

## Bulgaria

Bulgaria “Thank You” Day For already 22 years on the 11th of January people celebrate the International day of the word "Thank you". The students from GPCHE "Aleko Konstantinov" – Pravets, who are partners in the project “Education +” organized a series of initiatives dedicated to this day. The project includes children from different ages and the partners are the countries Estonia, Slovenia, and Italy. Its aim is to educate young people values such as benevolence, charity, compassion, and tolerance through a wide variety of activities. This year the students launched a campaign to collect books, clothes and toys; they made the pastries, and then carefully packaged the gifts for the disadvantaged children without parental care and elderly people. On the 12th of January the students visited the Centre for family-type accommodation - Pravets, the home for children deprived of parents care in the village Razliv and the sheltered housing for seniors in the town of Pravets. Their visit turned into a warmhearted celebration and made the day happy for everyone involved. At the Center for family-type accommodation the students preformed a short musical program, and in the end everyone danced the traditional Bulgarian horo. The festive mood was kept till the end. We spent wonderful time playing games and sharing ideas in friendly companionship and warmth. The provoked trust and feeling of comfort touched everyone. Once again love proved to be the shortest path to happiness and sense of fulfillment. Joy shone on the faces of the children deprived of parental care in the village Razliv. The students’ visit gave them a chance to make new friendships and contacts. The children were excited to show their skills in different areas and with great interest actively participated in the games that the students had prepared. At the home for the elderly people in Pravets, emotions also spilled. The students felt the warm treatment and comfort, with which they were welcomed. The program touched and reached the hearts of the elderly. During the folk dances, the joy in the eyes of the sweet grandparents could be seen. One of the elderly women recited some of her personal poetry, which in turn touched the students to tears. The meeting between the two generations was very emotional and exciting and there were planned more common projects together, which the elderly and the students eagerly look forward to. The visits marked the beginning of new friendships that the participants in the project will continue to have in the future.

Bulgaria Christmas charity week at “Aleko Konstantinov” Foreign Language School It has become a tradition in our school to have a Charity week before Christmas. The organisation of the events is the responsibility of our school club Solidarity, which is now part of the Erasmus + project Education +. Last December’s charity week comprised several events. It began with a bake sale, which sold a lot of delicious home-made cakes, biscuits, pies, etc. Both students and their families had spent hours at the ovens cooking mouth-watering baked dishes. Meanwhile, the big charity concert was being prepared. Tickets for the concert were sold to students, teachers, town authorities, citizens, local businesses. The rehearsals were held with great creativity and enthusiasm. There was another bake sale on the day of the concert – as successful as the first one. As a result the students managed to raise a substantial sum of money, which was donated to two former teachers suffering from incurable diseases. Charity concert and bake sales ( How we Perform Miracles). December is the month of giving. We become better - we want to help people and make their days brighter. Students from our school often raise money for charity causes. This year the money was for two special women. They are former teachers at our school. Everyone liked them and we still miss them. Unfortunately, they are seriously ill, so our kids decided to raise money and help their teachers. But this mission was not easy at all. Students organized a charity concert and bake sales. Everyone bought a ticket for the concert. There were boxes for donating money. It was incredible how helpful the students were.. The concert was amazing. Dancing, singing (we do have some incredible singers) and, of course, some traditional stories about Christmas. Everyone in the hall felt the spirit of Christmas. About our charity bake sales - there was some delicious food and interesting candles. Again our students made the dishes and everything else. Events like this are popular in our school. The money we raise are for people, who are seriously ill but never give up because hope keeps them fighting. We do hope that we will make the world a better place - if not all the world at least our own world. And, of course, we believe in the Christmas miracle.

## Bulgaria The Legend of “Martenitsa” in Bulgaria

Bulgaria The Legend of “Martenitsa” in Bulgaria For more than 1 000 years, we in Bulgaria have celebrated our national holiday on March 1st called “Baba Marta”, Grandma March. “Mart” in Bulgaria is the name for the month of March. This holiday symbolized the coming of spring. Bulgarians wear a small special ornament made of red and white yarn on this day, called “Martenitsa”. We wear it until March 22, and some people wear it until they see a stork or the first buds of a tree. The belief is that if you wear the Martenitsa, Baba Marta will help you, and spring will come more quickly. People often give a Martenitsa as a gift to friends or relatives. The tradition comes from the following legend: Khan Asparuh, the first Bulgarian King, had a sister called Huba. She was held captive in another kingdom. Asparuh sent a message to his sister that he found a land where they could settle down south of the Danube River, a place that nowadays is Bulgaria. When Huba got the good news from her brother, she managed to escape from captivity and run away. She rode on a horseback without stopping until she reached the Danube River. She looked for some way to cross the mighty river but couldn't find a ford to pass across. So then she tied a thread of white yarn to one of the legs of a falcon sent by her brother and let him fly up into the air, holding the other end of the thin thread in her hands. The falcon flew away to find a ford for passage across the river and just then, when he found a place, an arrow shot by an enemy pierced the falcon, and he fell to the ground dead. The yarn became red from his blood. Huba followed the thread she was holding and so she found the way to cross the great river and reach the country where her brother Asparuh had made his new home. Then they lived free and happy in the new land they called Bulgaria. This day was March 1st, the new year in the tradition of those times. They called the white and red threads of yarn after the name of the month March, and named it “Martenitsa”. The Martenitsa became a symbol of peace and love, health and happiness. The white color symbolizes purity and honesty in relationships, and the red color means life, passion, and cordiality in friendships and mutual love. Since that time the red and white threads of yarn have come to symbolize the strong bond among Bulgarians around the world. This special holiday on March 1st reminds us of the values which the Martenitsa has carried down through the centuries.