

Local traces of Jewish life in Sighetu Marmatiei, Romania

The first meeting of the project took place in Sighetu Marmatiei, a town in the north-west of Romania, part of Maramures County, which has a various history in Jewish culture. Sighet had a Jewish community of over 15.500 people who were deported during the Holocaust period and the project focuses on their lives before and after this time period. All the students and teachers were accommodated in the town and a part of the activities organized by Romanian team took place in place linked to Jewish life and "King Ferdinand" Pedagogical High School.

SATURDAY, 07.02.2015

The meeting started on 7th February 2015 with the arrival of foreign students and teachers from four different countries: Germany, Poland, Portugal and Greece. The delegations from Greece, Germany, Poland and Portugal arrived in Sighetu Marmatiei. The students met their host families and had a free evening.

SUNDAY, 08.02.2015

The participants had a town tour by auto carriage and listened to Horatiu Vescan and Ramona Munteanu talking about the town's history and main touristic attractions. Some, like the Portuguese and Greeks, were quite impressed by seeing snow for the first time in their lives. Then they had a welcoming speech at "King Ferdinand" Pedagogical High School by headmaster Diana Pozman.

In the evening all the students had a meeting to get to know each other better and discuss about future presentations.

MONDAY, 09.02.2015

In the morning there was a presentation at the high school about Maramures County, including the history of Sighet and the culture, traditions, holidays, gastronomy and tourist attractions of Maramures.

After that the group went to a Jewish Synagogue where they could find out more about the Jewish community that existed and exists in Sighet. They participated at the seminary held by Markus Hary, leader of the Jewish community. The Synagogue was built in the 19th century, the only one that remained, while four others were destroyed during the Holocaust period. It's an old building composed of two rooms with separate places for men and women, with symbolistic architecture and lots of documents, and also a holy place where the Tora is kept. Markus Hary talked about important Rabbis, the deportation of the Jews by the Nazis, how many survivors came back to Sighet and about the actual Jewish community in the town.

After the seminary the delegation visited the Jewish Cemetery, where Johnny Popescu gave a speech about the funeral ceremonies in Jewish culture. Later the students had a work sessions back at the high school in which a team from every country presented their local schools and the local history of the Jewish communities.

TUESDAY, 10.02.2015

In the morning, all participants went to classes of King Ferdinand High School and the students had a work session held by Susana Melo, Harry Riegel. They separated the students in five different teams of five students from each participating country and gave them a topic for their future presentation, in which they had to describe different aspects of Jewish life along history in the countries represented by every single person.

After lunch time, the group went to the Ellie Wiesel Museum where they took part in a seminary held by Alin Pralea, about Ellie Wiesel's family and the route of Jewish deportation. Mr. Wiesel is an 88 year old Jew, born in Sighet and is a Holocaust survivor. As a result of his experience at Auschwitz, he became the author of 57 books, but only two of them are volumes of memories: All Rivers Run to the Sea and And the Sea is Never Full. In 1955 he moved to Washington D.C. in USA and in 1986 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for speaking out against racism, violence and repression. In the present, he's a great personality and a real symbol for humanity.

Next, the participants reconstituted by foot the deportation route starting from Ellie Wiesel's house to the railway station, from where the Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau by train on 6th May 1944. The group ended the day commemorating Jews deported as they lit candles and had a moment of silence for those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and never came back to Sighet.



Participants of the meeting in Romania



Orthodox church



Markus Hary, leader of the Jewish community



Moving to the ghetto, Sighetu Marmatiei



At the museum



Commemorating deported Jews