

# Changing views

Migration



Free hugs



Cooperation

Breaking stereotypes



# Changing Views

## newspaper

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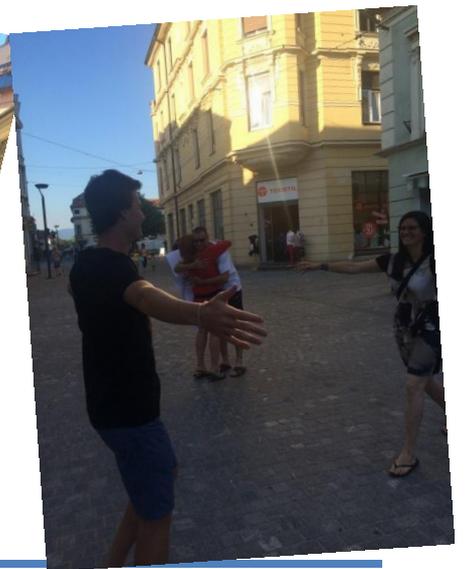
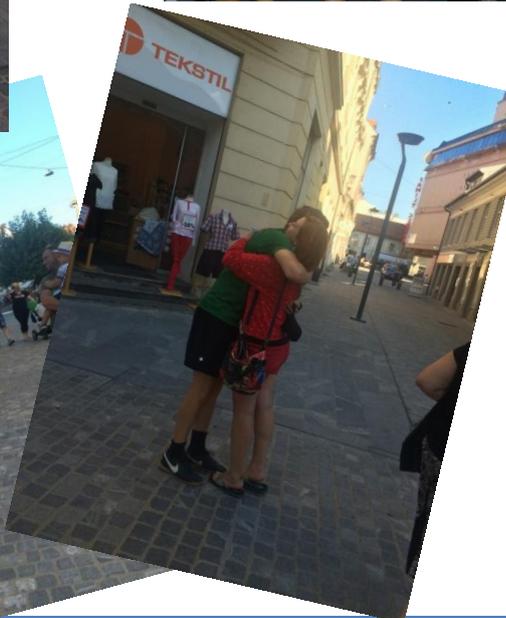
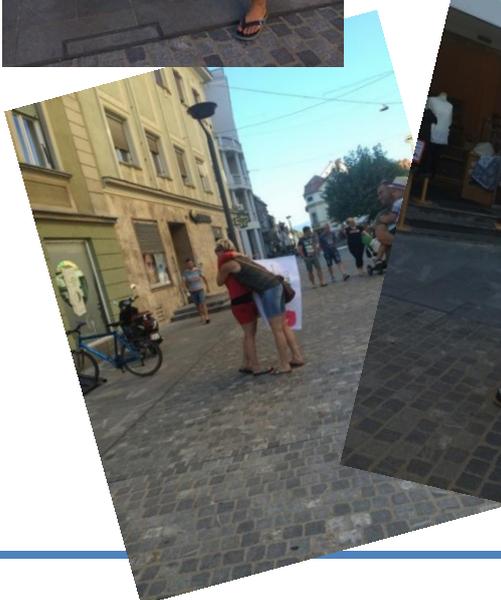
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# Free hugs, or how 6 youths scared every person in the city center of Celje

Thursday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, a group of youths from the Erasmus<sup>+</sup> project “Changing Views” set out to the center of Celje to bring joy and good vibes to the inhabitants of the city. They offered free hugs to anybody who passed by and wanted one. Unfortunately, not many took them up on the offer. We’re still not sure if the problem was with them or with the people of Celje. The photos in this article show how well this idea went. Maybe next time they’ll have more luck...



## Immigration in the eyes of the people of Celje

In the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> of August a group of participants from the Erasmus<sup>+</sup> project “Changing Views” went to the streets of Celje to ask the locals a few questions about the migrant situation.

They asked three people - a young girl (YG), a university student (US) and a middle aged man (MM). The girl studies in the local high school, doesn't travel a lot, and only takes part in school projects abroad. The older boy is a student who will start studying university in Ljubljana this September and travels when the situation enables him. And the middle aged man was working as a freelancer before retiring earlier this year. His job offered him many opportunities to travel abroad.

**Q: How is life in Celje?**

YG:” *It's nice, only a bit crowded. There is nothing special, but in some ways it's better than Ljubljana.*”

US:” *It's really calm, not crowded. The city centre is more relaxed than in other bigger cities and I like it.*”

MM: *“I'm disappointed about the atmosphere in the world, about the drama with refugees. But the atmosphere in Celje is good.”*

**Q: What do you think about the migration crisis?**

YG: *“I don't follow the news so I*

*don't know much.”*

US: *“I personally think it's better when people don't have to move. When there is no war, people don't have to leave their homes.”*

MM: *“I'm very sad about the situation. I support immigrants because they lost their homes and they don't have any money.”*

**Q: How many foreigners live in Celje and Slovenia in general?**

YG: *“Some for sure. Maybe ¼ of the town.”*

US: *“From this migration crisis no one. But there are many economic migrants from the 1960s and 1970s from Bosnia, Serbia etc.”*

MM: *“There is small number of foreigners here as well as in Europe.”*

**Q: Do you know some foreigners personally?**

YG: *” Yes, there are some in my school, they come mostly from Serbia and Bosnia.”*

US: *” Yes, a lot of my classmates are children of economic migrants. But they were born in Slovenia.”*

MM: *” No. I only see them sometimes on the border passing by.”*

**Q: Have you felt any change in the society since the migration crises started?**

YG: *” Yes. Our government e. g. built a wire fence on the border, which in my opinion didn't help the situation. It also destroyed the nature.”*

US:” *No. The only change I've noticed*

*is that on Austrian border they started checking passports.”*

*MM:” Not here in Slovenia. I think it was more visible e. g. in Germany or in Italy.”*

**Q: Do you agree with the position of Slovenian politicians about the immigration crisis?**

*YG: “I don’t know much about this topic but I think they didn’t do a good job.”*

*US: “There are two extreme positions - politicians are only pro or against migration. I stand in the middle.”*

*MM: “I don’t agree with any politician in the world but I think Slovenian politicians took an “ok” position. It was better than when I compare the politicians in other countries.”*

**Q: Do you feel safe in Slovenia and Europe in general?**

*YG: “Yes. There was just one situation when my parent were worried about me. It was when the migrants came here with buses to go to other countries. But I wasn’t scared. When there were terrorist attacks in Paris, I was staying in Portugal and I was scared but there were no problems in the end.”*

*US:” Yes. I don’t think that anything could happen to me. There is only a really small chance.”*

*MM: “I feel safe. But maybe in September I expect something bad to happen, maybe World War III. But I hope that the politicians will solve the situation and will prevent such a*

*thing from happening.”*

## Sonja Majcen

- working in Celje Youth Centre as an international coordinator and coordinator of the Europe Direct Information Point
- finished studies in Political Science



**Q: Was it hard - coming up with the idea to make this event?**

*A: Not really because, as you probably noticed from two days ago, when two guys came to participate in activities and they left because of the discussion about migrations and stereotypes. They used hate speech when defending their opinion and at the end they left the workshop stating that we are all stupid. Unfortunately that is many young people from Celje reflect on the topic of migration crisis and different cultures. But we are working to*

*establish a really open community. When the refugees were passing through Slovenia, we here in MCC were like a point for collecting food and all the hygiene stuff for the refugees. And we are also doing a lot of projects about how to break stereotypes. If people have more knowledge and information than they wouldn't be so intolerant.*

Q: How many youth exchanges have you created and how many have you participated in?

A: *I don't know how many projects I was a part of...a lot. Now I am more in the position of the sending organization, so I sent yearly around 100 young people abroad on short term activities and also long term activities. We have two girls on the EVS at the moment. One in Liechtenstein and one in the Czech Republic. I mainly write projects, I made more than 50 of them.*

Q: When did you start to be interested in Erasmus+ projects?

A: *When I was finishing my university, we started to be a part of the EU, so all the funds were available for Slovenia. Then I was starting to think about Life Learning programs, Youth in Action programs and afterward Erasmus+.*

Q: You said, that the local community is strange about the whole migration situation - is it hard to work with them or do you have any problems with organizing these events when it comes to the local community?

A: *There is also a certain tolerance*

*from the community towards us, because we have our hands free to do what we want. So we have this respectful relationship with each other.*

Q: Are you also going also to projects abroad or you are just organizing events here?

A: *Yes, I also do other projects, I also go - mainly as a trainer. My last experience was in Nairobi in Kenya. I was a trainer for one capacity building activity project.*

Q: Would you like to work with migrants - to have some project about/with them?

A: *Yes, but migrants are not staying in Slovenia. Now we are negotiating and discussing with youth centers that are on the borders or they have activities with people who applied for asylum. We are discussing about what we should do together and also how we should go into schools presenting their life stories*

## ***Mirror, mirror on the wall, what are migrants to us all?***



Slovenians consider themselves as a close-minded country so four youth exchange participants in Slovenia went to the city center of Celje to investigate if that is true. They understand the point of view of Slovenian people about immigrants and decided to make a questionnaire. On Thursday, 25. of August, 30 people were asked on the street what are their first 3 associations when they heard the word immigrant. Most of the people were surprised with the question but in another hand there were open and willing to answer. Just 3 persons didn't answer and 4 people did say all 3 associations.

### **On the border of Slovenia**

Meet A.P., a 32 years old that looks like 26. When the first migration wave came to the Slovenian border she

volunteered to help. A.P. and her four friends sat in a car and drove to Brežice and later Dobova. They worked for the Red Cross on a project called Connecting Limbs. Mainly connecting family members together. They were divided previously in Croatia and arrived here in different times. They asked them for how many people are they waiting and one of the common answers was 16, so how could you explain to the authorities that 16 is a family in Syria. Most of the Syrian refugees spoke English and helped where they could. The translators worked only day shifts so the refugees helped with translating for each other.

Of course for every ninety percent of kind people there a 10% of the not so kind type. At the beginning when it wasn't organized, a guy took a child from his family and used him to get on the bus sooner. The organization was getting better and better daily, but at the beginning she was really disappointed by the Red Cross Organization and by EU.

The conditions were really bad, usually there were 100 people in a wagon for 50 and there was no toilet paper and a lot of filth. When they asked a 90 years old lady on a wheelchair why is she on the way when she knew it is hard, she said that it is never too late to see Europe. There was a lot of optimism in their eyes, when there were leaving they waved from the train and were very thankful.

Part of her work was cooperating with the policemen and government

officials. Mostly they were kind and tried to do their best. But the police and the military were in a situation in which they didn't know what to do, so everything was improvised.

The media presented the situation as a crisis, they were talking about refugees taking their work but most of them wanted to continue on their way to Germany.

A.P. believes that there should be a better organizing process and everything should be more humane. A lot of Slovenian people helped by donating food and clothes. Her friends are very supportive and they also did what they could to help. To the question if she would go again she said: " I will go back in a heartbeat"

## Changing views



There is an urban legend that inhabitants of the city of Celje don't like giving interviews, and that they like their privacy and really enjoy it. So that makes taking an interview

really difficult, especially when it is about stereotypes, which makes other people not want to speak with us. But, we made it! We interviewed five people, two women, one 65 and the other 35 years old, and three males. The first is 33, the second 35 and the third is 75 years old. We asked them to tell us what's the first thing they think of when we pronounce the names of five states: Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Romania and Slovenia, and what they think the inhabitants of these countries look like. Most related beer and the city of Prague with Czech Republic, as well as white socks and sandals, Czech hairstyles and empathy. A beautiful sea, islands, tourism, war and Zagreb were the associations made about Croatia, but half of them think that Croats are indifferent, greedy and loud, and the other half think that they are nice and good looking people, former brothers to the Slovenian nation. Rome, spaghetti and good music are related with Italy, and about Italian people the inhabitants of Celje think that they are dark skinned, communicative, traditional and temperamental, but that they also often cheat people and that males are mamma's boys. About Romania there are also contradictory opinions, a few of them related vegetables and "live rocks" with that country, but also Dracula, unemployment and poverty. About Romanians people think that they are dark skinned, hairy, European gypsies, but also a hard working and good people. What do the Slovenians think about their own country and people? They related it with tourism and beautiful nature, but

also with stealing, corruption and economic crisis, and they think that Slovenians are quiet, well educated, but also really closed minded and that they calculate in interaction with other people.

Younger people are more open towards giving an interview, but think outside of the box, and it was impossible to not notice that they are not pleased with their own country and that they used the most stereotypes about it.

It turned out that stereotypes are not related with age, origin, nation or

everyone who was interviewed was honest, so they did use stereotypes often. Most of the older generation didn't want to give an interview, and if they did agree to it, their point of view was political. Younger people

gender, but that every people, no matter how hard they tried, how much life experience they had or how educated they are, use them, and most of the interviewed people are aware of that, having used them consciously.

## Breaking stereotypes in Palermo



H.R.Y.O. (Human Rights Youth Organization) is a non-profit association in Palermo, working in the field of youth that promotes human rights, which in July 2016 launched an experimental project with the support of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Foundation.

The project, named 'Little Wings - a trip to the recognition of our rights', involves eight unaccompanied foreign minors from West Africa, and eight minors engaged in restorative justice activities, aged 14-18. The aim is to increase the integration of disadvantaged young people in the society and the awareness of the importance of the recognition of the others seen as a resource, through the promotion of activities on specific topics such as xenophobia, Islamophobia, racism, prejudices, and sexism.

The first step of the project is a basic Italian language course for the unaccompanied minors, started in July in order to develop their communication skills. The course combines formal education with opportunities for informal learning and it is proving to be a successful approach towards integrating minors

and teaching them about the harm of stereotypes.

During the lectures it has been really interesting to notice that prejudices and stereotypes are also present in the views of migrants. Despite being potentially victims of acts of racism from the host society, as immigrants and black, it seems that they also experience some active racism against each other.

For instance it turned out that one of the most common prejudices they have is against Nigerian girls. It is actually known that in Italy the most of the victims of sexual trade are from Nigeria, and this data can easily lead to the idea that "all Nigerian girls are sex workers".

On the other hand, Nigerians also show some forms of racism when they say that Gambians are "so black" or that "all the Gambians are Mandingo and can only fight".

This was an opportunity to introduce a debate on what stereotypes are and why we should avoid them and, as one of the guys said himself, "don't judge a book by its cover".

## During the migrant crisis

When the European migrant crisis began in 2015 it has caused a lot of hysteria and has been causing ever since. The media is mainly to blame because of its strong voice and influence on the public opinion. We wanted to find out what the situation is among common people. So we went out to the streets of Slovenia's Celje to find the answers. Overall we interviewed three locals and our main intention was to compare the differences between various age groups.

The first person we interviewed was a 17 years old student. 'I think that immigrants are bad people, maybe not all of them, but I would not like to have them in our neighborhood', he said. Then added that he would not feel safe anymore if they were there.

Second person was a 25 years old woman who works in the local Youth Centre. She had a different opinion and said that it's mainly media's fault that people are 'ignorant' about the refugees. 'Nobody should say things like all refugees are terrorist and they only bring crime and problems, it is ignorant. All of us should try to help them as much as we can, so there won't be any problems, it's told us. She also helped to collect goods and clothes for the immigrants that staying in Celje overnight.

The last person we spoke was a 66 years old lady who would not mind if there were any immigrants in her surroundings as long as they behave like ordinary citizens and adjusted to the lifestyle of the locals.

It is obvious that the migrant crisis affects in some way everyone, even if the people have not had any direct contact with the refugees themselves. A different case is an elderly male teacher from London who is currently staying in Celje for a week. We spoke with him and he told us that he's actively helping young immigrants who have troubles with visa and the administration in the UK. He even hosts one of the migrants in his house.

During the migrant crisis, lot of refugees passed through Slovenia on their way to Austria or Germany looking for a safe place to live. In September 2015, 500 of them came to Celje. The youth center wrote a request in local and national newspapers, asking for goods such as clothes and food. While waiting for the train, they spent time in an ex-economic school. Lot of people helped them even though there were individuals who didn't want immigrants to stay in Celje. Luckily no incidents happened and the school is still open for immigrants who need food or place to stay.

## STEREOTYPE ASSOCIATION GAME

25.8.2016., Celje - Students of the Youth Exchange programme Erasmus+ made a research project in the form of a stereotype association game. To test the perception of people, students asked ten locals to say the first country that comes up in their mind when they hear a given word. Although the results were more or less as expected, some of the answers were surprising. The following section shows the most common and unexpected results.

**RUDE:** USA (2), UK (2), France (1)

**LAZY:** Montenegro (4), Bosnia (2), Spain (1)

**TERRORIST:** Afghanistan (2), Iraq (2), USA (1), Germany (1)

**DRUG:** South America (4), Italy (3)

**FAT:** USA (9)

**PUNCTUAL:** Switzerland (5), Germany (3), Slovenia (2)

**GOOD LIFE:** Slovenia (4), Turkey (1), Australia (1)

**BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE:** Slovenia (4), Italy (2), Brasil (2)

**HOLIDAY:** Croatia (5), Italy (2), Thailand (1)

**SMILE:** Serbia (2), Italy (2), Spain (2)



Photo credit: <http://www.funnfun.in/sexy-and-funny-body-flags/>

## Diary

- 07:30= Wake up after 3 hours of sleep.
- 07:31= Say "hello! "in 5 languages.
- 07:40= Go to the bathroom.
- 07:45= Get in the shower.
- 07:46= Think about turning on the water.
- 07:47= Turn on the water.
- 07:58= Remember to get dressed.
- 08:00= Go to have breakfast.
- 08:01= See the coffee.
- 08:02= Remember not to drink the coffee.
- 08:03= Take a plate and come to try put something of everything on it.
- 08:30= Finish eating.
- 08:32= Arrive at the hostel.
- 09:00= Try to be on time for the energizer.
- 09:01= Again I am late.
- 09:15= Be late for energizer. Eat all the snacks and also make better coffee.
- 09:20= First workshop.
- 09:40= Prepare yourself for Alex talking about everything.
- 11:00= Coffee break. Drink at least 2 cups.
- 13:00= Go to lunch. Say " pofta buna", "dobron chut", "buon appetito", "dobur tek".
- 13:30= Try to sleep. Fail miserably.

15:00= Second workshop. Listen to Sonja in Rok telling us to put things on Facebook and Instagram.

15:30= Watch Sonja be serious and Tadej joke the entire workshop.

17:00= Drink more coffee. Try to remember how much coffee you drank.

18:00= Finish workshop.

18:01= “Where’s Marek and Adam?”: “running to Ljubljana and back”.

19:00= Dinner. Marek and Adam are still running.

19:30= Everyone tries to look for party

20:00= Sing “Volare” with Francesco and “Maria” in the shower.

21:00= Try to go clubbing. Remember there’s no club in Celje.

21:30= Come back to the hostel.

22:00= Listen to Tadej and Alex make fun of each other.

00:00= Antonio makes pasta for the entire hostel.

01:00= Karaoke in the hostel. Nobody sleep.

2:00= Tadej is still joking.

3:00= People remember they have to wake up in 4 hours.

3:30= Take the portable speaker to the river. Listen to music there.

3:59= Remember it’s cold and go back in the hostel.

4:29= Marek and Adam return from the Czech Republic. They have cares from their mothers.

4:49= People go to sleep. Tadej and Alex take their shower.

7:30= Wake up. Get ready to do it all again.