

Romania discovered anew

Students report from a seminar in Sibiu

In the last week of July (27.7-3.8) took place the international seminar “The Art of Living Together in Diversity” in Sibiu, supported by the E.U. Program “Youth in Action”.

Young people from Spain, Italy, Austria, Romania and Slovakia could experience during this week the art of living together - theoretically, through the presentations about migration and law, as well as practically, in every-day situations.

The presentations pursued a different, ethical and cultural perspective, which meant to see man as a social person, with a personal life and a family. While migration is often seen as a menace in Europe nowadays, we could hear the proposal to cultivate the dialogue as the only way to a better “living together”. “It is only through the dialogue with the other, with the foreign one, that one can redefine his/her own self and the own identity”, explained Professor Stefan Tobler from the Evangelical Academy in Sibiu. Most of the participants could experience this enrichment through the dialogue, during the seminar. “I have discovered that, if we want to live together with different people and without conflicts, we have to get to know and accept their culture first”, reports Elisabeth Gahberger (Italy). “How should we be able to understand a person, if we don’t know anything about their culture and country? We have to open ourselves, to have no fears of the others and to avoid prejudices”.

The unexpected visit and presentation of Florin Cioabă, king of the Gypsies in Romania, lead to interesting discussions about the current problem of gypsies in Italy. As an outcome, we discovered how necessary it is to avoid prejudices and generalizations on both sides. A special dynamic resulted from the fact that among the participants, there were also members of different minorities in those countries, such as the Hungarian minority of Slovakia or the gypsy minority of Romania – among them, the young jurist Claudia Mailat, who opened a new perspective with her presentation on the history of gypsies in Romania.

“I think that Romania was the perfect country for this seminar, because it is here that I completely changed my mentality”, says Laura Salinas from Almeria, Spain. “In Spain, we have a totally different image of Romanians, but here, we discovered that our prejudices were false and that prejudices are generally to be avoided. In the discussions with people from different countries, we could see the things we have in common, as well as the differences between us, and this was a great enrichment.”