

ERIC'S TRANSCULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Salomé



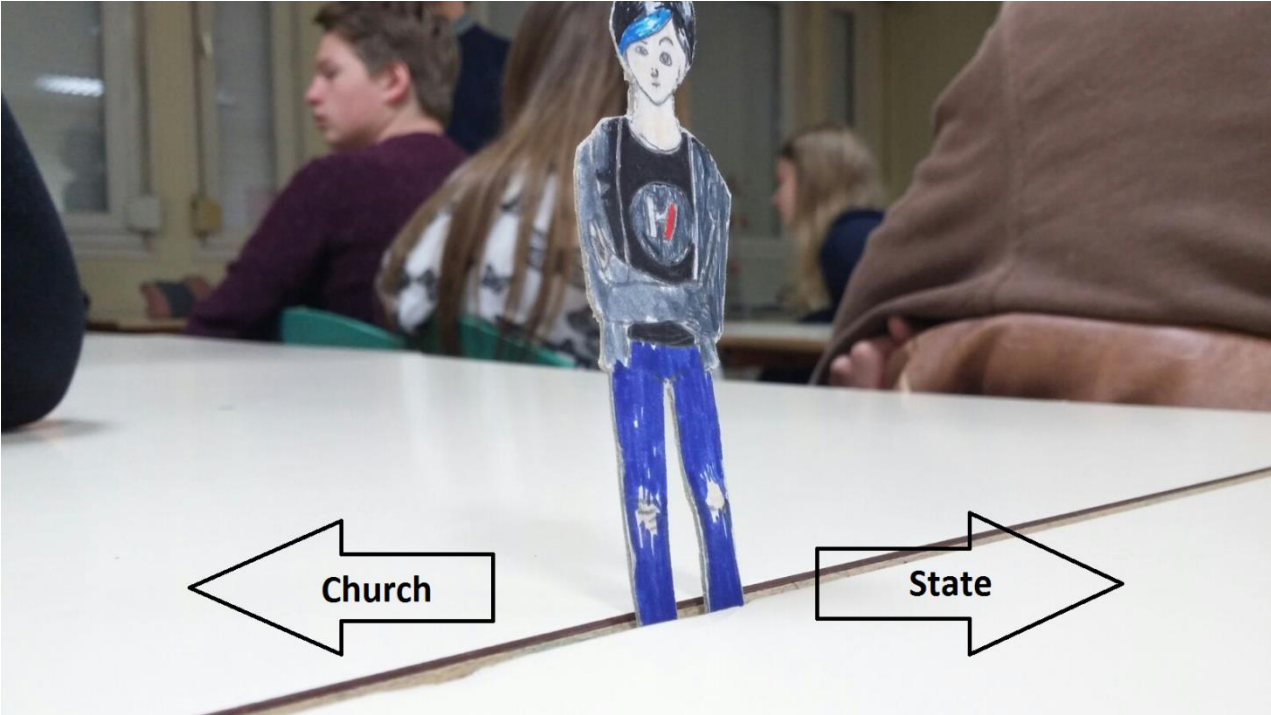
Eric in France

For a week Eric was participating in an exchange project as he went to Rennes, France. He noticed a few things that were quite different from his own culture and that made him chuckle.

Once, for example, he was sitting in the kitchen for having breakfast together with his host family. He noticed that something was different. They were eating without dishes. So he asked his host brother why they were using kitchen roll instead of plates. His host brother answered in broken English, mixed with French words: " We not use plates for petit-déjeuner because it is plus facile and not too much washing afterwards. Everyone does it dans ma famille." Eric nodded his head and still thought that it was more than strange.



In school Eric observed another difference. As he walked through the school he perceived that no one was wearing a headscarf or any other religious symbol, which surprised him because actually it was a very big school with many students and he was expecting that there was a mix of different cultures and religions. He decided to go further into this matter. It turned out that France is secular state which basically means that the church is separated from the state. The idea of it is that the state is “neutral” and that everyone is equal no matter what they believe in and that everyone has religious freedom. For example, in public schools teachers and students are not allowed to show their religion by wearing a headscarf or a necklace with a cross on it. They also do not have religion as a subject.



Another thing that caught his attention was the fact that adolescents didn't do as much after school or in their free time as he is used to. They usually go home directly after school. When he asked them if they never spent with their friends outside of school or going in town afterwards, they answered that they do these kinds of things on the weekend because they have school until 5pm and then they have to do their homework and work on assignments.

Eric was puzzled by the fact that there were so many differences between the French and the Austrian culture and decided that he definitely wanted to come back to learn some more about the French culture. All in all he really enjoyed his stay there and was glad to find out a little bit more about the French culture.



Eric in Graz

Not so long ago, my exchange student “Eric visited me for one week. We both really enjoyed our time together. There were just some little moments that were quite strange. He was very talkative but sometimes he was quite surprised and confused by things that are normal to me.

Once, for example, we were in the kitchen and wanted to cook something. I noticed that something had caught his attention. He couldn't stop staring at our spice rack which confused me a lot because in Austria it is normal to have a spice rack in the kitchen. I also noticed that he rarely used spices, not even salt and pepper. So I started to think that spice racks may be a cultural thing in Austria.



Speaking of food, I also noticed some other things that were different in his culture. When I showed him Graz, he was very puzzled by our restaurants and supermarkets. At first, I didn't understand why, but then he explained it to me. He told me that in his city it is not as common to have vegan restaurants and organic food markets as in Austria. Also the fact that we had soy-milk, rice-milk, soy-yoghurt and many other alternative milk products confused him. I showed him the following vegan and vegetarian restaurants: Ginko, Mangolds, Café Grün, Café Erde, Denn's, Reformstark Martin, Kunsthauscafé, Die grüne Erde etc. It turned out that he actually liked this kind of food.



Something that I was astonished by was that he thought it was strange that we had a raised garden-bed. I told him that most Austrians have one if they do not have the possibility to have a normal garden. I also told him that Austrians like to plant their own vegetables and fruit. He thought that it was really funny and that I was the first person he had met, who does this. I thought that it might be another cultural difference.

I think Eric enjoyed the time in Graz even though some things were different from his culture.

