



Erasmus+ mobility in vocational education: a transformative experience for woodworking students

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- ▶ The Lycée Polyvalent du Pays d'Aunis in Surgères (Charente-Maritime, France) has been actively involved in **Erasmus+ projects** for over 25 years, developing **strong and long-standing partnerships across Europe**. Over the years, the school has collaborated with institutions in **Finland, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Cyprus, Norway, Italy and Slovakia**, building a solid network to **support student mobility and cooperation**.
- ▶ This year, the school has also chosen to **expand its European partnerships by starting a new collaboration with Portugal**, with the aim of further **developing international opportunities for its students** in the future.



- ▶ From February 23 to 27, two teachers from the school — Stéphane Bauza, an English teacher, and Cindy Neveu, a mathematics and science teacher — accompanied a group of four students to Pombal, Portugal, where they began their work placements.
- ▶ These students — Damien, Valentin and Jérémie (full-time students) and Eddy (an apprentice) — were enrolled in final-year vocational baccalaureate programmes specialising in Cabinetmaking and Wood Manufacturing Technology. They completed their internships in two local companies, working in pairs.



► One company specialised in kitchen manufacturing and installation, while the other focused on wood flooring and the production of various wooden components, using modern equipment, including CNC machines.



- ▶ Three of the students stayed in Portugal for three weeks, while the apprentice completed a two-week placement.
- ▶ At the same time, other students from the same programmes also took part in international mobility : two students carried out **a three-week placement in Germany**, while four others, including one apprentice, completed **an internship in Cyprus**.
- ▶ Located in a semi-rural area, the school serves students for whom international travel is not always easily accessible. In this context, **the Erasmus+ programme represented a remarkable opportunity**. It allowed these young learners — some of whom were as young as 16 — **to experience living and working abroad**, often for the first time.
- ▶ In Portugal, the students were accommodated in Pombal, a town ideally situated between Porto and Lisbon. This location offered not only a professional environment but also access to cultural discovery. During their stay, the students had the opportunity to travel at weekends, and they notably spent a full weekend in Lisbon, discovering the city's heritage and atmosphere.
- ▶ From a professional perspective, these placements enabled students to develop technical skills, discover new working methods, and work with different materials and technologies in authentic workplace settings.
- ▶ Equally important were **the cultural and linguistic benefits**. Immersed in **an international environment**, **students gained confidence in using English and other foreign languages in real-life situations**, while also discovering new ways of living and working.
- ▶ Such experiences contributed significantly to the development of autonomy, adaptability and openness, which are key competences in both professional and personal life.
- ▶ **The Erasmus+ programme thus played a crucial role in promoting inclusion, mobility and European**

citizenship, particularly for students in vocational education.



► This experience once again **highlights the essential role of international mobility** in empowering vocational students and preparing them to **become skilled, adaptable and open-minded European citizens**.



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