

Traces of Jewish life in Porto, Portugal

The mobility in Portugal occurred between 07th to 12th December 2015, in Porto. Preparing and planning the week was challenging at different levels, but worth it at the end. All the delegations – teachers and students – were warmly received by the vocational school Raul Dória, represented by the teachers Suzana Melo – project coordinator- and Joana Neto, as well as by the 11 students actively involved in the project “Local Traces of Jewish Culture”. All week long, other Portuguese students volunteered to help with the logistics in many ways to provide the best possible experience at school. Therefore they formed a team ready to assist the visitors in any question they might need help with. The week and its activities were dedicated to the topic of the project, but also to the social and cultural aspects of the Portuguese region.

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The week began Sunday evening when all the delegations met at the metro station “Trindade” in the heart of Porto. The students had dinner with their Portuguese partners, and the teachers had dinner together in the old town, where everyone had the opportunity to get into contact with the Christmas atmosphere surrounding the main avenue – Avenida dos Aliados – and walk the old and narrow streets to get to the restaurant situated in front of the rectory of the University of Porto, one of the most iconic city squares – Praça dos Leões - in terms of academic Traditions.

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By Monday morning, a welcoming session took place in the auditorium of the school, followed by a work meeting between students and teachers related to the project in order to remember the planning for the week and to agree and define together the last details of the content of the international work group sessions between students. Students liked the idea to produce a video per international group about their experiences of the week. The morning also allowed the visit to the school and moments of sharing ideas with board members and other students. After the coffee break, the whole group had a walk through the old town to reach the Casa Museu Guerra Junqueira, where the city hall culture representative was expecting us. The house-museum is located behind the main cathedral of Porto, offering all the visitors a magnificent view at the Ribeira (medieval town along the river) and Douro river, as well as of one of the old Jewish quarters. Guerra Junqueiro was a writer, a poet and more, from Porto, who some historians believe to have Jewish ancestors.



The conference about Jewish routes in Porto and its region was very elucidative and well illustrated by Dr. Manuel Azevedo Graça. The group also had a guided tour to the museum and each visitor received a book from the city hall. After lunch time, at the school auditorium the students from all the delegations presented, their work about architectural marks of the Jewish presence in their region and country. In the evening, by 7pm, the photographic exhibition about Auschwitz, called “5 olhares” was inaugurated. It showed through white and black photos the five different impressions each delegation had when they visited the Auschwitz camp during the mobility to Poland. The photos were accompanied by excerpts from poems or thoughts of authors - Jews or with Jewish ancestry - from each country involved in the project.



The day ended with a welcoming dinner, where the delegations could watch and listen to the performance of two academic groups of Fado from the faculties of Law and Economics of the University of Porto. Each visitor received some typical souvenirs – a mini bottle of Porto wine, the rooster of Barcelos – a Portuguese symbol – and a tile hand painted by our students.