

News

Latest news about Erasmus+

YOUTH EXCHANGE



MY KIND OF PLACE

NOVEMBER 2024

YOUTH EXCHANGE

Let's talk about mental health! In a sunny, hidden town called Kaş in Turkey, with youngsters from Portugal, Germany, Italy, Serbia, Greece, and of course, Türkiye. So, who is the organiser? **Youth Plus from Frankfurt**. But how? Erasmus+ knows how—it just needs motivated and open-minded people not afraid of flying by planes.

Got this so far? About the food—don't worry! Come on, we are in the region of **Muğla**. Weather? Swimming in November—write that down.

But how did you end up there? By following information related to youth opportunities in Europe and writing a good application.

And just like that, you are reading a text written by one of the participants while he was wearing a swimsuit and getting inspiration from the crystal-clear blues in front of him. The constant sound of the waves crashing against the shore and the deck offered a healthier and more peaceful alternative to the gray, cold, air-polluted view from my hometown in winter. It was the perfect remedy for mental well-being.



But to make this topic engaging for 30 boys and girls, you need approachable and skilled facilitators. We had them, and it was their "fault" for making us comfortable and close during the first two days of introduction sessions. Then the stage was ours. Over the next days, many teams tackled very serious workshops about our feelings, which we expressed by drawing, acting, or even singing.

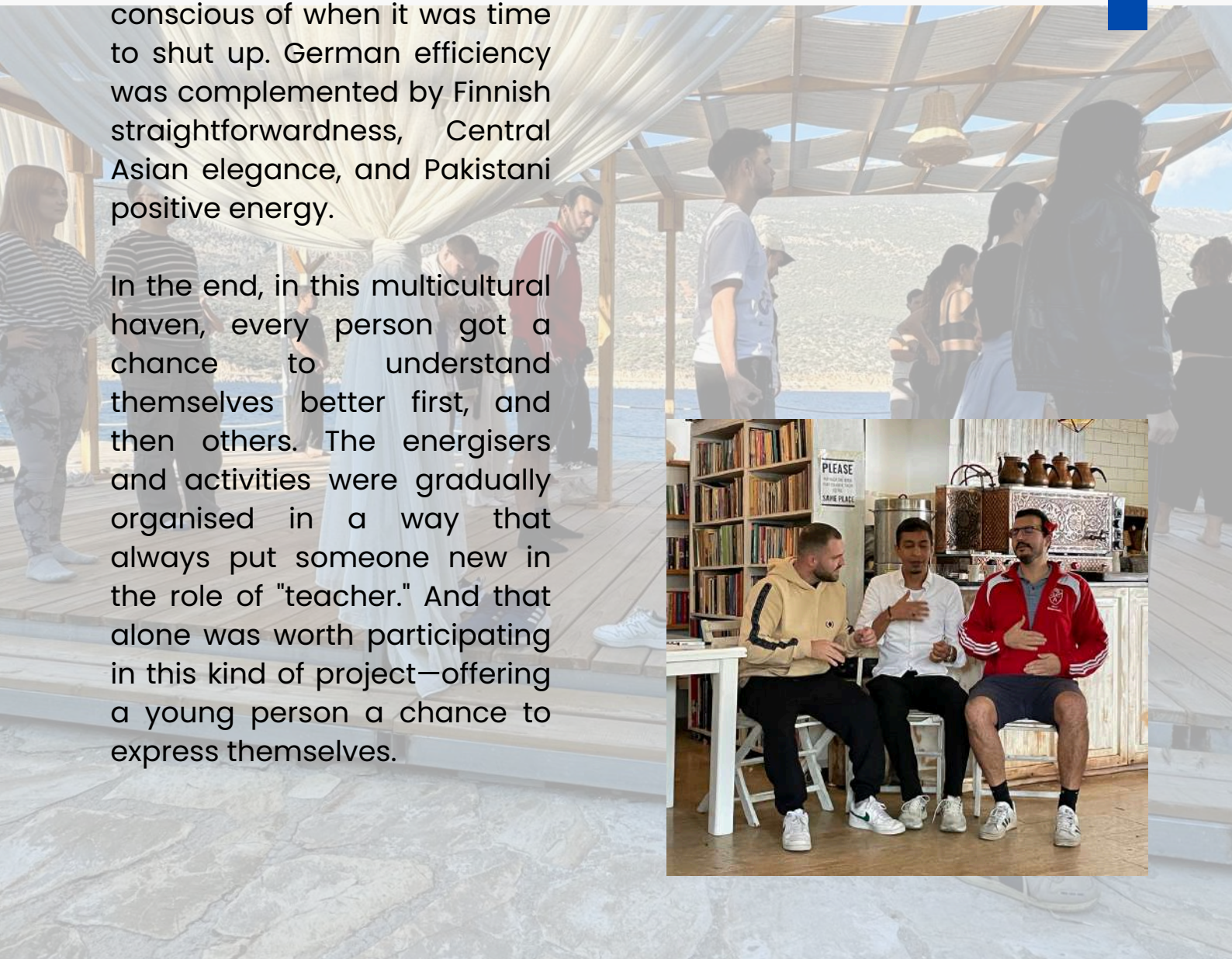
Not a single moment did I feel judged. Not a single time did I feel that someone was procrastinating or opting out of their tasks. Time management turned Kaş into Geneva. The Portuguese gave everything a flavour, sometimes a spicy one. Their jokes vibed well with the confidence of the Serbian group. The Turkish team was everywhere, compensating for their charming English accent with a lot of warmth.

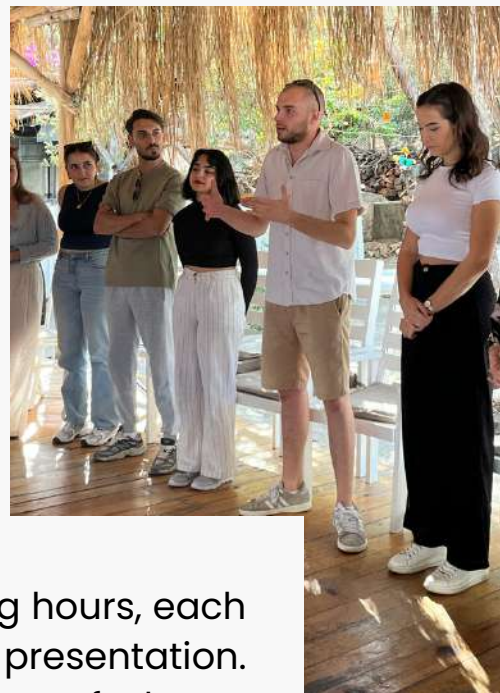
Non-verbal communication from the Italians made us conscious of when it was time to shut up. German efficiency was complemented by Finnish straightforwardness, Central Asian elegance, and Pakistani positive energy.

In the end, in this multicultural haven, every person got a chance to understand themselves better first, and then others. The energisers and activities were gradually organised in a way that always put someone new in the role of "teacher." And that alone was worth participating in this kind of project—offering a young person a chance to express themselves.

We learned how different states cope with issues like depression and loneliness. We encouraged people to talk about it and even wrote strategies on how to make an impact on social media and spread good deeds, or educate people on where to find help.

"Not a single moment did I feel judged"





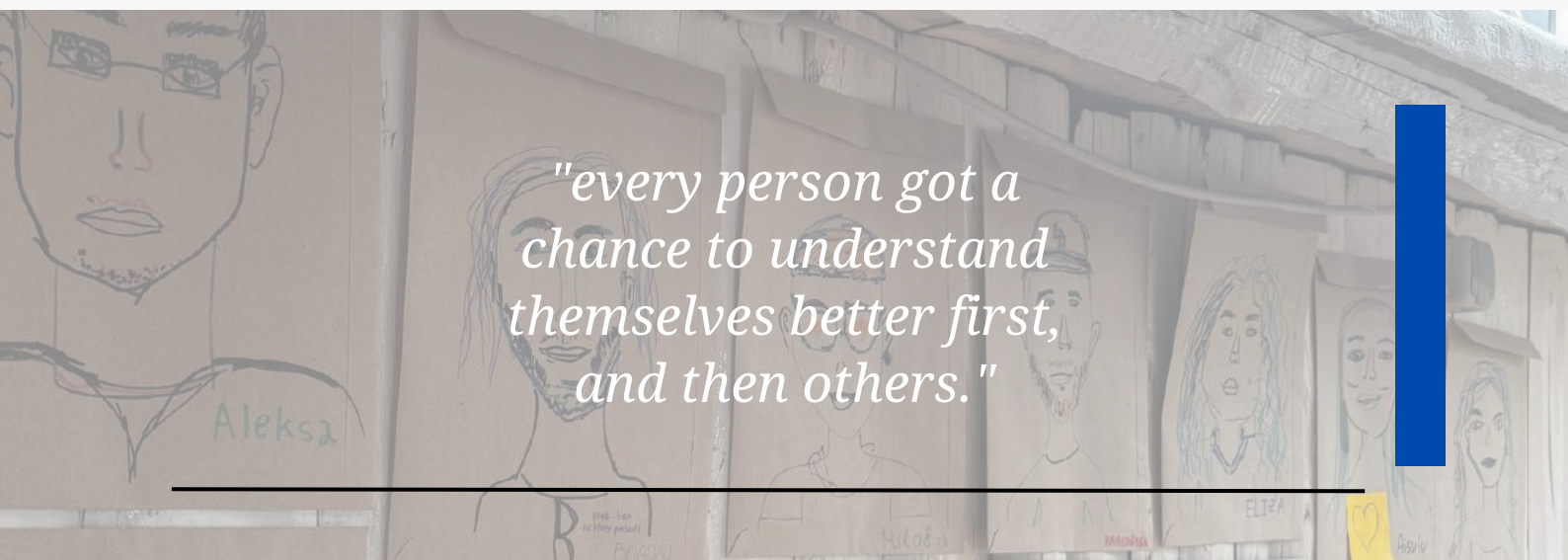
Outside of working hours, each country had a presentation. There were plenty of dance moves, unique dishes, drinks, and music exchanges. The city was 4 km away, so whoever wanted could find time for sports, the beach, or sightseeing. And there was a special day with more free time.



Our job now is to spread awareness that these opportunities exist and that non-formal education is equally important as formal education. I hope that at least one person who reads this feels inspired to get involved in an Erasmus+ project.



"every person got a chance to understand themselves better first, and then others."



COMMUNITY DAY

One day in Kas

During the community day, one part of the group visited the small town of Kas. The central part of the city is intertwined with narrow alleys in which there are buildings that have preserved their original appearance from the time of the Ottoman Empire. The city has a port from where small boats depart for visiting the surrounding towns. One of the things that is mandatory when visiting kasu is the ancient theater. It offers a wonderful view of the city and its surroundings, and it is especially beautiful to watch the sunset there.

The city is located in the bay, full of beautiful beaches, and due to the Mediterranean climate, most of the year is the tourist season, even until December. When you're already in the Kas you must try famous turkish specialties such as kebab and pide. I recommend visiting this city because the Mediterranean climate combined with local landmarks is worth a visit.

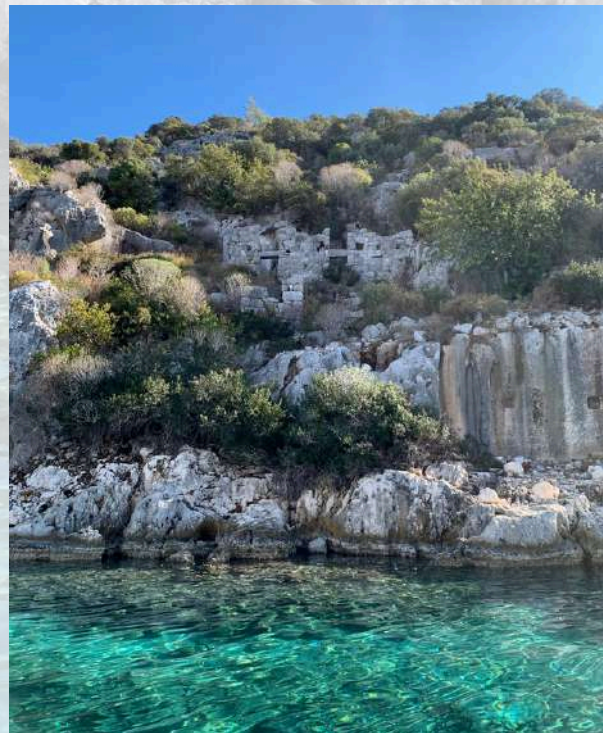


Exploring Kekova

When participating in workshops, there are moments when you can feel detached from the world around you, as if you're in a bubble, disconnected from reality. However, Community Days provide the perfect opportunity to recalibrate, offering a chance to reconnect with the people who welcome us into their world.

Have you ever heard of Kekova? A small island off the southern coast of Turkey, where abandoned spaces seem to reach out for recognition. A boat ride reveals stone steps, doorways carved into the rocks, and small houses that blend seamlessly with the rugged landscape. The ruins emerging from the crystal-clear waters are remnants of the ancient Lycian civilization, offering a glimpse into a long-forgotten past.

Our Community Day took place in Kekova, where we embarked on a boat journey to Akvaryum Koyu—"Aquarium Bay"—so named for the exceptional clarity of its waters.



Here, the past and present intertwine seamlessly, creating a stunning landscape that invites introspection: a place where ancient ruins converse with the timeless beauty of nature, a dialogue between the sea and the remnants of history.

But Kekova is not just a place for reflection; it's also a place to have fun. We swam, sang, and enjoyed each other's company. The best part was that everyone shared their songs and dances, turning the day into a celebration of culture and connection.

Our day in Kekova ended on a perfect note, with a cup of traditional Turkish coffee and refreshing pomegranate juice, enjoyed while gazing out at the sea.

OUR INSIGHTS

Before coming here, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. Since this was my first Erasmus project, I didn't have a clear idea in mind. I thought it might just be about intercultural exchanges and interactions, without much learning involved. However, the experience has completely exceeded my expectations. While intercultural mingling has been a big part of it, I've also learned so much through informal activities and workshops."

"This project has given me memories that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. Some of the people I've met here are incredibly like-minded, and I hope to stay in touch with them. I'm also now motivated to join more initiatives like this in the future, especially since this first experience has been such a success."

"As for my favorite moment, it's hard to choose from so many amazing experiences. But if I had to pick, I'd say one of the workshops where we did a silent theatre performance stood out—it was such a creative and entertaining experience.

HAMZA FAROOQ RAJA

"I had high expectations for this project because I've participated in another project with this organization before, and it was amazing. I'm happy to say this one fully met my expectations."

"This project has had a positive impact on my life, especially during a time when I've been struggling with mental health. We practiced things like meditation and yoga—activities I had never tried before—and they turned out to be really valuable experiences. I feel like I've learned tools that can help me in my personal life."

"My favorite moment was during the community day, when we went on a boat tour. We saw stunning views, relaxed, and enjoyed every moment of it. Combining such peaceful experiences with the lectures made for a perfect balance, helping us to recharge and appreciate the beauty of this place.

DANICA MANIĆ

"Honestly, I didn't have any expectations before coming to this project because I only found out about it two days before it started! I decided to challenge myself and join without knowing what to expect."

"This project has had a significant impact on me because it's my first time participating as a group leader rather than just a participant. In this new role, I've learned so much—I feel more responsible, energetic, and engaged. It's been a valuable opportunity for growth, and I've gained skills that I'll carry forward."

"It's hard to choose just one favorite moment because there have been so many unforgettable and enjoyable experiences. Each one has contributed to making this project truly special."

KAMRONBEK YAKHSHIMURODOV

"I didn't have any expectations for this project because it all came together at the last moment. I wasn't thinking much about what to expect, but I've been pleasantly surprised by everything—the project, the people, and the incredible location."

"Projects like this are so valuable, not just for their specific topics but for life in general. You learn how to connect with others, discover new cultures and languages, and expand your understanding of the world. I feel like all of this is adding to my 'cultural backpack,' something I'll carry with me forever."

"Every day and every moment here has been wonderful, but the free day stands out as my favorite. It was such an amazing experience, and I truly felt free."

RAFFAELA GARAU

"I had high expectations before joining this project, especially because it focuses on mental health, a topic that affects so many of us. I saw it as an opportunity to not only learn about ways to improve or prevent mental health challenges but also to make new friends, experience different cultures, and pick up some new languages. These were my goals, and I'm glad to say the project lived up to my expectations."

"I'm confident that this project will have a lasting impact on me. We've learned a lot about mental health, including practical solutions and approaches being applied in other countries. Seeing these examples has inspired me to explore some of these ideas further, both for myself and possibly in future projects. It's been a truly transformative experience."

"My favorite moment was doing yoga on the beach. It was an incredible feeling to take a break from everything and focus solely on myself and my body. Before this, I never thought yoga was for me, but this experience changed my mind. I'm now inspired to incorporate it into my life after the project, which is why it stands out as my most memorable moment."

SAID MELIH ULUCAN

"I didn't have any expectations before coming to this project. Being part of the Italian team, we found out about it just two days before, so there wasn't much time to think about what to expect. Everything felt like a sudden, exciting surprise."

"This project was my first experience of its kind, and it exposed me to something completely new. That sense of novelty was incredibly impactful—it made me eager to participate in more projects like this in the future. I also met so many amazing people, which has been one of the most enriching parts of this journey."

"Choosing a favorite moment is really difficult because there were so many highlights. I shared a lot with different people, and they shared so much with me in return. But if I had to choose, I'd say the moments where we all laughed together stand out the most—like on the boat trip, where we truly enjoyed every second. It was such a joyful and memorable experience."

SARA BOJANIC