popular team sports in Hungary. The film showed how important water-polo was for people at that time. The Hungarians played the Soviets in the Olympics in Australia and were able to defeat them. Of course the encounter of these



two teams was more about anything else, but sports. Following the film was quite interesting as a certain parallel can be seen in the Czechoslovakian ice-hockey team playing the Soviets in 1969 after the Soviet intervention in 1968 during the Prague Spring. The movie was rather gloomy, but moving and inspiring.

After the movie, students were involved in some “get-to-know-each-other-better” games. Even some of the teachers took part in and it was funny and entertaining. Then folk-dancing followed, we tried to dance the famous Csárdás but only the ones with good sense of rhythm and music managed. However, it was nice to try out and to see real professionals performing it. Csárdás was the last event on our schedules, thus we departed for our homes tired, but full of wonderful experiences.

Wednesday followed and it represented a very special day indeed as it was the day of Saint Imre who stands for one of the most important religious persons in the whole Hungarian history. St. Imre is also patron of the St. Imre Gimnasium. There was Holy Mass at the beginning of the day which all the students attended wearing formal clothes and uniforms. It all occurred in a wonderful church which is part of the school. The impression it had on us was simply stunning and we really enjoyed being able to witness the whole ceremony.

When the Mass finished, various workshops were ready for us. Namely, we had the opportunity to hear a Hungarian politician talking about the Visegrad programme and fund. Students were given the chance to ask questions on various topics. It was enriching to hear some new and unknown information about the collaboration among the states in Central Europe from and insider. Then a literary workshop followed led by a lady who translates Czech, Slovakian and Polish books into Hungarian. This workshop





represented a unique chance to experience similarities among the Slavic languages involved on one hand. On the other hand, it showed us the difference between Hungarian and the remaining languages. However, it was nice to hear some famous Czech works in Hungarian and miraculously enough our students recognized all the Czech works presented.

A free afternoon was scheduled on Wednesday leaving students with their families the whole afternoon. It was a chance for everyone to explore Budapest on his or her own a bit. Of course students were still accompanied either by the hosting families or Hungarian students. Most of the people did a sightseeing tour around Budapest experiencing bustling atmosphere of the city.





A bus tour was planned on Thursday. Our trip started in front of the school building in the morning. First stop was a nice small town called Szentendre which is usually packed with tourists, especially during summer. We visited a factory producing marzipan goods and bought some sweets for our friends and relatives back in the Czech Republic.

After Szentendre, our bus took us to Visegrad and its famous castle. It was highly interesting to hear about the rich history of the place. We also realized that the cooperation among the states involved dates back to 14<sup>th</sup> century when then kings signed the original Visegrad Treaty. We also made a short stop to enjoy some sort of sledging track where we had a lot of fun.

Last stop was a place where people performed a horse-back archery. A past time activity which is becoming more and more popular in Hungary nowadays. We admired skills of the performing artists and then some of us tried archery on our



own. We arrived to school in the evening rather tired after this eventful day. Students went home with their host families while teachers were invited to a dinner party where traditional Hungarian cuisine was served.

Friday followed giving us possibility to visit regular lessons in school. It was wonderful to experience certain differences and similarities to our lessons at the same time. Next, a sport competition was scheduled where students and teachers



took part altogether. After that we were taken to the Parliament which is one of the largest buildings in Europe. After passing several security checks we were able to admire the crown jewels and the interior of the building. We arrived back to school for the last activity which was cooking the traditional goulash soup. The final product turned out to be better than we had expected observing the cooking skills of our students. Then the St.Imre Ball followed with a variety of activities prepared. Students could try out different activities starting from karaoke singing and ending with students' bands performing live on stage.

Saturday represented the day of our departure. We were leaving the capital of Hungary with mixed feelings. On one hand, we were quite sad that the five days had passed so quickly, on the other hand we were leaving with pleasant memories of our stay. We discovered a few things about Budapest and Hungarians. Students described them as highly friendly, good-natured and hospitable people. We were also surprised to learn the fact that their sense of humour resembles ours. All in all, we really enjoyed the stay in Hungary.





## Students' Reports on the Stay in Budapest

### Klára

It was 3th November when our big trip started. Our journey was long but I really enjoyed it 'cause we decided to do our own party and annoy all train with our singing. It was really funny. We arrived about six o'clock to Budapest Keleti railway station. We met our Hungarian friends and went with them to metro. I totally fell in love with their metro. I love that architecture, they have absolutely amazing ceilings.

We (me with Ann) arrived to their home about quarter past six. I met her family. They were really nice. Ann has two sisters – one little Rita and one the same age as I am – Betty. She has two brothers too. We didn't talk to each other so much but they seemed nice. Parents don't speak English but they were very kind.

We had to get up about half past six, I guess. It was little bit hard for me because I usually wake up at seven o'clock. Our journey to school lasted half hour. I loved their school! It was so big but soooo beautiful. And I really liked their school-cafeteria. They have kind cooks, I don't understand how it is possible!

Our program was different with every day but honestly, I don't remember much from it... One day we have something like workshop about literature in our countries which was really interesting. I really enjoyed the game when we had to go over Budapest and looking for answers to our questions about this city. It was so funny, we had to ask some police-man „where's the Castle?“ and he tried to explain that „Here. There is military museum and there is gallery... „ and we were like „Okay but where's the CASTLE?! Like...that building?!“ and he with totally desperate voice said: „THIS-IS-



CASTLE!“ And we didn’t get it so we were still like: „BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT BUILDING?!“ and he just: „THERE IS NO CASTLE, THIS IS CASTLE!“ and showed to ground. Well, we understood it.

I’m really glad that we could learn something about Hungarian revolution in 1956.

But what was the best about that whole week, was the school ball. I love it, I wanna this in our school! There was karaoke and club and the band what played was totally amazing. It was like big concert at school, that’s awesome! I asked the lead singer of their school-band what they played because I wanted to listen to it in the Czech Republic and I’m so thankful to him because I found totally awesome Hungarian band and I listen to their songs every day.

There is so much I can say about how much I loved it there. I didn’t want to go home. Budapest is beautiful city with beautiful architecture (I wanna live in their metro station...) and very kind people.

I’m so thankful that I could go there and stood there for five days in the nicest family ever. It was totally awesome.

## **Filip**

Budapest is a very nice city. It is big and very modern. I stayed with the family of Gergeli. He is a boy and his nick name is Gergu. He has a brother and a sister. They have a big flat in Buda. Every morning we had to cross the Danube with the car to get to school in Pest. The school is very big. It has two buildings and an inflatable sport hall. We had an interesting and exhausting program. The metro station was very nice and the train station too. I think the best day was Thursday, because we went to the blind museum. I think



Budapest is not so hectic as Prague. I enjoyed the trip very much.

## **Doubravka**

The program in Budapest was super .We were in parliament on a large bridge and we also visited the Visegrad .Budapest is really big and great and we were able to visit a few interesting shops with our partners. At the end we were invited to the prom. On the day of our departure there was also a very nice fair. The family that hosted me was very pleasant and friendly. I'm glad that I could be involved in this project. I'm still in touch with my partner by e-mail.

## **Maruška**

We were in Budapest from 3rd November to 8th November. We arrived in Budapest on Monday. My partner waited for me at train station. Her name is Sari. Then I went with my partner to a place where is a beautiful view of the evening Budapest. View was wonderful. After we went home. Her house was very neat and her room was very nice. I lived with Sari in her room. On Tuesday we went to school in the morning. Then we had a little trip. We visited the Matthias church. Then tour we walked around Budapest and we tried to find answers to questions. After it was lunch. Their dining room was small and modest. After lunch we watched film. Film was very interesting and sad. Then film we danced. Dance was arduous and hurt but very funny. We went at home in the evening. On Wednesday there was Szent Imre Day. We had lectures led by a member of Parliament. After lunch we had free time. Czech group and our partners had your plan. We went on a blind tour. It was the best day of the days. After blind tour we went to the sweet shop. The sweet shop was very colourfull. On Thursday





we had big trip. We were on Visegrad , in the marzipan muzeum and bobsled track. Bobsled track was very exciting. On Friday was very replete. We cooked Hungarian goulash in the morning. Then we had sports games. We were dressed in the national colours. After we visited the Parliament. I bought Rubik cube in the Parliament and we had Emericus ball in the evening. We came home at 10:30 pm. On Saturday we went to the mart and then we went to the train station. We said goodbye and we got on the train. I was very sad. And so ended up a wonderful week in Budapest.

### **My report from V4 project**

In the 3rd November we went to Budapest in Hungarian country by train. We were on the way for 7 hours.

When we came out of the train there were waiting for our Hungarians friends which has already been in our houses in October. They had very big and old school.

In Budapest we visited a lot of Hungarian sights. For example the Fisherman's bastion or building of Parliament, we've seen famous horseback arching and we tried arching. Than we have seen and done a lot of other AMAZING things. Last day in their school was a big Emercius Ball, but we thing it was more like party. Our Hungarian friends were very nice.

After 5 days together we after a big saying goodbye went home.

We're excited that we could be with our Hungarian friends and we've experienced a lot of fun with them.

If it is sometime in the future, we're absolutely sure we'll go again.





## Kamila Břízová a Míša Šilarová



## Bratislava meeting 30/11/2014 – 05/12/2014

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November we started the third stage of our exchange program, namely in Bratislava. The best connection between Letohrad and Bratislava is via railway therefore we boarded the train in Letohrad. We arrived to Bratislava without any main difficulties, though we were not able to find any vacant seats, having forgotten to book them in advance. We were welcomed at the bus station by the host families and Slovakian teachers.

On Monday at 8.15 we met with all the students who



participated in the exchange program at school in Skalicka Street. The school deputy welcomed all the guests, who arrived, and showed us around the school telling us information about the school history. The school for gifted students is divided into two buildings; primary school which is located in Teplicka Street and a



high school with its building in Skalicka Street. The walk between the buildings takes approximately ten minutes and it was quite easy to get used to it. A special conference with local authorities was held being followed by Slovakian students presenting Polish, Czech and Hungarian stereotypes. After lunch we watched a Slovakian film with English subtitles.

At about 4 p.m. we left school and spent time with our host families.

Tuesday started with workshops organized at Skalicka School. An interesting quiz was prepared about the V4 countries; students were able to carry out chemical experiments, they also made some Christmas decorations and participated in IT lessons. Well-organized sport activities followed after lunch break. We had a great time taking part in them. Then a dancing session ensued being very exciting for us. First, we had the opportunity to listen to Slovakian folk songs and we were also given the chance to have a look on traditional folk clothes. Then, we were taught a traditional Slovakian dance.

On Wednesday we went on a tour around the city. Bratislava is a wonderful city which skillfully combines modern and historical features. We visited one of the oldest churches in Bratislava- St. Martin's Cathedral and Bratislava Castle. We were fascinated by the beautiful view of the city from the castle. We walked along the neat and narrow streets in the Old Town.



Lunch was served at the university which is regarded as a major tourist attraction of the city as well. After that,



we visited Christmas market in the downtown. The products available were really amazing, thus we spent a lot of money there. It was also perfect to have the chance to experience Christmas atmosphere of the city.

In the afternoon we returned to Teplicka School to cook some of the traditional Slovakian dishes. We started the cooking session with peeling and cutting vegetables. Then, the teachers put all the ingredients with cabbage, fried sausages and vegetables into a big pot. During the cooking, a presentation showing traditional meals of Slovakia was displayed. At about 6 p.m. we ate a tasty cabbage soup together.

On Thursday we went on an all-day bus trip. We visited a castle in Červený Kameň and the museum of L. Štúr. In the end of the trip we walked along Modrá which is a nice, small town. We returned to Bratislava at about 5 p.m. and enjoyed our evening with host families. On Friday in the morning we met together at Teplicka School to give a final farewell to each other. We had a wonderful time in Bratislava therefore it was rather hard for us to realize that this stay was coming to its end. We boarded the train back to the Czech Republic with a lot of pleasant memories of Bratislava. Slovak people were friendly, kind and helpful. We enjoyed every minute of the stay in Bratislava.

## Student's reports

I think it was cool I have met a lot of nice people. And with some of them I am still in contact. I play cs go with one guy and I enjoy it. I stayed at home with Matěj. He hosted me for the whole stay. I enjoyed the most that activity when we were soldering stuff together, they said I was the most capable and I was really proud of myself. Also the computer stuff was really cool in my opinion.

There was a trip happening and that trip was about going to a castle called „Červený Kameň“. I think a lot of people had a blast...





buuuut I did not :/. Just some rocks put together on the ground with lot of rooms and some underground stuff etc. After that visit on the castle we went to a town and there was an awesome pizza. . So in Matějs house we every single day watched TV until like some hours were passed. And then we went to sleep. And I forgot to mention that I had the best food in decade, especially the KFC one, it was like when a unicorn was pooping on your tongue. And that's about it. So yea in general it was an amazing trip. I never forget it.

## Štěpán

### Slovakia

Our trip started on Sunday. We met on Letohrad's station at half past eleven. Our journey took about four hours. When we arrived, our partners were already waiting for us.

Next day we went through their school. School was beautiful. What was interesting – They had pillows and carpets in every classroom so they could lie there and take a rest.

First day in the school we had lunch in their school canteen. I'm sorry but that was awful. After this experience we decided to eat just in McDonald.

Every day was disposed some program for us. We visited „Bratislavský hrad“ (their castle), we had sightseeing in Bratislava, we played some games and visited some workshops in their school.

After we covered programs which were organized by their teachers, we could do whatever we wanted with our partners.

We went shopping, visiting restaurants, coffee bars and we once went to the cinema.

Our partners were very pleasant. We experienced a lot of fun





and we're really glad we could be part of this project.

## **Tereza H. and Tereza M.**

### Visegrad project

We left on 30. 11. in the morning and arrived at 7 PM. Next few days we had a program in the school of our hosts. We visited the school for extraordinary gifted children. We saw a lot of interesting sights of the city. We really enjoyed shopping at the Christmas market in the city centre. The school was big, though it looked like block of flats, but we really liked it. It was nice to experience the Christmas atmosphere of the city. We took part in a sport competition and finished third. Students were very informal to the teachers and we liked that. We also visited a university where we enjoyed the food. We really had a good time in Bratislava and we regretted leaving, but it was an amazing experience.

## **Anička a Petra**

### Kalisz meeting 18/01/2015 – 23/01/2015

Last exchange programme was carried out in Poland, namely in Kalisz. Our journey began in Letohrad where we got on a train which took us to Poland. We changed trains in Wroclaw where we had just enough time to organize a short visit to the city centre. Then we continued in our travel. We arrived to the station in Kalisz in the early evening hours being warmly welcomed at the station by our Polish colleagues and hosting families. While the students were taken to their new homes, we, as teachers, were escorted to a newly opened hostel which looked really impressive.

Monday started with a gathering of students and teachers in the school building. We were officially welcomed





and greeted by the school headmaster. Then a guided tour around the school followed. Individual groups were accompanied by Polish students who informed us about the school in general and were ready to answer any potential questions.

When the tour finished we visited the Museum of Industrial History in Opatowek with many interesting machines and things displayed. There were several exhibitions divided into individual floors, namely old pianos, steam engines, looms and many others. In the afternoon we had a guided tour round the city of Kalisz. We started in the historical building of Kalisz theatre which is considered to be one of the oldest theatres in the world.

After that the guided tour moved to the city centre. It was fascinating to learn about the rich history of the city. We were really surprised to hear that Kalisz is believed to be the oldest city in the whole Poland. We also learnt about the moving history hidden behind some buildings in the city, not mentioning the fact that Kalisz was almost destroyed in World War One.



A short break followed and then all the participants went to the local sport centre to play a bit of bowling. It was an entertaining evening during the bowling session though gutters and strikes occurred at the same time.

Tuesday was characterized by bus trips. We started with a trip to Russow where we visited the Museum of Maria Dabrowska. Maria Dabrowska was a local writer who led an eventful life.

Her books are popular in the region even nowadays. The museum was also equipped with furniture of Daborwska's era making it possible to picture how life looked like in those years.

Afternoon followed with another trip, but this time Goluchov which is popular resort for trips and short walks due to its wonderful surrounding and parks. The place had a special atmosphere and we



also had a chance to observe European bisons. These noble animals were really impressive.

We were also warmly greeted by the mayor of Kalizs in the town hall. Given the opportunity to visit the town hall tower, which provided us with wonderful views of the city, we took a lot pictures from its top.

Then a cooking evening followed where students and teachers were divided into several groups to participate in cooking traditional

Polish meals. Some of the products were worse and some better, but all in all it was nicely prepared and entertaining.

Wednesday was another eventful day. It began with a visit of the Archeological Museum. Visitors could admire the early Medieval fort and the buildings which helped us to imagine how life was several centuries ago. Then we walked back to school and attended the school canteen which was cosy and neat. Then a movie about Katyň followed. The movie had a gloomy atmosphere and depicted one of the most moving events in Polish history. It gave the viewer a picture how difficult is to survive for the Polish among the two European big nations, namely between Germans on one side and Russians on the other. A short break ensued before the dancing party scheduled for the evening. The dance party took place in a local club. All the students took part in and enjoyed the evening dancing and chatting. That was the last event on our Wednesday list therefore everyone left for their home.



• LET'S BREAK OUR NATIONAL STEREOTYPES



Thursday started with various workshops including regular lessons. This again provided us with a unique chance to observe teaching and learning styles and methods. Students from all the four countries participated. Then a workshop on national stereotypes followed developing into a rather interesting discussion about prejudices which people have towards individual nations.

After the workshop was over, we visited the Kalisz Regional Museum, a very modern building showing the early and contemporary history of Kalisz. Again, we were fascinated by the historical richness of the city. We returned to the school for lunch and there was a surprise waiting for us in the form of karaoke singing. Students had to try to sing songs in a language different to their mother tongue. This prerequisite resulted in some very remarkable outcomes but we had loads of fun.

Then a sports afternoon with various sports events ensued. Unlike the Budapest stay, only students took part. The sports afternoon was followed by a zumba dance class but only the most physically fit survived till the end. Polonaise was the last item on our schedules for that day. We tried to learn the basics and surprisingly, most of us were able to manage.

A farewell dinner was organized for the participating teachers in the local restaurant where we were given lots of presents. The Slovaks and Hungarians had to depart in the early Friday morning hours leaving us the only group remaining.

Therefore we had an ice-skating morning specially organized just for us. However, then it was time to leave Kalisz for us as well.

We had a wonderful stay in Kalisz which left us with the feeling that Polish people have great sense of hospitality that they are good-natured, helpful, kind and polite. Our students were really amazed and none of them regretted going. On the contrary, they said that they had the most beautiful week during the whole school year. The five days had passed so quickly but we learned a bit about the way people in Poland think and live, so it was well worth it.





## Student's reports

Kalisz - just a name of a city somewhere in Poland. Honestly, I didn't even know that it exists before I joined our exchange project. So let me just tell you what was our trip like. :) I didn't prepare much. I packed my stuff during Saturday, woke up on Sunday and arrived to the train station in Letohrad. That's where it started.

We spent 8 hours on board of the 3 definitely worst trains across all European railways, but we didn't mind, because we could enjoy the journey anyway. When we arrived to Kalisz, it was dark already so I had some difficulties to recognise all the girls that we met in the Czech Republic. Right after our arrival I met the family of my host, got in their car and became so lonely, because it was really hard to start talking straight away.

Kalisz is not that different from Czech cities such as Pardubice or Hradec Králové and the Polish guys decided to show us the most of the city during the week. They organised few walks through the city, even one guided tour, visits of museums (many and many museums) and on the other hand, we had a disco, played bowling and had some fun in the aqua park. We had so many activities, that we didn't have almost any free time that I would use to do more shopping.

My host family was really friendly, but I needed to understand Polish to communicate with the parents of my host. I need to say that they cook really well and that's what I really appreciate! Poland was a great surprise and experience for me. All the people I met and all the fun I had make me truly glad that I went there.

Thank you and see you again!

**Domink Bednář**



Our trip started by meeting in Letohrad on Sunday at 9 pm. After 4 hours of train ride we changed trains and continued next four hours to the final destination, Kalisz. At 5pm we finally arrived to our new homes and met the families. Next morning we visited their school and we were part of the lessons.

After the lessons we went bowling with our partners. At Tuesday we met with mayor of the city and then we spent the rest of the day in the aquapark. At Thursday we went to visit the castle called Goluchow and then we joined party in the club and we really enjoyed it. On Thursday we cooked soup and Polish national food called “pirožky”. The last day morning we went ice-skating and at 2pm we headed back home. The families were great and lovely, we all really enjoyed it. I personally would love to join such event next time.

**Jakub Moravec**



## **Hungarian students' feedback of the V4 project**

This was the first time I could participate in a student exchange program. I had always wanted to be involved in a program like this because I think it is a great opportunity to meet different people and to get to know their culture and try to break down the stereotypes.

I chose Bratislava because it is a capital city. I got a Slovakian girl as a partner, Lucia and we have only one year age gap between us. I had been waiting for her arrival since we had contacted each other by writing e-mails. We were so excited to meet each other, it turned out that we had a lot of things in common. The 6 days they spent here were really good and exciting. It was really exciting to act like a tour guide here in Budapest, and it was a pleasure to show them around in places where they couldn't go without people who know the city. The programs organized by our school were also really enjoyable. We had a lot of fun and a great time together. On the day when our partners left we were so sad but at the same time also thrilled about travelling to Bratislava and see them there again.

We went to Bratislava at the beginning of December. Advent time had just started so we had this Christmas feeling and the city had its special atmosphere, too. It was so nice to see how my partner was excited about my arrival. She and her family did their best, so I had a really good time there without feeling homesick. They showed us around the city like we did in Budapest. Their school was so different from ours: they had free wifi and I guess better conditions and what I found interesting is that they could say 'Hi' to all of their teachers.

The sad truth was that the days when we were



there just passed by so fast that we did not even realise that our stay had ended.

The great thing is that we made new friends and I think we did break the stereotypes and found great relations between us. I hope that Lucia and I will be able to meet again in the near future. I had such a great time during the programme, because I did not only make friends with Slovaks but with Hungarians too from the lower grades, and now I am so happy to have them. I hope that later I will have other chances to take part in exchange programmes.

## **Almásy Zsófia**

Budapest

I think it was a great idea of the V4 to let the students meet with another students from other countries and forget the stereotypes.

I had an unforgettable week in Bratislava. My exchange partner, Sára (from Slovakia) was amazing. We found



many common things about each other so we became friends quickly. We talked a lot because Sára has got a really good English knowledge. My host family was so great. They were really nice to me and they also could speak English really well, so we could understand each other clearly.



We still write to each other as often as we can. I hope that we will meet again soon and we will gain some more memories.



I'm glad that I could take a part in this project!

**Bene Dorka**

Budapest, Hungary

We decided to sing up for the V4 programme with my friend, because

we wanted to meet new people from different countries and cultures. We chose Poland, as we had never been there before.

In November, my partner, Julia arrived in Budapest. At first, I was a bit surprised, since she was 4 years younger than me, but during the week, we got to know each other and got along well. We showed her the city and took her to an aquapark.

When I arrived to Kalisz in January, I was a bit scared, because no-one in the family spoke English. In the end, we managed to communicate quite efficiently even without speaking, and despite a few difficulties I really enjoyed our visit to Kalisz.



**Bőr Angéla**

Budapest, Hungary



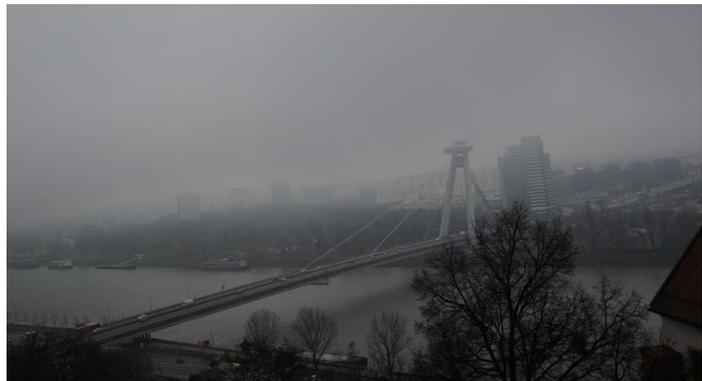
The weather was a lot colder than in Budapest, so we had to put on all the clothes we had.



### **V4 – Borbély Sarolta – report**

V4 was a very instructive and great experience for me. I really enjoyed the week in Pozsony (Bratislava), and I hope that our exchange partners had a good time here, too.

I was very lucky, because we got on very well with my partner, and she spoke better than me, so we could talk easily. In Budapest we tried to show them the city as much



as possible, and they found it amazing, so we were really proud. However, at the end of the week, we were disappointed, because there were lots of other things we didn't have time to show them.

We had a very good time together in Pozsony too, and it was better, because we had known each other by then. So it was great to get to get to know new people, and a new city, and make new friends.





## My experiences about V4

I had never been to the Czech Republic before. So I was looking forward to the trip.

The beginning was a little bit



difficult because my host family didn't speak English but they were really kind. Klara, my partner is a 15 year-old beautiful, clever and kind girl. She speaks English very well.

I enjoyed staying in the Czech Republic because I met a new culture and new people.

Although I had never had any stereotypes about the Czechs, after this amazing trip I am sure I won't say a bad word about the Czech Republic!

Anyway, it was an amazing experience and I hope we will have a second chance to meet again. So I am really grateful that I could take part in this project.

**Anna Börcsök**, Budapest





## V4 or vacation in a castle

I had never been abroad without my family so I signed up for the V4 project with my friend. I chose the Czech Republic, because I had never been there. I was looking forward to the trip. To my great surprise, my host family was the owner of a castle!

My partner was Filip, a 13 year old boy. He is half Austrian. His English is quite good and we could understand each other very well. I mostly spoke to his mother. The family was very, very kind.

I enjoyed the Czech Republic because it's a beautiful country and the weather was also nice.

I hope that I will get back there.

## Borody Gergő, Budapest





## My experiences about the V4 programme

It was great to participate in the V4 programme.

Vanessa, my exchange partner is a very nice girl. Her English is excellent and we have a lot in common. While visiting Budapest



I realized how beautiful our capital was. In Pozsony, it was interesting to find differences and similarities in our culture, traditions and gastronomy. The funniest part of the programme was that we tried to learn each other's language.

„Koniec dobrý, všetko dobré.”

## Csapody Nóra

Budapest



## My experiences about the V4 programme



We had a great opportunity at school being part of an exchange programme, and I picked Poland with my friend, so we went to Kalisz, the oldest city in Poland.



My partner was Patrycja, who is a few years younger than me, but it wasn't a problem, we could communicate very well.

We went to more interesting places around the town, so we could get to know the country a little bit better.

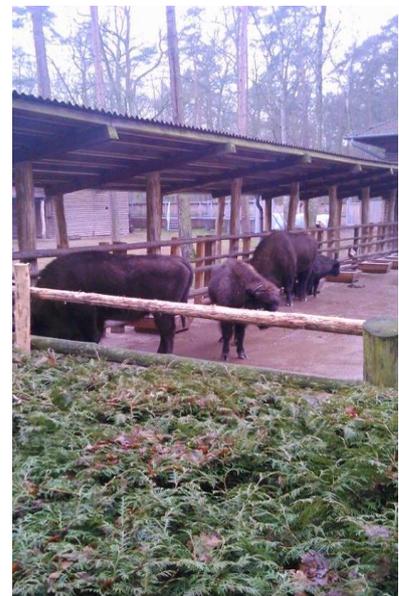
I think it was a huge experience for us, because we actually saw that Polish people are kind and friendly, and maybe we have different habits in some things, but we can have a nice relationship with them.

## Csonka Julianna

Budapest, Hungary

### My experiences about the V4 programme.

I think it was a great idea of V4 to let the students of the four countries meet each other and forget about the stereotypes.





My partner, Kamila is a Czech student, and she is in the same age as me. We could talk about a lot of things, it was really nice to meet her. Her family was very kind, too, so I would go to the Czech Republic happily again. We spoke in



English in both of the countries, so we practiced it a lot. I am very glad, that I could take part in this project!!!

**Katica Horváth**

Budapest, Hungary

### **Exchange students program**

It was a very good program. I hadn't taken part in any similar programs before, so it was really good and exciting. When Nina, my exchange student came to Hungary, she was shy and quiet, but when we went to Slovakia she wasn't shy.



I think one of the best thing was that the members of my Hungarian group got closer to the Slovak people. When the Slovak students came here

they thought everything cost cheap. For example, when we went to the city centre, we found a second-hand shop



where everything was 300Ft. When they found out this information, they started to jump and scream and after that they sorted clothes for 20 minutes. But when we visited Slovakia we didn't feel the same way... For example in a common confectionery, we saw the prices and one slice of a cake was 4 Euros! Later we went to the plaza Eurovea and there we found a lot of cheap t-shirts and accessories. And the city centre was beautiful. We had a lot of fun with each other and I hope my English has improved a lot. 😊

## **Kelemen Blanka**

Budapest

### **V4 exchange program**

To my mind, the idea of the V4 program was great because during this exchange, the students could make a lot of new friends and also improve their English.



My partner was Gosia Michalak from Poland. She is a 13 year-old girl. First, the Polish students visited us in Budapest in November. Unfortunately, Gosia was not very communicative, perhaps because she did not speak much English. So we could not talk much, really. The other Hungarians had the same problem, so we decided to organise the free-time programmes together with other Polish-Hungarian pairs, but it didn't solve the situation because the Polish just stuck together apart from a few of them. I think the programmes in Budapest were really good and well organised by the school.



When I was in Poland, in Kalisz my host family was very kind, but they did not speak English either apart from Gosia's older sister who knew some. So, in the evenings I usually stayed in my room because we could not chat. The programmes organised by the school were good because there were some other older students too who could communicate better and they were the same age as us. So we got along quite well with them. So, in the end it turned into a nice experience and we had some memorable moments.

Based on these experiences, I would have some suggestions to make the exchange better for both parties. I think the schools should match students of the same age group with each other and also genders in order to avoid too many boys and girls pairs. I would also suggest that the students should be chosen in consultation with the English teachers and a minimum conversational level of English should be a precondition of participation.

### **Kiss András**

Budapest, Hungary

### **V4 project Bratislava**

My exchange partner was Veronika Pazičzka from Slovakia, so she came to us first. She's kind, nice, and intelligent, and she's preparing for an advanced English exam. She loves Budapest and Harry Potter, so we got on well, because I'm interested in these things as well. We went to a lot of beautiful places in Budapest together with Blanka, Zsófi, Sári, and Dorka and their partners. We had some great programmes at the school as well.



I hadn't had any stereotypes before she came, but I had learnt some things about our common history. And now I haven't got any stereotypes either, but I've seen that they have a very great national consciousness.

We went to Slovakia by bus and her parents were really kind. Her father speaks English a little but her mother doesn't, so when she asked something she said it in Slovakian and Veronika translated and I answered in English, and she translated it to her mother, so it was a funny situation.

I slept in her room and we talked two or three hours before going to sleep. Bratislava is a cute small town for me. Everything was OK but one thing was a bit strange: we went to a museum and the exhibition was about a person who was their national hero who fought against the Hungarians and the Hungarian language in Slovakia and I think that wasn't a good idea for us to go there. I was proud when we visited the old buildings because all of them were built by Hungarians. I think it was a good experience and I was lucky because my partner was so friendly and I could practice English with her.

**Neumayer Dóra** Budapest

### **The V4 exchange programme**

I was lucky in more ways than one: first, my Polish host's, Jacek's parents were both artists and my mum is also one. This established an instant bonding between us. The parents were very friendly, open and easy going. Although they did not speak much English we enjoyed each other's company and being at home with them was relaxing.



The sharing of knowledge about Kalisz and the neighbourhood was somewhat hindered by the fact that very few of our hosts spoke English, including the teachers. But no problem: playing sports and dancing needs only body language and we were all very good at that.

All in all, it was a very good experience and I would be glad to have some kind of contact or relationship with Polish people in the future.

## **Petik Ábel**

Budapest

### **4 Days in Poland**

I have always loved and I'll always love travelling, so without doubts I signed up for this trip. Visiting Poland had always been one of my dreams and meeting Polish people of my age was just the cherry on the pie.

Even though, there were sometimes some obstacles in the channel of the communication between me and my exchange partner, since her English is really basic.

I loved spending every minute in Kalisz. I also realised that the Polish people do like Hungarians and yes they have very nice cities, too. Programmes were always fun to do (especially because we could meet other nations). The food was sometimes strange but in general good, and the Hungarian and the Polish students were really nice, couldn't have wished for best.

So all in all, the stereotypes were blown away in my opinion.

## **Pintér Kálmán**

Budapest





## Travelling to Poland

I was really scared and excited when we departed to Kalisz in January. Although when we stopped by in Cracow on our way to Kalisz, just the excitement was left in me. The city is very beautiful and it reminded me a little of Budapest.

We arrived in Kalisz very late, but the family welcomed me very warmly. I spent my week with my exchange partner, her mother and her little sister. Sometimes English was a difficulty, but we solved it with hands and legs. The weather could have been a little bit better but they said “it's Poland” :).

So I really enjoyed the whole trip and I can recommend to every one to try it once at least for breaking the stereotypes.

## Pintér Veronika Budapest

I had been in the Czech Republic two times, but I had never got to know Czech students. It was very interesting. First I was a bit frightened, but when I arrived at the railway station, my host family gave me chocolate and they were very kind. They live in a small flat in Letohrad near to the partner school and my partner is very kind too.

She is 14 years old so we could talk a lot and she has a sister who is 8 years old and she is very cute.

The city was very nice and calm and I found it very good. We saw the biathlon centre, the centre of their national sport. We could try shooting and running with the strange rolling skis. I got to know so many people, I got some new friends from the



Czech Republic, and I am really grateful for that.

## **Simon Réka**

Budapest

### **V4 student exchange, Bratislava, 2014**

Where should I begin the story? Originally, it seemed, I couldn't take a part in the exchange program, because I missed the deadline of the application, so I was put on the waiting-list. Therefore, when the Slovak team came to Hungary, I didn't receive anybody. I heard, the Hungarians organized amazing programs for the guests, so I decided, I would take part in the next one. When the first part of the student exchange was finished, a Hungarian participant broke her leg, so she couldn't travel to Bratislava. I was asked by the teachers to substitute her, and to go with the other Hungarians students to Slovakia. I grasped the opportunity and I left for Bratislava on 30 November.

A few days before the departure, I was said that my exchange partner would receive other two girls besides me in her house. I found it a little bit strange for the first time, but afterwards I realized, it would be even better, because I would be able to get to know three new girls instead of one. When the 30 November, the day of the departure came, I was very excited, because I had never met the girls who I would be going to live with in one house for a week. I was preparing all day, I was looking forward to the arrival to Bratislava.

And we did arrive... It was around 10 o'clock, everybody was tired, sleepy, hungry, but at the moment, we could see our own partner, we forgot the tiredness and on everyone's face you could see only a smile.



I got to know the three girls and we exchanged our phone numbers /anyway it was obligatory, in case anybody got lost in the town, she should be able to phone somebody/, we added each other on facebook, instagram, snapchat, in short, on all social media where we are registered :) We arrived home and we got to know many things about each other and about our nations. We immediately sat down to the table for dinner and we talked English all night. It was simply fantastic - and it was just day zero!

### **Day 1**

We started this day with a common lesson hold for the participant countries /Slovak, Polish, Czech, Hungarian/. This way we could become acquainted with the traditions, glories and symbols of each nation. After finishing the class, we went to see a film, Mother Hulda, of course in English. In the evening, we had a walk in the town with the exchange students.

### **Day 2** Tuesday.

This day was very interesting because of the workshops. We had Chemistry, where we could see exciting experiments, Physics, where we could craft Christmas trees, Geography where we could fill in a V4 quiz, which we won! But my favourite one was ICT, because there we could design an android app, which we could at the end save to our mobile phones. Later we went to have lunch whereby we made some selfies :) Afterwards we had a sports afternoon, where we could test ourselves, we even learnt a Slovak folklore dance.

### **Day 3** The day of tour.

On this day we explored Bratislava with the Czechs, we were at an open air Christmas market, we could ice skate and drink hot chocolate. Afterwards we had some spare



time, and we could go with the Hungarian team to buy some souvenirs. In the afternoon we prepared coconut balls at school.

**Day 4** We visited the castle Cerveny kamen and a few other museums.

**Day 5** The day of farewell.

We realized, it was the last day. Maybe we wouldn't see each other anymore. Therefore the Slovaks organized a farewell meeting, where everybody could have a talk and say goodbye to each other. After that we went to the Slovak National Gallery. We had a free afternoon, so we sat down in a restaurant, and we tasted traditional Slovak foods, like halušky.

We had a week plenty of experiences and adventures. It was a good feeling to get to know three kind and cute girls, who I keep in touch with even today. The international environment meant a great pleasure for me, it was great to speak English for one week. It was worth undertaking the project, even if I couldn't take part in the first half of it.

Consequently, I can recommend the student exchange to everybody, because you can get to know new, fantastic people, you can use the foreign language that you are learning. You can also realize that it is worth to learn languages, it is fantastic to be able to understand foreign people, and you don't consider learning languages to be a waste of time anymore. Should you be afraid of the student exchange, because you may get a partner non-fitting to you, I can say: don't be afraid of that.

It is sure, you will get a good one, since the pairs will be matched on the base the personal description written by everybody at the beginning. Should you be afraid of not feeling



well, don't worry, you can meet the Hungarians every day, and you can always speak to the Hungarian students and teachers as well. So, I can only tell good things about such a student exchange. If you have the chance, don't hesitate to apply.

### **Unforgettable Kalisz**

The greatest experience I have ever had was when I went to Kalisz in January, with some of my classmates, in the V4 programme. Kalisz is one of the oldest cities in Poland. It is a very beautiful city with lots of museums and galleries and churches in the centre of Poland.

Although we saw lots of things, but the most important is, that we made lots of friends, who we want to keep forever. During my trip I could feel that the Polish love the Hungarians because wherever we went to we were received with great hospitality. I could try the best dishes of my life, which were traditional Polish dishes, I could get to know Polish drinks, students, teachers, and beautiful girls! It is impossible to describe all the joy, happiness and experiences that we received in Kalisz and we all hope that our Polish friends feel the same way.

### **Szabó Bálint**

Budapest





## My experiences about V4

I think this V4 Program was really a good idea, because we could meet young people from other European countries.

My partner is Czech and her name is Doubravka. It was very interesting to see where they live and how they live.

We had very good programs and we talked a lot in English. We tried out their national sport, biathlon, which was really funny and we visited beautiful places.

We still write to each other every week. I'm glad that I could get a friend from another country.

**Zsófia Szmrecsányi**

Budapest, Hungary

## My experiences about V4

In my opinion, it was a great idea of the Visegrad Group (V4) to let the students of the four countries meet each other and forget about the stereotypes.





When I was in the Czech Republic, in Letohrad, my host family was the Horáčková family. They were very kind, but they couldn't speak English, except Tereza, my partner (but her English was really basic). So, all in all, we could hardly communicate (only using the Google Translate which I think was a bit awkward).

But besides that, it was a huge adventure, a very-very cool trip and a great occasion to test my English knowledge and gain some experience. I could make lots of friends (Czechs, Slovaks and Poles alike), get to know so many things about the Czechs and the Visegrad 4 and do some sightseeing. We had a lot of fun and memorable moments that I'll never forget.

In Hungary, in Budapest we hosted Vítek (Vít Šrámek) who is another Czech student. He is just 8 months younger than me, so we could get along very well. He could speak English well, too. The Hungarian part of these 2 weeks was better, because I think I could learn English more efficiently when I was with Vítek.

Anyway it was an amazing experience and I hope this program will continue and we will have a second chance to meet each other again. I am very glad, that I could take part in this project!

## **Thuranszky B.**

### **My experiences about v4**

When I heard that our school had an exchange program with a different country from England, I was really happy, because I wanted to go to another country. I and my



friend applied for this program. We chose the Czech Republic because we hadn't been there before.



My partner is 12 years old and his name is BOBO.... He is a very funny and friendly guy. I stayed at their detached house in a small town. Interestingly, my friend's favourite mountain biker was born here.

To sum up, it was a really good trip and it was really useful. We were very sad when we had to come home.

I hope I will go back sometime.....

## **Turi Balázs**

Budapest

I was in Poland, and a Polish girl came to us. My partner was kind, but she wasn't too good at English. What is more, the other Polish people couldn't really speak English either. It was a bit annoying, but two of the Polish students could speak with us, so



finally we could talk. It was the negative side of the programme.

On the other hand, I really enjoyed it. The Polish people, who could talk English, were kind and funny. And I was with my friend, so we laughed a lot. And we organized exciting and great programmes, for example: Aquapark, lasertag, Andrassy road, Váci street, etc. On the way to Kalisz, our Hungarian teachers organized for our group to visit Krakow, and it was beautiful. My host family was friendly, and I had the chance to eat some really delicious dishes. The programmes in Poland were a bit boring, and the leaders of the programmes didn't speak English. Sometimes, the guides did not speak English, either. We felt excluded, because the other three Slavic nations could understand things in any of their languages, so it was a bit disappointing.

To sum up, the programmes in Poland weren't too good, the majority of the pupils couldn't speak English, but they were kind. I wrote more negative things, but I enjoyed it.

**Varga Marcell** Budapest

### **One Week in the Czech Republic**

I had an exchange student from the Czech Republic. It was my first time, that I could see this country's culture. My student is younger than me, so first when she came to the railway station with her family the communication was a little bit complicated with her. But she has an older sister and I could talk a lot with her.

They live in a village near to Letohrad where the school was.

Every morning we went to school by bus. It was



good because I could talk with a lot of people. We had lots of good programmes during the week. My favourite was when we went to the biathlon centre. We could try shooting and we had to concentrate a lot - it was exciting. Every afternoon my host family organized programmes for me. We saw a lot of nice places around Nekor (the village) and Letohrad, we went bowling and her mother cooked me a lot of Czech food and cookies.

This time was very determinative for me. I loved it! And I got a lot of new friends.

## **Véghelyi Sára**

Budapest

## **V4 pályázat**

When I heard about the V4 opportunity, I wanted to join immediately. Fortunately, I succeeded. My Slovak exchange student – Adam – sent an email to me and after that I got his phone number and we chatted on Viber. When he arrived I learned lots of things about him, for example he had lived 4 years in the USA so he speaks English very well.

The first evening we showed him Budapest by night. We visited the Buda Castle and places around it like Matthias Church and Fisherman's Bastion. Every day we had lots of programs for example a tour to the Castle of Visegrád, Szentendre (tobaggoning), we visited the Parliament, the Citadel, St. Stephen's Basilica etc. After school programs, we went to Budapest Eye, Heroes' Square, Chain Bridge, and we were walking along Danube. In the





evenings, we talked a lot with my family and just the two of us. The last day we were very sad, but we knew we can see each other soon. We continued chatting and we looked forward to meeting each other.

We travelled to Bratislava by bus and we were very excited. He and his father, Peter, were waiting for me and prepared me a very tasty dinner and we went out to drink a Bubbletea and it was very delicious. I met his dog, Funny, we made friends. In the evenings, we watched photos together of them when they lived in the USA. It was exciting and cool.



Every day, we had programs with their school and in the afternoon the Slovak students organized activities. I saw the Castle and the Christmas Market and some churches. I enjoyed the whole week very much and I was sad when I had to come home. His father gave me a beautiful Christmas present.

I've found the V4 programme very useful and I can speak English courageously and I've learnt new expressions and words. It was exciting to get to know another culture, folk dance, habits, and people.

**Zsiborács Dorottya, Budapest**



## Slovakian students' feedback of the V4 project

LETOHRAD

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Slovak exchange students:

Matej Sventek

Michal Rebro

Laura Macháčová

Paula Straková

Barbora

Marcineková

Sofia Šulek

Simona Znášiková

Cyril Eštok

• Visegrad Fund

www.visegradfund.org



I packed my bag and drove to the train station. We got on a train heading to Letohrad. There was almost no room for us, but fortunately we had already reserved some seats. I played card games with Paula on the way there. When we arrived at our destination, there was a group of students and teachers waiting for us. All of them had little paper signs with our names written on them. I didn't see my name though. A girl came up to me. She was tall and slim. "Are you Sofia?" she asked me. I told my teachers I was fine with Eva and her father took me to their house. Her whole family was really



nice. She has only one sibling, an 18-year-old sibling.

The first full day we played introductory games and were greeted by the Mayor of Letohrad. Eva took me to her dance class. The following days we went to a biathlon sports center, cooked at school, had a sport afternoon and went to see a bunch of churches and museums. I was sad that I had to leave Friday around lunch time.

A couple of weeks later 3 girls came to Bratislava, to my house. I hosted 3 because we have a big place and not everybody has that luxury. Anyway I had one Polish girl named Kaja, one Hungarian girl named Csilla, and one Czech girl named Peťa. I took them to the Presidential Palace and we watched all the Hangover movies. The Polish girl even went ice skating!



All in all I had fun. I don't think I gained new experiences, because I am a native-english speaker plus I travel alot without my parents so I know how to manage by myself, but I think that the girls that stayed at my house had a very eventful week that brought them a ton of new experiences.

**Sofia Šulek, 14 yrs.**

Our trip to Letohrad had been shrouded in mystery since the beginning. We had gone to this secret place with the great expectations, without knowing what had been awaiting us. Fortunately, I had got really kind and



ingradiating family, which had shown me their style of living, that was different and pleasant at the same time. Living in the village approximately 10 km far from the school had been such a big deal for me, because I am used to live in the capital city, where I get to school in 5 minutes on foot, and there it took me 45 minutes by bus.

The village, where my hostfamily lived, was pulescent, restful and silent most of the time, but I could not live in this kind of place for more than one week. I am accustomed to busy and hectic life, where I wake up to the rumbustious and noisy sound of the street, the stress is my bestfriend and I do not even have time to take a rest, which happens to me quite often. The most surprising moment for me was when I realized that the coffeehouse, confectionery, and some of the other shops were closed from 5 p.m. and the students went straightly home after the school time. It is just impossible for me to be at home at this time, I have got plenty of activities after school as I said and I usually get home after 8 p.m.

I had a chance to try the different style of life. I would like to get you know something more about one of the days. It was the Wednesday, 6 a.m. when my alarm clock rang. I was extremely exhausted, because I was not accustomed to getting up this early. We went to the biathlon centre on foot, this walk lasted approximately 20 minutes from Letohrad. We had seen the home biathletes training, we also had the great opportunity to try it by ourselves. Some of the exchange students fell and tore their pants. The Czech students had shown us their snow cannon, which is going to make the artificial snow this winter time.

They showed off with their new fitness centre, trail for the inline-skating and the gun-range. After this trip we went for a lunch in the school canteen and went to the gym. We



learned how to dance polka, played the omnikon game and competed with the other nations in different sport games.

I think I have made so many new friends. After all, the czech nature impressed me the most.

### **Laura Macháčová, 15yrs.**

Before I went on this trip, my greatest fear was of the host family, because I have never lived in a foreign family. I was lucky, my family was friendly, very kind and I felt pleasant at their home. A huge advantage was that their flat was situated in the centre of the town, away from the school only 10 minutes walking.

My host sister was nice, funny and we got along very well. She had two siblings- younger brother and younger sister, so they were very busy with taking care of the children. The whole family were animal lovers; they had one dog, two cats and two huge snails in terrarium. My host mother was an excellent cook, so every day we had mouth-watering dinner. When I was sick, my host parents bought me medicines and host sister stayed with me at home.

What shocked me the most was that both parents woke up every day at 3 a.m., because they were bus drivers and returned home at 8 p.m. They only cooked us a dinner and went to sleep.

My favourite day on this trip was Tuesday, when we went to mansion Orlice and after that we had cooking afternoon and Movie Night. In the morning we met at school and went on foot to the edge of the Letohrad, where is this mansion situated.

It was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt in 16<sup>th</sup>. Exterior is humdrum, inside are placed gothic and renaissance cellar, collection of weapons. Throughout the building is



situated baroque furniture and on the walls are hanging period paintings. There is also functional historical letterpress printing workshop. We passed through route A, which is included spaces, which were 400 years bricked and were discovered during reconstruction.

After lunch, we had Cooking afternoon. At first we were cooking potato pancakes, which were very tasty. After that we decorated gingerbreads, which were already baked. At the end of the day, we watched film Kolja and after when it had finished, we responded to questions regarding the movie, which ended this day.



### **Paula Straková, 16 yrs.**

On Thursday we went on a bus trip to see sightseeing near the city of Letohrad. We stopped by few small churches than we arrived to Neratov which is a big church with a glass roof. It was a church near German village. During the World War II it was destroyed by shelling, later, during the socialist era it was again about to be destroyed but people protected it. Since 1992 this church has been a culture heritage and after nearly 80 year it has got a new roof and there is even more renovation coming.

Our next stop was The Hill of Holy Mother. It is a big abbey on a hill from which there is really great view over the county. After visiting the abbey we moved to the tower near the abbey. We have also seen the War museum in Kraliky. This war museum is in the middle of defensive line build in 1935-1939 to



defence Czechoslovakia. Near the museum there are plenty of bunkers and other remains of the defence system. In the museum there is a big military exposition consisting of lot's of military vehicles, tanks, artillery, ammunition, uniforms, documents and photographs.

After that we moved to our last stop which was the The Land Gate. It is a beautiful nature of this region. It is a natural reservation.

We have seen a stone Bridge on which there was lovely view over the nature in this park. It surprised me that in Czech Republic are much prouder for their history and for history of Czechoslovakia than we. For example we do not have any museum like this



specified on Czechoslovakian defence system like they do and it surprised me to how clean and beautiful that park was. On the other side surprised me that many of the small churches where we stopped was completely destroyed and nobody cares about it.

### **Matej Sventek, 16 yrs.**



During my trip to Letohrad in Czech Republic I found out that there are not so many differences between our nations. The mentality of people is pretty much the same. We all have similar habits. Even our languages are conformable. Traditions of family which I lived



were like traditions of my family. But during these five days I noticed one thing that surprised me. It was the way of eating dinner. In our family it is more formal. We put all the food on the table, we wait until everybody is sitting and ready to start eating and then we eat together. It was not like that in their family. We just came and received the food from my host-mother, by the way she was really nice to me, and we ate.

As well as their way of eating dinner I was surprised by the position of their house. They lived in forest with no neighbors and one kilometer away from the bus stop. This combined with the fact that the program started at 7:50 in the morning was pretty difficult for me.

On the other hand the program was worth it. I really enjoyed most of it. But best experience for me was the Military Museum in Králiky.

*„The most modern military museum in Czech Republic lies in the middle of the extensive and massively built zone of Czechoslovak fortifications from period between 1935 and 1938. A large number of preserved fortification buildings of various types lie in the direct vicinity. There are military history exhibitions dedicated to the army, the defence of the state and the Czechoslovak fortifications.*

As a man I find things like weapons or army vehicles really interesting so visiting this place was highlight of whole trip to Letohrad for me.

By all means this is not my only positive experience from Letohrad. Entire visit was a great adventure for me. I am really happy I could meet so many amazing people and see huge amount of beautiful places.

**Michal Rebro, 17 yrs.**



At first I wasn't sure whether to join this project. But after a while, when I thought about it, it didn't look to me like a bad idea. So I signed in and I didn't even realize, but there I was. Sitting on a train heading to Letohrad. I expected a very long journey, but it wasn't like that. The journey passed really quickly. When we got off the train there was a kind looking family waiting for me. I even got a paper with the Slovak flag and my name on it. As they told me later, at first it was supposed to be a big flag on the long stick.

Right on the first evening they took me on pizza for dinner. I was really thankful, because I didn't eat much on the journey, and let's say honestly... who doesn't like pizza?! When we came to their house, they showed me the whole house from the bottom to the top (for the first moment I thought I would get lost in there 😊). They even gave me my own room to stay in. But after few days I felt guilty, because Peťa (the girl I stayed at) had to sleep on a couch.

It was kind of disadvantage that they live far from Letohrad, but right in the next morning my worries were gone. We talked all the time we were on the bus to school and I didn't even realize and we were in Letohrad. Trips from school were really cool. We have seen many interesting things. They showed us a small castle, which was nicely furnished inside and there were cages with animals outside. Including one owl, which was soooo cute.

Later we saw three old, but interesting churches. The first one with the roof of glass, the second one really small, but very nice and the third one had an altar, which they could move as they wanted. To the middle of the church, or to the front... on the fourth day they hired a bus and they transported us between villages nearer or further from Letohrad. They had a planned



route around sights, that were somewhere nearby.

Examination of soldier cover was interesting. You could find there big tanks, soldier uniforms, emergency cars and many other things, that were used in the Second World War.

Everything till now was supercool, but I wanted to have one horse riding lesson, because they kept saying that Pardubický kraj is heaven on earth for horses and for horse lovers. In the family I stayed at everybody was kind to me and they booked a horse riding lesson for me on the farm near them. I was so happy. They lived near the border with Poland so they took me for a trip there and we went shopping. At the end I would like to say thanks for all of this.

### **Barbora Marcineková, 14 yrs.**

What exactly is a stereotype? It's basically a simplified idea attached to a person that belongs to some particular group, subculture, or nation. We all have stereotypes. Germans are cold and unfriendly, French people are smug, Jews are greedy, Russians are always drunk... Problem with stereotypes is that even if their ideas might be based on true, you can never apply them on every single person that belongs to some nation. It's actually quite funny, how we can think that millions of people have almost the same actions or personality traits just because they belong to same nation. Despite this fact we often somehow don't want to admit that each





person is different and we can't put everybody in some kind of imaginary boxes.

I think the best way to break our national stereotypes is to travel, and really get to know different people living in different countries. Their habits, culture, food, daily routines, places when they spend free time, so you somehow get the whole picture. I spent a week in Czech Republic in a small town Letohrad. I found out more about the region, we visited some interesting historical places, churches and a biathlon centre. It was all surrounded by nature.

My host family was really lovely. Except Anička, who was my exchange partner, I got to know some other Czech students. I also talked with some Polish and Hungarian students. We became familiar with the Czech culture and cuisine. They also tried to teach us their national dance Polka, but we weren't very good at it. When the international students came to our school I also met three girls from Hungary. We had a lot of fun together. We discussed our culture and we even taught each other some words and phrases in our native languages.



Overall, I think this exchange program was a good experience, I met new people and I think we know each other's nations better now.

### **Simona Znášiková, 14 yrs.**

Our trip to Letohrad was very interesting from the start. We had no idea where Letohrad is, how does it look



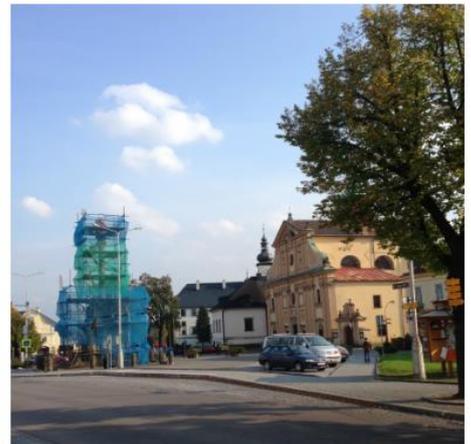
like and what could we expect. We were looking forward to meet our new families.

I was little surprised when we got off the train and saw my family for the first time. Overall, the family was awesome, but I expected boys to be little older. As I found out, one was 12 and the other one 13. Since the boys weren't in my age, I spent most of the time talking to my host mother. She was very kind and communicative, together we discussed the Slovak and Czech culture. She was very helpful and let me have my own room, also when I told her about my allergy to cats, she kept them away from my room. They had a very big house with a great land. They live in a village far from Letohrad, so we had to commute to school by train. It wasn't a problem. But before the trip, we thought we would live close to each other together in Letohrad, but it sorted out that Letohrad is a small town and everybody stayed in a different village outside of Letohrad.

The whole week in Letohrad was amazing, We have visited some very nice and interesting places and sights, and learned new things about the Czech people, country, traditions and culture. My personal favorite one was the museum of crafts in Letohrad. There were over 50 displays of crafts from the period of 1840 - 1930. It was very interesting to see how crafts and shops looked over 100 years ago and how people lived at the time.

In summary, I enjoyed our visit to Letohrad very much, it was both educational and entertaining, so I am glad I have this experience, since this was my first exchange program and I am always happy to meet new people and find out more about another culture.

**Cyril Eštok, 16 yrs.**





## **BUDAPEST**

### **HUNGARY**

#### Slovak exchange students:

Lucia Iffková

Veronika Pažická

Adam Tóth

Nina Šmatláková

Jana Sadovská

Vanessa Eisnerová

Nina Marcinekóvá

Sára Lovecká

#### What are these stereotypes?

Every nation is different and exceptional, but we are all people and we have to stick together. If we don't, we will never solve any global problems like terrorism, water crisis, racism or homophobia. I am so glad, that I had chance to visit Hungary like an exchange student. It was definitely one of my best experiences in my life, because I've learnt, that if I want to change something in the future, I have to learn languages.

That week in Budapest was amazing and I met stunning people, especially Sarolta. Sarolta was my Exchange partner, she was friendly and lovely and her whole family was so nice and kind to me. When I was in Hungary, I had my 15th birthday and Sarolta waited with me till midnight, because she wanted to be the first to wish me „Happy Birthday“. They all gave me presents and bought me cakes (six yummy cakes!) from confectionary. I was so impressed! We had a lot of fun together, we played each other our



favorite songs, we had interesting talks and it was really incredible time.

I found out one thing. We are all people, we are black, white, yellow, we have



different colours of hair, different body shapes, habits. We live in different houses, we eat different food, we speak different languages. But we are people and we are tantamount. We should travel round the world and meet new people, make new friendships and get to know each other. I wanna explore new countries so much. I adore travelling, I like trying new food and learning new things. My life goal is to travel round the world. I recommend you the same. Go and see the cities, forests or beaches. Go and break the national stereotypes.

### **Nina Marcineková, 15 yrs.**

To start off, I'd like to state that this student exchange in Hungary was by all means one of the best school excursions, if not the best, that I have been a part of. I'm honestly more than happy that I had decided to go and try something like this for I was leaving Budapest with so many great and unforgettable memories.

We left Bratislava on 3rd of November 2014. The train was delayed by some eighty minutes or so, so in the meantime, the eight of us plus our two wonderful teachers, have surged in a nearby café place because it was way too cold to just stand



outside. Long minutes of waiting came to an end when we finally boarded the train that took us to Keleti pályaudvar – which was such a stunning first impression. There we met our new families for the week, I met my host sister Dóri and along with her mum we took the underground and got home – that was another beautiful shock for me as their loft flat was situated in gorgeous surroundings and had such a lovely cozy and homey feel to it. Their family greeted me dearly with a delicious warm dinner, asked me loads of questions about Slovakia and my life in general.

The programme they prepared for us in their school – which, by the way, is humongous and so very beautiful – was more than less entertaining, I don't really remember all the details and things we did to be honest, but as far as I know I don't recall any moment that stood out by being boring or anything like that. It was sort of perfectly balanced and there was always something that pleased pretty much everyone.



One of the few reasons why I chose to visit Budapest in the V4 event is that I've heard so many great things about the capital but I expected something absolutely different. I'd been to Budapest twice before but only now I actually finally found out what all the fuss

was about and I can swear to every single person, that not visiting Budapest at least once in a lifetime is a sin. The city simply blew me away with its architecture, culture, and overall splendour.



We not only visited Budapest, the Hungarians also organised a field trip for us and we went to see some other tiny little cities and villages. That day was really chilly outside and it started raining later in the evening. But we survived with no harm and still enjoyed every possible bit. Visiting the museum of marzipan, the vast Hungarian parliament, a walk through the stunning building of Matthias church – all of these things had awed us all and I'm thoroughly satisfied I was able to be a part of them.

Throughout the week we took a ridiculous amount of pictures, majority of which were selfies that made this trip legendary and easy-to-remember. I'm also



adding the best photo ever, it's a selfie of our tremendously spectacular and astonishingly splendid Slovak group as one would say, we took it down under the ground while waiting for subway to come.



During the week spent in Budapest at the Szent Imre Gimnázium, we found new friends from Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and even Slovakia. We cooked appetizing gulyás and coconut balls, had a great time at Szent Imre bál, won second place in a sport competition, but most importantly – we broke our international stereotype.

## Veronika Pažická, 16 yrs.

Last year in November I participated in the Visegrad exchange program and went to Budapest for exchange . It was a wonderful experience -I got the warmest room in the house, every day I had delicious meals (hungarian cuisine is fantastic and very rich). I experienced family values, Hungarian mentality & traditions, due to my accomodating exchange family and teachers. The program was conscientiously prepared and we did not have chance to get bored :)



At the beginning I was a little confused but Sari and her family were always there for me and in a short time I started to feel like I was at home. The official part of a program was mainly focused on the sights and cognitive games, and we really had seen beautiful places, discovered interesting information about both Buda and Pest. But I am a kind of a person that loves to discover new places by roaming, finding a lost silent places and meeting the soul of the city. I was really glad that I had enough free time and also a chance to do some wandering.

The main impact on me was an awareness about our countries - that they are quite similar, and for me Budapest is a bigger Bratislava - and I really love my city. I realised that the



Hungarian language is quite euphonious, not only a tough accent and obviously for me was important a chance to improve my English.

It's a pity, that Sára broke her leg and she could not come here, but I've invited her to come to Bratislava in April. I hope that she will come and I'll have a chance to requite her my amazing reminiscences.

### **Jana Sadovská, 16 yrs.**

In our school they gave us an opportunity to visit Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland for one week. The program was about breaking out national stereotypes and learning more about these countries. I didn't want to go at first and decided to give it a try in Hungary at the last minute when there were only two more places left.

Retrospectively this was the best spontaneous decision I have ever made. This was my first time spend with Hungarian people. There are lots of stereotypes



about them in Slovakia. From what I heard they just eat a lot of sausages. But my experience was completely different. All the people there were very polite, but not too uptight. I had tons of fun with them, and they were very smart. My exchange partner though was the best. We were almost the same age and had lots of things in common. She knew English very well so we didn't stop talking. She became a true friend to me and I really miss her now. I think Hungarian culture and people are very similar



to ours. When I was sitting at their dinner table in the evening it felt like at home.

I learned that you shouldn't judge people before you know them the same as you shouldn't judge countries before you visit them. We should definitely think twice before we start judging others. We are all different. But why does different have to be bad? What fun would we have, what would we talk about if we were all the same?

To me all the stereotypes about Hungary are gone. Now I can only think of it as a beautiful country full of beautiful people. Hopefully, I get to visit it again and if our school does another exchange program I won't hesitate. Count me in. So if you didn't do it until now, this is the time. **BREAK OUT THE NATIONAL STEREOTYPES!**

**Sara Lovecká, 14 yrs.**

I really wanted to go to Budapest, because I've never been there before. So when I heard about this exchange program, I was really happy. My exchange partner was 15 years old girl, her name was Nóri. She has an eleven-year-old brother named Adam and he was really quiet because he couldn't speak English but he was still very cute. The parents were very nice to me. Mother's English was great so we were talking a lot. She was an excellent cook, she prepared some traditional Hungarian meals and I really loved them! Nóri and I were really close to each other, we were laughing a lot and I miss these late night talks with her.

The school was an old building (I think it was something like a museum before, but I'm not sure) and it was huge! There were many gyms, classes, stairs (we always got lost), elevators and everything and it was the most amazing school I've ever



been to. I've met there another two amazing girls – Dorka and Sarolta, they were Sára's and Nina's (my classmates) exchange partners, and we spent basically the whole week together. There was one free day in program, so they decided to show us the most beautiful parts of Budapest. We were walking through the old streets and squares and it was amazing, I think Budapest is very beautiful. We were hungry so they took us for lunch, it was a Mexican restaurant and that's where we took the photo. Then we went to see the "singing and dancing fountain" as Nóri said. It was dark outside, and there was music playing and the lights made the water look colorful. It was beautiful, we were just sitting there without a word.

Then they taught us some Hungarian words like "szeretleg", "köszönöm", "kislány" and many others, and we've taught them some Slovakian words too (milujem ťa, ďakujem and so on). It was really funny, we were laughing all the time. We spent our last night at

Dorka's place (all six of us) and we promised each other not to sleep, but we were just too tired so at the end we went to sleep earlier than we planned! When we



were leaving, we were crying. I really miss them and I hope one day we'll see each other again. I hope they liked their week in Bratislava as much as we liked our week in Budapest, because I'm really thankful for everything they've done for us, especially Nóri.

In the picture – there's me on the left, then Nina, Dorka, Sarolta, Nóri and Sára.



## **Vanessa Eisnerová, 15 yrs.**

Last November I decided to take part in a student exchange program called *Let's break our national stereotypes*, because it seemed very flattering to me to join an experience with such a nice purpose behind it. My friend and I chose Budapest due to the fact, that even though it's the capital city of our neighbor country, we've never been there and didn't know much about the Hungarian people, nor the land itself.

First, when we started discussing how it's going to be like, we, of course, met with the typical prejudices against Hungarians since the history of our two countries is not exactly full of comprehension. But I'm not the type of person, who would be abided by these bad sayings, because I think that riddance of them shows a simple decency and maturity of a human being.

Therefore I packed my things and went to Budapest only with a basic information about Hungarian cuisine and traditions. I have to say, I was not disappointed at all.

My hosting family, a mother with a 17 year old daughter, welcomed me really warmly and were maybe even more excited about my visit than I was. They took an exceptional care of me, always providing me with delicious food, interesting knowledge about the city and other services. I was positively surprised to see how open-hearted, talkative and full-of-energy Hungarians are.

Budapest was no less of a beauty. The city architecture with the old buildings, cathedrals and bridges was outstanding. Me and my Hungarian partner Sophie often took walks through the city centre and there was always something new and





exciting to see. As an example I can state taking a ride on a Budapest Eye which allowed us to see the monuments from the bird's perspective and the cool vintage shops I bought little souvenirs at. It was awesome to have my private "city guide" from Budapest, because she showed me place I wouldn't normally get to.

Visiting the catholic school Sophie goes to was a good experience as well for the reason that we were able to see how their education was running and also to discuss some V4 questions with a member of European parliament and an expert from an international relationship department.



In overall I can say it was an incredible adventure. I left Hungary with amazing memories, made new friends, gained lot of knowledge, visited new places, broke all of the unpleasant stereotypes and improved my English skills. Hope I will have another chance to join such program in the future.

### **Lucia Iffková, 16 yrs.**

Last year in November I decided to take part in an exchange program called *Let's break our national stereotypes* in Budapest. I made this decision mostly because I've never had such experience and it sounded really interesting. On November 3<sup>rd</sup> our Slovak group met at the train station in Bratislava and we got on our train to Budapest. We had a lot of fun on the way, but as we were getting



closer to Budapest, everyone started to be nervous. I didn't know what to expect.

I was worried if I would get along with my host sister or if there's going to be a language barrier. As we got off the train, I finally met with my host sister Blanka and her father. My first impression was



really good. Blanka was very kind person and we got along well. When we arrived home, things started to get exciting. I'm the only child in our family and suddenly, I was in my temporary home with Blanka and her four sisters. It was a bit of a shock for me to be in

such big family but it was fun.

I was really excited about the next day, how would their school look like and I wanted to see Budapest. When I walked into their school in Budapest, I was very impressed. The building was beautiful and Hungarian students were all extremely nice. We had a traditional folk dance lesson, watched Hungarian movie and tasted some of their national food.



In the afternoon we were usually exploring Budapest and we visited a lot of interesting places. I

was overwhelmed by Budapest and its' architecture. But what got me the most were antique shops with the second-hand books and clothes, since we don't have many of these

shops in Bratislava. Also Budapest is known for their 'ruin pubs' which were a bit weird and creepy but interesting.



After our program in school, Hungarian students took us to the city to show us all the interesting places. It was an amazing week for me, because I made new friends from our school and also from Budapest. We had a lot of fun and we also improved our

English skills.

Our Slovak group wanted to bring home something traditional, so in the morning before the train was leaving we went to the biggest market in Budapest and bought 'paprika' and sausages.

Five days passed by and our trip was slowly coming to an end. To summarize it, I'm really glad that I have participated in this exchange program. I made new friends, practiced my English and saw different city and culture.

If I have another opportunity to take part in a similar programme, I definitely will.

**Nina Šmatláková, 15 yrs.**





## **KALISZ**

### **POLAND**

#### Slovak exchange students:

Dávid Debnár

Kristína Ščasná

David Ušák

Tomáš Lastovka

Filip Krajča

Tomáš Masaryk

Johana Brezovská

Alan Laifer

At the time I decided to take a part in this exchange project, I had no idea what was it going to be like to live in a host family, where I didn't know anyone. I had no clue about how Poland looks – I have never been there before. When I had to decide, whether to go or not, I was a bit doubtful about the fact, that I actually have to go somewhere by myself and use English to talk. Turned out, that my doubts were completely pointless and that I couldn't have done a better decision, than to participate in this project.

The place that we were staying at was Kalisz. Kalisz is really nice, cosy and historical city and it is also said to be the oldest city in the whole Poland. The programme was well-planned and we all had a lot of fun there. The programme included some unique activities as well, for instance: disco, cooking traditional Polish dishes, meeting with the mayor of Kalisz. Despite the shorter length of this exchange (which was 5 days), I still enjoyed it to the



fullest. Unfortunately the time went by so fast, that just when I started to really enjoy it, we had to go back. It could have been even better, by adding a few more days to the exchange.



Before this trip, I had few stereotypes about Hungarian and Polish people – I believed they are probably not as communicative as Slovaks and that we don't have that many things in common. However, in reality, they happened to be the exact opposite of what I thought. I met a lot of new people and I quickly made friends with them. In my opinion, projects like this should be done in the future as well, because the project fulfilled its purpose. But all of this wouldn't be possible without the support of the International Visegrad Fund.

I still keep in touch with quite a lot of people – especially Polish people. They are very kind, humble and friendly. We have an amazing friendship and it feels really good to have friends whom I can talk to in English. So did this exchange enrich me with something? Yes, because I met a lot of great people and even practiced my English.



Here are two photos of Kalisz (in the first one you can see the view from the town hall and in the second photo you can see the town hall itself).



**Alan Laifer, 14 yrs.**

During our trip to Kalisz, Poland I realized that there are not so many differences between our nations. We all have many things in mutual: our habits, mentality, traditional food, even our languages are very similar. My host-family had really close traditions to ours.



Besides these nations being so similar to each other, there were few things that really surprised me and I didn't expect them. For example, when we arrived at 1am in the night, they offered me a really late dinner. It was really nice but my stomach was absolutely



tightened because I normally sleep at that time of the night, so I couldn't eat much of it. On the other side, my relatives eat from 6 to 7pm and I can't imagine them eating during the night.

Another thing that was completely new to me was my host-family's rabbit. Not exactly the rabbit but the way how she was treated. My parents wouldn't let any animal to eat inside, sleep in the house. But in my host-family, they were absolutely used to this. They let him outside the cage just when we returned back from the trip programme, she was allowed to run freely in the house, except the living room as there were fragile things that could get broken like TV, lamps or some vases..

No matter those slight differences, I really enjoyed that I could have stayed there for those few days. I enjoyed



most of it. Although the best experience for me was the visit of 'Okregowe muzeum ziemi Kaliskiej'. I really like history and learning about our past and it was really interesting for me to learn more about the local history, how people have lived in that region for some time, all those battles and wars that took place there. Also as a man I find things like weapons really adorable so visiting of this museum was like icing on the cake of the whole trip to Kalisz.

For sure this isn't my only nice experience from Kalisz as the entire trip was really great and I am happy that I could meet so many amazing people there and visit a large amount of interesting and beautiful places.

### **David Ušák, 16 yrs.**

There are many prejudices in the world. People hate each other for many things that are not entirely true, based on the way they look, the color of their skin, their way of speaking and many other things. We grow up being told that this person is bad because of where they come from or because of the clothes they wear. Also because of things they have no control of or things that are simply their self-expression. From the moment we begin understanding the world and we are taught to hate people that are not like us.

That is why this project interested me. I do not think people should be judged by those things so I decided to try it out to see what the others thought if people there were prejudiced or not. The trip to Poland certainly did not disappoint me. It even surprised me how positive it was. The bus ride was really long. We spent about 12 hours travelling and by the time we got there it was night. I was positively surprised by how nice the host family were.





They immediately offered me some food and showed me whatever I needed. The school was really nice and clean and they welcomed us warmly. The people there didn't seem so different. Both the Czech and Hungarian groups were also really nice. I really liked the program. The city was really pleasant and the activities fun to do. I really liked learning the traditional dance.

As for people, they were all really kind. I don't know many stereotypes about Polish people, except that they play a certain videogame which was actually confirmed but I do not think it is a negative thing, it is quite the opposite. I have also heard rumors about them not eating good food which was certainly disproven. All of the people there were nice, we talked a lot about the differences and customs in our countries which were not all that different. The things we talked about the most were our languages which turned out to be really funny sometimes, especially with the Hungarian people.

Stereotypes alter our perception of a person before we even get to know them. However, many young people, including myself, do not believe in stereotypes and therefore make connections with other people easier and better.

**Johana Brezovská, 17 yrs.**

For the first time I noticed something about the V4 program was when the groups from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary were about to come for a visit to Slovakia. It was all possible thanks to an exchange program where 4 nations cooperated to break the national stereotypes.





My Mum agreed to accommodate two foreign girls. One from Poland named Kasia [Kasha] and the other one from Czech Republic named Anna. Even though I did not expect two girls living with us we got along very well and had fun. We have become good friends.

Few months later we were about to leave to Poland. We woke up early and came to the bus station. We met all up and headed to our BUS which took us to Poland city Katowice. It was a long journey during which we mostly watched movie and listened to music. In Katowice we had to wait for another BUS which took us to our final destination - Kalisz [Kalish]. We arrived to the town right after midnight and we were really tired. I guess the hardest part was to walk up the stairs with baggage while still being half asleep.

The next day was hard to get up but after waking up I had a lot of surprises. We had good breakfast even that talking to parents was difficult at first as they didn't know much English. We had tour round the school which was bigger than it looked at first from the outside. It was kind of awkward to go from class to class and seeing all the people just in the middle of the lessons interrupted from their work and looking very surprised.

We had some long walking day. We saw a lot of city but it was a long trip and it was freezing so some of us were „frozen to bone“.

As the days passed by talking to parents was easier as we combined English and our national languages. I even tried some food named cuscus. It wasn't as good as rice or potatoes but that's maybe because I am not used to its particular taste.

I believe and hope that all of us came back home with new experience and many national stereotypes were broken indeed as we got to know each other better because I sure did. I look forward to



another time seeing our newly made friends and maybe we will visit each other in future.

### **Tomáš Masaryk, 17 yrs.**

I participated in Visegrad 4 project for the first time this year. Firstly, I was a bit stressed, because some unknown person was coming for a week to live with me and my family, but everything happened to be alright, since I paired up with a great partner.



Her name is Aleksandra and she comes from Poland. During these two weeks we were living at our place, we

had no major problems. We understood each other in everything, as our communication was almost completely in English and if there occurred some difficulties with English language, we solved it in Slovak, or in her case in Polish.

It was in December when she came to Bratislava and we actually saw each other for the first time. It was her first visit to Slovakia ever, so I tried to present my country in the best possible way. The program our school organized was very suitable for everybody, because they prepared a perfect combination of school activities, such as workshops, field trips and free time. During this free time me and my friends, who were also taking part in this project, showed Aleksandra and other Polish students the most interesting parts of our beautiful city. We also tried to prepare



them some entertainment, so they could enjoy the trip the most they could, not just to go sightseeing, for example we managed to go ice-skating in the city centre.

In January, our roles switched and I became the guest. I had never been to Poland till then, so it was something new to me. The city we visited was called Kalisz and I had never heard of it until the last year. When I came there, I wasn't afraid of meeting Aleksandra's family at all, maybe because I already knew her. Her parents and sister were very friendly, kind and entertaining people. I enjoyed every second I spent there.

I don't regret taking part in this project and I would definitely sign up again, if it would be possible. I gained a lot of experience as well as I made new friends, visited new places etc. I hope I helped to break the stereotypes between Slovakia and Poland that exist.

### **Tomáš Lastovka, 15 yrs.**

First of all, I want to clarify I had a great time in Poland and I don't want anyone to feel otherwise reading this. With my whole intentions and feelings explained, none of upcoming shall surprise you.





I like Poland a lot, I did like it before I was there for the first time, last May. I like people there, their history, culture, but mostly the people and the spirit they have. They're the underdogs of Europe and



that's something likeable for me. It's the same story with Finland or Ireland for me. So I can quite certainly say I was looking forward to this trip and it fulfilled my expectations. First, the spirit I mentioned before. I have never seen so humble and generous

people, speaking of my guest family, but it wasn't just mine, everyone of our 8 members said the same. And it got better, not for everyone thought, but for me, one of the best things was to see the whole family together. My parents are divorced so that was truly something else to be a part of such a thing as a dinner with every family member involved.

About the stereotypes, I'm not really into those. I mean, I joke about some of them, but if I was about to speak with an American, I would not expect him to be fat or dumb or any other stereotype you can come up with. So this wasn't about breaking them for me, but I appreciate the effort and the



idea of such a thing, since there might have been some of us thinking about others and using nothing but



superstitions, but again, not really my thing. I can only hope that people who had them before, left without them. To summarize my experience - perfect country, perfect people. I'd go back to Kalisz any day.

### Filip Krajča, 17 yrs.



On the 18th January, before midnight, me, my seven classmates and two teachers arrived to Kalisz, Poland. Half asleep, we got out of the bus and our foreign friends with parents and teachers greeted us and accommodated us. I left the bus station with my exchange partner from Poland, Aleksandra. We were getting along very well during the

visit in Slovakia month ago already, and now we were very excited to spend some time together again. Though Aleksandra understood some Slovak words and I understood Polish when she spoke to me very slowly, we were talking in English all



the time,



because we wanted to improve our speaking skills. Aleksandra is a warm-hearted person and also other Polish students were very nice to us.



During the whole visit we had a great programme and it was tiring a bit because we didn't have a lot of free time, but we enjoyed ourselves, we played bowling, sang karaoke, danced at disco and cooked. We visited churches and museums and theater of Kalisz. We went sightseeing the city a lot. What surprised me about Polish people was, that they were very proud of their city, history and nation. We also watched a movie about Poland. After 5 days we returned home. I learned a lot about Poland, especially Kalisz. I think this project is very useful, because we get to know new people, new countries, improve our English and we can also find out what we have in common and what we are different in.

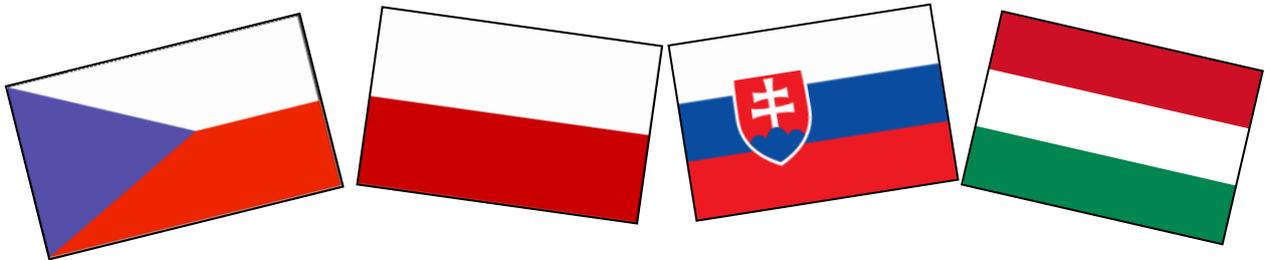
### Kristína Ščasná, 17 yrs.







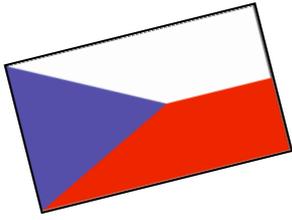
**“LET’S BREAK OUR  
NATIONAL STEREOTYPES”**



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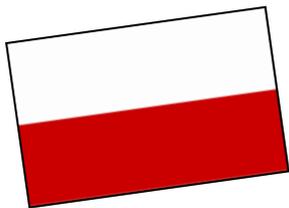
✓ Letohradské soukromé gymnázium o.p.s., Letohrad, the Czech Republic



✓ Budai Ciszterci Szent Imre Gimnázium, Budapest, Hungary



✓ Škola Pre Mimoriadne Nadané Deti a Gymnázium, Bratislava, Slovakia



✓ Gimnazjum nr 10 im. Janusza Kusocińskiego, Kalisz, Poland



# LETOHRADSKÉ SOUKROMÉ GYMNÁZIUM O.P.S., Letohrad, the Czech Republic

05.10.2014 - 10.10.2014



The meeting with the Mayor of Letohrad

On the first day we were officially welcomed by the mayor of Letohrad. We had the opportunity to look around the school building as well as took part in typical Czech lessons.



We managed to overcome language barriers and broke our national stereotypes. At the workshops we got to know the Czech people's opinion about Polish, Slovak and Hungarian societies. During our stay in the Czech Republic we went on a number of interesting trips to the places connected with the Czech Republic and Europe history.

What is more, all the sport and dancing activities developed and cemented our friendships. For example, we danced 'Polka' a national-Czech dance and played Omnikin together. We also enjoyed our visit in a biathlon centre where we could try shooting and biathlon skiing on special rollerblades. After the cooking afternoon, we know what the Czech cuisine is like. Unfortunately, our visit finished and we had to come back to Poland. Yet, we are sure that the ties of friendships between us will last much longer than our visit in Letohrad.



**The meeting with the Mayor of Letohrad**



**Castle Orlice**





### Last moments in Letohrad



See you soon in Kalisz





## Our impressions:

### Magdalena:

I was in the Czech Republic. I stayed with a very nice student. Some of my stereotypes about Czech Republic turned out to be true. Some of their habits were strange to me. When I was in Letohrad the show of traditional dance was the coolest thing for me. I also enjoyed cooking and eating traditional dishes. We also watched a very interesting film

### Aleksandra:

When I was in the Czech Republic, I was staying with a very nice student during the exchange programme. Before I went to the Czech Republic my stereotypes about Czech people were as follows: they are beer lovers, calm, overprotective and they can be easily scoffed at. It was the first time I had ever participated in an exchange programme and I really loved it. I loved the traditional dance, sports games, sports center, making traditional dishes, visiting museums.

I think every student should participate in exchange programmes because it's a cool experience and what is more, you can practice English, visit a lot of places and learn something new about a foreign country and spend time with friendly people.



### Julia:

My favorite memories from the exchange with Czech students are: cooking traditional dishes, dancing the traditional dance and sightseeing. I think that stereotypes about the Czech Republic aren't true. Czechs are cheerful and overprotective and I loved it I recommend the participation in a student exchange to everyone. As it is a very good experience and I would like to participate in the student exchange again.

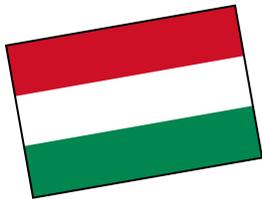
### Gabriela:

I have an interesting experience with a student exchange. The funniest thing for me was when we had a free time...a free time is the best occasion to get to know other students. I haven't broken any stereotypes about students from other countries because I had never had any, but I think that my participation in the programme was very beneficial for me. Now I have a lot of friends from other countries. I know a lot of things about them and about their countries. We had a great time and a lot of adventures. I miss the time I spent in Letohrad and I think I will keep the memories from the visit deep in my heart.



**Edyta:**

On the student exchange I made a lot of new friends and I can still talk with them on facebook. I learnt a lot about the Czech Republic culture and I saw interesting places. The family with whom I lived was very nice. I had the opportunity to talk in English and I could listened to a beautiful Czech language and I understood few words. I really liked this visit and I'd



**Budai Ciszterci Szent Imre Gimnázium,  
Budapest, Hungary**

**03.11.2014 - 09.11.2014**

We arrived to Hungary on Monday morning and immediately went for a trip to Gellért hill with water terms – we took advantage of being the first group to arrive to Hungary. The first impression of the city was absolutely fantastic we immediately fall in love with Buda and Pest. The next day was the day of visit at the school. The building of our school in Kalisz is quite new so we were enjoying walk in the old, majestic corridors and classrooms. You could literally feel ghosts of former students and teachers and maybe even hear some whispers in the empty hallways. But besides that school building was very comfortable and have a lot of modern



stuff. Teachers and the headmaster warmly welcomed us.

We also had rare opportunity to learn some Hungarian. It was really nice to compare (and find nothing in common) our languages - especially for teachers - we all are philologists. We wrapped up the day with informal get-together with dancing lesson, games and play and above all - enjoying the company! Wednesday was a School Holiday at Saint Imre School. Some of us spent the morning celebrating a mass, listening various lectures and participating in different workshops.

Thursday was of the trip to Visegrád (or us we call it - Wyszehrad). We saw the castle and spend a long time inside - hearing a great story about the place - full of memories and symbols. It was really interesting for all of the nations to find how our history is related, our kings were common and how good we can understand each other from the historical point of view. Besides, we had a lot of fun observing the art of archery. Some of us tried it themselves! The second last day of our visit in Hungary was the day sport game and of the visit in the parliament. Firstly, our pupils competed in sports - the Polish team was defeated, but most important was the networking and enjoyment than actual victory.

The visit at the parliament which is absolutely „must to”, so we were really glad that we had this opportunity. Our guide - a former teacher from Saint Imre School - got us a perfect tour and in simply words explained every detail of building and history. We were under a great impression of the beautiful crown. After this interesting trip we had a hard task - we had to prepare our own lunch. And of course it was goulash. It was a good lesson for some of the students because their cooking skills were very low. But at the end we had a tasteful meal. It was also a farewell time.



During the week students took a lot of competitions so at the time they get their rewards. We could also show our gratitude for a great hospitality and fantastic time. But that wasn't the end of attractions. At the evening we participated (and had fun) in a school's party. We heard students and teachers "concert", we sang in karaoke and once again enjoyed each other company.

Saturday was our last day in Hungary. We had a lot of time to visit Budapest for the last time because our train home was at the evening. The long trip to Kalisz we spent thinking about how fast this week past, how much we were enjoying every single event, how great our hosts - both families and teachers - were, how much we were enriched by this networking and how much we want to come back to Budapest.





• Visegrad Fund



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LET'S BREAK OUR NATIONAL STEREOTYPES



## Our impressions:

### Iga:

I really liked the exchange. Mates from Hungary were really nice. I liked the competition part, and I enjoyed afternoon meetings. Budapest was a really nice city. I didn't have an opinion about Hungary earlier, but now I think it's a nice country, full of (usually) nice people. Sightseeing was interesting, sometimes a little bit boring - but still it was good to know some of Hungarian history or facts. I've made couple of interesting and beautiful photos of Budapest. I have nice

### Maja:

The exchange was great. Budapest was beautiful. It was cool, interesting and fun. Our host students welcomed us warmly. The only drawback was too spicy food, which I do not like, but the spicy dishes are Hungarian traditional dishes. In my opinion, the coolest attraction in Budapest was a huge water park. Because of my participation in the student exchange I learned about Hungarian culture, etc.



**Malgorzata:**

I really liked the trip to Hungary. I learned about the Hungarian culture. I liked Budapest. It's so beautiful in the evening. Lessons in Hungarian school were very nice, and people there are also very nice. Places which we visited were very interesting and inspirational. One thing that I didn't like was that in the city there weren't many green trees or plants, but I want to go back there and have a good time again.

**Edyta:**

When I was in Budapest I met a very sympathetic student. I really enjoyed the time when we were in the aqua park. We had a party in 60`s and 70`s style. We had a great opportunity to listen to live music. I bought myself delicious Hungarian chocolate. I saw a war movie that was produced by Hungary. I was at the Gellért Hill. The view from the hill was amazing. The international exchange is a great opportunity to meet new friends.



**Škola Pre Mimoriadne  
Nadané Deti a Gymnázium,  
Bratislava, Slovakia**

**30.11.2014 - 05.12.2014**

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November eight girls and two teachers started their journey to Bratislava. We met early in the morning at the bus station in Kalisz at 3.50 a.m. and left Kalisz at 4.15a.m. We arrived in Katowice at 9.15 and waited for another bus to Bratislava. Finally, we reached Bratislava at 6.55 p.m.. We were welcomed at the bus station by the host families. On Monday(1<sup>st</sup> of December) at 8.15 we met with all the students who participated in the exchange programme at school in Skalicka Street. We got to know students from Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

We were welcomed by the school deputy who showed us around the school and told us a lot about the school history. The school for gifted students consists of two buildings –primary school that is in Teplicka Street and the high school in Skalicka Street. We had to walk for about 10 minutes to get from one school to the other one. But it wasn't a problem for us at all.

We also took part in a special conference with local authorities and then watched Slovakia students' presentations of Polish, Czech and Hungarian stereotypes. Polish people are perceived as freak catholics and doughnuts eaters. After lunch we watched the Slovakia film with English subtitles. At about 4 p.m. we left school and spent time with our host families. On Tuesday we took part in the workshops organized at Skalicka school. We did the quiz about the V4 countries, carried out chemical experiments, made some Christmas decorations and participated in IT lessons. After lunch we engaged in





sport activities. We didn't win any competitions, yet we had a great time.

However, the most exciting thing for us on Tuesday was the dance club. First, we had a chance to listen to Slovakia folk songs and admire traditional folk clothes. Then, we were taught a traditional Slovakia dance. The dance was amazing. I think we performed it quiet well. On Wednesday we went on a town tour. Bratislava is a wonderful city. We took our thermos bottles with hot tea with us because it was a quiet chilly and rainy day. We visited one of the oldest churches in Bratislava- St. Martin's Cathedral and Bratislava Castle. We admired the beautiful view of the city from the castle. We strolled along the cosy streets in the Old Town. We had a hot lunch at the university that is also regarded as a tourist attraction. After that, we visited Christmas open air market in the downtown. Few of us bought some Christmas decorations there. The atmosphere at the market was wonderful. In the afternoon we came back to Teplicka school to prepare traditional Slovakia dishes. We began the cooking evening with peeling and cutting vegetables. Then, the teachers put all the ingredients with cabbage, fried sausages ad vegetables into a big saucepan. After that, we made sweet balls. We crushed biscuits and chocolate, then we mixed ingredients with butter and finally we shaped sweet balls. In the meantime the cabbage soup was cooked and we watched the powerpoint presentation about traditional Slovakia meals. At about 6 p.m. we ate delicious cabbage soup together. On Thursday we went on all day bus trip. We visited a castle in Cerveny Kamen and the museum of L. Stur. In the end of the trip we walked along Modra that is a nice, small town. We went back to Bratislava at about 5 p.m. and enjoyed our evening with host families.



On Friday in the morning we met together at Teplicka school to say good buy to each other. We wished we could stay longer because everyone was so friendly. We got on the bus to Poland at 10.35. We changed the bus in Katowice and got to Kalisz just before the midnight. We still keep in touch with Slovakia students on facebook.







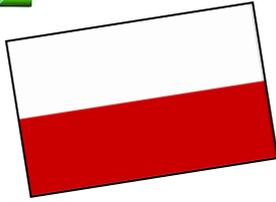
## Our impressions:

### **Gabriela:**

I like Slovakia. I think the capital of city is beautiful. I saw a lot of monuments and interesting places. My favourite attraction was Christmas Market. People are nice and friendly. I spent an awesome time with my new friends. I like their school, too. There are many stereotypes about this country but none of them is true. I like the city and I want to visit it again in the future. It was a fantastic time.

### **Aleksandra:**

Slovakia is a very nice country. There are a lot of stereotypes about this place but none is true. I like this country very much and I want to visit it again in the future. I spent an amazing time with my new friends. They are nice and friendly. The school and lessons were interesting. In my opinion it was better than our school. The capital city of Slovakia is beautiful and there are a lot of monuments. We visited most of them and more. My favourite attraction was Christmas market. There were some fantastic things. We were in the café for tasty chocolate too. It was an amazing time for me!



**Aleksandra and Wiktor:**

We really enjoyed the Bratislava and its surroundings. Activities that were organized in the school were also very interesting and exciting. After school, our host students showed us a lot of interesting places. However, the food that we got in the school canteen wasn't tasty for me. On the whole, it was great to be in Bratislava, and I would like to go there once again not alone, but with my family.

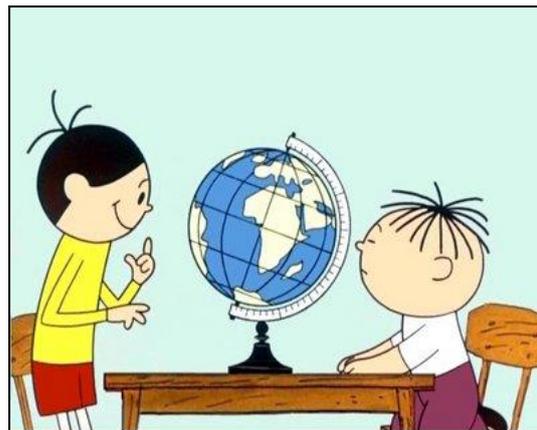
**Karolina:**

I've been to Bratislava for the first time and I really enjoyed it! I have met a lot of amazing people, seen this beautiful city and learnt something about the culture and tradition. In my opinion, Slovakia is a bit similar to Poland, so I wasn't surprised by many things. Going there, I didn't have any stereotypes, but I also didn't think that we as nations are so similar! I really don't regret that I chose Bratislava in this exchange!

**Gimnazjum nr 10**  
**im. Janusza Kusocińskiego,**  
**Kalisz, Poland**  
**18. 01. 2015 - 23. 01. 2015**

We were looking forward to the arrival of our Czech, Slovak and Hungarian friends. The programme of the visit was full of attractions, so we were busy all the time.

We met with the mayor of Kalisz at the town hall. He welcomed officially our guests in Poland. We showed our partners around Kalisz. They visited Wojciech Boguslawski



Theatre in Kaliszu, Zawodzie Archaeological Museum, Kalisz Regional Museum and the beautiful park in Kalisz. Moreover, they could see the attractions of our region such as the castle in Gołuchów, Museum of Maria Dąbrowska in Russów , Museum of Industrial History in Opatówek. They were also showed round our school and took part in workshops on our national stereotypes. Additionally, they cooked traditional Polish dishes with us and learned how to dance “Polonez”. We enjoyed dancing and sport activities a lot, especially dancing “Zumba” at the gym.

We had the opportunity to get to know each other very well and consequently break any national stereotypes since we spent a lot of time in the evenings together, for example we went together to the bowling alley, to the aqua park or to the dancing club. Furthermore, the film afternoon when we watched the film “Katyń” and discussed



it with our guests was unforgettable and valuable experience.



Unfortunately, this five-day visit passed so quickly and our guests had to go back

home. We were really sad and full of tears when we had to said farewell to Slovak, Czech and Hungarian guys.

We will keep all the memories from the meetings in our hearts and certainly the friendships we have made will last forever.



Meeting with the local authorities







*The End*



## Common Things

It was interesting to observe similarities and differences in the individual schedules used during the exchange programmes. The following section sheds light on the events or things which all the countries included in their programmes. The examination should take into account reasons for their placement in the programmes.

All participating countries included the following activities in their programmes. Folk dancing, a movie of national provenience, cooking and preparation of national food became an essential part of each programme. Most people would probably expect national food and films to be part of the list.

The reasons for the film usage is rather obvious as it possesses certain advantages in terms of transmitting and showing the individual and typical features of a country to a foreigner. Films have the ability to show and express typical characteristics of a country in rather a short time. To be more specific, they can display things which can be easily recognized by just watching the movies themselves (e.g. appearance, fashion, habits etc.). Moreover, they can also provide a suitable insight into more complex aspects as national mentality, sense of humor, history, language and lexical means used and many others.

Secondly, food and meal does not only convey what the typical eating habits are. Of course, these are also considered as vital in shaping the picture of individual nations and nationalities. It should be taken into account that the variety of food shows what agricultural products are or were traditionally grown in different regions, not to mention their availability in the past. Thus we not only



learn about the food itself but also about the lifestyle of our predecessors in various regions.

Folk dancing would be probably regarded as the most surprising item on the list by majority of people. Though when examined thoroughly, the surprise vanishes to some extent. It definitely represents an important element in each culture. The dancers usually wear special and unusual items of clothing which gives certain uniqueness to the whole occasion. As dancing always goes hand in hand with music, the latter stands for another important feature depicting its culture from which it originates. There may be differences in terms of musical notions such as rhythm, tempo, melodic scales etc. or simply in terms of musical instruments present. It should not be forgotten that dancing represents a physical activity which is usually popular among students as well.

### **Was It Well Worth It?**

As it was written in the beginning of the report, there existed certain worries about the smooth development of the project. It can be said that all four programmes were organized in detail; all the exchanges were full of fascinating and exciting activities prepared for the participants. Moreover, all the programmes followed the previously prepared plans with slight changes only which indeed represented a positive aspect for the organizers.

We, as participants, have learnt a lot. We have discovered a lot not only about the aspects which are essential when organizing such project, but, more importantly, also about our neighbouring countries. The latter could be regarded as the major goal of the project. The project provided us with answers to questions asked at the beginning about the project. Students and



teachers obtained a vast amount of information about our closest neighbours in historical and cultural terms. They have also learnt about various lifestyles, different mentalities and local traditions. The project definitely achieved its goals as it helped to break several stereotypes among its participants. This represents a major positive feature as young people are willing to pass enlightenment about the V4 countries among their peers and public in general. Hopefully, this procedure may help to crush these national stereotypes among wide public; though it will probably represent a long-lasting process. In addition, we are definitely experts on recognizing various national dancing styles 😊.

