

## **Anette Ballin i Grækenland**

**Anette Ballin, 4th Gymnasium of Chios – Grækenland. Opholdet fandt sted fra 1. december 2002 til 31. maj 2003.**

### **Arbejdsvilkår**

At the school I was mainly assisting the German teacher, but I also took part in some other lessons, where I told about the way things are in Denmark concerning consumer questions, traffic policy, the school system and other subjects. I taught some Danish to the pupils of the German classes, which is relatively simple, since these two languages are closely related. I also made a lecture for the whole school (pupils and teachers) as an introduction to the Danish language, using a translation of a Greek poem as the starting point, and – among other things – asking the audience to tell me, which words they could recognise from the translation, because they were similar to German or English words. Quite a lot of words could be recognised, and in general the lecture was a great success – afterwards everybody had a greater sense of how languages are connected and how learning one language is a help for learning more languages. I gave an interview to the school paper and I made a board with pictures and some information about Denmark.

I also helped some of the weaker pupils with German a couple of times a week after the normal hours.

In general my working hours were 12 hours per week, but I also took part in some excursions, partly one-day-excursions, but also the yearly three-day trip to Athens for the 3. classes, where I assisted the teachers in all practical matters as well as I could.

With the pupils I taught, I mainly used the method of repetition, of “translating” the pronunciation of words into Greek, of trying to find similarities, of trying to see and remember rules etc.

In my free time I also visited a primary school several times. I met one of the teachers, who asked me to come for a visit, and I went there and told them a

fairy tale of Hans Christian Andersen (on the Day of the Book, which takes place on Hans Christian Andersen's birthday). Afterwards the pupils wrote about the day and made some drawings from the fairy tale (The ugly duckling), and some of it was also printed in their school paper.

The school also participates in a Comenius school partnership for primary schools, and they co-operate with a school in Germany, one in England and one in Spain. While I was on Chios, all the teachers were meeting on Chios, and I was asked to come and participate and help with translation etc. In that context we took a new look on my lecture on Danish language, I translated the poem into English. Then the Spanish translated it into Spanish, and the Germans translated it into German, and we all took it as a starting point for saying something about the different languages. This was done for the pupils of the school, where we were, and present was also representatives for the local community and the primary schools on Chios and the local television. This was a truly international event, and I was very happy that I was able to be part of it.

In general I would say that the Gymnasium could have been better prepared for the programme, both before my arrival and after. I was almost ready to leave around halfway through, because I found everything too chaotic and unorganised. I sent a letter to the national agency in Athens (with a copy to the Danish agency), and tried to call the local responsible, leaving messages etc., but I never got a reply. So I tried to make things work at the school, I got a new contact person and had some meetings with her, and things got somewhat better, but I would have liked to have been better integrated in the school, to have had more collaboration with other teachers than the German and the English teacher.

## **Indblik/udbytte**

Since I have been studying Greek, I knew the Greek culture quite well before I came to the school. I cannot say, that I have changed my attitude very much, though I of course have an even deeper and better understanding now.

I have always felt very much "a European", and I thought and still think, that this kind of programmes are very good in deepening the understanding and the communication between the countries of Europe. I think that for the pupils of both schools, that I was in contact with, meeting "a Dane" partly served as a stimulus for learning languages, partly made them more interested in knowing more about this end of the world, and partly made them think about the differences and similarities between us.

Concerning teaching methods, I have become more aware of the multiple variety of methods. The Gymnasium was a “test-school” for certain pedagogic programmes from the pedagogic institute in Athens, and consequently tried various new forms of teaching, that have been so far unusual in Greece. This was very interesting, and certainly stimulated my wish to learn more about teaching methods.

I didn't learn or receive any teaching in any language during my stay, unfortunately – I had wished to take Greek lessons to improve my Greek, but couldn't find a teacher.

I think I learned many, many things on Chios, which will be of use for my future career, many of which I have mentioned here, and other things I might discover later.

First of all I improved my Greek during my stay – due to the constant contact with the pupils and the staff – and I improved my German, by having to teach it, which often gives another view on a language. But what I learned most of all, was handling many languages in my head at the same time. In the beginning, when I came home from school, my head was spinning. I spoke English with the English teachers, German in the German classes, Greek the rest of the time – and sometime at the same time – and I felt it was a great strain for my mind. In the end, when we had the meeting at the primary school, I translated the whole day and evening in and out of English, Greek and German constantly – and my head didn't spin, but I quickly found the right words in the right language. This was a great pleasure, but also a surprise, since I had thought, that the ability to handle several languages at the same time was physical – either you had it, or you didn't have it, and that I didn't – but now I found that it could actually be learned, and I had learned it.

## **Elevernes udbytte**

The students at the school(s) have learned something about the Indo-European family of languages and about the connection of Danish to German and English, and they have a picture of how the difficulties of languages can be different depending on the structure of the language, the relationship between the spoken and the written language etc.

The students now have a little idea about what Denmark is like, and some of what they heard, about our welfare system, decentralized school system etc., sounded practically like paradise. In any case they learned that things don't have

to be the way they are, there are other possible ways of living, of doing things, of looking at life in general.

I think "Europe", the other European countries and the European Union became more concrete to the pupils – as well as the possibilities to travel and live or study in other parts of Europe.

### **Praktiske problemer**

It was very difficult to find a place to stay on Chios (for a reasonable amount of money), since there is a part of the North-Aegean University and a lot of military on a relatively small island. I ended up staying far from the school and far from the main town and paying about 300 Euro a month, which is quite a lot out of 532 Euro. But the good thing out there was the nature, I could go for long walks, which I enjoyed very much.

As I mentioned above, I had some problems with the school around halfway through, and I tried to contact the responsible person at the national agency by telephone and by mail, but I never heard anything. This was of course not very helpful. Luckily I was able to sort out the problems myself, but I was very disappointed about the agency and felt very alone with the problems. So I would of course suggest, that the national agencies should do something to help the assistants. The Danish agency answered my mails quickly and friendly, but were of course not responsible since I was in Greece.