

Our school "Agios Neofytos Gymnasium" is a secondary (middle) state school in Limassol, Cyprus and it participated in a KA122 Erasmus+ project from September 2024 to October 2025. Our project "No aliens among us' - A journey to open-mindedness, respect and development" aimed at developing our students' and teachers' intercultural competence and help them communicate and interact across cultural boundaries.

During the project, we took part to four outgoing mobilities (to Turin, Italy-Barcs, Hungary-Kos, Greece) with 19 students overall, two job shadowing mobilities (to Alba Iulia, Romania and Beauvais, France) and two ingoing mobilities (from Barcs, Hungary and Turin, Italy).

Our Art teacher designed two workshops during which students and teachers drew, wrote and spoke about their "Alien", a symbol of cultural otherness. The allegory of an Alien led participants into exploring the nature of stereotyping and prejudice in intercultural encounters. During the second workshop, they created one artwork which brought together artefacts of their countries and cultures, thus highlighting our commonalities.

To assess the impact of the project on our school organisation, electronic questionnaires were created and completed by students before and after mobilities as well as by six teachers who did not participate in mobilities. This method reflected changes quantitatively. Students' artwork was analysed qualitatively. Both methods focused on perceptions of others' culture as well as on concepts of tolerance, empathy, and commonalities across cultures.

Findings from student questionnaires suggest that new friendships became the key benefit; enthusiasm about meeting peers from other countries, curiosity and interest in other lifestyles rose, helping students overcome initial cultural barriers. Qualitative findings indicate increased empathy as well as an ability to perceive a relationship between cultures. Hence, respondents' motivation for meeting other cultures and enjoyment in intercultural communication have increased.

Findings from teacher questionnaires revealed higher confidence in communicating with international peers and an increased recognition of intercultural interactions' professional value, indicating that the Erasmus+ project fostered a deeper intercultural awareness.