

# Experiences from peace camp in the Netherlands

Six young people from Åland traveled in July 2009 to a week long peace camp in Ysselsteyn, the Netherlands. At the camp they discussed personal, cultural and national borders and boundaries with participants from the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Turkey and Hungary. The Ålandic participants were sent to the camp by the Åland Islands Peace Institute, and the trip and the camp were financed by the EU Youth in Action programme. Here, some of the Ålanders tell about their experiences from the camp.

## Jennifer Karlsson:

*I learned a lot in Holland, especially about other countries and cultures. I learned to cooperate with people from other countries, in English. It was a good (and fun) way to practise English!*

*We had many games about cooperation, and we also had presentations about our own countries. The presentation was fun, and I think it was a good experience to talk in front of many people in English, I'm sure that's something I'll have to do in the future.*

*We also had presentations about soldiers who are buried on the graveyard next to the Camp where we stayed, and I was also in a group which worked with a presentation of the week.*



## Marie Johansson:

*I learned a lot during this exchange. For example I learned a lot about other cultures, and how similar Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria are in many ways. We had a lot of cooperating exercises and I experienced that everybody has different ways to cooperate.*

*This exchange was also a good opportunity to practice English. We had a presentation in the intercultural evening about Åland. It was very fun.*



## Frans Jansson:

*I think I contributed to all of the programme activities by actively taking part in them.*

*Since we had prepared name games at home I took part in organizing one of them. In all discussions and debates I felt I could speak for my opinion and I guess my interest in politics and society helped a lot. The Anne Frank museum was as well as the graveyard an overwhelming experience, I had read the Anne Frank diary before we went to the museum and I think it helped me understand and appreciate it more. Throughout the camp I learned a lot about the cultures of the other countries taking part. I learned about our differences and found out how easy it is to get past them.*





**Katja Wallén:**

*My experiences of the peace camp in Holland are really good. I got to understand and learn more about other cultures, and many of the prejudices I had before are gone. One of the activities I thought was a lot of fun was an act that we did to simulate how the cultures are different. For example that you in some countries can bribe the police, and that a person from one of those countries were in a country where you can't and tried to do that. We also had a work in groups about soldiers of the second world war that are buried in the big cemetery close to the camp. We learned about their lives, plans for the future and read letters that they'd sent for their families, girlfriends and friends. You really saw how unnecessary war is. I learned a lot that week and I'm glad I participated in the camp.*



**Josefine Ginlund:**

*I learned many new things at the camp. The guidance tour at the cemetery and making the project about one soldier that was buried at the cemetery really made me think. Visiting Anne Frank's house was very exciting for me because I've read her diary several times and also seen movies about her. Almost all the activities were fun and a lot of them were also interesting.*

*We from Åland came up with a couple of name games and getting to know each other games that we played in the beginning of the camp and that was fun. I've got to know new people from other cultures and it is really interesting to notice all the differences between us but also to see all the things we have in common. I've also grown as a person. And I feel that I know a little bit more than before and that I am a little bit stronger.*



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