



## Case Study 2

### Stereotype and reality – a real-life example

When the vocational school in Oświęcim began cooperating in the Erasmus+ project, a mixture of emotions emerged among the students: curiosity, excitement, and fear. The first trip was to be attended by 10 students from the gastronomy technical school, who would spend 2 weeks on internships in Greece. Most of them have never been abroad before.

During the first preparatory meeting, the teacher, Mrs. Kasia, asked everyone to share what they associate with Greece. Various answers were given: "olives", "beaches", "mythology", "lazy people who constantly have a crisis". The last sentence caused laughter among the group, but Mrs. Kasia wrote it down on the board. "Let's stop at this for a moment," she said. "Let's think about where such opinions come from, and do we really know anything about it?"



Bartek was also in the group – an 18-year-old boy, ambitious by nature, but quite impatient. He had great results in cooking apprenticeships and was happy to go abroad, but he kept repeating: "I'll do it, I'll do my own thing, but I won't integrate there. Apparently, they do everything casually, not like us."

Upon arrival in Greece, the group was received at a local restaurant in Thessaloniki. The owner, Mr. Dimitris, invited the students to cook together. On the first day, he assigned them simple tasks: cutting vegetables, preparing sauces, and cleaning the stands. Bartek quickly became irritated – he decided that the tasks were too trivial for his level.

"At our school, we make more complicated dishes, and they tell me to cut onions like a first-grade student," he said to his friends in the afternoon. – "And their ease! In the middle of work, they go for coffee. Zero discipline!"

On the third day, Mrs. Kasia asked the students to take a look at how the kitchen work was organized. Bartek noticed that despite the apparent chaos, everyone knew what to do. The team was harmonious, people talked calmly, and often laughed. There was no screaming or stress. He also noticed that the kitchen is spotless and the dishes come out at a perfect pace.



At the end of the week, Dimitris asked Bartek to help prepare a tasting dinner for a group of tourists. Together, they were supposed to prepare a seafood dish. At first, Bartek tried to impose his way of working, but when he saw how the Greeks work as a team, share tasks, and support one another in difficult moments, he changed his approach.

"You know, Bartek," Dimitris said, seeing his concentration, "we here believe that good cuisine is not just about technique. It's also about emotions. When you cook under stress, the taste of the food feels it."

At the end of his internship, Bartek was a different person. He himself admitted that his previous beliefs had little to do with reality. "I thought the Greeks were lazy, and they just worked smarter. They can stop, drink coffee, but when necessary, they act with full commitment. And most importantly – they are kind to each other."

The rest of the group nodded. Mrs. Kasia smiled and said, "And that's what it was all about. It's about being ready to see more than just what we know from the internet or jokes."

A few weeks later, Bartek gave a presentation to younger generations about his experience. He talked about Greek cuisine, how different it is from Polish cuisine, but also about how much you can learn when you open up to people and stop judging them through the prism of patterns. He concluded: "The best spices are curiosity and respect. Without them, even the best recipe won't work."

### Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What stereotypes appeared in this story and what could they result from?
2. What caused Bartek to change his attitude?
3. What intercultural competences did he develop during his internship?
4. Do you encounter similar stereotypes in your environment? How do you react to them?
5. How can a school or teacher help students confront stereotypes with reality?
6. What educational activities could help young people develop curiosity instead of prejudice?

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