

Second meeting in Cassino, Italy

3 – 10 April 2022

The second meeting of the project “Keys to Success” started in the school Auditorium where the headmistress Maria Venuti and the Italian coordinator Luigi Marrocco welcomed both the Slovak and the French partners expressing their thanks and hope that such projects would contribute to better knowing and understanding other cultures and emphasized the importance of peace maintaining and tolerance enhancement in Europe. After that, all three partner schools ‘students introduced their schools via presentations. Our guests had the chance to see our fantastic fashion shows performed by the students of the fashion branch, one introducing their “own creations”, the other one was an introduction to our visit to Montecassino Abbey, planned for the afternoon, as it was a presentation of historical costumes related to the area. All this was enriched by the stunning performances of the school music band composed both by teachers and students.



After the show, the guests were shown our school and there was an official meeting at the headmistress's office with the coordinators of the schools and our staff. We all had lunch at the school restaurant and then we visited Montecassino Abbey and their brewery.







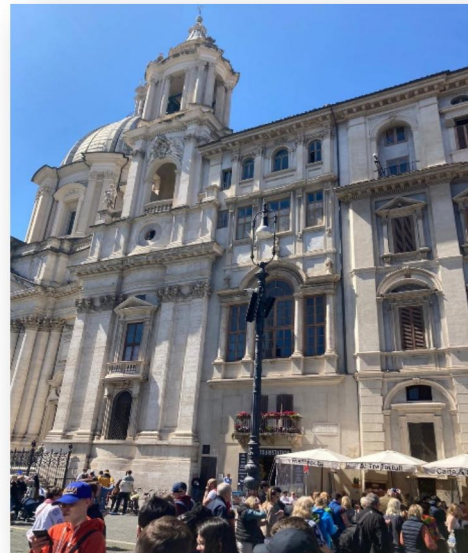




Day 2 was special for our trip to Roma. As we all know that 'All Roads Lead to Rome', this city was a must and we certainly enjoyed it to the fullest, seeing St. Peter's, Castel Sant'Angelo, Piazza Navona, The Pantheon, The Parliament, Via del Corso, Via Condotti, Piazza di Spagna, Fontana di Trevi, The Altar of the Nation, The Roman Forum and the Colosseum. It was an exhausting but enriching experience for all of us as it was the first time for many students and teachers.







Day 3 was notable for team activities at another site of our school, where students solved puzzles with the topic of national cuisines and created presentations of the national cuisines. We also had a lecture held by our Geography teacher about the region. While students and teachers kept on doing their activities I took Martina, the Slovak team leader and Julien Wendling, the French team leader to the local radio premises where we joined our headmistress Maria Venuti : they had a live interview, presenting the project, its aims and their impressions of the school and the region.









FREEDOM

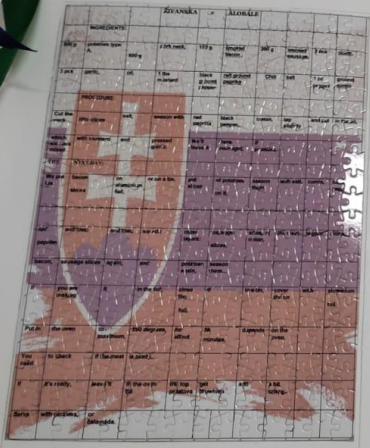


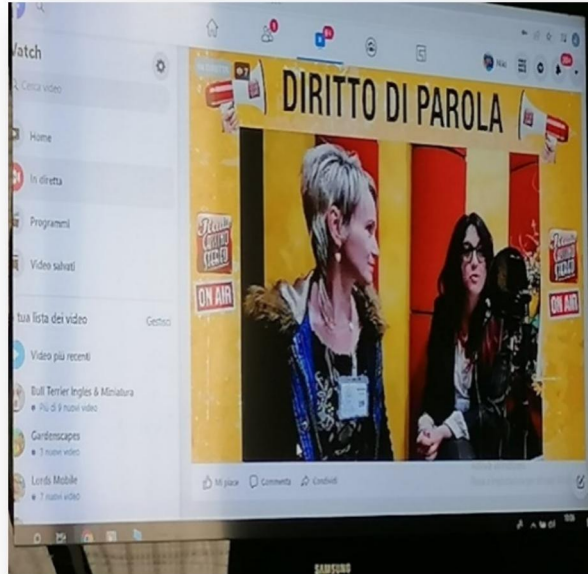
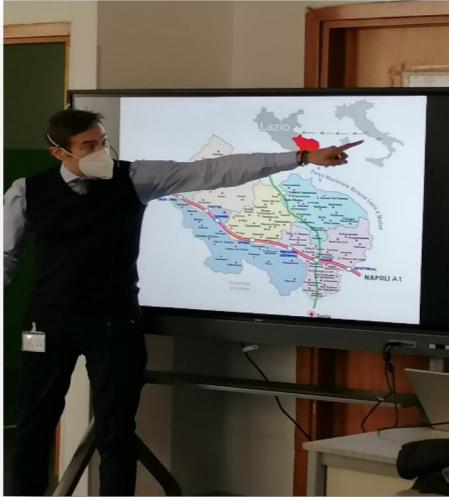


LOVE



PEACE







On the fourth day we set out for Pompeii, where we spent a couple of hours, then enjoyed the proper, real Neapolitan pizza at the local pizzeria opposite the San Carlo theatre, and then we visited the town seeing Galleria Umberto, Piazza del Plebiscito, Piazza Municipio, Maschio Angioino, the waterfront, Via Tribunali and the Dome.







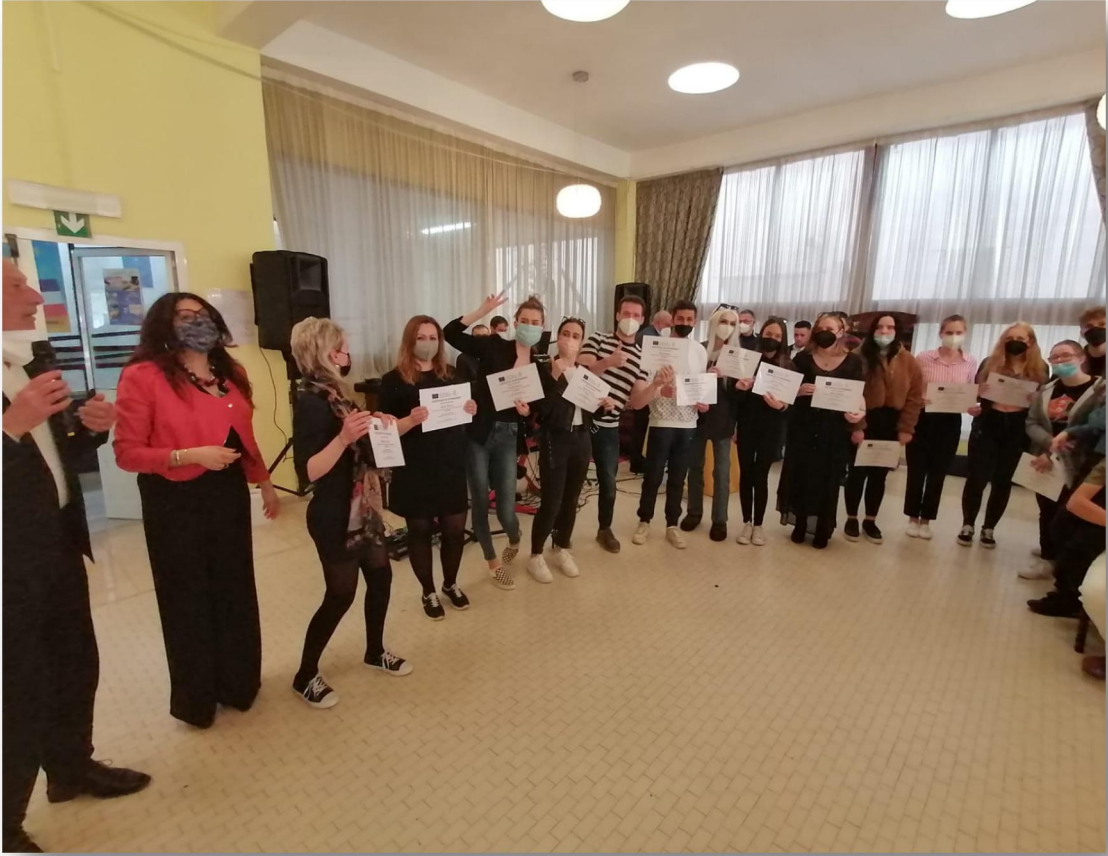
Day 5 was special because all the participants were admitted by the city mayor, at the Town Hall, being the first group of visitors getting this privilege after the 2 years of pandemic. Then we visited the Archaeological Museum, The Roman Amphitheatre, and the Tomb of Ummidia Quadratilla, as well as The War Cemetery. After that, we had the privilege to experience an Italian festa at one of the school sites and the Certificates of Attendance were presented to all the participants. Students had

a small party accompanied by dancing and singing, again, the school band was contributing to the pleasant atmosphere. We thanked each other for cooperation at that mobility and said goodbye, because Saturday was a day dedicated to trips and time spent in families.









Teachers went to the Tyrrhenian coast in Gaeta, admiring the beautiful village, and families made programmes for the students being hosted. Those staying at the hotel made their own program exploring the beauties of the city of Cassino.



During the second meeting, half of our students were accommodated in families, the other half at a hotel, under the supervision of teachers, as unfortunately, due to the impact of the pandemic, and due to the fact how Italy especially was struck with it right at the beginning, our families felt hesitant to host people from other countries. That is fully understandable, so we were happy that families were found for at least 12 of their students. Those hosted in families had the opportunity to experience the well-known hospitality, friendliness and big hearts of Italians, as well as homemade dishes, cooked with love and often with recipes running in families for generations. They enjoyed the time the families spent with them and their care, they learnt a lot of information about our cultural heritage and experienced it in real life, which is different than only reading about it in books. The students accommodated at the

hotel, learnt to rely on themselves and to cooperate with each other as they were staying in triple rooms. Also they had to learn to organise and plan their evenings together with the teachers in the way they had enough food and all they needed for the nights, in comparison with those in families, who, if they lacked something, the families provided them with it. All that mentioned above, was beneficial for every individual, as the students had never been far away from their families for such a long time, and in a country such a long way from home. There were also students, both in families and at the hotel, who were from disadvantaged family backgrounds, or suffering from some kind of social anxiety or fear to be in the company of others and they did surprisingly well. They all knew the teachers were there for them, they could communicate with them anytime via phone calls, or social networks. They came out much more self-confident and proud of what they had managed and they expressed their hope that in the future similar projects would take place. All students had to speak English all the time, which made them improve naturally, and they better understood the importance of being able to speak and learn it in order to survive, especially in large cities. In case of difficulties in families, because of course, not all parents spoke English, students used translators to communicate. That is a great example of their creativity and of the fact that if you look for ways how to do something, instead of the reasons why you cannot do something, you will succeed. Monday and Friday activities were the best days for us to show our nature and mentality, our temperament and a big heart. Our guests certainly did not expect such a noisy, friendly, loving and warm welcome that they got as they are used to more conservative and reserved school events. Therefore, it was a great opportunity for their participants to experience this loving Italian nature in real life, not only reading about it in travel guides and I am sure that was exactly what happened.

What was also very thoughtful, was the initiative of the Italian staff to emphasize the importance of peace, tolerance, and love in the world, in reference to the war in Ukraine, which had broken out a month before this meeting. These ideas repeated every single day, whether it was the welcome speech of the headmistress and the coordinator or the school team activities, where the mixed teams were named LOVE, PEACE, FREEDOM, or our visit to the mayor or the visit to the War Cemetery. That made most of the students be aware of how lucky they were to live in peace, and especially the visit to the cemetery, seeing the thousands of tombs, made them realise how horrible it was that now, in the 21st century, there was a new war and

people obviously had not learnt a lecture from the past. They were horrified how many people had died in WW2. The visits to Rome, Naples, and to the museum on Friday gave the participants a much better insight into our historical heritage. Up till then, they only had read about many of the sights and places and historical events in history books, in history or literature lessons, but here, they had the chance to see what they had learn about in real life. During the lab activities at school, where students worked in mixed teams, they had to communicate in the target language, if troubles, they used translators. They definitely had to cooperate, which was sometimes not easy because they had to find compromises among ideas created by students of different cultures. That all helped them understand that it was possible to come to a satisfactory conclusion of a task, even if you were a part of a team composed of people of completely different social backgrounds, opinions and attitudes. If you are open to ideas you can use the target language well enough. The lunches and dinners showed all the participants the varieties of Italian national cuisine, and they, from the first-hand experience, could confirm, that it really is as delicious as stated in travel guides.