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Erasmus+ KA2 „Unique National and European Symbols of our Culture and Originality” (U.N.E.S.C.O.)

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**KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices
KA229 School Exchange Partnerships**

***PROJECT JOURNAL – MAZARA DEL VALLO, ITALY
March 13th – 16th, 2023***

“Dimitrie Cantemir” Economic College Suceava coordinates, between September 2020 - August 2023, the Erasmus + KA229 project entitled „**Unique National and European Symbols of our Culture and Originality**” (U.N.E.S.C.O.).

The partner schools come from European countries with a rich UNESCO heritage: Turističko Ugostiteljska Skola (Tourism and catering school), Split, Croatia, Istituto d'Istruzione Superiore Francesco Ferrara Mazara del Vallo, Italy, 1o Geniko Lykeio Artemidos Artemis, Greece, Cemberlitas Anadolu Lisesi Istanbul, Turkey, Instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria LosCardones Granadilla de Abona, Spain.

Between March 13th – 17th 2023, teachers and students from partner schools participated in the fifth mobility within the project, in Mazara del Vallo, Italy, mobility organized by Istituto d'Istruzione Superiore Francesco Ferrara Mazara del Vallo. The central theme of the activities was “U.N.E.S.C.O. cultural heritage” and focused on tangible cultural heritage: movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts), immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, and so on), underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities). The LTT activities took place in Italy because, with 49 cultural heritage sites, Italy boasts more World Heritage sites than any other country in the world.

Tangible cultural heritage refers to physical artifacts produced, maintained, and transmitted intergenerationally in a society. Examples include the Historic Centres of Rome and Naples or Venice and its Lagoon. All these heritage sites and monuments are here thanks to human creativity and have a global cultural significance. It is important to preserve these cultural sites because of their value to local communities. Furthermore, and though they are physical objects, they help shape the aspirations, values, and beliefs of a person's national identity.

Not only are these sites important for nations, but are also recognized worldwide. This is why UNESCO – the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization – has created a very long list of safeguarded tangible cultural heritage sites. Countries may try to include something they believe to be of cultural significance and if UNESCO agrees, it will be added to the list. Famous worldwide for its great historical, natural, and cultural treasures, Sicily has six World Heritage Sites, not to mention its Intangible Cultural Heritage.

On March 13th 2023, the official opening of the project meeting took place, at Teatro Garibaldi, and the host students presented and illustrated representative elements of the cultural heritage from Sicily. The mayor of Mazara del Vallo was also present to greet the guests and to speak about the importance of cultural heritage and diversity.



Then, the students participated in a scavenger hunt around the centre of Mazara del Vallo, followed by a guided tour of the city. With the largest fishing fleet in Italy, a world-famous Dancing Satyr netted from the sea, a labyrinthine North African Kasbah in the town centre and some delightful architecture, Mazara del Vallo offers a fascinating mix of culture, history, ethnicity and art.



Mazara del Vallo was founded in the 9th century BC by the Phoenicians, who used it as a strategic emporium for their trans-Mediterranean trading interests. Floating along on the familiar tide of Sicilian history, Mazara soon became part of Magna Graecia, when it served as a port for nearby Selinunte, and then to the Romans, during whose dominance, in the 3rd century AD, the town's most famous son, San Vito, was born.

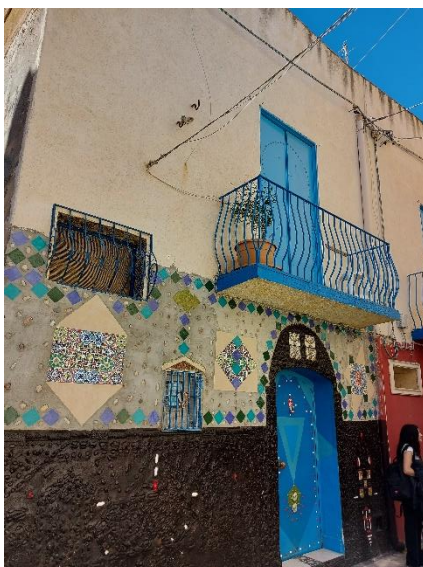
It was under the Arabs, who invaded in 827, however, that Mazara's potential was fully realised. Under their rule the town assumed an importance on the island second only to Palermo. Still today Meghrebian influences course through the town's streets, not least in the historic Kasbah quarter, where around 3,000 (mainly) Tunisians live, work and study. The Arabs developed the traditional maritime and commercial activities of Mazara, but also made it an important administrative, cultural and juridical centre.



The old historical centre, once enclosed inside the Norman walls, includes numerous monumental churches, some dating from the 11th century. It presents the typical traits of districts with an Islamic urban layout typical of medinas, called *Casbah*, characterized by narrow torturous lanes and streets surrounded by low buildings, which lead to numerous courtyards with the entrances to the houses.

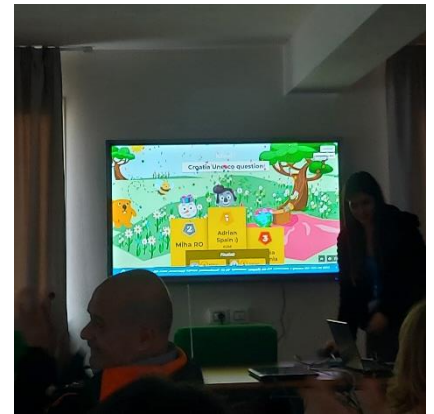
The historical centre retains several buildings of cultural and historical interest including the beautiful Norman Cathedral rebuilt later in baroque style, the church of St. Ignatius of Arab-Norman origin and the Church of San Nicolò Regale, of which only the facade remains.

The true attraction of the city is the Dancing Satyr a precious bronze statue recovered from the sea in 1997. Dating to the late 4th century B.C. and attributable to the school of the great sculptor, Praxiteles, it is exhibited in the Museum of St. Egidio, a deconsecrated church built between the early and late 16th century.



The city is renowned throughout Sicily also for the fleet of its high-sea fishing boats which unload several tons of fresh fish from the low Mediterranean in the port each day.

On Monday afternoon, the students presented their schools, towns and countries and some of the cultural sites protected by UNESCO, like the Historic Centre of Sighisoara, Romania, Historical Complex of Split with the Palace of Diocletian from Croatia, the Historic Areas of Istanbul, Türkiye, Archaeological Ensemble of Mérida, Spain and the Acropolis from Athens, Greece, among others. An understanding of the cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.



Tuesday, March 8th, started with the educational visit to the Archaeological Area of Agrigento, a site inscribed on UNESCO's heritage list in 1997. Founded as a Greek colony in the 6th century B.C., Agrigento became one of the leading cities in the Mediterranean world. Its supremacy and pride are demonstrated by the remains of the magnificent Doric temples that dominate the ancient town, much of which still lies intact under today's fields and orchards. Selected excavated areas throw light on the later Hellenistic and Roman town and the burial practices of its early Christian inhabitants.



Agrigento has a special place among classical sites in the history of the ancient world because of the way in which its original site, typical of Greek colonial settlements, has been preserved, as well as the substantial remains of a group of buildings from an early period that were not overlain by later structures or converted to suit later tastes and cults.

In the afternoon, the students participated in the webquest activity “UNESCO - Cultural Heritage” (<https://www.createwebquest.com/unesco-cultural-heritage>), where they learned about UNESCO cultural heritage sites and the process behind their selection to be included on the official list. They analyzed the six selection criteria and learned about the ‘**Outstanding Universal Value**’ or OUV, which describes why the designated site is one of the most remarkable places on earth. Outstanding Universal Value means cultural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.



In six multinational teams, the students then researched information, designed short presentations and explained to their colleagues the similarities and uniqueness of various UNESCO sites associated under a specific category: Urban landscape - Medieval European; Structure – Palace; Religious structure – Christian; Archaeological site - Ancient Rome; Structure - Memorials and Monuments; Urban landscape - Post-medieval European. Understanding World Heritage helps students become more aware of their own roots, and of their cultural and social identity. A closer look at any of the sites on the World Heritage List helps them learn about the beliefs, values and knowledge of the peoples and the civilizations that created them.

On Wednesday, March 15th, another educational trip was organized. This time to Palermo – so the day was dedicated to discovering both the cultural and intangible UNESCO elements. Located on the northern coast of Sicily, Arab-Norman Palermo includes a series of civil and religious structures dating from the era of the Norman kingdom of Sicily. Collectively, they are an example of a social-cultural syncretism between Western, Islamic and Byzantine cultures on the island and bear testimony to the fruitful coexistence of people of different origins and religions (Muslim, Byzantine, Latin, Jewish, Lombard and French). The students enjoyed a guided visit to Cappella Palatina, Norman Palace, cathedral, S. Giovanni degli Eremiti, Piazza Pretoria, S. Maria dell’Ammiraglio, and the historical center of the city.

The Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace) in Palermo, also known as the Palazzo dei Normanni (Palace of the Normans), is one of the most extraordinary buildings in Sicily. It chronicles the history of Palermo from the first Punic settlements to the present day. One of the many halls and rooms that can be visited is the **Cappella Palatina** (Palatine Chapel). Designed by Roger II in 1130, this extraordinary chapel is Palermo's top tourist attraction. Located on the middle level of Palazzo dei Normanni's three-tiered loggia, its glittering gold mosaics are complemented by inlaid marble floors and a wooden *muqarnas* ceiling, the latter a masterpiece of Arabic-style honeycomb carving reflecting Norman Sicily's cultural complexity. It has been a World Heritage Site since 2015.



The afternoon was dedicated to intangible heritage: the puppet theatre known as the Opera dei Pupi, which is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In its most classic forms, it started to appear in the mid-nineteenth century, when stories about villains and saints, Shakespeare’s dramas, and the incredibly popular tales about the French paladins were put on show. Amongst the most famous puppeteering families is Mimmo Cuticchio, a magical interpreter of

the art of oral storytelling. Cuticchio's family is based in the Opera dei Pupi Theatre, located in a small street in the heart of Palermo.

The students had the opportunity to meet the Cuticchio family from Palermo, a family of puppeteers who despite the times still survive and keep their theatrical reviews alive. Mimmo Cuticchio is the most important figure in the preservation and renewal of the tradition of the *opera dei pupi* in Italy. He was brought up in the world of the “*opra*” and initiated at an early age into the manipulation of the large Sicilian puppets, the *pupi*. Students learned about the creation of a piece of theatre from the carving of the wood, the artisanal construction of the puppets, their armour and costumes, and the painting of the scenery to the final production of the show.



Thursday, March 16th, continued the series of outdoor learning experiences with the educational visit to Nave Punica and Marsala city centre. The Archaeological Museum is housed in the

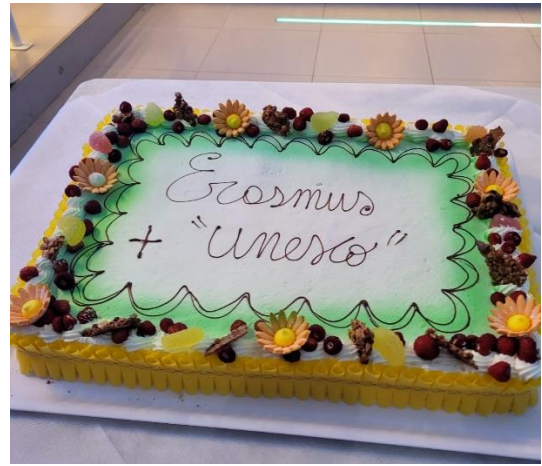
Baglio Anselmi, a building born at the end of the last century as a wine factory for the production of "Marsala". The museum exhibits the Punic wreck of the ship and tells the story of Lilybaeum and territory historically related to it, from prehistoric to medieval times. The wreck is that of a sleek ship that features the bottom of the hull on the water line, can be identified as a battle ship, rowing, sank in the middle of the third century BC, coinciding with the battle Egadi which ended the First Punic War in 241 BC.

The central streets of historic Marsala are made from marble, and lined with elegant Sicilian Baroque buildings, gracefully opening out onto beautiful piazzas and garden squares.



In the afternoon of the last day of activities, the teachers discussed the organization of the next meeting in Tenerife, financial details, necessary documents, etc. The project coordinator gave a presentation of the activities carried out so far, the responsibilities of each school involved, emphasizing the program of activities for each mobility and the online application. The evening ended with the awarding of certificates of participation in a festive atmosphere, where students and teachers exchanged impressions and tasted traditional dishes and desserts of Sicilian cuisine.

The meeting was a real opportunity for professional, cultural training, exchange of experience and practice of language and computer skills for the participating students and teachers. Due to the activities of the project, the students had the opportunity to learn more about their own country and the culture of other countries, about the different lifestyles in both formal and non-formal learning environments, being active protagonists of the teaching and learning process.



Outdoor education - educational visits (students took part in a variety of adventurous challenges to discover UNESCO heritage in Sicily), curiosity and fun during activities (posting InstaStories, photos on social media) increased the quality and quantity of the learning process. By participating in all activities and coming into contact with different cultures, students have become receptive to the European heritage, have become more sensitive to the meaning of European culture, culturally aware and willing to consciously protect European heritage.

The activities carried out in the school workshops and the open discussions offered the students the opportunity to manifest their artistic and creative potential, to participate in experiences that helped them to learn not only scientific information, but also values, traditions.

Participating in webquests, using Microsoft and Web 2.0 tools and Google Play in an intercultural way stimulated students' academic success, improved their English language skills and specific vocabulary related to natural and cultural heritage.

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