



We are Europe News from the district Arnsberg

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Preface



Dear readers,

Europe is more than just a political entity – Europe is a living reality in our schools. Under the theme ‘We are Europe’, this issue highlights how vocational colleges in the Arnsberg administrative district bring European values and cooperation to life on a daily basis through the Erasmus+ programme.

Almost all vocational colleges in our administrative district are now accredited for Erasmus+ and make extensive use of the flexibility this offers. Mobility schemes, partnerships and innovative projects open up new perspectives for both learners and teachers, whilst simultaneously strengthening the quality and future viability of vocational education and training. Europe is not taught in abstract terms, but experienced in concrete ways – in the classroom, in practical training and through collaboration with European partners.

The current Erasmus+ programme call for 2021–2027 sets clear educational policy priorities. The articles presented in this booklet impressively demonstrate how vocational colleges are implementing these priorities: inclusion and diversity are actively promoted to enable all young people to participate. Digital transformation is being harnessed to develop new learning formats and shape international cooperation in a contemporary way. Projects on environmental and climate protection strengthen sustainable thinking and action in the spirit of education for sustaina-

ble development. Last but not least, Erasmus+ promotes participation in democratic life by bringing shared values, solidarity and civic engagement to life.

Vocational education and training plays a key role, particularly in the face of profound social, economic and environmental challenges. The vocational colleges in the Arnsberg administrative district make a valuable contribution to this through their European engagement: they combine training, European values, professional practice and regional roots with international perspectives. In doing so, they actively shape the European education area and open up opportunities for young people to experience Europe as a shared space for experience and shaping the future.

I would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment and their openness to our Europe. This issue invites you to discover successful projects, gain inspiration and make it clear:

The European activities of vocational colleges demonstrate that vocational education and training is an integral part of the European Education Area and that apprenticeship-based professions have an international dimension.

Karsten Mielke

Head of the EU Office
Economy and Vocational Training
Arnsberg District Government

Welcome Note



Dear readers,

Under the motto 'We are Europe', this issue once again impressively demonstrates how vocational colleges in the Arnsberg administrative district embed the European ideal in their everyday lives – in training practice, in the classroom and in numerous international projects. As the new Managing Director of the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Training, it is my pleasure to be able to continue shaping this European educational space together with you.

The articles from recent years clearly show how closely European cooperation, vocational qualifications and democratic education are already interwoven: learners gain professional experience in other European countries, engage with remembrance culture at historical sites, collaborate with partner schools through digital exchange platforms, and get involved in projects on sustainability, inclusion and participation. In this way, Europe is not merely discussed, but experienced as a concrete space for experience and shaping the future: we are coming together – we are Europe.

Particularly in times when disinformation, polarisation and social uncertainty are gaining ground, this form of European educational work is of inestimable value. Our vocational colleges make an important contribution to strengthening critical thinking, judgement and resilience in the face of simplistic or extremist interpretations. Those who work in international teams, get to know other ways of life and experience European values such as human

dignity, democracy and the rule of law first-hand develop attitudes that extend far beyond the classroom – this is how our learners and teachers become individuals with a lasting European outlook.

The projects featured in this issue and the outlook for 2025 impressively demonstrate the immense innovative power of our vocational education and training: the diverse spectrum ranges from inclusive mobility schemes for previously under-represented learner groups and job shadowing for teachers to digital collaborations and initiatives in education for sustainable development. This opens up Europe to everyone – regardless of educational pathway, background or circumstances – so that together we can become part of this great European whole.

My thanks go to all school leaders, EU coordinators, teachers, trainees and students who are walking this European path with great commitment and creativity. I look forward to working with you to further deepen European cooperation in vocational education and training, to initiate new projects and to strengthen existing partnerships – so that 'We are Europe' remains a living reality at our vocational colleges in the years to come.

With warm regards

Dominik Lux

Managing Director of the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Education and Training, Arnsberg District Government



EU Office for Economy and Vocational Education and Training



DiLex – Finspiration and digital school development: Impulses for modern vocational education

In the 2024/2025 school year, a total of 32 teaching and management staff from school inspectorates, school management teams, digitalisation and media officers, and specialist advisory services took part in the first two rounds of the Erasmus+ qualification ‘Digital Learning Experts – Culture of Digitalisation’ (DiLex).

Job shadowing forms part of the implementation of the ‘NRW School Digital Strategy’ and aims to systematically advance the digital transformation in vocational schools.

The two DiLex groups focused on the question of how teaching and learning processes can be supported digitally and how pedagogical concepts and school development can be integrated. In Finland, they found an education system that offered interesting insights into how these aspects can be brought together.

The mobility visits took both groups to the Finnish educational institution Omnia, a vocational training centre that

serves as a prime example of how modern vocational education can function in a European context. Following two preparatory modules in which the culture and education systems of the two partners were compared, the actual job shadowing in Finland took place as the third module, followed by a concluding reflection and evaluation in Germany. In this way, participants were able not only to familiarise themselves with teaching, learning environments and structures, but also to immediately apply their impressions to their own school development work.

Particularly influential was the Finnish approach of viewing learners as active shapers of their own educational journey and, at the same time, as ‘clients’. Their personal development goals take centre stage and form the starting point for flexible learning pathways. Assessments are organised as real-world work samples, regardless of whether a specific course has been attended. This reinforces the focus on individual competence levels and highlights the practical relevance of vocational education and training.

A central role is played by the 'Personal Competence Development Plan', which digitally documents learning progress, is continuously updated and is available to all teachers involved. This transparency enables close, digitally supported, individual support. For the German participants, this system offered valuable insights, particularly for training programmes in pre-vocational education and at vocational schools, where supporting heterogeneous learning groups with very different learning requirements presents a key challenge.

However, in Finland, digitalisation does not mean using as many tools as possible, nor does it imply a fully technologised learning environment. Rather, digital technology is used there to support pedagogical processes, make individual learning pathways visible and empower learners to become more independent. The visit to the Maker Space clearly demonstrated how creativity, problem-solving, digital technologies and action-oriented learning interlock. Furthermore, collaborations with start-ups were impressive, showing just how practical and innovation-oriented vocational education and training can be.

An important component of the mobility programme was the daily exchange within the groups. Through joint reflection on their observations, **professional learning communities (PLCs)** emerged, which continue to exist even after the mobility programme has ended. Under the leadership of Detlef Sandmann, the head of the digital education department, the participants developed concepts for combining face-to-face and distance learning in a way that supports learning, tested digital modules for learning support, and laid the foundations for cross-school e-learning programmes. Short training sessions on AI, onboarding processes and school software complemented this process and are intended to benefit all teachers in the future.

Initial results were presented in workshops and staff meetings. There was considerable interest in topics such as the development of school FabLabs, digitally supported competency grids and the integration of new learning

formats into pedagogical-organisational concepts (POKs). Some schools plan to integrate elements of Finnish practice – such as regular learning guidance or the systematic documentation of individual learning pathways – into their school programmes on a long-term basis.

The European context also played an important role. Topics such as the **European Green Deal**, sustainable mobility and climate-friendly travel planning were discussed in depth. The participants considered together how CO₂ emissions could be reduced or offset in future and how international cooperation could still be maintained.

The fourth module for the two DiLEx groups took place in November 2024 at the Märkisches Berufskolleg in Unna. It served as a structured evaluation and preparation for the closing event in June 2025. Both groups concluded that the mobility programmes had not only provided professional insights but had also changed their long-term perspective on school development. Many participants rated the experience as a real boost to innovation and as inspiration to rethink digital school and teaching processes – **Finspiration at its best**.

And the process continues: in the 2025/2026 school year, DiLEx will launch its third and fourth rounds with new participants, fresh ideas and a shared vision of shaping vocational education in North Rhine-Westphalia to be sustainably digital, European and future-proof, whilst further strengthening cross-school networks..

The author

Anina Wellers

Subject Advisor, Arnsberg District Government



EU Office for Economy and Vocational Education and Training

Democracy education qualification with a trip to Gdańsk in the 2024/2025 school year

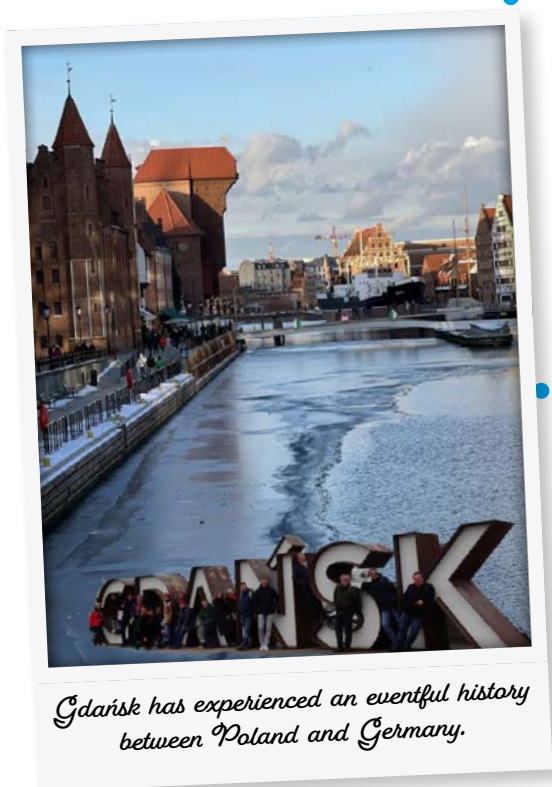
The 'Promoting Democracy in International Projects' (DiP) initiative of the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Training

Through its initiative "Promoting Democracy in International Projects" (DiP), the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Training has been supporting vocational colleges in the administrative district since 2021 in implementing international projects in the field of remembrance culture and the promotion of democracy.

This small photo album provides an insight into the five-module democracy education training course, in which 32 teachers took part.

Ablauf der Qualifizierung	
01	Thematische Einführung und Organisatorisches 24.09.2024, 14:00 – 16:00 Uhr (Videokonferenz)
02	Polen – Unser unbekanntes Nachbarland !? 05.11.2024, 09:00 - 16:00 Uhr (Karl-Schiller-Berufskolleg)
03	Demokratiebildung in meinem Unterricht am Berufskolleg 13.01.2025, 13:00 - 16:00 Uhr (Videokonferenz)
04	Erasmus+-Mobilität nach Danzig Fahrt A: 16. - 22.02.2025 oder Fahrt B: 23. - 29.03.2025
05	Rückblick und Ausblick 23.06.2025, 13:00 - 16:00 Uhr (Karl-Schiller-BK)

Schedule for the Democracy Education Qualification Programme in the 2024/2025 school year





At the Na Zaspie cemetery, the memory of the victims lives on to this day.



Entrance gate to Stutthof concentration camp, where a guided tour of the site and a presentation by the educational department took place.



The memorial stone for the numerous victims of the evacuation of Stutthof concentration camp.



The teachers on the February trip.



The Museum of the Second World War, where a multi-perspective exhibition is on display.



Visit to the European Solidarność Centre.



Teachers from the March trip visiting a vocational school in Gdańsk.



After completing the qualification: the Europass award ceremony

The authors

Ludger Dieckmann
Head of the Education Department,
Arnsberg District Government

Sandra Hansen
Subject Advisor, Arnsberg District Government

Richard Höffner
Subject Advisor, Arnsberg District Government



EU Office for Economy and Vocational Education and Training

Virtual Skills. Real Craft. – An initial insight into the European project “Hairdressing goes digital”

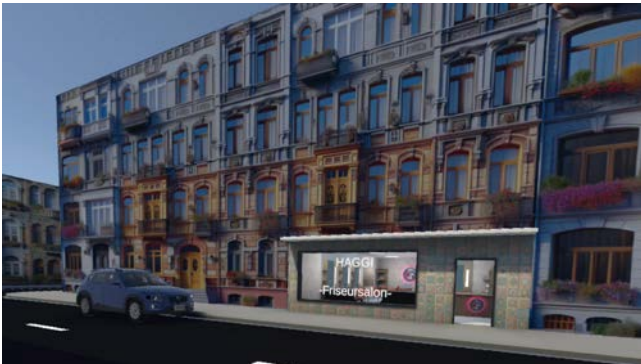


Imagine a hairdressing salon where digital tools are part of everyday working life: VR (Virtual Reality) glasses open up the possibility of entering a simulated salon where procedures can be tried out safely or consultations practised. AR (Augmented Reality) glasses superimpose cutting lines, colour steps or instructions directly onto the real hair. Staff could learn techniques step by step, clients could view potential looks, and salon owners could test new processes without disrupting business. These visions form the basis of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project HAGGI – Hairdressing goes digital, which explores immersive applications for vocational training in the hairdressing trade within a strategic partnership.

Under the leadership of the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Training at the Arnsberg District Government, four vocational colleges in North Rhine-Westphalia – the Börde-Berufskolleg in Soest, the AHS-Berufskolleg in Siegen, the Berufskolleg am Eichholz in Arnsberg and the Gertrud-Bäumer-Berufskolleg in Lüdenscheid – are work-

ing together with Graafschap College (NL) and the Chambre de Métiers et de l'Artisanat Occitanie (FR) to develop VR and AR prototypes for teaching. Since the kick-off in autumn 2024, three trilateral VR meetings have been held in Germany, the Netherlands and France, prototypes and teaching materials have been developed, and their use has been tested. The results are currently being evaluated and prepared for the final event in Dortmund in July.

VR (Virtual Reality) is particularly well-suited for orientation, spatial thinking and practising basic procedures. Learners can move through a virtual salon, organise workstations or simulate simple customer scenarios – regardless of the physical classroom setting. AR (Augmented Reality) is particularly useful for practical activities such as cutting techniques or chemical processes, as digital information appears directly in the learner's field of vision. Both technologies show potential, but reach their limits when haptic precision or fine sensory perception is required.



Initial feedback from schools indicates that learners predominantly find VR and AR helpful in understanding procedures. At the same time, technical hurdles or physical reactions are occasionally mentioned. Teachers report a shift in their role: less instructive, more supportive. Handouts, checklists and short training modules assist them in integrating the technology into lessons.

As the project progresses, the question increasingly arises as to how VR and AR can be integrated into training and workplaces in the long term. A change to the training regulations is not currently planned; the technologies are regarded as a supplement and are legitimised by the current curriculum. Workplaces are generally interested – depending on practicality, effort and benefits. Differences between the participating countries lie primarily in the technical infrastructure, rather than in the willingness to trial digital forms of learning.

The closing event of the Key Action 2 project “Hairdressing goes digital” will take place on 8 June in Dortmund. If you are interested in attending or would like further information, please feel free to contact the EU Office for Economy and Vocational Training.

The author

Jakob Terlau

Technical Advisor, Arnsberg District Government





EU Office for Economy and Vocational Education and Training

Focus on international mobility: Two vocational colleges set a strong European example

Promoting international experience is becoming increasingly important in vocational education – two vocational colleges in the region are sending a clear signal in this regard. Both the Meschede Vocational College and the Bergkloster Bestwig Vocational College were honoured in 2025 for their successful work in the field of European mobility. Both institutions thus demonstrate how important cross-border learning has become for young people.

The Meschede Vocational College reached a significant milestone with the additional qualification 'International Vocational Mobility': at least 10% of school leavers acquire this qualification, meaning the school meets the benchmark for the whole of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The Arnsberg District Government recognised this achievement with an official certification, which was presented in person by Andrea Stein from the EU Office. The award not

only demonstrates that numerous graduates are gaining work-related experience abroad, but also that the school has firmly embedded its internationalisation strategy within its curriculum and project work. For the students, this means greater transparency regarding the skills they have acquired and a clear advantage when entering the global labour market.

The Bergkloster Bestwig Vocational College can also continue its successful work: the school has once again been certified for its consistent international cooperation in European vocational education and training. At a ceremony, Headteacher Markus Hester emphasised the significance of this re-certification as an expression of a clear stance. European exchange is a central component of the school's profile and opens up valuable opportunities for young people – from further language development to personal growth. Particular recognition was given to the fact that



more than 30 per cent of graduates gain practical experience abroad and receive corresponding certificates.

Both vocational colleges view this recognition not as an end in itself, but as a mandate. They plan to further expand their international activities – through additional Erasmus+ projects, new partnerships and a growing range of intercultural learning opportunities. At a time when global skills are increasingly in demand, they are thus sending a strong signal in favour of open, European-oriented vocational education and training.

The author

Anina Wellers

Subject Advisor, Arnsberg District Government



Am Eichholz Vocational College, Arnsberg

Work placement at the German School of Athens' nursery

As part of the Erasmus+ programme, we – four students from the College of Social Pedagogy at BK Am Eichholz in Arnsberg – completed a five-week placement at the German School of Athens' nursery from mid-November to mid-December. The aim of the placement was to gain practical experience in the field of education, gain insights into an international education system and broaden our intercultural skills. During the placement, we were visited by two mentors from our school, who supported and reflected on our work.

Description of activities and work processes

At the start of our placement, we got to know the school, the teaching staff and the children. We were gradually integrated into the daily routines and supported the teachers in their day-to-day care work. Our tasks included, amongst other things, supervising the children, assisting with educational activities and helping out at school events.

As the placement progressed, we took on increasing responsibility. From the third week onwards, we planned

and ran educational activities independently. We also took part in team meetings and parent-teacher meetings and gained insights into organisational and educational decision-making processes within the school.

Professional learning experiences

The placement enabled us to expand our professional skills in the field of education. We were introduced to various educational approaches and recognised the differences between the German education system and everyday life at a German school abroad. Planning and delivering activities independently proved particularly instructive, as it allowed us to further develop our skills in preparation, implementation and reflection.

The visits from our mentors were a key professional component. During the classroom observations, we received constructive feedback on our work, which helped us to reflect on and improve our teaching skills in a targeted manner.



Personal and social skills

The stay abroad significantly strengthened our independence and sense of personal responsibility. We learnt to organise ourselves in a new environment, take on responsibility and react flexibly to unexpected situations. Our daily work as a team fostered our communication skills, willingness to cooperate and sense of responsibility.

Dealing with stressful situations, particularly during the mentors' visits and periods of intensive work, also contributed to our personal development.

Intercultural experiences

Our stay in Greece provided us with a wide range of intercultural experiences. We encountered cultural differences in everyday school life, in our interactions with one another and in public life. We were particularly impressed by the openness and warmth shown to us by people in both school and private settings.

Despite language barriers, we received a great deal of support in our daily lives, for example when dealing with parents, in the supermarket or with local traders. These experiences strengthened our intercultural sensitivity and our ability to interact with other cultures in an open and respectful manner.



Organisation, transport and general conditions

Overall, the organisation of the stay went well. Using public transport was inexpensive and generally reliable, even if timetables served more as a guide. We found the cost of living to be comparable to that in Germany, with a few exceptions for certain product groups and the lack of wine gums.

The state of the infrastructure and extreme weather events presented particular challenges. During heavy rain, the streets turned into rivers, as many of them were built on old riverbeds, as we learnt from locals. Nevertheless, it became apparent that daily life resumed quickly and mobility remained assured even under difficult conditions.

Reflection and conclusion

Our four-week placement at the German School in Athens was an unforgettable experience. We were able to grow both professionally and personally, expand our professional skills, gain new perspectives and get to know a culture which, despite organisational and infrastructural challenges, impresses with its warmth and openness. In particular, the human encounters will remain in our memories for a long time to come and made our stay something very special.

The experiences we have gained will accompany us throughout both our further academic and professional careers.

The authors

Julia Grabowski

Jule Hüttenmüller

Jennifer Schelchshorn

Cara Schulte

Students at the College of Social Pedagogy





Vocational College Berliner Platz of the HSK

Contacts and mobility initiatives to promote democracy

In 2025, the Berliner Platz Vocational College consistently continued its European activities within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. The aim of the projects was to strengthen young people's participation in democratic life, to bring shared European values to life and to promote civic engagement in the long term. Through student and teacher mobility schemes, as well as through internal school initiatives, the European ideal was actively integrated into everyday school life.

Mobility

A central component of the project was the stays abroad undertaken by a total of 19 students, who travelled to various European countries for two- to four-week work placements as part of Erasmus+. The placements took place in Spain, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Hungary and Austria, amongst others. The participants were given the opportunity to gain professional experience in a European context, expand their technical skills and deepen their intercultural and language skills. At the same time, the stays promoted an understanding of different ways of working and living within Europe and strength-

ened awareness of shared values such as solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect.

In addition, a variety of job shadowing activities took place, which promoted international exchange between teachers. The Berufskolleg Berliner Platz welcomed two teachers from Menorca (Spain) and one teacher from Kutná Hora (Czech Republic). In return, four teachers from our school took part in a job shadowing programme in Turin (Italy). These reciprocal visits enabled an intensive professional and pedagogical exchange, an opportunity to learn about different education systems, and the establishment of lasting European contacts. The exchange contributed to further developing teaching methods and school organisation from a European perspective.

Events

As part of the annual Europe Weeks, the EU Quiz was held at our school again in 2025. The event was aimed at pupils from various educational streams and promoted knowledge of the European Union, its institutions, values and opportunities for participation in a playful way. The EU



Quiz thus made an important contribution to political education and the strengthening of democratic skills.

Teacher training and professional development also played an important role in the 2025 project year. One teacher took part in a training course on democracy education as part of an educational trip to Gdańsk. This training course provided a lasting impetus for the school's democracy work: the so-called 'Poland Mobile' was invited to the Berliner Platz Vocational College and inspired pupils with an enthusiasm for Polish history, culture and the European neighbourhood.

Another milestone was the establishment of a democracy team comprising committed pupils and teachers. This team has set itself the goal of initiating and implementing national and international democracy projects in the future. In this way, democratic participation is not merely discussed, but actively practised and firmly embedded in the school's profile in the long term.



In addition, the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme were presented at an information event for students, parents and training companies. Furthermore, a presentation on European mobility opportunities took place at the so-called 'Round Table', a cooperation platform for regional business representatives and school study coordinators. The aim of these measures was to create transparency, increase acceptance of European mobility formats and gain supporters.



Overall, the EU projects carried out in 2025 made a significant contribution to bringing shared European values to life at the Berliner Platz Vocational College. Through Erasmus+, European cooperation was put into practice, democratic education was strengthened, and civic engagement was promoted in a sustainable manner.

Photos: Thomas Grimm



The authors

Anna Fahle
EU Coordinator

Berthold Hohmann
Headteacher



Brilon Vocational College Project Days and Erasmus Report

Project Day: Fake News

The debate surrounding so-called fake news is becoming increasingly significant. Fake news is a specific form of false or fabricated news that is disseminated online, primarily via social media platforms (Meta, Twitter, TikTok, etc.). In particular, AI-generated Reels, Shorts and similar formats contribute to the mass dissemination of fake news. Due to the high level of detail and the technical capabilities offered by AI to circulate fake news, social media users find it almost impossible to distinguish this information from verifiable facts. Furthermore, the mass dissemination of fake news leads to growing uncertainty and mistrust towards news and journalistic media in particular. We therefore took Europe Day 2025 at Brilon Vocational College as an opportunity for our students to engage with the topic of opinion-forming and opinion-making in various workshops. To promote media literacy, our full-time classes from the Commercial School, the Higher Commercial School and the Upper Sixth Form immersed themselves in various workshops centred on the topic of 'fake news'. These workshops were organised so that pupils had the opportunity to choose three workshops from a wide range of options, based on their personal interests. Each workshop lasted 90 minutes.

Among other things, there was an interactive game in which the learners themselves took on the role of disinformation spreaders – and were able to experience how quickly false information spreads online.

In another workshop, various examples of fake news were presented at the start. The pupils analysed videos and images to identify the characteristics of false reports. This not only promoted an understanding of the issue but also sparked lively discussions.

Another workshop addressed the question of how to recognise fake news and expose populism. With regard to opinion-forming and opinion-making, the pupils were asked to generate and present fake news themselves.

How can you spot fake news? How can you protect yourself from it? What responsibility do we bear as a society? These were the questions posed in another workshop.

In addition, the pupils explored the influence of fake news on democratic elections and processes.

In the seventh lesson, all participating pupils gathered in the hall for a joint discussion and reflection on the event. Here, the pupils had the opportunity to express their impressions of the workshops and reflect on them.

Through practical exercises, our pupils thus learnt to critically evaluate the media.

The author

Rainer Molitor
EU Coordinator

SLOW FASHION Project Day

On 8 October, a ESD project day on the topic of 'SLOW FASHION' took place at Brilon Vocational College. The planning and implementation were led by the ESD working group in collaboration with many other teachers at the





college. The aim of the project day was to examine the issues surrounding fast fashion from various perspectives and to raise learners' awareness of sustainable consumption choices.

All classes and courses present at the college on the day took part in the project day. This ensured that the topic of sustainability was actively brought to the attention of the entire school community and examined from a wide range of professional, social and ethical perspectives.

The morning was structured as a workshop session. The workshops on offer addressed the topic of fast fashion in an interdisciplinary manner and from various angles, with most being delivered through team teaching. During these sessions, the students

examined the following questions, amongst others:

How can textile fibres be distinguished microscopically and what degradation processes do they undergo? What positions on the subject of consumption and responsibility can be found in religious texts such as the Bible? What lies behind terms such as 'greenwashing' and how meaningful are quality labels really? What psychological mechanisms influence purchasing decisions? And what global working conditions, as well as environmental and social impacts, are associated with the fast fashion industry?

In the afternoon, the 'Wardrobe Swap' clothing exchange took place. In the weeks leading up to the project day,

well-preserved clothing was collected from the school community. A token system was used for the exchange: for every item of clothing handed in, participants received tokens which could be exchanged for other items on the day of the project. The rules were communicated transparently in advance, ensuring the swap run smoothly and fairly. The vocational college also received support from local organisations and businesses, which helped out with items such as clothes hangers and clothes rails. Any remaining clothing was donated to a regional charity.

To accompany the project day, sixth-form students organised the sale of waffles and muffins, thereby contributing to the positive atmosphere of the day.

Overall, the ESD project day "SLOW FASHION" proved to be a great success. The combination of content-based discussion, action-oriented workshops and the practical implementation of sustainable alternatives in the form of the clothes swap met with great interest. The project day made an important contribution to the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development at Brilon Vocational College and demonstrated how sustainability can be taught in an interdisciplinary, practical and real-life oriented manner.

The author

Jana Bausen
ESD Working Group



Erasmus Report

As part of the Erasmus+ programme, four international mobility projects were carried out: a visit from two schools in Italy, an exchange with a Spanish school here in Brilon, our reunion with the Spanish exchange group in Spain, and a teacher training course on AI in Malta.

In Brilon, we welcomed the Italian schools ISTITUTO TECNICO C. ANDREOZZI DI AVERSA (CE) and IS N. BIXIO DI PIANO DI SORRENTO (NA). Through targeted activities, intercultural exchange, digital skills and communication in English were strengthened.

A highlight was the forest rally with sustainability stations, which gave participants the opportunity to engage deeply with climate change, sustainability and the role of the community in environmental protection.

The exchange with the Spanish school IES Pintor Colmeiro in Silleda also focused on interaction and dialogue. Joint activities, such as staying with host families, enabled the young people to experience cultural differences and similarities first-hand and to develop mutual openness and tolerance. An important component was the exploration of history and democratic values. This was further developed through a visit to the memorial site 'Düsseldorf Children and Young People under National Socialism'.

The training course "Artificial Intelligence for Education: Exploring the Frontiers of ICT" in Valletta, Malta, presented various AI tools and their potential, which were then tested for use in teaching to, amongst other things, better address the diversity of the student body. The internationally diverse course facilitated an exchange that broadened our own perspectives with a variety of viewpoints and approaches, and initiated networking for future exchange programmes

The authors

Carolin Bolte
Erasmus Coordinator

José Luis Patino Martin
Erasmus Coordinator





Ennepetal Vocational College Europe is gaining momentum at BK Ennepetal

Proven work placements abroad for students and trainees in Ireland, a new foothold in Spain, job shadowing in Italy and a preparatory visit to Brussels, networking in the region and participation in external ERASMUS+ programmes

At Ennepetal Vocational College, Europe has long since ceased to be an abstract buzzword and has become part of everyday school life. The past ERASMUS+ year clearly shows that the college's internationalisation strategy is bearing fruit – and continues to gain momentum.

Originally, 25 participants were planned for work placements abroad; in fact, 26 pupils and trainees were able to complete a four-week placement in another European country. A slightly lower demand for the Business and Administration vocational grammar school course in Barcelona was more than offset by higher participation at the tried-and-tested location of Dublin.

The focus was once again on work placements abroad in Dublin, Ireland: 21 participants from the dual vocational training programme in Business and Administration and

the Vocational Gymnasium gained valuable professional and intercultural experience in Dublin in January and February 2025. This was made possible once again through close cooperation with ADC College, our trusted partner organisation.

Spain has become a new pillar of the BK. In June 2025, four students from the two-year vocational school for health and social care completed their work placement in Barcelona in cooperation with the partner school, the Institut Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia. The group was joined by a further participant from the vocational grammar school, who undertook his work placement in Barcelona in January/February at the same time as the Dublin group. This further sharpened the European profile of BK Ennepetal whilst simultaneously strengthening the permeability between educational pathways. This year, we will be stepping up our activities in Spain. Although aspects such as the fight against racism and the promotion of democratic values were not an explicit focus of the ERASMUS+ placements abroad, they proved to be an important outcome of the change of perspective – both in Dublin and in Barcelona.

In addition to the students, the focus was also on the teaching staff. A school-organised job-shadowing programme took a teacher from BK Ennepetal to Turin in Italy. There, the course coordinator for international support classes – supported by the Düsseldorf District Government – gained important insights into the topics of inclusion and diversity, which are being directly incorporated into her work with the classes.

Further job shadowing placements were organised and supplemented by the Arnsberg District Government: the BK's digital officer took part in a job shadowing placement in Finland in March 2025, focusing on digitalisation. Three teachers from the newly established 'Anlage E/Educators' course spent time observing in Madrid in spring 2025 to familiarise themselves with pedagogical concepts and further develop the European dimension of the course.

This European engagement was rounded off by a preparatory visit by a teacher to Brussels in August 2025. The aim was to initiate new collaborations and further advance the internationalisation of the EU Industrial Business Administration course – a key component for the sustainable integration of European content at BK Ennepetal.

Regionally, BK Ennepetal is networked within the REFIT group with the vocational colleges in Hagen and Hattingen. Regular exchanges take place there among the EU coordinators. A memorial site visit in 2025, organised as part of a job-shadowing programme by the BRA in the Netherlands, provided fresh impetus for ''.

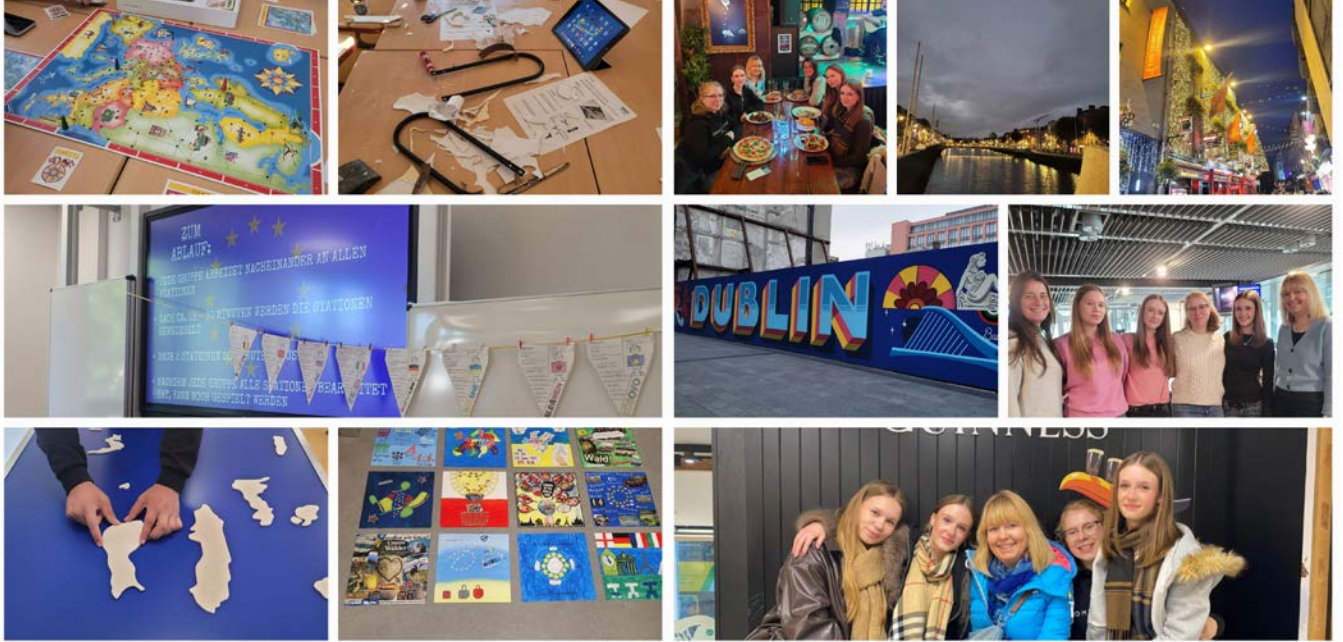
All initiatives are closely aligned with the school's Erasmus plan. They strengthen vocational, intercultural and digital skills, promote inclusion and sustainable development, and open up better opportunities for participants in the labour market or in further study.

Europe is thus gaining noticeable momentum at BK Ennepetal – and demonstrating how international experiences can enrich education and broaden future opportunities.

The author

Beate Rauser
EU Coordinator





Hattingen Vocational College

European projects at Hattingen Vocational College: Stronger together for Europe

Bringing Europe to life, opening up international perspectives and embedding the European ideal in everyday school life – this was the aim of Europe Day at Hattingen Vocational College. On 5 May 2025, the day was organised as a school-wide project day, during which 24 classes engaged intensively with Europe. The motto was: “Strong together: For a united Europe!”

Together with teachers and external partners, a diverse range of workshops was organised, shedding light on Europe from various perspectives. The aim was not to treat European topics in an abstract manner, but to make them tangible in a realistic, practical and action-oriented way.

In political discussion formats, learning groups addressed current challenges facing the European Union. In doing so, they reflected on different positions regarding European policy and discussed core values such as democracy, solidarity, participation and responsibility. Other workshops focused on the concrete opportunities that Europe offers young people – for example, in terms of mobility, international cooperation, education and career prospects.

Sustainability also played a role. One learning group examined ecological issues in a European context and looked at environmental and climate protection measures at European level. By shifting the work to an out-of-school setting, it became clear how closely European decisions are linked to one’s own living environment.

Playful approaches enabled other classes to get to know the continent of Europe with its countries, cultures and distinctive features. With the help of games, fact sheets and interactive tasks, the learners expanded their geographical and cultural knowledge. Other groups approached Europe through sport and creativity, using posters on European sports which were then put into practice in the school playground.

Several learning groups delved deeper into economic topics, examining, among other things, European payment systems. In doing so, they gained insights into financial structures and interrelationships within Europe. Europe was brought to life through a hands-on creative tangram project: following an introduction to the topic, pupils sawed individual countries out of wood and then assembled them to form a complete picture of the continent.

Other learning groups were equally creative in their artistic exploration of Europe. Working alongside external experts, they produced canvases that interpreted Europe in a wide variety of individual ways, bringing to life Europe as a community of values and culture.

Successful Erasmus+ placement in Dublin

Another example of European education in action is the Erasmus+ internship abroad organised by the Technical

College for Health and Social Care. At the beginning of October, students travelled to Dublin for three weeks to gain practical experience in Irish institutions. They learnt about new ways of working, reflected on differences compared to everyday working life in Germany, and further developed their professional skills.

By staying with host families, the participants were immersed in everyday Irish life. Daily communication strengthened their language skills and their intercultural understanding. Alongside their work, there was time to explore Dublin and the surrounding area. After three weeks, everyone returned with greater self-confidence and valuable personal experiences.

bkh launches school partnership with Lublin

To strengthen European exchange, the Hattingen Vocational College signed a cooperation agreement with a school in Lublin. The aim of the partnership is to facilitate meetings, workshops and exchange projects and to bring young people from both countries into contact with one another. The collaboration promotes language skills, intercultural learning and a deeper understanding of European neighbourhood.

Connected across Europe: Erasmus+ training in Malta

Teachers from bkh also undertake further training across Europe. An Erasmus+ training course in Malta focused on project planning, funding, intercultural learning and networking. The exchange with international participants provided valuable impetus for the further development of European projects at our school.



bkh visits Majdanek in preparation for a commemorative trip

Another key European focus lies in historical and political education. Teachers from the bkh visited the former Majdanek concentration and extermination camp to develop educational concepts for a planned commemorative and educational trip. The aim is to bring history to life and to encourage engagement with issues of responsibility, human rights and democracy.

Europe Day and the numerous international activities demonstrate that Europe is a living reality at Hattingen Vocational College. Through projects, encounters and exchanges, European education is firmly embedded in the school's profile and is continuously developed.



The authors

Dana Tiemann
EU Coordinator

Lea Steffens
Public Relations and EU Team





Meschede Vocational College Democracy Day at MVC

With its first school-wide Democracy Day, the Meschede Vocational College has sent a powerful signal in support of strengthening democratic values. Under the motto “Democracy needs you!”, around 700 students from all courses took part in a varied programme comprising nearly 30 workshops and excursions. The day was an expression of a deep conviction: democracy is not something to be taken for granted, but a shared responsibility that the school consciously and actively shapes.

The impetus for this event arose following a democracy training course attended by two colleagues in Gdańsk. Visits to historical sites such as Westerplatte, a war cemetery and the Stutthof concentration camp highlighted how early on exclusion became apparent and how important it is to raise awareness of democratic values among young people today. In Europe in particular, knowledge of history is crucial. From this experience grew the desire to create a day on which democracy could be experienced and brought to life – for the entire school community.

From the outset, it was clear that all pupils should take part, including those with limited German language skills. Democracy should not merely be explained, but felt. The resulting programme combined historical responsibility, creativity, interaction and political learning into a democracy experience.

The day began with a video message from Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz, recorded especially for the vocational college, before the workshops started. The activities ranged from a virtual tour of the Anne Frank House and exploring fake news, through discussions with politicians, to a visit to the Stolpersteine in Meschede. Other groups visited the Dortmund Football Museum, held talks with the mayor, or explored in a rap workshop how music can strengthen social engagement. Even during the waffle sale, democratic processes were practised, as the prices were set by the students themselves. The proceeds will go to an association dedicated to democracy education.

The personal encounters were particularly moving. Silvio Uhlfelder, a second-hand witness, gave a moving account of his family’s history during the Nazi regime. In the Old Synagogue in Meschede, the chairman, Mr Recker, explained Jewish life in the region and its destruction. In the town centre, a colourful “Democracy Wall” was created in collaboration with the Meschede Alliance for Democracy, serving as a symbol of diversity and participation. Pupils distributed a “Light of Democracy” there and struck up conversations with passers-by. The day concluded with a discussion on the crimes committed against forced labourers, which underscored the importance of historical responsibility.

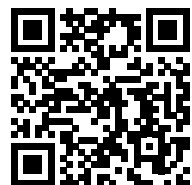
The evaluation of the day via Microsoft Forms clearly showed just how much the Democracy Day had resonated with the pupils. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Many young people wrote that the day had prompted them to reflect – on their own actions, on responsibility, and on what democracy means in everyday life. Numerous responses expressed a desire for such days to take place more frequently, as they felt democracy was conveyed more effectively than in regular lessons. The survey thus impressively demonstrated the lasting impact Democracy Day had on the students and the extent to which young people are willing to engage with political issues.

For the Meschede Vocational College, Democracy Day was far more than a single project. It is a central component of the school's internationalisation strategy. It was a confident commitment to democratic culture and to an educational approach that places participation, openness and responsibility at its heart. The school will continue this commitment and embed democratic education in everyday life in the long term – driven by the conviction that democracy needs us all at the heart of Europe and that we must stand up for it together across the entire continent

[Democracy Day at Meschede Vocational College – Lokalzeit Südwestfalen - Sendungen A-Z - Video - Mediathek - WDR](#)



Video message from Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz:
<https://youtu.be/J2UB7T3MGco>



eTwinning: European democracy and AI – Shaping our future

Our eTwinning project on the topic of democracy education began in the 2024/25 school year. The project was led by Ms Stockhausen, who taught a sixth-form class at the two-year Higher Vocational School for Business and Administration, and Ms Overhage, who taught at a Vocational School 2 for Business and Administration. Having already explored the differences in the democratic systems of the participating countries in 2024, the students now moved on to the practical implementation of a democracy project. The pupils at our school decided to organise an exhibition in the break hall. There were posters, presentations and interactive activities to inform the school community about the value of democracy and to encourage social engagement. In May 2025, four pupils from Voca-

tional School 2 travelled to Luxembourg with their teacher as part of a group mobility programme, where they met their eTwinning partners in person. Together, they visited the European Parliament's visitor centre, where they learnt how decisions are made in Europe. They also jointly designed a city based on democratic structures (Democracy). In addition, they developed positive visions of the future of Europe in 5 and 25 years' time.

The current eTwinning project is entitled "AI – Shaping our future" and focuses on AI and the concrete impacts of digital transformation. This time, Ms Stockhausen is participating with a lower-year group from the two-year Higher Vocational School specialising in Business and Administration, and Ms Overhage with a new Vocational School 2, also specialising in Business and Administration. In this project, the pupils are working in 11 mixed international teams on various questions relating to AI.

- How will AI change our working world?
- What about data security?
- Will robots soon become everyday helpers? – and many other questions.

In addition to Germany, six other European countries are involved in this exciting project. Here too, group exchanges are planned for next year as part of the eTwinning project. Students from Spain and Luxembourg will work alongside our pupils to deepen their knowledge of AI and its potential impacts, including on democracy.



The authors

Martina Funke-Linnemann

Expert in individual support and potential analysis

Daniela Overhage

Deputy Headteacher



HSK Olsberg Vocational College Democracy Day and Christmas without Borders

Successful project day at the Olsberg Vocational College

At the Olsberg Vocational College, Europe Day was all about exchange, creativity and the students' commitment. The highlight of the day was the panel discussion with Member of the Bundestag Sandra Stein, whom the college was delighted to welcome. Confidently moderated by pupils Alina Fellmann, Marlene Fleper, Altina Kolloni, Vanessa Zachmann and Marvin Klamandt from class FO12B, she engaged in a lively discussion about the significance of Europe in today's world, European values and current challenges. The young people's participation and interest were impressive – many took the opportunity to ask questions and share their own thoughts.

Following the discussion, everyone was treated to a varied exhibition on the theme of Europe, which had been organised by the students with great dedication. At interactive stations, they explored the topic creatively – from Kahoot quizzes and delicious traditional snacks to games and hands-on activities centred on the European community and its cultural diversity. Particularly impressive was the exploration of the concept of Europe as a network, which was brought to life through visual representations on the theme of connectivity.

Europe Day was a resounding success – driven by the enthusiasm and inventiveness of the students at Olsberg Vo-

ccational College. Everyone involved is proud of the commitment and team spirit with which this project day was organised. Europe thrives on togetherness – and that was exactly what was felt at Olsberg Vocational College.

Christmas without Borders An Erasmus+ project for cultural exchange in Świnoujście

From 8 to 12 December 2025, a group of nine students aged between 16 and 18, along with two teachers from the Olsberg Vocational College, Ms Lass and Ms Schwake, took part in the Erasmus+ project 'Christmas Without Borders' in Świnoujście, Poland. The project offered participants a valuable opportunity to learn about and share the different Christmas customs and traditions from Germany and Poland.

On Monday, 8 December, the programme began with a warm welcome and an integration day filled with various games and creative group activities. The participants designed posters featuring the project logo, which promoted intercultural exchange whilst strengthening teamwork within the groups. In the afternoon, a walk through the town and along the beach was on the agenda, allowing the young people to discover the surroundings of Świnoujście whilst learning more about Polish culture and the Baltic Sea. The first day ended with a debriefing and a brief discussion about the day's experiences.

The next day featured a creative highlight: the Polish group led a workshop on making Christmas decorations, during which the participants created their own handmade decorations. In the afternoon, under the guidance of the German participants, everyone baked Christmas biscuits together – a German tradition which the young people embraced with great enthusiasm. The German participants organised a ‘National Evening’, during which they presented their own Christmas customs and traditions. It was a wonderful opportunity to discover and celebrate the diversity and commonalities of both countries.

Wednesday began with an energiser and another craft workshop. This time, the programme featured making Christmas candles from natural waxes such as soy wax and beeswax, led by the Polish group. In the afternoon, everyone joined in making paper Christmas tree decorations, during which the participants not only got creative but also learnt more about the traditions surrounding the Christmas tree in Germany and Poland. The participants rounded off the evening with a karaoke and disco night, where many of the young people shared their musical talents and laughed and danced together.

On Thursday, 11 December, the German participants took their Polish counterparts to an art workshop and organised Christmas games, including active games. In the afternoon, everyone worked together to make Advent wreaths, another German tradition that offered plenty of scope for creativity. The Polish participants rounded off the evening with a ‘National Evening’, during which they presented and shared their own Christmas customs with the others.

The final day of the programme began with a special boat trip to the Świnoujście lighthouse. The participants enjoyed the picturesque views and had the opportunity to chat once more during the excursion. The afternoon was set aside for some final free time and a project evaluation, during which the pupils and teachers shared their impressions and experiences. The evening concluded with a final dinner together.

The “Christmas without Borders” project was an unforgettable experience that not only deepened mutual understanding of the various Christmas traditions but also helped to strengthen awareness of a shared European identity. For the Olsberg Vocational College, taking part in this project was an important step in further implementing its internationalisation strategy and offering students valuable intercultural experiences. The project enriched the young people not only academically but also personally, and created a deeper connection to European culture for everyone involved.

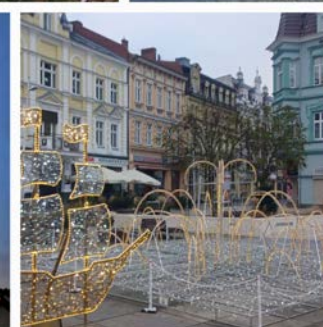


The authors

Anne-Sophie Friedrichs
EU Coordinator

Stefan Ferdinand
EU Coordination Team

Aleksandra Lass
EU Coordination Team





Freiherr-vom-Stein Vocational College, Werne

Experiencing history with Erasmus+

Participation in democratic life, shared values and civic engagement. This is not only one of the priorities of Erasmus+, but also an essential part of the mission statement at the Freiherr-vom-Stein Vocational College in Werne.

So we took advantage of the newly created opportunity for group mobility under Erasmus+ and travelled with students from various vocational preparation classes to Linz in Austria from 11 to 15 May 2025.

Together with a group of students from our Erasmus+ partner school, the "Polytechnische Schule Urfahr" (PTS), a vocational preparation school, our students explored the topics of National Socialism and forced labour in Germany and Austria.

A total of 20 pupils from our vocational school classes, Levels 1 and 2, boarded the ICE at Dortmund Central Station on Sunday morning. For many of our pupils, the long journey itself was a highlight, as was the subsequent hotel stay in Linz.

The trip was accompanied by teachers Nina Dollenkamp, Ruth Metzmacher and Thomas Stute from Werne, as well as Stephanie Fiedler and Michaela Höllwarth from Linz

On the first day, the Austrian-German group learnt what forced labour meant during the Nazi era during a visit to the Voestalpine steelworks. The plant's own Museum of Contemporary History, dedicated to the Nazi forced labourers at the Linz site of 'Reichswerke Hermann Göring AG Berlin', offered the students an initial insight into the inhumane exploitation of deportees and prisoners of war who were deployed for the Nazi arms industry. The subsequent factory tour then provided a fascinating insight into steel production and the latest technology.

On the second day, during a guided tour of the "Tunnel of Remembrance" in Steyr, not far from the former Münichholz concentration camp, the participants were able to experience first-hand another harrowing consequence of forced labour. The tunnel was built at the end of the Second World War by forced labourers to protect the local population from air raids. However, those who had to build it were not allowed to use it. Today, the tunnel is used, in conjunction with documents and photographs, to commemorate the victims

On the final day, the pupils had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences so far in a workshop at PTS Urfahr and put their thoughts down on paper.

The trip concluded with a guided tour of the city focusing on the memory of the Nazi regime's reign of terror, which left numerous traces in Linz in particular, as the city was also intended to be developed into a 'Führer city'.

For many of those involved, war, flight and expulsion were not abstract concepts due to their personal histories, and so one pupil concluded: "I am not alone with my story; this connects me to the people of the past." For all pupils at th , this offered their first glimpse into a dark period of Europe's past and, with it, a desire for a shared peaceful future.

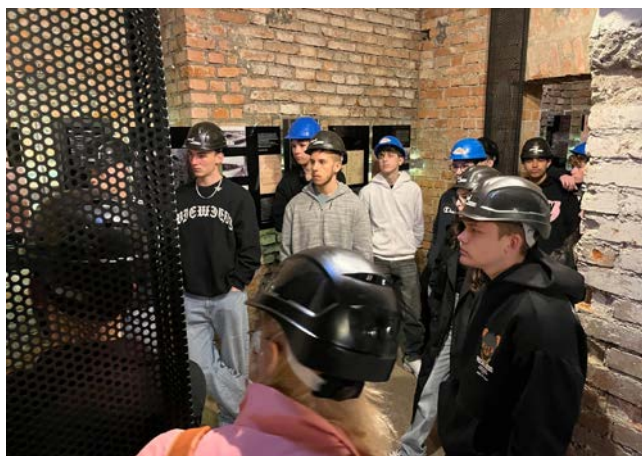
Alongside the demanding and intensive programme, there was of course still time for socialising and leisure, which everyone involved was happy to make the most of. The Danube, the beautiful old town of Linz with its wonderful squares – and not least the good weather – provided the perfect backdrop for shared activities.

A big compliment goes to our pupils, who, at all times responsible, very interested and open to new experiences, actively helped shape this trip.



The author

Ruth Metzmacher
EU Coordinator





Witten Vocational College, Ennepe-Ruhr District „A nossa aventura no Porto – Our AV students in Porto“

First time on a plane – First time abroad – First time eating fish

This trip was not only an opportunity to explore the beautiful city of Porto, but above all a skills-building experience: the students developed and consolidated social skills and practical life skills by having to communicate in English to find their way around Porto and organise themselves. They explored Porto in small groups and were able to rely on their group members!

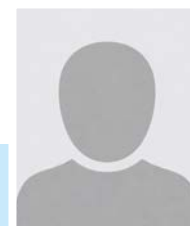
Particularly inspiring was the artist 'Rafi the First', who motivated the pupils with positive affirmations and helped them to believe in themselves and their own abilities. All over Porto we discovered Rafi's wonderful façade murals, and her presence was a constant reminder that anything is possible if you believe in it and work towards it with all your heart. Her positive encouragement really helped our pupils to flourish.

We all got to know and love the city in all its facets. A highlight was the visit to the beach in Matosinhos, where we were able to swim in the Atlantic – a dream that many of our pupils would not normally have been able to fulfil.

With a shout of "Alohomora", we headed straight to "Livraria Lello", one of the most beautiful and magical bookshops in the world. The gardens of the Palacio de Cristal were the perfect spot for yoga and a spot of exercise.

The icing on the cake was the graffiti, which our pupils were able to use to leave their mark on Porto under Rafi's guidance.

All in all, the trip to Porto was a time full of new experiences, valuable insights and unforgettable moments for the pupils. They returned with greater self-confidence, a new sense of togetherness and many wonderful memories that will stay with them for a lifetime.



The authors

Christina Costa Morgado

Special needs teacher specialising in emotional and social development

Julia Schwarz

Course Coordinator for HPS and JAP



Wittgenstein Vocational College Trebnitz Castle: German-Polish Youth Exchange

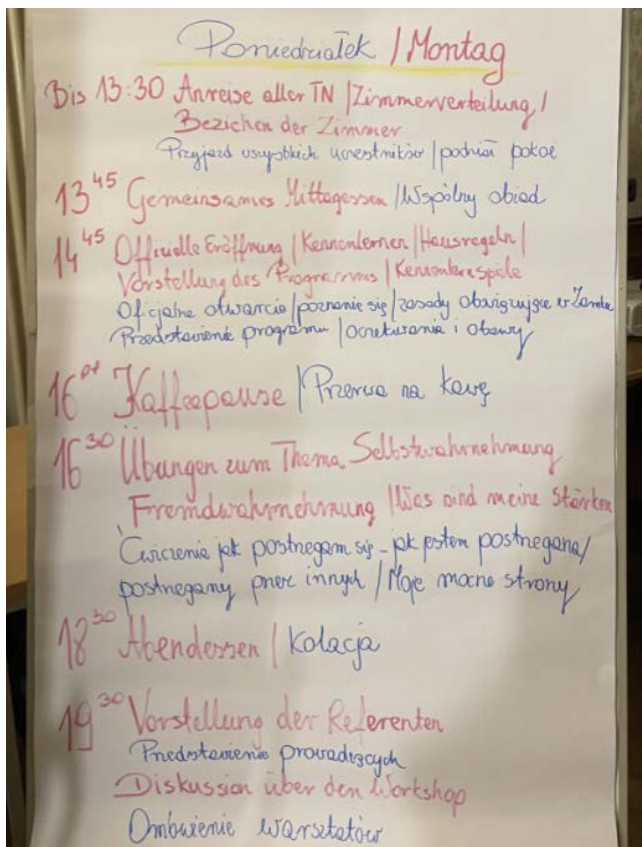
As part of the project “Together we can achieve more. Now in our careers!”, the youth exchange between Wittgenstein Vocational College and the Polish partner school Zespół Szkół Gastronomiczno-Hotelarskich from Tarnowskie Góry took place from 24 to 28 March 2025 at the Trebnitz Castle Education and Meeting Centre. During the week, the 29 participants from the catering sector had the opportunity to take part in various workshops, which not only broadened their skills and abilities with a view to future career choices, but also promoted intercultural exchange.

The workshops were varied and offered different insights into various topics. For instance, in the workshop on body language, the students were able to learn, through practical exercises, how to better understand and make targeted use of their own body signals. Among other things, this helped to boost the students’ self-confidence. Another workshop focused on job applications. Here, using examples, the participants filmed their first application videos to help them present themselves effectively online in an increasingly digital world. To promote teamwork and also an understanding of the hospitality industry, a barista workshop was held, during which the young people perfected the preparation of various coffee specialities. Another key component of the event was language activities, during which language skills were continuously improved

in a playful manner. Through interactive games and exercises, the participants were able to deepen and further develop their knowledge of German and Polish.

A central element of the youth exchange was intercultural exchange. The young people took advantage of a wide range of opportunities to discuss their cultures, make friends and gain new perspectives, whether on a day trip to Berlin, during walks together in the castle grounds or around a cosy campfire.





All in all, the youth exchange at Trebnitz Castle was a resounding success, according to the unanimous opinion of the young people and supervising teachers from both schools. The students were not only able to acquire new skills and abilities, but also gained valuable experience in intercultural exchange, as well as basic knowledge of careers in the catering industry, their requirements and training pathways. Encounters of this kind are crucial for the personal and professional development of young people and are effective in breaking down prejudices and fostering mutual understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

The youth exchange was funded by the German-Polish Youth Office (DPJW) as part of the project "Together we can go further. Now professionally!". In addition, the Friends of Wittgenstein Vocational College covered part of the travel costs.

The author

Frau Lena Grobbel
Project Coordinator



Vocational College for Business and Administration, Siegen-Wittgenstein District

Vocational College goes to Ireland

The Siegen Vocational College for Business and Administration has been certified as a European School in North Rhine-Westphalia since 2011. As such, it places particular emphasis on expanding cross-border exchanges for learners and teachers. The number of Erasmus mobility placements at the vocational college is rising year on year: in the current project year, over 70 students from various courses are taking part in international mobility projects. The preferred destinations are Spain, Poland, Finland and Ireland.

Whilst in the past it was primarily learners from the fields of industry, wholesale and foreign trade, and from full-time school-based courses such as the Business Gymnasium and the Higher Commercial School who benefited from stays abroad, for several years now there has been a particular focus on sending so-called 'learners with fewer opportunities'. In the past, this group rarely had the chance to benefit from international mobility.

A mobility project specifically aimed at these learners takes ten pupils from Vocational Schools 1 and 2 on an annual two-week study visit to Tralee in Ireland. The learners on these courses are classified by NaBibb as educationally disadvantaged. Participants often face additional social, financial, cultural or health-related constraints. The

aim of this now well-established project is to enable these young people to gain cross-border learning experiences, to promote intercultural and foreign language skills, and to strengthen their personal and social development in the long term.

At the end of June 2025, ten learners, accompanied by two teachers, travelled to Tralee for 14 days as part of this project. The Celtic School of English acted as the local partner institution, assisting with the organisation of accommodation and work placements, and also running an English course focused on everyday oral communication. The project was designed so that the students attended three hours of English lessons in the mornings and completed a work placement in selected retail businesses in the afternoons.

The journey began with a flight from Düsseldorf to Dublin – for some participants, the first flight of their lives. From the airport, the group travelled by bus to Tralee, a journey of around three hours. Already on the way, the students gained their first impressions of the green Irish countryside, including encounters with flocks of sheep.

Upon arrival in Tralee, the pupils were welcomed by the headteacher of the Celtic School and then assigned to

their host families. Their experiences with their host families were consistently positive. As pupil Daria Khliustova reports:

“The host families were very nice, though understanding each other was sometimes difficult. There were also different rules – for example, we had to be home by 8.30 pm.”

Monday marked the start of the first day of lessons and work experience. The English lessons focused heavily on everyday spoken communication, which the participants found particularly helpful. Daria Khliustova explains:

“I didn’t have any major problems communicating in English, but I had to get used to the Irish accent first. That was a bit difficult at the start.”

Lessons were followed by a lunch break, before the three-hour work placement began in the afternoon. The students worked in various retail outlets, including clothes shops, supermarkets and charity shops, where they carried out typical retail tasks. Especially at the start, the unfamiliar working environment, combined with limited English skills, presented a challenge. However, as their stay progressed, their confidence in using their newly acquired language skills grew. The students were surprised at how much they could already understand and say – their self-confidence grew with every sense of achievement.

Pupil Beatrice Matcovschi completed her work placement in a supermarket:

“As I was working at the till, I was able to speak a lot. It was very varied because lots of different people came in, and I could have short conversations with them in English. I was surprised at how well it worked over time.”

The participants were also offered a varied programme in their free time and at the weekends. This included ex-

cursions in and around Tralee, including a trip to Dingle and a visit to the beach. Project leader Tobias Wezel was surprised that some pupils hadn’t expected to go to the beach during their stay.

The two-week stay flew by for everyone involved. The feedback from the participants highlights the great value of the mobility experience for their personal, social and intercultural development. Project supervisor Ulrike Latsch was particularly impressed by the learners’ increased independence and strengthened self-confidence:

“For most pupils, it was a major personal challenge to embrace a foreign country, unfamiliar families and a new working environment. This boosts self-confidence and the feeling that they can master challenges even without their parents’ help and outside their familiar surroundings. This is a particularly important aspect for vocational school students, as they often come from socially disadvantaged families and receive little positive feedback. Now they are returning from Ireland proud and enriched by new experiences, and can share their stories.”

At the end of their stay abroad, all participants received the Europass Mobility, a certificate documenting the project’s content which can support them in future job applications..



Der Autor

Patrick Helle
EU Coordinator





Cuno-Berufskolleg I, Technical Vocational College, Hagen

European education at Cuno-Berufskolleg I, Hagen

Cuno-Berufskolleg I is leading the way: vocational training is more than just technical skills. It is a space for experience and learning where European values such as democracy, solidarity and diversity are lived out every day. Through innovative projects and international partnerships, the school creates new perspectives for its learners and demonstrates what future-oriented education looks like.

Inclusion and diversity as a foundation

Respect for all people – regardless of origin, gender or background – is part of everyday life at the school. Cuno-Berufskolleg I actively works to combat discrimination and exclusion: eyewitness projects bring people into the

classroom who have personally experienced racist attacks or exclusion. They share their experiences and show learners how important mutual respect is. At the same time, cooking and baking together brings the community in diverse learning groups closer together across cultural boundaries. By preparing international dishes, learners learn from one another, break down prejudices and discover common ground.

Learners receive special support through partnerships with the Talentmetropole Ruhr's talent scouting programme. This partnership opens doors to equitable support, offers low-threshold access and guides learners through their transition and study orientation. In this way, diversity is not merely recognised – it is actively harnessed as a strength.





Digital transformation for European mobility

Digitalisation is not an end in itself, but a tool for European networking. Cuno-Berufskolleg I is currently developing a central module for Erasmus+ mobility. In future, an innovative portal will enable learners to find out about offers and opportunities and apply directly for a mobility placement. Teachers will then be able to manage applications even more effectively and coordinate exchanges. What is still in its infancy today is set to mature into a comprehensive information and administration portal in the future: a digital gateway to Europe.

This technological infrastructure sends a clear signal: international engagement is standard school practice, not the exception. It empowers learners to think about their professional future across borders.

Sustainability and climate responsibility

At Cuno-Berufskolleg I, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) means taking concrete responsibility. With the installation of water dispensers, reducing plastic use has become part of everyday life – in spaces for teachers and learners alike. A simulation game on resource efficiency raises awareness of the limited availability of raw materials. A school-wide waste separation system with labelled bins and support materials in all classrooms demonstrates that climate protection starts small.

Particularly valuable is the approach of empowering students to sort waste not only at school but also at home. Environmental awareness is thus carried from the school community into private households – a multiplier effect for a sustainable Europe.



Democratic participation and civic engagement

The heart of teaching European values lies in democracy in action. Cuno-Berufskolleg I organises EU mobility programmes to Ireland, Denmark, France, Italy, Spain, Croatia and the Netherlands – in collaboration with local partner institutions and funding organisations. Teachers and students experience European institutions, professional practice and cultural differences first-hand.

An annual Europe Week highlights the EU's role in politics, the economy and everyday life. The school also integrates elections into the curriculum: through the 'Lokal-O-Mat' tool and personal discussions with teachers, students are encouraged to take part in local elections. They understand that their vote counts.

Service-learning combines learning with social action. Learners organise 'Stolperstein' initiatives for Holocaust Remembrance Day, thereby fostering a culture of remembrance. A former neo-Nazi activist speaks about radicalisation and his personal exit from the movement; a survivor of the Mölln arson attack (1992) recounts the power of resistance against racism. These voices leave a lasting impression and inspire moral courage.

Graffiti murals on the school grounds with messages against racism and in favour of diversity transform the school environment into a space of values. A football project ("Pöhlern in the district league") teaches teamwork, respect and fairness. Workshops against hate speech and racism, as well as training sessions with MuTiger, empower learners to stand up for a just and diverse Europe in their everyday lives.

A day trip to the European Parliament in Brussels brings European institutions to life.



Vocational training at with a European outlook

Cuno-Berufskolleg I demonstrates that future-oriented vocational education combines professional competence with democratic awareness, local roots with international perspectives, and professional practice with European values. Together with local and international partners, the school creates a learning environment in which inclusion, sustainability, digital participation and democratic engagement are not merely taught, but lived out.

This is European education in practice – not as theory, but as an experience.



The authoris

Iris Luongo-Schnitzler

Alexander Einhoff
Teacher, EU Coordinator



Cuno Vocational College 2, Hagen Projects and Internships

Special prize in the NRW school competition 'Encounter with Eastern Europe' for the Advanced Course in Design Technology GO 11A

The Year 11 pupils in the Design Technology/AHR course have once again won a special prize of €100 in the prestigious NRW school competition "Encounter with Eastern Europe", organised by the Münster District Government.

As part of this year's competition, themed "Europe – it works!", there was once again a series of exciting and creative tasks. The task for GO 11A was to design a double-page spread inspired by the Czech children's book illustrator Kveta Pacovska. The pupils were asked to reimagine an existing fairy-tale character and thereby create a completely new hero or heroine of our time. They rewrote a fairy-tale scene of their choice and depicted it artistically. The result was a series of exciting works – including pop-ups. With these imaginative and artistically sophisticated double-page spreads, the pupils impressed the jury and were awarded a special prize.

We warmly congratulate class GO 11A on this success and are proud of their commitment and artistic achievement!

Cuno 2 heads to Brussels to visit the European Parliament

On 9 April 2025, Cuno 2 organised a study trip to Brussels in cooperation with the Hagen European Office. A total of 49 pupils from four different classes and four teachers took part. The European Parliament, which represents the interests of EU citizens, has its headquarters in Strasbourg, where the monthly plenary sessions also take place. In addition, plenary sessions are held in Brussels, where the MEPs' offices are also located.

Our journey began at 7:00 am as we set off by coach from Hagen Central Station. The pupils comprised students from the vocational school (BF02A), the lower and upper years of the Higher Vocational School of Engineering (HI11A and HI12A), and the geomatics trainees (GE02A).

Upon arrival in Brussels, our first stop was the 'House of European History'. Here, through a highly interactive and multimedia-rich experience – partly guided by numerous light installations – we were able to take a journey through time and learn key facts about the history of the Europe-

an Union. Equipped with audio devices and headphones, everyone could access additional information individually at the various stations. Some of these were also presented in a playful manner. It was therefore a very informative 'experience' for all the senses.

After a short lunch break, we then drove to the European Parliament and were subjected to very strict security checks, where everyone had to show ID and their bags were searched. Strict measures, therefore, to ensure the safety of the many people who visit there every day. Around half a million people come here every year. Once inside the building, we were met by a member of MEP Birgit Sippel's staff and then attended a presentation in a meeting room, where we gained insights not only into Birgit Sippel's work but also into her private life.

At 3 pm, we took the bus into the city centre. We then had about three hours of free time. Small groups formed here, and most of us went for a bite to eat, explored the picturesque city centre with the Grand Place, and took plenty of souvenir photos. You can see some of these here.

On the return journey, there was a minor traffic jam due to an accident, so we arrived at Hagen Central Station at midnight and then set off on our respective journeys home. With a short night's sleep, but in return many wonderful shared experiences and interesting insights into Europe's highest political authority, the few hours of sleep were more than compensated for.

The author

Yunus Demircan, Europe Team



Europa ist wichtig, weil wir zusammen für unsere Lebensweise eintreten können.

Maj

gemeinsam fuer.eu für Demokratie



The international support class at Cuno Vocational College 2 has successfully launched the eTwinning project 'AI: Use, Opportunities and Risks' in cooperation with a new partner school in Greece

The first virtual project meeting took place on 16 December 2025. During this meeting, the participating pupils created profiles and introduced themselves to one another. To conclude, they presented short videos they had prepared. In this way, the learners gained an authentic insight into school life in the respective partner class. The meeting took place in an open and respectful atmosphere and laid a solid foundation for further project work. The next online meeting is eagerly anticipated by all involved.

Project content

The project focuses on comparing the use of artificial intelligence in the participating countries, Germany and Greece. The emphasis is on its application in schools and everyday life. The aim is to promote the responsible use of artificial intelligence and to critically reflect on its opportunities and potential risks.

Project process

At the start of the project, each participating class designed its own project logo. This was followed by a joint vote, from which the logo of the Greek partner school emerged as the favourite. In addition, the pupils created short videos in which they introduced their class and their school. As the project progresses, the participants get to know each other better through various online formats and create personal profiles. Communication takes place initially in small groups and subsequently in a joint chat. Furthermore, the pupils compare the use of artificial intelligence in school and everyday life. To this end, they jointly develop questionnaires, evaluate the results and compile them statistically. Similarities and differences are systematically analysed and documented. The project concludes with the joint creation of a collage on the topic of the opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence.

The author

Vassiliki Kasdanastassi, Europe Team

Europe Week at the Cuno Vocational Colleges

This year's Europe Week took place for the second time in cooperation between the two Cuno vocational colleges. Under the motto 'Strengthening democracy in Europe', classes from both schools created a variety of projects, including videos on the topic of Europe, music projects, art projects on the theme of 'home', as well as interactive projects, for example on the migration routes of immigrant pupils.

The week's opening event took place on 12 May 2025 at 10:00 am. Milad Tabesch from the "Ruhrpott für Europa" initiative was invited to give a keynote speech. Milad Tabesch encouraged the pupils to actively champion democracy and urged them to engage deeply with the subject.

This opportunity was provided to the pupils as part of the project week, as they were able to view the exhibition and actively contribute to its design in various time slots with their subject teachers or form tutors. The initiative was well received by the pupils, and the projects on display encouraged them to engage in conversation and discussion with one another. This was evident during the class visits. Engaging with democracy and helping to shape it is particularly important for young people, as they play a key role in shaping our future. This was made clear to the pupils, and there was great interest in exploring the topic further. We are already looking forward to European Week in the coming school year.

The author

Isabel Sanger, Europe Team

Erasmus+: My work placement abroad in Spain

As part of the Erasmus programme, I had the opportunity to complete a three-week internship at Cada Ingeniería in Ejea de los Caballeros, Spain. The company specialises in surveying, geodata analysis and engineering services. During my internship, I worked extensively with QGIS and ZWCAD to create and analyse maps. Outside of work, I had the chance to visit some of Spain's most beautiful places at the weekends. On the first weekend, I explored the Bardenas Reales in Navarre; on the second, I travelled to Zaragoza; and I spent my third weekend in Barcelona.



My internship abroad had several objectives. Firstly, I wanted to deepen my knowledge of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), particularly through the practical application of QGIS and ZWCAD in the creation and editing of maps. Secondly, I wanted to gain experience in an international working environment and broaden my understanding of surveying techniques and engineering projects. Cada Ingeniería is an engineering firm specialising in surveying, cartography and GIS services. It utilises modern technologies for the collection and analysis of geodata and provides solutions for urban planning, infrastructure projects and environmental management. The company places great emphasis on precise data processing and innovative working methods. The company is based in Ejea de los Caballeros, a town in the Aragon region of Spain. The area is known for its agricultural land use and numerous infrastructure projects. The town offers ideal conditions for surveying and GIS work, as many projects relate to land use, water management and urban planning.

During my time there, I was entrusted with various tasks. A key focus was on creating and editing maps using QGIS, as well as using ZWCAD for technical drawings and surveying work. In addition, I analysed geodata and visualised it for various projects. Close collaboration with engineers and GIS specialists gave me a comprehensive insight into professional practice. Among other things, I created maps for infrastructure and environmental projects. QGIS, an open-source GIS, was used to create topographic maps, analyse land-use data and integrate satellite imagery and surveying data. The software proved to be extremely versatile and enabled the efficient processing of spatial information. ZWCAD, on the other hand, is CAD software used for technical drawings. I used it to create construction plans and survey sketches, edit GIS data for technical applications, and integrate CAD data into GIS projects. The combination of both programmes allowed for precise and targeted project management. As with any project, I en-



countered a number of challenges during my internship. For example, the quality of the existing GIS data was not always adequate – many datasets were incomplete or contained errors. I resolved this issue through data cleansing and validation in QGIS. Another challenge was software compatibility, particularly when integrating ZWCAD data into QGIS. However, by making targeted use of suitable exchange formats such as DXF and SHP, this problem was efficiently overcome. The language barrier also posed a hurdle at the start, as communication with Spanish colleagues was difficult initially. However, by improving my Spanish skills and making targeted use of technical terminology, I was able to make rapid progress.

Alongside my work, I had the opportunity to visit some impressive places in Spain at the weekends. On the first weekend, I travelled to the Bardenas Reales, a spectacular semi-desert in Navarre. With its bizarre rock formations and vast sandy expanses, the landscape resembled a mixture of the Grand Canyon and Mars. I was able to take numerous impressive photos there. I spent the second weekend in Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon. I visited the Basilica del Pilar, strolled through the historic old town and enjoyed the Spanish cuisine. My final weekend took me to Barcelona, one of Europe's most exciting cities. There, I visited the famous Sagrada Familia and explored Park Güell with its unique mosaics by the architect Antoni Gaudí.

The internship was an extremely enriching experience that taught me a great deal. I was able to significantly expand my technical skills in QGIS and ZWCAD and deepen my theoretical knowledge through practical application. By working with a Spanish team, I also strengthened my intercultural skills and gained valuable insights into international work processes. Culturally, too, the stay was a great enrichment – the weekend trips gave me a fascinating insight into Spanish culture and history.

In conclusion, the Erasmus placement at Cada Ingeniería was a fantastic opportunity to gain practical experience in GIS and surveying. Not only was I able to further develop my technical skills, but I also learnt new working methods and made valuable international contacts. The trips to the Bardenas Reales, Zaragoza and Barcelona rounded off my experience and left me with unforgettable memories. Looking ahead, I plan to further deepen my knowledge of GIS and CAD and pursue a career in a similar field. I would recommend an Erasmus internship to anyone wishing to gain practical experience in an international environment.

Der Autor

Yakup Aytekin (2nd-year trainee in the Geomatics GE02A programme)

Report on our Erasmus+ internship in Seville, Spain

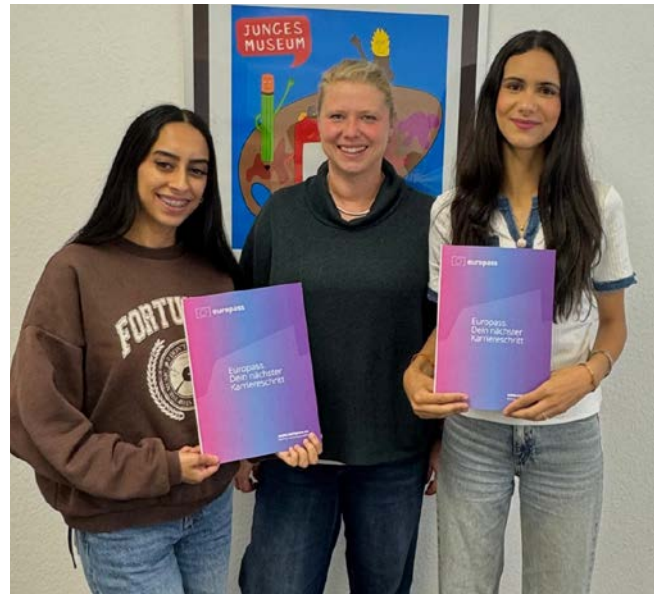
Thanks to the Erasmus+ programme and the fantastic support from our vocational college, Cuno 2 in Hagen, we had the opportunity to complete a four-week internship at the Escuela Infantil 5ª Avenida from 28 April to 23 May. This is located in the La Cartuja Science and Technology Park in Seville, Spain. This experience has enriched us not only professionally, but also personally and culturally.

During the placement, we had different areas of responsibility, all of which provided us with equally valuable insights. Amina worked with a group of one-year-olds. She helped with mealtimes, nappy changes, nap time, and playful and sensory activities. She was able to build close relationships with the children and closely observe their development. Marua focused on the technical and creative side. She learnt the basics of web design and created her own website as a personal project. She also expanded her IT skills, helped with the design and decoration of the centre, and in some situations assisted directly with the children – for example, with feeding or playing. We both experienced the importance of teamwork first-hand. From day one, we were warmly welcomed and integrated into a professional and dedicated team. We learnt to listen attentively, take responsibility, act flexibly and support one another. A particularly enriching aspect was the intercultural exchange. We worked with people from different countries, including Tomás, an intern from France, with whom we communicated in English. This international experience has broadened our perspectives and strengthened our social skills.

Overall, this internship exceeded our expectations. The Erasmus+ programme offered us not only professional experience but also a formative and inspiring life experience. We have gained new self-confidence, shown initiative and broadened our future prospects. That is why we would like to warmly recommend the Erasmus+ programme to every student at th . We would like to express our sincere thanks to Cuno 2 Berufskolleg in Hagen for this valuable opportunity and hope that many more students will have the chance to take part in this unique programme in the future.

The authors

Marua Barkani Aissaoui und Amina Asria Beirou
(students on the Type 2 vocational school course)





EMSCHERTAL-BERUFSKOLLEG
der Stadt Herne mit beruflichem Gymnasium

Emschertal Vocational College, City of Herne

Erasmus+ at the Emschertal Vocational College in Herne

The Emschertal Vocational College in Herne has been accredited for a year, and we have set ourselves the goal of giving students from as many courses as possible the opportunity to gain work-related experience abroad in various EU countries, and to organise further training abroad for three colleagues each year. In addition, at least one group mobility programme is to take place.

Three trainee painters and varnishers and three trainee plant mechanics for sanitary, heating and air-conditioning technology spent three weeks in Vicenza learning how Italian companies work and provide training in their respective fields, and what specific materials and techniques are used there compared to companies back home. They would not have been able to gain this valuable experience without an Erasmus placement and the ease of exchange within the EU.

Mobility programmes also took place in the field of education and social work. Trainee educators from both the consecutive-course programme and the practice-integrated training programme undertook a three-week placement at a nursery in Malta during the summer holidays. There, they were able to quickly get involved in the day-to-day routine of childcare and plan their own small activities. During their time in Malta, the students were able to com-

pare the daily routine, rituals and educational styles at the nursery with those at their placement sites in Germany and discuss their findings. For one trainee nursery teacher, the first few days were particularly striking, as some children at the nursery cried when they saw him or ran away, because – according to the local staff – they were not used to seeing male nursery teachers. This experience opened the eyes of all the trainees and gave them a different perspective on values and customs in another EU country.

Two trainee nursery nurses will be completing a three-week placement at a nursery in Wrocław during the summer holidays. The nursery has a group where the children regularly learn German. The students will be assigned to this group and will then also be able to practise a few simple songs or finger plays in German with the children. The children realise that people with a different mother tongue are part of their everyday lives. In this way, despite the language barrier, the trainees will be even better able to show the children that shared social values among EU countries, such as compassion and justice, can already be practised in nurseries.

From the next school year, we plan to include trainees studying to become state-certified social care assistants in

the Open All-Day School (OGS) programme in our mobility schemes in the field of education and social work, and to enable one or two students to undertake a placement in Dublin in the field of childcare.

Last December, three colleagues set off for a training course in Finland. There, they familiarised themselves with the country's culture and, whilst visiting (vocational) schools, learnt about the local school system and the use of digital and analogue teaching methods in this country – which is a model in terms of pupils' academic performance. Among other things, the three learnt that many Finnish schools have introduced a daily morning reading session, as pupils' language skills have deteriorated noticeably in recent years and this trend needs to be specifically counteracted. Two colleagues now wish to implement this concept at the EBK within their course to systematically promote language skills.

This autumn, three colleagues will be heading to sunny Tenerife to learn more about the practical application of artificial intelligence in the classroom.

The group mobility trip was a visit to the Auschwitz memorial, which we organised in cooperation with the Centre for Diaconia and Prayer and in partnership with a Polish school. For the twenty pupils from various courses, the visit and the guided tour of the former concentration camp

were deeply moving and sobering. The group immediately established a good rapport with the other pupils from the Polish school and, in some cases, quickly formed a close bond, leading to exchanges on a personal level and the sharing of thoughts on shared history and values. Most of the pupils are unlikely to forget this trip.



The authors

Dr. Katharina Gieselmann
Sarah Wagner
EU Coordinators



Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg Hamm

We are Europe: Inclusion and the digital future at the Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg

The Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg (ELBK) in Hamm is actively committed to firmly embedding the European ideal in everyday school life and making it a tangible experience for everyone involved. Under the guiding principle 'We are Europe', we see our European commitment as an expression of shared responsibility, diversity and solidarity in vocational education and training. Our aim is to open up learning spaces for young people where they can not only learn about European values such as participation in democratic processes and tolerance in theory, but also put them into practice.

Inclusion and diversity: inspiration from Turin and new partnerships

A new focus of our work last year was the Erasmus+ priority "Inclusion and Diversity". To gain fresh inspiration for creating an inclusive learning environment, two colleagues

undertook a three-day job-shadowing placement in Turin, Italy. This intensive exchange enabled them to experience innovative pedagogical approaches for supporting learners with diverse backgrounds first-hand and to link local practices with international perspectives.

It is particularly pleasing that the contacts made in Turin have already led to a sustainable collaboration. During the current school year, colleagues from Turin are scheduled to visit our school in Hamm as experts. Planned activities include specialist talks on the topic of inclusion, as well as practice-oriented workshops in which we will jointly further develop methods for individual support. This return visit underscores the vibrant European spirit that is brought to life every day at our school through Erasmus+. The insights gained there are directly incorporated into our school development and strengthen our ability to break down barriers and sustainably increase equality of opportunity at the ELBK..

Digital transformation and sustainability through eTwinning

In addition to face-to-face exchanges, we promote digital collaboration through the cross-curricular online project E-twinning. The theme 'My Planet, My Future' was continued. As part of this, our upper sixth form students worked together with pupils from partner countries such as Greece and Cyprus to develop visions for a sustainable future. These virtual meetings and the use of shared exchange platforms remain a key component in actively shaping digital transformation whilst raising awareness of environmental and climate protection (ESD) – issues that are playing an increasingly important role in the context of European objectives.

Europe in everyday school life: experiencing diversity on European Day

The results of our international collaborations are regularly showcased to the entire school community. At the annual 'European Day', we present artworks and photographs created during our eTwinning projects and mobility programmes. The diverse range of Erasmus+ mobility programmes is also a key focus at our Open Day. These stays abroad offer our trainees and students a valuable opportunity to gain professional experience in other European countries, overcome language barriers and strengthen their personal development in a new environment.

Conclusion and Outlook

The Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg sees itself as a place where diversity is lived out, where international encounters and mobility are encouraged. By closely linking professional practice with fundamental European values, we empower our learners to act responsibly, sustainably and with a focus on the future in a diverse Europe. We look back with pride on our successful projects and plan to steadily expand our commitment through new partnerships – such as our current collaboration with our partners in Turin. For the coming academic year, we are planning work placements abroad in Croatia for students at the Higher Vocational School. In doing so, we are utilising existing contacts with educational institutions to further strengthen these links. In this way, we are making an active contribution to strengthening the European ideal and democratic participation. Together, we are shaping the European educational area – because we are Europe.

The author

Stephanie Lemke
EU Coordinator



Fritz-Henßler Vocational College, City of Dortmund **#fritz says grazie di cuore and merci beaucoup!**

International learning experiences are an integral part of the educational programme at the Fritz-Henßler-Berufskolleg in Dortmund. As part of numerous Erasmus+ projects, our students, trainees and teachers have gained valuable professional and intercultural experience in other European countries. The following reports showcase a selection of the diverse mobility programmes and are representative of many other successful Erasmus+ projects.

STUDYING AND WORKING IN ITALY

Two carpentry apprentices completed a two-week work placement in Varallo. A personal account:

On Friday, 10 October 2025, our two-week mobility programme to Varallo in northern Italy began. We – Robert and Florian – were the first carpentry apprentices on site and moved into our accommodation in a local monastery. After our arrival, we got an overview of the town and visited the village of Otro, which was celebrating its 1000th anniversary that weekend.

Things really got underway on Monday. In the morning, we visited the school. There, we were first shown the woodworking workshop. We then each planned a project for the coming two weeks that we would work on independently. Florian opted for a folding chair, Robert for a shoe cupboard. In the afternoon, we drove on to the com-

pany 'Multone', which operates internationally but also produces a significant proportion of its goods by hand. There, we spent a week following the entire process of manufacturing solid wood doors.

We spent our mornings at the local vocational school working on our projects or taking part in factory tours. On Tuesday, we visited a factory that produced waxes, paints and oils for wood sealing. We were able to follow the entire production process and gained insights into the company's history. Two days later, we visited a factory producing wood-based materials. Thanks to a German-speaking member of staff, we were given a private tour and learnt all about the production of veneers and chipboard.

Things got exciting in the joinery too: a customer from Germany came to discuss the interior design of his house. Our first week ended on Friday. At school, significant progress on our projects was already visible, and at the 'Multone' joinery it was time to say goodbye – accompanied by a small company party, which takes place once a year and where a food truck served fresh fish.

At the weekend, Florian took the opportunity to visit the nearby city of Milan with the trainee chemical laboratory technicians from the Fritz-Henßler Vocational College, who were also there, and to gain a lively insight into Italian city life. Meanwhile, Robert went on a hiking tour to a

mountain hut and spent the night there. On Sunday, we met at an altitude of 2,400 metres to hike together to a mountain lake.

The second week began with a visit to a company that builds roofs using glulam. Here too, we were given plenty of information about the company's development, as well as insights into CNC technology. In the afternoon, we moved to a second joinery workshop, where we were to build a chest of drawers for a private client the following week. We cut the wood to size and planed it.

On Wednesday, we had the opportunity to visit a private art collection featuring objects and furniture from the early 19th century. For over three hours, we marvelled at numerous pieces of delicate Italian craftsmanship. Later, we made the drawers for the chest of drawers at the workshop. Thursday was our last morning at the vocational school. Florian's chair received the final touches, so that it only needed to be assembled the next day. Robert's shoe cupboard was also essentially finished.

On the final day, we visited a factory belonging to a world-leading manufacturer of wooden clothes hangers, which supplies numerous luxury brands. In the evening, we sat down with our Italian supervisors, looked back over the two weeks and said our goodbyes in a friendly atmosphere. We spent our last day once again surrounded by beautiful nature before heading back home on Sunday.

Our conclusion: Two varied and educational weeks with many interesting insights into craftsmanship, industry and culture – as well as hosts who gave us an extremely warm welcome and looked after us so well. Grazie di tutto!

The authors

Florian Willner and Robert Kinzel
carpentry apprentices

SUR LES TOITS DE LA ROCHELLE Strengthening Franco-German cooperation to expand the Erasmus exchange programme for apprentices

In November 2025, students took to the rooftops of La Rochelle. The roofing course at Fritz-Henßler-Berufskolleg once again took part in the European Union's exchange project with French students.



Three trainees were given the opportunity to spend two weeks working on the building sites of a French roofing company in La Rochelle and the surrounding area. During this time, they gained an insight into regional construction methods and learnt about different working techniques used in the French roofing trade. A more detailed account of the experience will be provided in the trainees' forthcoming article.

Three specialist teachers from the course also travelled to La Rochelle at the start of the exchange to accompany the trainees on their arrival at the company, to find out more about the French education and training system, and to further strengthen Franco-German cooperation within the framework of the Erasmus programme. The visit to the host roofing company and discussions with the business owners reinforced the mutual interest in establishing an annual student exchange under the Erasmus programme.

During the tour of the 'Les Compagnons du Devoir' training centre in La Rochelle, the subject teachers gained comprehensive insights into the French vocational training and further education system, as well as the high value placed on craft-based training. At 'Les Compagnons du Devoir', trainees travel throughout France and, in some cases, abroad during and after their training period – moving from one company to another and from one training centre to another. In this way, they receive a broad-based education.



In addition, the teachers exchanged views with owners of training companies and with managers of the training centres, with the aim of further expanding opportunities for mutual student exchanges and deepening cooperation between the regions.

The Erasmus mobility programme was a great success: the trainees worked in good and safe conditions at the French companies and were able to specifically expand their technical skills through the regional construction methods – which are not common in the Ruhr region. Particularly encouraging was the strong mutual interest in consolidating the existing cooperation and extending it to further training courses in the building trades in the future. Furthermore, the exchange offered valuable opportunities to establish contacts with potential future cooperation partners.

The authors

Hans Stanik, Stephan Fontius and Jakob Schwäbe

Teachers in the Department of Construction and Wood Technology

Photos: Stephan Fontius



BONJOUR MARIE-CURIE!

Art, culture, exchange – educational trip to Paris for the chemical laboratory technicians

We – the intermediate-level chemical laboratory technicians – took the Eurostar high-speed train in the early hours of the morning directly to Paris to our partner school, the 'Marie-Curie-Lycée'.

Beforehand, we had received a crash course in French, which gave us a first taste of our five days in Paris. Despite the cool temperatures, the week was packed with numerous cultural highlights. From the famous Mona Lisa in the Louvre to the imposing Eiffel Tower, we experienced and learnt a great deal. This included a boat trip on the Seine, visits to Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, Sacré-Cœur, the Champs-Élysées and Chantilly Castle in the neighbouring town.

We were able to stay at our partner school in Nogent-sur-Oise during the week. In the laboratory, we made hand cream and shampoo together with the French class and were allowed to take these home with us. Afterwards, we were given a guided tour of the school. Vocational training in France differs significantly from that in Germany, as there is no dual training system there; instead, training is purely school-based. The school's facilities are correspondingly extensive – ranging from its own blast furnace to a department dedicated to working with AI-controlled robots.

We rounded off the school day with games devised by the French pupils, arm wrestling and a cake buffet. This mutual exchange, and in particular our school trip, was made possible by Erasmus. We are already very much looking forward to the return visit by the French pupils to our vocational school!

The authors

Intermediate-level chemical laboratory technician class



Friedrich List Vocational College, Hamm

Democracy education and school development in Gdańsk | Erasmus+ mobility in Finland

Special school trip to Gdańsk Democracy education and school development in a European context

In October 2025, the Friedrich List Vocational College in Hamm organised a multi-day school trip to Gdańsk with a study group from the Higher Commercial School (upper school). The group was accompanied by teachers Maren Dördelmann and Christian Kinner. The trip was deliberately designed not merely as a traditional school trip, but as an educationally sound project that combined subject-specific learning at extracurricular learning sites with democracy education, the development of intercultural competence and an orientation towards European values. At the same time, it formed part of a strategically oriented school development initiative within the framework of European educational work and the Erasmus+ programme, aimed at finding a partner school in Poland.

Subject-specific learning at historical and social learning sites

In terms of content, the school trip focused on three key themes: European urban and commercial history, the cul-

ture of remembrance, and education in democracy and sustainability. During a guided city tour, the pupils explored the historical development of Gdańsk as a significant, multicultural trading city. This highlighted how closely economic development, cultural diversity and political conditions are intertwined in European cities.

This historical approach was complemented by a visit to a traditional milk bar, which offered an everyday insight into Polish food culture and social meeting places. Issues of social participation, social mixing and cultural identity could thus be experienced first-hand, whilst also supporting the Erasmus+ priority of inclusion and diversity.

Culture of remembrance and historical-political education

A central component of the trip was the examination of the Nazi past. The visit to the memorial site of the former Stutthof concentration camp was complemented by an accompanying workshop, which addressed topics such as daily life in the camp, the perspectives of perpetrators and victims, and historical responsibility. The in-depth examination of systematic exclusion, disenfranchisement and



violence fostered the development of historical judgement and, at the same time, strengthened the learners' understanding of democratic values.

Democracy education, digitalisation and sustainability

At the European Centre for Solidarity, the pupils gained insights into the history of the Solidarność movement and the political transformation processes in Poland since the 1980s. The multimedia and digitally designed exhibition vividly illustrated how modern technologies can contribute to the contemporary delivery of political education and what role civic engagement plays in democratic processes of change.

A further workshop at the Maximilian Kolbe House built on this and examined the '21 Demands of Gdańsk'. These were linked to current democratic challenges in Europe and critically reflected upon. Aspects of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) were also addressed in a practical manner, for example through the conscious use of public drinking water dispensers and the distribution of reusable water bottles by the school's own student-run company.

School development and professionalisation of the teaching staff

The design and implementation of the school trip were based on ideas from the training series "Democracy Education in Vocational Education" organised by the Arnsberg District Government, in which Tim Adam and Christian Kinner participated between autumn 2024 and spring 2025. The subject-specific, didactic and conceptual skills acquired there were specifically incorporated into the planning. The school trip thus served as a transfer project in which training content was directly translated into school practice and sustainable school development processes were initiated.

In parallel, the training also contributed to the strategic further development of the international networking activities of the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm. In this context,

Tim Kammann and Andreas Overhage took part in a multi-day online contact seminar organised by the German-Polish Youth Office, which is geared towards establishing long-term school partnerships and sustainable mobility formats with the neighbouring country.

International partnership and European perspectives

As a result of this networking work, an official partnership was established in autumn 2025 between the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm and the Centrum Kształcenia Zawodowego i Ustawicznego w Jaworznie (CKZiU Jaworzno). This cooperation specifically expands the school's European network to include the Polish educational sphere and creates reliable structures for future Erasmus+ mobility programmes.

Plans include regular student and teacher exchanges, joint project work, and thematic meetings on democracy education, sustainability, digitalisation and vocational education. The school trip to Gdańsk should therefore be seen as the starting point of a long-term Erasmus+ strategy that can systematically address all four Erasmus+ priorities and contribute to the sustainable integration of European educational work into the school's development process.



The authors

Tim Kammann
Management Team, Europe Group

Christian Kinner
National Coordinator for Poland in the Europe Team

EUROPE FOR ALL

Erasmus+ mobility in Finland as a tool for an inclusive European school

In January and February, five students from Vocational Schools 1 and 2 at the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm will once again take part in a six-week work placement in Western Finland, funded by Erasmus+. The mobility programme was organised in close cooperation with the Finnish partner schools Valkeakosken Ammatiopisto and Ammatiopisto Tavastia and forms part of a strategy to strengthen basic vocational education, individual support and international networking.

A central premise of the European work at the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm is that pupils from the vocational school, in particular, should also systematically take part in Erasmus+ mobility programmes. The FLBK is thus consciously pursuing the goal of being a European school for all and not limiting international learning experiences to high-achieving or privileged educational pathways, but specifically opening them up to young people in transitional phases of their vocational education.

Vocational school, participation and European educational equity

The vocational school at the FLBK is aimed at pupils in a phase of career orientation and preparation for apprenticeship or further education. The learning groups are characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity, often linked to experiences of migration or displacement, as well as discontinuous educational backgrounds. Against this backdrop, the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg explicitly views European mobility as a tool for equal opportunities.

Participation in a longer-term work placement abroad opens up new perspectives for these young people regarding their own abilities, boosts self-confidence and motivation, and enables learning experiences that would often not be feasible in a purely national context. In this way, mobility schemes make a significant contribution to

the Erasmus+ priority of inclusion and diversity and underline the FLBK's commitment to shaping European education not selectively, but inclusively.

Lasting impact: transitions into education and employment

The positive effects of this approach can also be demonstrated in the long term. Experience from recent years shows that participation in Erasmus+ mobility programmes has opened up concrete opportunities for pupils at the vocational school. In several cases, the international experience gained was specifically utilised to secure attractive apprenticeship positions in the service and tourism sectors, including in commercially recognised vocational training programmes under the German Federal Training Act (), such as the tourism clerk qualification.

These successful transitions demonstrate that European mobility not only contributes to personal development but also significantly enhances participants' readiness for training, career guidance and competitiveness. Erasmus+ thus serves as an effective tool at the FLBK for integrating school education, career guidance and labour market integration.

Digital transformation and modern ways of working

In addition to on-site activities, the internship experiences also encompass digital and hybrid forms of work. Depending on their respective job profiles, the students worked remotely at times, used digital communication and collaboration tools, and undertook tasks that also involved working from home.

A mandatory component of the mobility concept is also a final skills demonstration. In a presentation, the pupils showcased the technical, methodological and social skills they had acquired. This form of performance demonstration made learning progress visible, strengthened presentation and media skills, and fostered the ability for critical self-reflection.



Strategic management and European school development

The Finland mobility programmes are firmly embedded in the European school development strategy of the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm. Tim Kammann and Andreas Overhage, who act as regional coordinators at the FLBK, are responsible for the planning, coordination and strategic development of the Finland activities. In this role, they combine operational mobility work with conceptual school development and international networking.

KA2 projects and broadening European perspectives

Individual mobility initiatives are complemented by joint KA2 cooperation projects, which deepen the partnerships both structurally and in terms of content. These projects are closely linked to the vocational school's courses and, looking ahead, to preparatory training. Whilst the previous project focused on 'Lifelong Moving and Volunteering', the upcoming project will centre on 'Active Citizenship'. The inclusion of a further European partner school further broadens the transnational perspective.

Through the clear premise of systematically involving students from the vocational school, the Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm fulfils its aspiration to be a European school for all. The demonstrable positive transitions into vocational training underline the lasting added value of European mobility for individual educational pathways and for the school's development as a whole.



Der Autor:

Tim Kammann
Management Team of the European Group at the
Friedrich-List-Berufskolleg Hamm





Hansa Vocational College, Unna Erasmus+ 2025

The Hansa Vocational College Unna uses the Erasmus+ programme as a key tool for the internationalisation of vocational education and training and for sustainable school development. In 2025, a total of 80 trainees took part in funded mobility schemes and completed **four-week, six-week and ten-week work placements abroad in eight European partner countries: Italy, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Turkey, Poland, Spain and Greece.**

The Erasmus+ activities, which are excellently organised by the eight-strong EUROPA team at Hansa Vocational College Unna, were closely linked to the school's strategic development goals and were consistently aligned with the European Union's four horizontal priorities:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital transformation
- Environmental and climate protection
- Participation in democratic life

A key objective of the Erasmus+ work at Hansa Berufskolleg Unna is to **enable all trainees – regardless of their origin, social background or individual circumstances – to participate in international mobility.**

Particular mention should be made of the participation of a trainee from the freight forwarding department, who fled Ukraine and has only been living in Germany for three

years. Not only was she given the opportunity to take part in the Erasmus+ project, but she was also sent to the partner country Norway as **the first ambassador for Hansa Berufskolleg Unna.** There, she completed a **six-week work placement** at the newly acquired company FREJA. This example impressively illustrates how Erasmus+ can contribute to equal opportunities, integration and personal development.

A trainee of Iraqi background was also able to broaden his professional and personal horizons during an internship in Sweden. Taking part enabled him to familiarise himself with European working practices and to develop a stronger sense of belonging to an open, diverse European society.

The digital transformation was taken into account in both the **organisation and implementation** of the Erasmus+ projects. The preparation, support and follow-up of the mobility placements were carried out, amongst other things, through:

- Digital meetings via Teams during the internship period
- Use of collaboration platforms (e.g. Microsoft Teams)
- Digital documentation of learning outcomes
- Presentations and reflection formats using digital media (Instagram)

In addition, participants gained insights into **digital work processes** at the partner companies, including in the fields of logistics and freight forwarding. The trainees further developed their digital skills and reflected on the responsible use of digital technologies in an international working environment.

Sustainability and climate protection were integral parts of the Erasmus+ mobility programmes. In several partner companies, environmental aspects were not only discussed but actively implemented in day-to-day work.

A notable example is the collaboration with **DHL in Sweden**. Three trainees from the freight forwarding sector gained in-depth insights into sustainable logistics processes there. Particularly striking was the consistent **avoidance of paper in freight forwarding procedures** and the mindful use of resources. The trainees returned deeply impressed and incorporated these experiences into their lessons and school projects.

During the work placement in Norway, too, topics such as **climate protection, sustainability and environmental responsibility in the logistics sector** were discussed and reflected upon in depth.

The trainees worked in international teams, reflected on different ways of working and living, and developed a stronger awareness of their role as **active European citizens**. In particular, participants with experience of displacement or migration reported a strengthened sense of identification with Europe and fundamental democratic values.

Erasmus+ will continue to be used as a **strategic tool for school development** in the future, enabling trainees to gain international learning experiences, professional competence and personal development.

The Erasmus+ activities concluded with a **large public closing event** to which more than **300 participants** were invited. In addition to trainees, teachers and project participants, numerous **training companies** and external partners in particular attended the event. The **District Administrator of the Unna district, Mr Mario Löhr**, was present as a special guest of honour, further underlining the social and regional significance of the Erasmus+ work.

During the event, committed training companies were certified with an **Erasmus+ Training Partner label**. This label recognises the companies' **long-standing, high-quality training work** as well as their special commitment to international vocational education and training. At the same time, the awarded companies receive visible recognition, which they can use specifically to **attract further trainees**.

The **international participation in the closing event** is also particularly noteworthy: two tutors from the partner company **DHL Sweden (Helsingborg site)** travelled specifically to attend the event. This highlights the sustainability of the partnerships established, as well as the close European network of Hansa Berufskolleg Unna.

The closing event impressively demonstrated that Erasmus+ at Hansa Berufskolleg Unna is not merely a mobility programme, but a **network comprising the school, companies and European partners** that makes a lasting contribution to securing a skilled workforce, school development and the strengthening of European values.



The author

Lucia Tozzi
EU Coordinator





Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg, European School European cooperation in action

Second meeting in Vichy, France

The European team at Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg is delighted to report on the second meeting of our current Erasmus+ project 'Verbraucherschule international', which took place from 24 to 28 March 2025 in Vichy, France.

The host of this meeting was the Lycée Albert Londres. The commitment of our hosts contributed significantly to the success of this intensive working week. In addition to our school and the French partners, our new partner school, the IES Comercio from Logroño in Spain, was also represented by a dedicated group of students and their accompanying teachers.

The project meeting focused on three key and highly topical issues, which the pupils worked on intensively in mixed-nationality groups:

Fake news: Building on the results of the first project meeting in Soest, the young people once again addressed the topic of fake news. The aim was to develop a concrete guide for dealing with misinformation.

Bullying: Another key focus was on the issue of bullying. First, the pupils presented the results of surveys they had conducted at their respective schools regarding personal experiences of bullying. They then worked creatively in mixed-nationality groups to design posters aimed at highlighting ways to prevent bullying and promoting a constructive approach to supporting those affected. The resulting posters demonstrate a good understanding of the issue and a desire to bring about positive change.

Generative AI and chatbots: A particularly informative part of the programme was the talk by IBM data scientist Hana Konrád. She gave the pupils a thorough insight into the world of generative artificial intelligence and chatbots. She not only explained key buzzwords and introduced various AI tools, but above all encouraged the development of an open yet critical approach to dealing with AI technologies. With regard to the rapidly changing world of work, Ms Konrád emphasised strongly: "People who use AI will replace those who don't." This pithy statement vividly illustrated the need for young people to engage with the opportunities and challenges of this key technology at an early stage.

There is already great anticipation for the final meeting with our Spanish partners in Logroño in October 2025. There, the pupils will work on another exciting topic: the specifics of buying and selling online.

These European exchanges are of inestimable value to our pupils and contribute significantly to the development of their intercultural skills and European awareness.

HSBK visits Spain: Third meeting in Logroño, Spain

As part of the Erasmus+ project '**Consumer Education – a contribution by European schools to sustainable behaviour and the critical use of digital media**', pupils and teachers from the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg travelled to Logroño in the Rioja region of Spain from 6 to 10 October 2025.

The third meeting within the framework of the European programme was hosted by IES Comercio, which welcomed not only the HSBK but also participants from the French partner school, the Lycée Albert Londres in Vichy.

Having addressed the topics of fake news, bullying, artificial intelligence and chatbots at the first two meetings in Soest and Vichy, this time the participants focused on **e-commerce/online shopping, private selling on the internet and first apartments**, for which the pupils had prepared PowerPoint presentations, video clips and role-plays. The pupils received inspiration for their work in international groups from two invited experts. David Oliván Rueda, an IT entrepreneur, spoke about the potential risks of online shopping and offered tips on how to avoid problems. Prof. Dr Juan Ramón Liébana Ortiz, an expert in tenancy law from the University of Logroño, discussed with the participants a checklist to serve as a basis for renting a first flat whilst studying or undergoing vocational training.

The cultural programme took the participants to the nearby Yuso Monastery in San Millán de la Cogolla, where a

document dating from 967 is kept, considered to be the origin of the Spanish language. As wine plays a significant economic role in the region, the group then visited the Vivanco Wine Museum, which documents the history of winegrowing in La Rioja and Europe.

International meetings within the framework of European projects provide a suitable platform for the development of cultural competences, which also play an important role in the professional future of young Europeans.

The project is funded by the European Union through the Erasmus programme (KA210-VET-Small Partnerships).



The author

Reiner Linpinsel
EU Team

Team Up: Together for a diverse Europe – Participation in Europe Day on 14 May 2025

"Team Up: Together for a diverse Europe". Under this motto, 80 pupils from secondary European schools in the district of Soest gathered in Lippstadt to take part in the school network's annual joint Europe Day, which was organised this year by the Europe Team at Ostendorf Gymnasium.

Following the European anthem and poetry slam performances on the theme, headteacher Gaby Lütkehellweg





welcomed the guests and emphasised “the role of European education in schools in allowing and promoting diversity”.

The event began with a ‘warm-up’. A Kohoots activity focusing on the European profiles of the participating schools helped to get the participants in the right frame of mind for the theme. This highlighted just how diversely the topic of Europe is explored at the participating schools. The pupils then set off in mixed teams for an ‘Ostendorf European Championship’ comprising eight stations, where the focus was not on peak sporting performance but on communication, team spirit, fairness and a wide range of skills and abilities. A key aim was to reflect on the importance of diversity for Europe, but above all to get to know the participants from the various schools and school types better.

Pupils from the European class HH11EP at the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg took part in the meeting together with their class teacher Dr Markus Schröder and a member of the European team.

Job shadowing at the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg

As part of the European Erasmus programme, which offers pupils, students and teachers the opportunity to gain valuable professional experience abroad, three Italian teachers visited the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg in May.

Headteacher Hubertus Gosmann welcomed Giovanna Pepe, Milena Ferrarone and Fabio Ramasso from the province of Novara in northern Italy, who spent a week job shadowing at the HSBK. In addition to observing lessons taught by their German colleagues, the guests also

received information about teacher training in North Rhine-Westphalia and career and study guidance at their host school. The Italian colleagues were looking forward to an exciting week and gaining an insight into everyday working life at a German school.

Intercultural exchange with the NRW Junior Ballet

On Wednesday, 12 March, the time had finally come: our student preparation day for the project “HSBK meets NRW Junior Ballet – Business Meets Elite Sport” took place at the Ballet Centre in Dortmund! Despite the strike, 14 mentors, together with Ms Schmits, Ms Mühlenschulte, Ms Mengel and Ms Schreiber, set off to gain a very special insight into the world of competitive sport.

After a warm welcome from Mr Bialas, we headed straight to the mirror hall, where we were able to experience the 80-minute training session of the dancers from the NRW Junior Ballet and Ballett Dortmund up close. We watched intently as they memorised complex step sequences in a matter of seconds from the ballet master’s tiniest instructions and executed them with incredible precision to live piano music. The dancers’ jumping power and synchronisation were particularly impressive!

Following this fascinating experience, we moved on to a meet-and-greet: our mentors chatted with the international dancers in small groups. Language barriers? No problem! The conversations flowed easily in English and there was plenty of laughter. Topics such as the young people’s daily lives, cultural differences, personal musical tastes and life far from home sparked lively discussions.



HSBK Internships Abroad

In the calendar year 2025, 37 pupils from the HSBK took part in a four-week internship abroad in Ireland, Spain or Greece. These stays abroad promote intercultural learning and thinking, as well as tolerance towards people from other countries. In view of the increasing Europeanisation and globalisation of economic and trade relations, international mobility serves to improve pupils' career prospects for employment in internationally active companies and organisations both at home and abroad, and to familiarise them with the European labour market.

Speaking on behalf of the participants, we quote here from the internship report by Hanna Stroop, who completed her four-week internship in Athens at PARIMED S.A., a company specialising in medical products and services.

Hanna Stroop writes in her conclusion:

"In conclusion, I can say that I really enjoyed the internship abroad in Greece. I gained an interesting insight into the working world of another country and was able to gain a lot of new experiences. I also improved my English skills and became more confident in using the language. I was also impressed by the working environment. My colleagues were very friendly and patient and explained everything to me calmly, so that I was able to find my feet quickly. I was allowed to work on many tasks independently, which I really enjoyed. Alongside the internship, I also had the opportunity to get to know Athens and Greek culture better. It was exciting to experience everyday life and festivals such as Easter in a new environment and to gather new impressions. This time has



had a profound personal impact on me and made me a bit more independent. Overall, the internship was a great experience for me."



The author

Marion Dietz
EU Team

Building Bridges in Weimar – Our German-Polish student exchange is entering its next phase

In May 2025, we at the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg in Soest had the wonderful opportunity to meet our partner students from the Liceum Sztuk Plastycznych in Rypin, Poland, as part of a student exchange in Weimar. The week was filled with educational and unforgettable experiences that brought us all closer together.

Visit to the Buchenwald Memorial

A key part of the programme was the visit to the Buchenwald Memorial. Led by Luca from our Year 11 class and Mr Nettelhoff, we gained a deep insight into the history of the concentration camp. The exhibition on camp life and the

stories of the survivors were particularly moving. Another detail that left a lasting impression on us was the memorial commemorating the more than 56,000 victims who lost their lives here.

Language and icebreaker games

Alongside the serious topics, there was plenty of fun to be had. We had a good laugh during the language and icebreaker games, and we were able to improve our language skills in a relaxed atmosphere. These activities helped us to overcome cultural barriers and make new friends.

City treasure hunt in Weimar

Another highlight was the city scavenger hunt in Weimar, where we explored the city in mixed-nationality teams. The scavenger hunt included short theatrical sketches created by the students themselves. A particularly lovely photo was taken in front of the Goethe and Schiller statue, which perfectly captures the team spirit and joy of the participants.

Guided tour of Erfurt

The city tour in Erfurt offered us a fascinating insight into the city's intercultural and interfaith dimensions. We visited historical sites and learnt a great deal about the co-existence of different cultures and religions throughout Erfurt's history.



Thank you

Special thanks go to Ms Szablewska, who was a great help to us with her linguistic and content-related support. We would also like to thank all the pupils for their fantastic cooperation. This exchange not only enriched our knowledge but also forged friendships that transcend national borders. Thanks to the financial support of the German-Polish Youth Office (DPJW), we were able to organise informative and interesting days.

We are already looking forward to the next exchange and to seeing our new and old friends again soon!

EU Project Days at HSBK

Understanding social media, thinking critically, living democracy – Over two intensive project days, trainees on the Industry (IU1, IU2) and Administration (VM1, VM2) courses explored important social and political issues. Under the themes 'Social Media & You' and 'Democracy & You', they expanded their knowledge, strengthened their ability to reflect, and deepened their understanding of methods for critical analysis and presentation. The event was funded by the European Commission, delivered by facilitators from Eurosoc Digital gGmbH, and initiated and supported by Ms Berkemeier.

First project day: Social Media & You

The first day of the project (11 February 2025) began with a survey on the trainees' personal social media usage habits, which was compared, among other things, with a study on Generation Z. The participants then critically examined the strategies and business models of social media. They investigated how platforms specifically influence the human reward system through mechanisms



such as personalised content and dopamine release in order to maximise usage time. Problematic phenomena such as confirmation bias, echo chambers and targeted manipulation through algorithms were also discussed. In a round-table discussion, all participants debated whether social media tends to strengthen or weaken social cohesion.

Working in groups, the trainees used scientific poster design to explore key topics such as 'Online hate', 'Is social media addictive?', 'Cyberbullying' and 'Body shaming'. They presented their findings to the political guests Stephanie Willenborg (SPD, MdK) and Roland Linnhoff (Die Linke, MdK) and discussed possible solutions together.

Second project day: Democracy & You

The second day of the project (12 February 2025) began with the question "What exactly is autocracy?". The trainee industrial clerks and administrative assistants analysed autocratic systems, compared them with democratic structures and examined the separation of powers. In seven expert panel discussions, they then engaged in a lively debate on whether democracies should cooperate with autocracies.

During the subsequent discussion, the importance of democracy was emphasised – in particular the ability to remove political decision-makers from office through elections. The event concluded with a campaign workshop, in which the trainees developed their own ideas for strengthening democracy. Their campaigns, including "Spot the lies – speak the truth!", "Your vote counts – use it!" or "Experience democracy through projects!", were presented to the political guests Heinrich Frieling (CDU, Member of the State Parliament), Sarah Gonschorek (Alliance 90/The Greens, Member of the City Council), Roland Linnhoff (The Left, Member of the City Council), Pia Marie Fischer (SPD, Member of the City Council) and Bernhard Michel (SKW Group, Soest City Councillor).



The project days showed participants how manipulative mechanisms on social media work. They were also encouraged to take what they had learnt with them and to champion democratic values and social engagement both in their private and professional lives.



The author

Ulrich Nettelhoff
EU Team

European cooperation on the integration of refugees

The Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg welcomed guests from Rypin (Poland) and Graz (Austria) as part of the joint Erasmus+ project "Refugees are Welcome", which is coordinated by the Soest District's European Agency.

Mr Sascha Kudella, Head of the Department for Youth, Education and Social Affairs at Soest District Council, welcomed the international guests and regional partners in the council chamber. In addition to the Hubertus-Schwartz Vocational College and the Christian-Rohlf's Secondary School, the Municipal Integration Centre is also involved in the project.

Headteacher Hubertus Gosman was delighted to welcome the visiting groups to his school for the day. The participants observed lessons in the refugee classes and were subsequently briefed on the educational provision and concept for IFK classes at the Hubertus-Schwartz Vocational College.



The cooperation between the three regions and also between the local partners is based on the shared aim of improving the educational attainment, language skills, vocational competences and intercultural skills of the young refugees, in order to enhance their training and employment prospects in the labour markets of the host countries and to increase their opportunities for personal development. The focus is therefore also on discussing a differentiated approach to educational and vocational transition management for the young refugees.

By successfully integrating Ukrainian pupils and young adults into the school education system and the vocational training system, host countries are also making a significant contribution to their successful return and reintegration into their home country. Integration can only succeed if we work together. For this reason, fostering closer collaboration among all those involved in the school integration process is one of the key focuses of this project.

Globalisation, South Africa, and Global Citizenship

Lecture by Mr Varkey George, a South African lecturer and social entrepreneur | Mr George covered a wide range of topics, from global challenges in many areas (finance, markets, unemployment, innovation, global warming), through political ideologies and social systems, to current political and social developments (the rise of right-wing parties, the ageing of European society), before taking a closer look at social entrepreneurship and non-profit organisations.

Throughout, he took the participating students from the Economics Gymnasium on an engaging journey, striving to make these rather complex topics more accessible to them, to help them recognise the looming dangers, and to explain what 'global citizenship' means: seeing oneself as part of a global community and taking responsibility for global challenges.



Thea author

Carsten Brinkmann
EU Team





INI Vocational College Lippstadt

International student exchange for a sustainable future

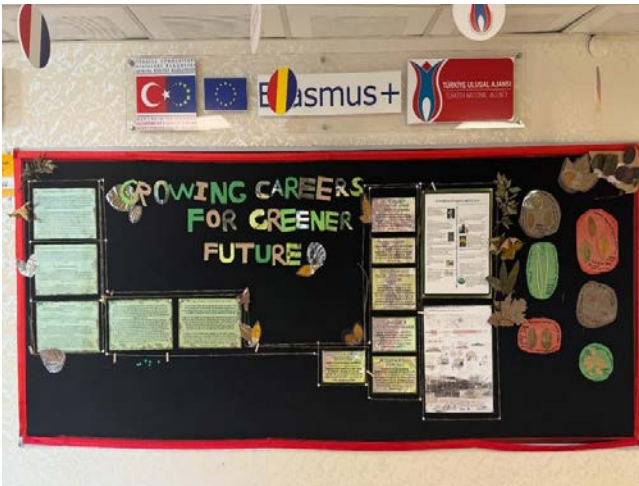
Istanbul/Lippstadt/Nurmijäven. How can young people actively contribute to a more sustainable world whilst discovering career prospects in the environmental sector? This is precisely the question addressed by the Erasmus+ project “Growing Careers for a Greener Planet”, in which three groups of six students aged between 15 and 19 from Istanbul, Lippstadt and Nurmijäven (Finland) are taking part. The focus is on the Erasmus+ priority of the environment and combating climate change in the context of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

The project’s first week-long mobility took place from 3 to 7 November 2025 in the Turkish metropolis of Istanbul. Right from the start, the international guests were warmly welcomed and got to know the partner schools and their project ideas on the topic of sustainable agriculture. Presentations, a joint music programme and sporting ice-breaker activities created an open and motivating atmosphere in which intercultural exchange was practised from the very start.

In terms of content, the week’s focus was clearly on the connection between environmental protection, sustainable food and career guidance. In workshops, the pupils explored career profiles in the field of sustainable agriculture, described the necessary skills and discussed the opportunities and challenges of these forward-looking professions. In addition, they learnt how to create a modern CV and developed sample CVs and online profiles for green careers.

A particular highlight was the visit to the Istanbul Indoor Vertical Farming Application Centre. There, the participants gained vivid insights into innovative forms of urban agriculture that save resources, shorten transport routes and make an important contribution to climate protection. The excursion impressively demonstrated how technological innovation and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand – a central concern of ESD.

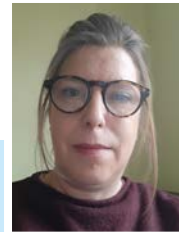
Cultural activities such as guided tours of Istanbul, visits to historical landmarks like the Hagia Sophia and Dol-



mabahçe Palace, as well as joint leisure activities, also strengthened the cohesion of the international group. They made it clear that sustainable action must always be viewed within a social and cultural context.

To round off the week, the pupils designed models of vertical farms in a further workshop and symbolically planted a sapling – a visible sign of growth, responsibility and the future. In feedback sessions, they reflected on their learning experiences and took home new inspiration for school, career choices and personal engagement

The 'Growing Careers for a Greener Planet' project impressively demonstrates how Erasmus+ empowers young people to actively tackle climate change, explore sustainable career paths and breathe life into European cooperation. The upcoming mobility programmes in Lippstadt and Finland will continue along this path – for a greener and fairer future.



The author

Janine Amperse
Project Coordination





Kaufmannschule1, Hagen

Experiencing democracy at K1 – a school that broadens horizons

Encounters across national borders, collaborative learning in international projects and the active experience of European values are an integral part of everyday school life at Kaufmannschule I. International exchanges, excursions, work placements, competitions and projects not only open up new academic perspectives for our pupils, but above all enable them to gain personal experiences of diversity, participation and democratic coexistence. This fosters friendships that extend far beyond the classroom.

As part of our internationalisation strategy, numerous activities have become established which have now grown into cherished traditions at our school and which highlight the importance of openness, respect and European solidarity.

German-Polish exchange at Trebnitz Castle – learning through encounters

From 5 to 9 May 2025, the German-Polish school exchange took place for the fourth time at Trebnitz Castle, organised by the German-Polish Youth Office. Under the motto 'German-Polish Barista and Baking Project', the participants experienced an intensive week of working, learning and

exchanging ideas together.

Icebreaker games created an open atmosphere right from the start. In practical barista and baking workshops, the young people developed professional skills and gained insights into international training opportunities. The programme was complemented by workshops on teamwork, communication and cooperation – key skills for democratic coexistence.

The presentations by the participating schools from Hagen and Racibórz were particularly enriching. Many pupils with a migrant background took the opportunity to share their own personal experiences and highlight both the similarities and differences between the two countries. In this way, cultural diversity was not merely discussed, but actively lived out.

A trip to Berlin, with stops at the Brandenburg Gate and the East Side Gallery, highlighted historical developments and current social challenges. Saying goodbye was difficult for everyone – what remained were new perspectives, deepened friendships and an awareness of just how valuable intercultural learning is.

Europe Days at Kaufmannsschule I – Understanding and Protecting Democracy

The Europe Days from 12 to 14 May 2025 were entirely dedicated to political education and democratic responsibility. In the Europe Café, the pupils explored the topic of disinformation. Using the 'Lisa case' as an example, it became strikingly clear how fake news can exacerbate social divisions.

An interactive gallery walk encouraged the pupils to critically question information and distinguish between facts and falsehoods. Through conversations, quizzes and discussion sessions, it became clear that democracy thrives on informed, engaged people who take responsibility – including in the digital sphere.

The event concluded with workshops by Ruhrpott für Europa and a moving keynote speech by Milad Tabesch, who, through his personal story, conveyed a vivid vision of a Europe based on solidarity. Finally, by forming a human chain in Volmepark, the pupils sent a visible message of unity, diversity and peace.

Experiencing Erasmus+ – Learning in Europe

International mobility opens up new horizons for young people. As part of the Erasmus+ project "Kaufmann International Certificate" in Galway, Ireland, our pupils combined language lessons with project-based work. Setting up their own business fostered creativity, teamwork and independence – complemented by a wealth of cultural experiences on the ground.

The Erasmus+ mobility programme "The Netherlands under German Occupation" also offered intensive learning experiences. The combination of historical reflection, encounters and practical educational work strengthened awareness of responsibility, remembrance culture and democratic values. Ms Claudia Lohse took part in this mobility programme and contributed her experiences and insights to the joint work in a fruitful way.

Vocational mobility in Poland – experiencing Europe in everyday life

Another Erasmus+ project took our students to Poland – to Racibórz and Kraków – for a two-week work placement. Alongside professional experience, they gained valuable intercultural skills, overcame language challenges and developed openness and self-confidence. It is precisely this personal growth that embodies the spirit of Erasmus+.

Krakow – Understanding history, shaping the future

The five-day trip to Krakow in March 2025 combined cultural, economic and historical perspectives. In particular, engaging with places such as Auschwitz, the Jewish quarter of Kazimierz and Schindler's factory highlighted how important remembrance work is for a democratic future. The trip left a lasting impression and strengthened the awareness of the need to take responsibility based on history.

International projects such as these are of inestimable value to our pupils.

They not only promote subject-specific and language skills, but also strengthen character, empathy, critical thinking and the willingness to actively shape democracy – today and in the future. We will continue along this path and let our projects grow together with our pupils. These projects thrive on the commitment of many colleagues who shape democratic education at our school with conviction, openness and team spirit. A heartfelt thank you for that.



The author

Marzena Wosch
EU Coordinator





Minister für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten,
Internationales sowie Medien
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen
und Chef der Staatskanzlei



Kaufmannsschule II, Hagen City Vocational College

Europe Unites: Learning, Exchange, and Responsibility

Exploring Europe in Brussels with the 'International Business' profile class

The graduates of the two-year vocational school will long remember their two-day excursion to the European capital, Brussels, funded by the Europa-Schecks.

At the European Parliament, the Visitors' Service gave them a comprehensive insight into the work of MEPs. This was further enriched by a one-hour discussion with MEP Dennis Radtke, who spoke to the students about his work as a politician.

The participants explored the history of the EU and the role of the community of nations in securing peace in Europe in the interactive exhibition at the Parlamentarium. On the second day, they went on a guided tour of the city, which focused on the city's economic development. The

participating classes from Kaufmannsschule II and Cuno II Vocational College also had time to explore the city on their own. The trip was funded by the Europa-Schecks initiative and organised and accompanied by Ina Wortmann, the City of Hagen's European Affairs Officer.

The authors

Esther Vattes
Class teacher

Sandra Hansen
Deputy Class Teacher, EU Coordinator



eTwinning Quality Label for project on sustainable businesses

The 'International Business' profile class was awarded certificates for their project on sustainable businesses, carried out with pupils from Poland, Spain and the Czech Republic.

Memorial trip to Auschwitz/Krakow

In March 2025, pupils from the Remembrance Culture Working Group at Kaufmannsschule II in Hagen, together with Märkisches Berufskolleg Unna and organised by the International Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk e. V., undertook an impressive study trip to Auschwitz and Krakow. The trip marked the culmination of the working group's work and was characterised by in-depth engagement with history, personal encounters and cultural experiences. Under the motto "Remember, Understand, Encounter", the trip provided an opportunity for learning, empathy and a sense of responsibility for the future.

The visit began with a meeting at the Polish partner school, Powiatowy Zespół Nr 4 Szkół Ekonomiczno-Gastronomicznych in Oświęcim. There, the young adults immersed themselves in the daily life of a Polish school and got to know its pupils better. These pupils then prepared the KIL students for the experience of Auschwitz. A particular focus was placed on getting to know the different groups of victims; this made the complexity of Nazi crimes tangible.

The following day was entirely devoted to the historic Auschwitz main camp. Traces of the past led through the infamous camp gate bearing the inscription 'Arbeit macht frei'. The four-hour guided tour of the former concentration camp left a profound impression: barracks, prisoners' clothing, suitcases and even tufts of hair from the victims were on display. A workshop focused on escaping from the camp. A discussion with the Polish classmates over lunch, as well as talks between the teachers and the Pol-



ish school management, complemented the international learning experience.

A particularly moving part of the programme was the conversation with Stefania Wernik, a survivor of Auschwitz as a child. Her accounts of the camp hospital and the long-term physical and psychological consequences she suffered made it clear that history is about the present and about responsibility. Krakow offered insights into Jewish life in the Kazimierz district. Conclusion: The trip left a lasting impression – the participants returned emotionally moved, intellectually enriched and with an international network. The participants summed up their experiences as follows: Remembrance means not only coming to terms with the past, but also taking responsibility for the future.

The authorin un der Autor:

Constanze Lugner

Head of the Working Group on Remembrance Culture, SOR Representative

Dirk Radke

Head of the Remembrance Culture Working Group, Press Team

Internship abroad in Malta

Riccardo and Sofii completed their five-week work placement in Malta in spring 2025. They were supported by the Erasmus+ project "Pro Disco" run by arbeit + leben.

What were your tasks?

Riccardo: At SIGMA-World, I sent emails to staff, set up workstations for new employees, created their accounts in the database and sent out enquiries. In the IT department,



I resolved computer issues and ordered and installed new monitors.

Sofia: During my internship at Sprachcaffe Language Plus, I was responsible for a wide range of administrative and organisational tasks. I entered the students' attendance data into the system and then carefully checked all personal details. Based on this, I calculated the attendance rates and created the certificates of attendance for the course graduates. I also laminated important notices. In addition, I optimised the ordering of office supplies.

How did you feel before the internship?

Riccardo: Before the internship, I was nervous and didn't know what to expect, but when I arrived on the first day, I was given a warm welcome and all my tasks were clearly explained to me in English.

Sofia: I was a bit nervous at first about whether I'd manage to build a good rapport with my colleagues. But on my very first day at work, it turned out my worries were unfounded; I immediately got on well with them.

What's it like working in Malta?

Riccardo: I thought working in Malta was great, partly because I got on well with everyone in the office.

Sofia: The climate is very warm and pleasant, and the people are very friendly, helpful and open. In terms of the way we work, however, I didn't notice much difference between Malta and Germany.

Why should all students do an internship abroad?

Riccardo: Students should do an internship abroad because it really helps with independence, as you have to do your own shopping and organise your daily life. And, of course, your English improves. It's definitely worth it!



Sofia: It's a great opportunity to become more independent, develop your communication skills, meet people from all over the world and gain an insight into how international companies operate. This experience is priceless..

Kick-off for a German-French group mobility programme in the retail training course

In early February 2025, two teachers from K2 visited the Lycée Professionnel Jean Rose in Meaux to organise a German-French group exchange involving 8–12 trainees from each side, with the support of PROTANDEM (DFJW). A German-French language tandem will be formed in each case. Both will learn each other's native language.

In April 2025, the French delegation made a return visit to Hagen to get to know each other even better, gain an insight into the local conditions and plan the further details of the group mobility programme.

During a visit to Meaux, the trainee exchange was discussed in advance. The agenda included two company visits (cheese dairy, brewery) and a visit to a museum.

In the annual teaching plan for the two vocational training programmes – Sales Assistant and Retail Clerk – the theme of France will be firmly established in future, and binational learning situations tailored to the specific vocational and educational pathways will be developed. Intercultural workshops are being planned to ensure the students are well prepared for the exchange.

The author

Tatjana Rosenthal

Coordinator for France-related activities at K2



Karl Schiller Vocational College, City of Dortmund Following in the footsteps of the victims

The Karl-Schiller-Berufskolleg (KSBK) is involved in various European projects aimed at promoting intercultural learning, international understanding and reconciliation, and enabling our students to gain practical experience abroad. We have close partnerships with agencies in Ireland, Denmark and Malta, amongst others, as well as partner schools in the Netherlands, Spain and the Czech Republic, which help to put these learning experiences into practice. We have a regular exchange programme with our Dutch partner school in Zwolle, Deltion College, particularly within the Higher Commercial School. In 2025, we were able to realise the joint project 'Following Traces'. We were supported in this by the International Education and Encounter Association Dortmund (IBB e. V.) and generously funded by the Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future (EVZ).

Over a period of several months, pupils from our school, together with students from Deltion College in Zwolle, set out to trace the history of the Jewish Grüneberg family. The family lived in Dortmund-Hörde before the Second World War, fled to Zwolle to escape persecution by the Nazis, were arrested there and ultimately murdered in the Sobibor and Auschwitz extermination camps.

As part of an intensive and moving search for traces of their history, the pupils visited numerous historical sites. In Dortmund, they explored, among other places, the Steinwache, the former Gestapo prison. In Amsterdam, they visited the Schouwburg, a former theatre that was misused by the Nazis as a collection point for the Jewish population. They commemorated the victims of the Holocaust at the former transit camp Westerbork in the Netherlands, as well as at the former extermination camps Majdanek and Sobibor in eastern Poland. In Lublin, they also explored the city's Jewish history. Finally, in Zwolle, the programme included a visit to the Jewish community and the synagogue, as well as a presentation of the entire project.

Through English-language video conferences, city tours, visits to memorial sites and numerous creative workshops, the German and Dutch pupils worked together to produce impressive results. The outcomes included photo collages and a commemorative folder, fictional poems and short stories from the victims' perspective, as well as Instagram Reels about the individual project components. Through meticulous archival research, the history of the Grüneberg family was reconstructed almost in its entirety. These data and facts—some of which were uncovered

for the first time—regarding the family’s life, persecution and murder were handed over to the Sobibor Memorial for further research.

The research formed the basis for the laying of the Stolpersteine in Dortmund-Hörde (Beukenbergstraße 2) on 10 November 2025, attended by around 100 guests from Dortmund and the Netherlands. Students from the KSBK took on the sponsorship of the Stolpersteine and recounted the fate of the Grüneberg family during a moving memorial service. The Stolpersteine commemorate Hugo, Martha, Bernhard, Fanni and Edith Grüneberg. Finally, the project participants presented the results of their work at the KSBK. In addition to sponsors and project partners, guests from the Netherlands, trainers and interested pupils from the school also attended the event.

Pupils from the Media and Information Services programme were particularly involved in the research for the Stolpersteine. In other project groups, vocational school pupils from the Office Management, Event Management and Audiovisual Media programmes worked together. A pupil from the vocational grammar school also took part.

The Following Traces project not only imparted in-depth knowledge of history, but also built a bridge to the present. Learning from the past means standing up for the dignity of all people – especially the most vulnerable in our society – and taking responsibility for democracy, peaceful coexistence and a united Europe.



Der Autor

Richard Höffner

Representative for “Schools Without Racism – Schools with Courage”





Louis-Baare Vocational College, Bochum Shaping international learning spaces – digital, sustainable, dem- ocratic

Internationalisation, digitalisation and social responsibility are firmly embedded in the school's ethos at the Louis-Baare-Berufskolleg (LBB). As a certified European School, the LBB combines European and global perspectives with vocational education, the promotion of democracy and education for sustainable development. International cooperation, European mobility projects and the school's work on democracy shape everyday school life and open up a wide range of learning experiences for students.

Digital school partnership with Taiwan – from online cooperation to an official partnership

A particular focus of the LBB's international educational work is the school partnership with Hsin Chuang Senior High School in New Taipei City (Taiwan). The collaboration, which began in 2022 as a digital exchange project, was officially sealed in December 2025 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and placed on a long-term institutional footing.

The partnership centres on digital exchange formats, joint teaching projects and, looking ahead, hybrid mobility formats. Through video conferences and collaborative online working phases, students from both schools work together regularly, thereby developing foreign language skills, media literacy and intercultural communication skills.

A milestone in the partnership was the first visit in April 2025: teacher training students from the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, together with teaching staff from the partner school, were guests at the Louis-Baare-Berufskolleg. They were accompanied by Professor Cathy Weng.

The focus was on interactive workshops on the topic of 'Love Language', which were run by the Taiwanese trainee teachers in collaboration with the pupils at the LBB. In addition, workshops were held for teachers, offering insights into Taiwanese teaching and learning cultures and including practice with Chinese characters.

One participating teacher summed it up as follows:

"Meeting in person has greatly deepened our digital collaboration. An online partnership has turned into a genuine school partnership."

Environmental education and sustainable tourism – responsibility in a globalised world

The LBB is also making a clear mark in Europe, particularly in the areas of environmental education and climate protection. As part of an Erasmus+ mobility programme, trainees from the tourism and transport services sectors took part in a project on sustainable tourism in Seville.

The programme included a vocational language course, job shadowing at a travel agency, guided hotel tours focusing on sustainability concepts, a guided tour of Seville railway station, and excursions to Granada and Córdoba.

A central component was a project-based exploration of sustainable tourism. Among other things, the participants examined the topics of sustainability in the hotel industry and travel packages, as well as environmentally friendly mobility and rail transport.

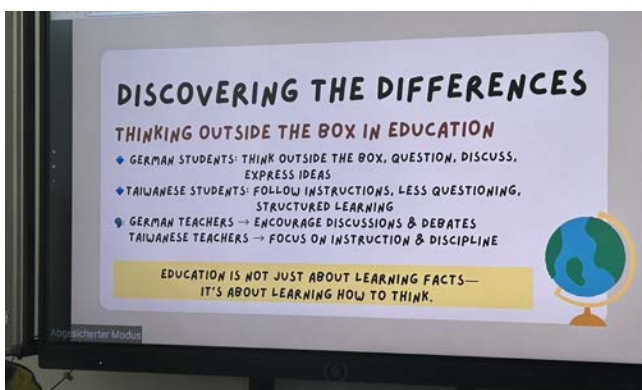
At the same time, mass tourism in Spain was critically examined. The aim of the project was to enable the students to gain a new perspective and to initiate a nuanced, constructive examination of the ecological, social and economic consequences of tourism.

Their own mobility was also critically examined. Although the group travelled by plane for organisational reasons, the participants made a conscious decision to offset the resulting CO₂ emissions. Once there, they used public transport and rail travel.

In the spirit of Global Citizenship Education, the participants explored their responsibilities as future professionals and as global citizens: How can travel be made more sustainable? What role do consumer choices play? And how can travellers help to strengthen local structures rather than burden them?

One participant sums up her experiences:

"We have learnt that, as travellers, we can be part of the problem – but as future tourism professionals, we can also be part of the solution."





Promoting democracy in the International Support Classes – actively shaping participation

Another key component of European educational work at the LBB is the systematic promotion of democracy, particularly within the International Support Classes (IFK) programme. The aim is to empower newly arrived young people to understand democratic values, actively shape them and reflect on them critically.

Democracy promotion takes place through cross-curricular modules and projects that are closely linked to the learners' everyday lives. These include class representative elections, participation in setting class rules, modules on fundamental rights, equality and cultural diversity, project days on values education, and participation in Europe Day.

A particular focus is on developing an understanding of digital democracy. In classroom projects, pupils learn to recognise fake news, critically evaluate sources and use social media responsibly. Historical learning on the development of democracy and human rights complements the programme.

A teacher from the IFK describes the approach as follows:

“For many of our pupils, this is the first time they experience that their opinion matters and that they can actively help shape things.”



Europe, with a global perspective

The school partnership with Taiwan, the European learning mobility programme on sustainable tourism, and the promotion of democracy in the International Support Classes are prime examples of the educational philosophy at Louis-Baare-Berufskolleg.

At the LBB, young people are not only equipped with professional skills but also prepared for a responsible life and career in an interconnected world. Europe is not merely taught here, but lived – rooted locally and thinking globally.



The authors

Hanna Luise Marquaß
Erasmus+ Coordinator

Ekaterini Kotaidou
EU Coordinator

Melanie Tajnsek-Gehne
Head of International Projects



Lippe Vocational College of the District of Soest in Lippstadt

Lippe Vocational College: Experience Europe and play an active role in shaping it

Participation and engagement through innovative projects and international mobility

The Lippe-Berufskolleg (LBK) was first certified as a European School in 2009. With its successful third recertification in 2024, the school underlines its commitment to European values and international education. The motto "One school. Many opportunities" is reflected not only in the diversity of educational programmes on offer, but also in the numerous projects and mobility schemes carried out as part of the Erasmus+ programme. These initiatives enable pupils to experience Europe first-hand and play an active role in shaping their future.

Democracy in action

The school not only organises a wide range of work placements abroad for pupils across all courses but also collaborates with partner schools on bilateral projects. One

example of this is the bilingual Erasmus+ specialisation course in Year 11 of the two-year vocational school, specialising in Business and Administration.

In the first half of the course, pupils learn about the EU and its institutions, and also explore different cultures and intercultural communication. In the second half of the year, the focus is on 'Democracy in Action', which includes a one-week group mobility programme funded by Erasmus+. This structure enables pupils to gain both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Group mobility to Kolding

In the second half of the 2024/25 academic year, 20 pupils and two teachers travelled to the International Business College (IBC) in Kolding, Denmark, a long-standing partner school of the LBK. Preparation for the project trip began at the start of the second half of the academic year and cov-



ered key topics such as the values and objectives of the EU and an understanding of democracy. The bilateral project focused on the theme of 'Civil Society in Action' and aimed to explore examples of civil society participation within the EU. This practical approach not only enhances the young people's knowledge but also fosters their engagement.

Itinerary of the project trip

Day 1/5: Arrival in and departure from Kolding.

Day 2: Introduction to the theme "Civil Society in Action". In mixed groups, they researched various civil society organisations in Germany and Denmark, created posters and presented their findings in a gallery walk. A guided tour of Kolding showed where civil society engagement takes place in the city and how it shapes it.

Day 3: The programme included a visit to the Sustainability House in Kolding, which is run by volunteers from civil society. Here, the pupils learnt about various aspects of sustainable living and then conducted a survey they had devised themselves at the IBC on youth participation and engagement in society.

Day 4: Under the motto "Our Voice!", the German and Danish pupils analysed the survey results and then selected a topic that was important to them. They developed their own initiative or campaign based on this. The results were presented and discussed, giving the pupils the opportunity to share their ideas and receive feedback.



Return visit from the Danish partner school

On 6 May 2025, the return visit by the Danish partner school IBC took place at the LBK. Coincidentally, this day coincided with the election of the German Chancellor, which provided a fitting introduction to the theme of the return visit: "Let's get into politics".

Schedule of the return visit

Day 1/4: Arrival and departure of the Danish pupils.

Day 2: The pupils worked together on the topic "Politics & Young People" – discussing the positive and negative aspects of young people's lives in Denmark and Germany and creating an infographic summarising their findings.

Day 3: Under the motto "Creating our own Danish/German party", the groups designed election posters and flyers for a fictional German-Danish party. This creative task not only promoted an understanding of political processes, but also teamwork and creative thinking.



Democracy Day #Ich steh auf

The commitment to Europe at the LBK is also evident through initiatives promoting participation in democratic life. An outstanding example of this is Democracy Day #Ich steh auf, which took place at the start of the 2025/26 school year. This school-wide project day offered a wide range of workshops on various topics, including those related to the EU.

The workshops, including 'Democracy in Europe' and interviews with eyewitnesses from the organisation 'Grandmothers Against the Right', enabled pupils to gain practical experience and engage actively with democratic values.

A wide variety of products were created in the workshops and kitchens: biscuits and treats from various countries were baked, nail art relating to democracy was created, and the hoarding around the school gym construction site was decorated with painted sheets and democracy posters. These creative projects were designed to convey a practical understanding of democracy. The exhibition remained on display until the autumn holidays.

"We are Europe" is not just a motto, but a lived reality at Lippe-Berufskolleg. Through mobility schemes, partnerships and various projects, active participation in democratic life, an understanding of shared values and civic engagement are promoted. These initiatives help students to find their way as responsible citizens in a diverse and democratic society. The LBK demonstrates how education and engagement are intertwined to meet the challenges of the future.



The author

Anke Wertz
EU Representative



Lippe Vocational College, Lünen

New modular model in the 'Careers in Cycling' project

The foundations for this model were laid by the Arnsberg District Government's "Berufe Rund ums Rad" project. In close collaboration with the Fritz-Henßler-Berufskolleg and the Leopold-Hoesch Berufskolleg in Dortmund, this internationally award-winning project develops and implements initiatives designed to inspire young people to pursue apprenticeships in the fields of green mobility and cycling. The modular model at the Lippe Vocational College Lünen (LBK) forms part of this project under the thematic area of physical and road safety education within the framework of early years education training.

As an additional offering within the "Berufe Rund ums Rad" project, the conceptual aim from the outset was to link teaching, international cooperation and close collaboration with cycling clubs and training partners from the region. This has led to the development of the modular model at the LBK, which is being implemented with students from the College of Social Pedagogy and will enter its second phase in 2026.

First module: National cooperation with RSV Lippe 23 Lünen e.V.

As early as June 2024, students from the LBK's School of Social Pedagogy had the opportunity to expand their skills in the field of physical and road safety education by participating in the RSV Lippe 23 Lünen e.V. nursery cycling training programme. The Kitarad training, which is aimed at all nursery children in Lünen, takes place annually in cooperation with the "Berufe Rund ums Rad" project and the Lünen Road Safety Association, and teaches children how to use running bikes or bicycles in a playful way. On this day, the children have the opportunity to demonstrate their balance and agility on an obstacle course. In addition, the mascot Helmut Meloni teaches the children about road safety. On this day, the children can also have their bikes checked by trainee bicycle mechanics from the Leopold-Hoesch Vocational College.

The students from the LBK were involved not only in running the event but also in planning and evaluating the cycling training. This allowed them to expand their project management skills and, during the event, to demonstrate and develop their abilities in interacting with children and parents.

Second component: Curricular links and cooperation with training institutions

During the past school year, these newly acquired skills and competences were then consolidated and assessed in project-based lessons at the LBK. In collaboration with a local training institution, the participants developed their own project on road safety and physical activity education for children. In doing so, they were able to draw on the resources and expertise of the RSV Lippe 23 Lünen e.V. and put these to good use in implementing their project. The project work focused on delivering a 'mini' cycle training session and teaching traffic rules and road behaviour to pre-school children in a playful manner. During a final presentation, which was assessed, all students at the LBK were able to learn about the collaborative work carried out by the participants.

Third module: International Erasmus+ cooperation in Madrid

The third and final module consists of an Erasmus+ group mobility programme to Madrid. During the week-long stay, the participants gained a wealth of cultural experiences and professional insights, and presented their Kitarad project. In the run-up to the trip, three colleagues from the College of Social Pedagogy visited selected nurseries and pre-schools in Madrid as part of an EUGS job-shadowing programme to prepare for the mobility in terms of teaching and methodology.

The official reception at the Spanish partner school, I.E.S. Zayas y Sotomayor in Majadahonda, marked the starting point. There, the hosts provided fascinating insights into the Spanish education system and presented their school. During exchanges with Spanish trainees, differences and similarities in early years teacher training were discussed in detail. The participants also visited preschools and nurseries, where they took part in activities with the children.



Furthermore, they observed lessons and exchanged views with educators on teaching methods, daily routines and the challenges of the profession. The participants were particularly impressed by the focus on play-based learning and a family-like atmosphere within the facilities. In this context, the students presented their 'Kitarad' project to the local trainees and teachers, thereby sharing their ideas and expertise on early childhood physical and road safety education.

In addition to professional insights, the programme also offered cultural highlights: a guided tour of Madrid and a visit to a flamenco show provided the opportunity to experience the Spanish way of life first-hand. At the end, the guests were officially bid farewell – with an invitation to continue the European dialogue. The exchange left a lasting impression: it not only strengthened the professional identity of the trainee early years educators, but also fostered intercultural understanding through new friendships, openness and a sense of European solidarity.

Outlook

The 'Berufe Rund ums Rad' project is set to expand further during the current academic year. To this end, we will present the project modules at other vocational colleges and bring further national and international training partners involved in the cycling sector on board.



The author

Jonathan Krakau
EU Coordinator





Märkischer Kreis Vocational College in Iserlohn

We Are Europe Too – Erasmus at BKIS (2025)

In 2025, the Märkischer Kreis Vocational College in Iserlohn remained deeply involved in the Erasmus programme and was able to further expand its international mobility initiatives.

Business & Administration: Experiencing Europe in Ireland and Japan

In the Business and Administration department, students from the EBC (European Business Class of the two-year vocational school for business and administration) and trainees (EU industrial clerks) got to know Irish culture, lifestyle and working practices in Athlone (Ireland) as part of their work placements. The focus of the mobility programmes in Ireland is on deepening communication skills in English, the lingua franca of the modern world. For this reason, the participants were not placed in typical office jobs, but rather in more communicative sectors such as catering, tourism and sales. With the organisational support of our partner organisation, Shannon Academy of English, the trainees also successfully obtained the Cambridge Certificate.

In 2025, for the first time, we took the opportunity to use part of the Erasmus budget for a mobility programme in a country outside Europe: Darius B., a graduate in automotive sales, used the time between his final exams and the start of his employment to undertake a work placement at KIKKAKKE Co., Ltd. in Fukuoka (Japan).

Exchange with Montpellier: New avenues in retail and the automotive sector

The exchange with our partner vocational college, Lycée Jules Ferry, has been intensified: Arno D., a student of business administration, successfully completed an internship at a branch of REWE SE & Co. KG in Iserlohn. In 2026, retail trainees from our vocational college are also set to be placed in retail businesses in Montpellier. In addition, two French automotive mechatronics apprentices will come to Iserlohn in March 2026 to work in automotive workshops.

Nutrition & Home Economics: Hairdressers in Montpellier

In the 'Nutrition and Home Economics' department, four intermediate-level hairdressers once again took part in an exchange with two master craftsman's workshops in Montpellier, France, at the end of September. The fascinating thing about this was that none of the students spoke French beforehand. However, this did not hinder communication. Using hand gestures, body language, specialist knowledge and plenty of smiles, they worked, learnt and laughed. In addition to numerous new practical experiences in everyday salon life, the Erasmus+ programme also offered cultural highlights. After work, the participants enjoyed the late summer sun on the beach, explored the picturesque old town of Montpellier and sampled the odd culinary treat in the form of a crêpe. An excellent opportunity to expand professional skills, gain intercultural experience and realise that good craftsmanship knows no language barriers.



Social & Health: First PIA mobility programme to Spain

The 'Social and Health' department also hosted a number of Erasmus mobility placements again in 2025. In addition to the well-established work placements abroad at the HBFS, the department is particularly proud that a student from the PIA childcare class (practice-integrated training) successfully took part in a two-week Erasmus mobility placement in Spain. As part of her international placement, she worked in a nursery in the Valencia region, where she gained valuable professional and intercultural experience. During her stay, she supported the local teaching team, assisted with the children's daily routine and gained insights into different approaches to early childhood education. She particularly benefited from the intensive language practice and the exchange with the Spanish staff. With this successful participation, the vocational college is officially extending its Erasmus mobility programme to the PIA Childcare course. This means that in future, even more students will have the opportunity to gain international work experience and strengthen their personal and professional skills. The school community is delighted with this successful start and is already planning further international placements for prospective childcare workers.

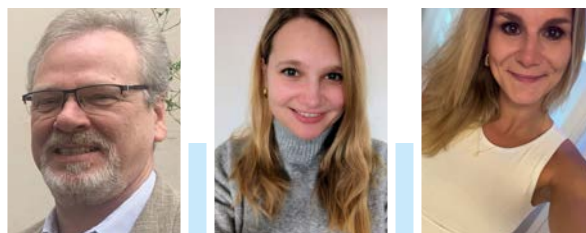
Europe Day 2025: Europe in conversation

A particular highlight was Europe Day on 19 May. Students from various courses discussed the key question: "What does Europe mean to me personally?"

EU Coordinator Michael Boeck welcomed Dr Peter Liese, a Member of the European Parliament for over 30 years. In an open discussion, students spoke about their internships abroad – for example, at Playmobil in Malta, in nurseries in Valencia or at a modelling agency in Lisbon. All these internships were funded by Erasmus grants. Dr Liese emphasised the importance of professional mobility for the European Union. The students then asked questions on current political issues such as the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as the future of peace in Europe. Lively discussions ensued, highlighting the students' political interest. In the end, everyone agreed: Europe Day was a resounding success and is to be continued and expanded in the coming school year.

Outlook

Iserlohn Vocational College looks back with pride on an eventful Erasmus year and is already looking forward to the planned international activities in the coming year.



The authors

Michael Boeck
Erasmus Coordinator

Miriam Schmidt
Erasmus Coordinator
for the Social and Health Care Department

Sabrina Müller
Erasmus Officer for the Higher Vocational School
programme in the Social and Health Care sector



Märkisches Berufskolleg Unna Thinking outside the box

In 2025, students at the Märkisches Berufskolleg in the district of Unna were once again able to engage with Europe, diversity and democracy through a range of initiatives. These included, for example, taking part in language certificate exams and competitions, as well as study abroad programmes for students and teachers. Below, we would like to share a selection of these initiatives and impressions.

As part of the project “Promoting participation and cross-border understanding to broaden and consolidate acceptance of diversity in Europe post-Brexit”, eight students from the Inclusion Working Group travelled to Glasgow again in March 2025. There, together with two teachers and partners from our partner school, Hollybrook Academy, they took part in joint activities.

These activities included a visit to the Glasgow Science Centre, hiking through the Highlands, golf and bowling. During this time, our students were able to establish contacts and exchange ideas with people both with and without support needs. The results were presented to the school community in an exhibition at MBK Unna in May 2025.

The project was supported by the ‘Europa-Schecks’ state initiative organised by the Minister for Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs, and Media, and Head of the State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia.

As in the previous year, some of our trainee hairdressers travelled to France in 2025. This time, they went to Évry, a town in the Essonne department in the Île-de-France region.

In addition to practical work in selected local partner salons, the programme also included a visit to the vocational school Faculté des Métiers Essonne. There, they gained an insight into everyday school life in France, took part in regular French lessons and were able to develop their creative and technical skills in professionally led up-do workshops.

The weekend was spent enjoying cultural highlights. Together, the group explored central Paris – visiting landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs-Élysées, Notre-Dame and Sacré-Cœur.

Not only our trainees, but also our teaching staff were able to gain valuable experience abroad in 2025. The training to become a nursery teacher and the work as a qual-

ified professional were the focus of a job shadowing programme organised by the Arnsberg District Government. To this end, various facilities for the under-3 and under-6 age groups were visited, and there was an in-depth exchange with nursery teachers.

The programme also included a visit to an education centre, where our colleagues were able to answer questions from the Spanish trainees about training and working conditions in Germany. Alongside these key areas, they also got to know Madrid and Spanish culture better. Having 'looked beyond their own horizons', our colleagues returned to the MBK with plenty of ideas and inspiration. It remains exciting!

Furthermore, a joint trip to Oświęcim and Kraków in 2025, focusing on memorial education, was on the programme with the K2-BK from the city of Hagen. The culture of remembrance, on the one hand, and intercultural encounters with pupils from a Polish school, on the other, formed the core of this trip. Among other things, the Auschwitz concentration camp and Schindler's factory were visited. Due to the high demand, the trip will be repeated in 2026 – a great success!

In addition, a de-escalation trainer and a guidance teacher from the MBK travelled to the Netherlands for the training course 'Learning from Neighbours – Dealing with Conflicts Constructively', funded by the Münster District Government. There, relevant challenges were discussed, such as dealing constructively with extreme viewpoints held by pupils and responding appropriately to discriminatory remarks. The tour of Deltion College and participation in the "Brown Eyes – Blue Eyes" simulation also offered training opportunities from which everyone at the MBK can benefit.

However, the MBK has not only ventured out into the world, but has also welcomed new friends from abroad here in Unna. During the project run by the voluntary association "Europa macht Schule", an economics student from Ramtha in Jordan gave us an insight into his homeland in his presentation "Discover Jordan: Culture, Country and People". With a focus on comparing Germany and Jordan, our pupils thus experienced a cultural exchange in which topics such as Jordanian cuisine, the role of women and migration were explored in greater depth.

Alongside all the travel, however, our students here at home were not idle either. In 2025, four students from the higher vocational school successfully obtained the KMK language certificate in English at B2 level. They sat the written and oral exams for this certificate alongside their final exams and were honoured for this achievement during the graduation ceremony at the Travados Circus.

In 2025, Year 12 and 13 students at the vocational grammar school took part in a simulation exercise on 'fake news' and 'hate speech' in EU digital policy. This was organised by the Europe Direct Centre of the Auslandsgesellschaft in Dortmund. The project actively addressed current issues such as the spread of misinformation on the internet and EU legislation in this area, with students taking on the roles of MEPs.

Building on this, the classes also took part in the EuroVisions 2025 competition under the slogan "Checkst Du?! Active against fake news in Europe!". In the entries they produced, the pupils were able to engage with the topic once again individually and creatively. We're keeping our fingers crossed for positive feedback!



The authors

Ms Kyra Orgelmacher
EU Coordinator

Ms Nicole Majek
EU Coordinator

Ms Christiane Roth
Teacher of the MBK Inclusion Working Group





Paul Ehrlich Vocational College, City of Dortmund News from the 2024/25 academic year

As part of the work on the Erasmus+ project, a wide range of organisational, coordinating and advisory activities were carried out. A key area of responsibility was partner acquisition, with the aim of expanding existing international collaborations and attracting new project partners.

To ensure continuous professional development, project participants regularly attended training sessions, both online and in person. These served to enhance their professional skills and ensure high-quality project implementation.

To inform and recruit potential participants, the Erasmus+ project was presented in various courses and classes at the Paul-Ehrlich-Berufskolleg. In addition, individual consultations were held with students to clarify participation requirements, organisational procedures, and personal and financial matters.

Another key area of responsibility involved providing support with financial matters, particularly regarding funding opportunities, reimbursement procedures and cost coverage. In this context, there was also close cooperation with

the Friends of the Paul-Ehrlich Vocational College to provide organisational and financial support for the project activities.

Furthermore, additional teaching staff were continuously recruited to join the Erasmus+ team in order to expand the project's personnel base and ensure its sustainable implementation. Ongoing bookkeeping and the maintenance of project-related data were also part of the ongoing administrative tasks.

The author

Jörn Helfmeier
EU Coordinator

Report on our trip and the work placement abroad in Salamanca

Our trip began at Düsseldorf Airport, from where we flew to Madrid. It was my first ever flight, which is why I was

very excited. Despite my nerves, the flight was smooth and problem-free. After arriving in Madrid, we travelled straight on by train to Salamanca. The train journey took us through the Spanish countryside, which I found particularly impressive. I had imagined the landscape to be much drier, but was surprised at how green everything was.

Once we arrived in Salamanca, we moved into our room in a Spanish student hall of residence. We stayed in a twin room and were mainly surrounded by Spanish students. The accommodation offered plenty of communal areas where it was easy to socialise with others. There were numerous leisure facilities, such as table football, a communal kitchen, a gym and even a cinema. The food at the accommodation was also a new experience for me, as I hadn't really known beforehand what people typically eat in Spain.

From Monday to Friday, we completed a two-week work placement at a beauty salon. This salon offers both beauty therapy and hairdressing courses, which are mainly attended by young Spaniards. In the first week we had a South American course leader, and in the second week a Spanish one. We had a lot of fun with both of them, and they tried to involve us in the lessons as much as possible. As most of us speak hardly any Spanish, we were accompanied by Christina, our translator. Thanks to her, we were able to follow the lessons well and communicate more effectively.

We also went on lots of outings in our free time. Almost every day we explored the nearby old town, which was very beautiful and lively. We were given a guided tour of the city as well as a tour of the famous Cathedral of Salamanca. This gave us an initial overview of the city and helped us find our way around more easily later on. I was particularly impressed by the city's architecture, which looked very old yet felt vibrant at the same time.

Together with our Erasmus partner, we also visited a very well-known café and ate classic Spanish churros there. I didn't know beforehand that they're eaten differently in Spain than they are back home. There, the churros are dipped in thick hot chocolate, which I particularly enjoyed. For me, this experience was one of the culinary highlights of the trip.

Towards the end of our stay, we went for a pedal boat ride. This allowed us to get to know the city from a less touristy side, as we were south of the city centre, where there were many sports fields where the locals were training.

One evening, I went out for tapas with my teachers. Christina had given us a tip about which restaurant supposedly served the best tapas in town. There, I tried lots of new dishes that I'd never eaten before. It was a particularly lovely and enjoyable experience for me, as we could try lots of different dishes and share them with one another.

On the last day of our stay, our work placement started a little later as we had arranged to meet Christina for breakfast beforehand. She showed us a café at the university that was frequented by both young people and working people. There I learnt that most Spaniards have a café con leche and a small sweet treat for breakfast. I really enjoyed this relaxed breakfast culture.

Overall, this trip was a wonderful and educational experience for me. Not only did I get to know a new country and a new culture, but I also gained a lot of new insights in a professional context. In particular, the first flight, the internship, the many activities we did together and the encounters with the local people will stay with me for a long time.

The author

Student at the Paul Ehrlich Vocational College



Walter Gropius Vocational College, City of Bochum Europe Unites: Exchange, Learning, and Remembrance

A new edition of the “Robot Project” in Greece with the partner school “1st Epagelmatiko Lykio Lechenon” (Peloponnese)

Environmental disasters such as storms, earthquakes or floods often result in remote areas being cut off from the outside world in the affected regions. In such cases, it is often difficult to get aid convoys to the affected areas, and they usually arrive late. The reason for this is the destroyed infrastructure. Yet the people in these areas need the aid supplies as quickly as possible!

To develop a solution to this problem, students studying automotive mechatronics and design engineering at the vocational grammar school and technical college of our vocational college, in collaboration with pupils from our Greek partner school, developed a robot in October 2025 that can be easily controlled via a smartphone app. Loaded with relief supplies, this robot can navigate through the

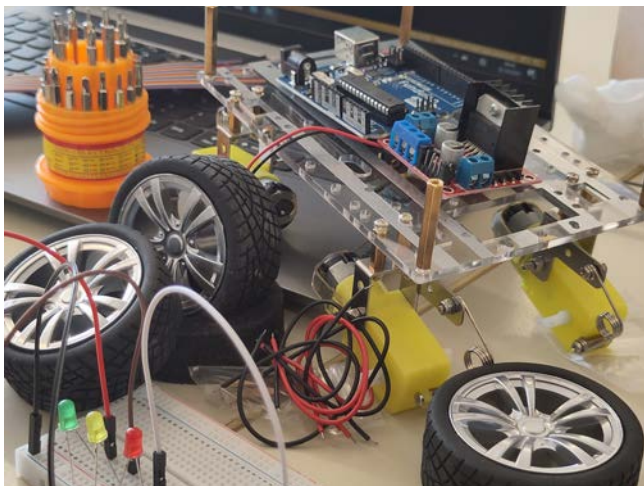
devastated area and provide direct assistance to those affected in an emergency.

To mark the end of the project, a small competition was held in which the self-built robots demonstrated their capabilities. Even after the first few exercises, it became clear just how much teamwork and mutual support had facilitated the implementation of the project. There were setbacks, but the challenges were overcome together. In the end, perseverance paid off: alongside the technical work, there was plenty of fun, creativity and, above all, cultural exchange. The collaboration impressively demonstrated how straightforward communication can be, even when you don't understand every word.

One participating student summed up her experiences as follows: “The ice was quickly broken; we became more confident in using foreign languages and more open to other ways of life. Differences do not have to divide us – on the

contrary: they make encounters exciting and valuable and open up new perspectives. This trip has shaped us and will stay with us for a long time to come. Every conversation and every moment spent together showed just how much one can learn from a project like this."

We are now eagerly looking forward to the return visit from our Greek partner students in February 2026!



The author

Magdalena Sidiropoulos
European Coordinator

Erasmus+ project in Málaga: New learning through European exchange

In October 2025, a group of vocational college teachers from our college, along with several trainees, set off for Málaga. Together, they explored the Spanish training system in the field of automotive mechatronics. The trip was organised by the Dortmund Chamber of Crafts and Mobility Advisor Svenja Höhfeld, who made the exchange possible through the Erasmus+ programme.

During several company visits in the Málaga region, the participants gained fascinating insights into vocational training in Spain. The aim was to gain an understanding

of the training system in Spain, learn about intercultural differences, improve foreign language skills and establish new or further strengthen existing European partnerships.

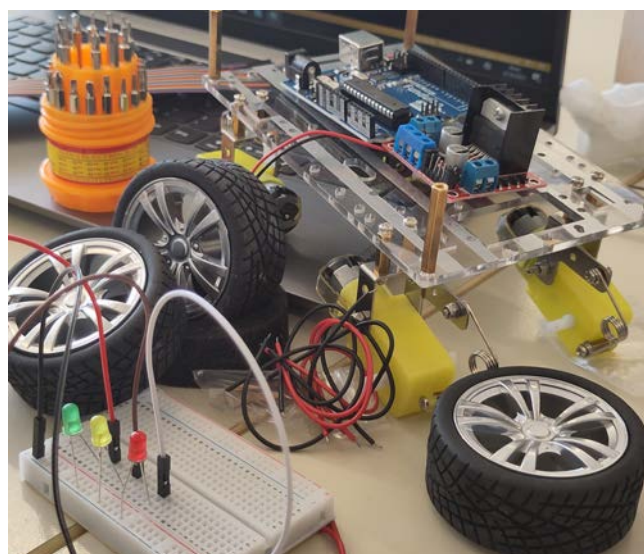
Two of our apprentices took the opportunity to undertake a three-week work placement in Spanish automotive workshops. During our visit, we were able to see their work first-hand and engage in in-depth discussions with their Spanish colleagues. The garages worked with both national and international customers – an ideal opportunity for our trainees to expand their technical, intercultural and language skills.

Their daily work included oil changes, inspections, tyre services, minor diagnostics and repairs to engine and braking systems. Replacing entire engines and gearboxes was also part of the programme. Particularly impressive was the insight into how Spanish garages operate, which differ significantly from German garages in terms of organisation and procedures. Despite language challenges, our trainees quickly settled in and communicated successfully in English and using basic Spanish.

Our intern Niklas P. sums up his impressions as follows:

"Thanks to Erasmus+, I have not only acquired new technical skills, but also learnt to work and live flexibly and independently in an international environment. I would do this placement again in a heartbeat!"

Another highlight of the trip was the visit to the vocational school IES La Rosaleda in Málaga. The intensive professional exchange led to a new partnership focusing on automotive mechatronics. A reciprocal exchange project involving work placements for trainees from both schools is already planned for 2026.



Conclusion: The project trip to Málaga was a resounding success – an inspiring example of European cooperation in action and practical internationalisation in vocational education and training!



The author

Beata Haveloh
Member of the Democracy Education Team

Memorial trip to Gdańsk

In November 2025, we undertook our memorial site trip to Gdańsk. The aim of the trip was to familiarise the students with the historical context of the outbreak of the Second World War and to foster a deeper understanding of Polish history and its development up to the present day. Through an in-depth examination of the city's historical and social context, history became not merely a theoretical subject but a tangible experience.

Even during the preparations for the trip, several information sessions on the historical context were held, as some of the students, who came from a wide variety of nationalities, had only limited prior knowledge of history. These sessions provided basic knowledge, for example on the rise of the NSDAP, the reasons for the imprisonments and Hitler's rise to power.

As part of a detailed guided tour of the city, the students explored significant historical sites in Gdańsk, including the Garrison Cemetery, the Old Post Office and the Kindertransport Memorial. A particular focus was placed on the visit to Westerplatte, where they examined in depth the German invasion of Poland as well as the strategic and geographical significance of Gdańsk at the start of the Second World War. At the modern Museum of the Second World War, the students gained a comprehensive insight into the international context of the war. Both political developments and the most serious crimes and atrocities of that period were addressed in a powerful manner.

The emotional highlight of the memorial tour was the visit to the former Stutthof labour and concentration camp. The historical events they had previously studied led the group to this place, where Nazi violence and inhumanity became shockingly visible. For many students, it was al-

most unimaginable that systematic exploitation, suffering and death had been part of everyday life in this now quiet and remote place. The accounts of daily life in the camp, the inhumane living conditions and the individual fates of the prisoners brought home the scale of the crimes and led to deep shock, speechlessness and intense reflection.

In the evening, detailed reflection sessions took place, during which the pupils were able to openly share their impressions and feelings. This not only allowed them to process what they had experienced, but also provided an opportunity to discuss the dangers of the present day, particularly exclusion, hatred and responsibility within society. The consistently good weather also allowed for walks on the beach, which were deliberately used as quiet moments of pause to literally 'take a deep breath'.

The pupils were very grateful for the opportunity to take part in this memorial trip. Their impressions were also reflected in personal comments, such as:

"I will never forget this trip."

"How can people do such things to one another?"

"We must put an end to this hatred today."

As an accompanying teacher, I too found this trip deeply moving. Although I had visited similar places before, the impressions I gained in the surrounding woods were particularly new and left a lasting impression. The wealth of emotions, thoughts and conversations among the pupils really brought home to me how important it is to provide young people with spaces where they can develop an awareness of history, responsibility and humanity.



The author

Magdalena Sidiropoulos
European Coordinator

Contact



EU Service Centre for Business and Vocational Training
Laurentiusstraße 1,
59821 Arnsberg
GERMANY
www.bra.nrw.de/-2420



Head of the EU Office
Karsten Mielke
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3141
karsten.mielke@bra.nrw.de



Managing Director of the EU Office
Dominik Lux
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3180
dominik.lux@bra.nrw.de



Alexander Gerber
Telefon: 02931 82-3167
alexander.gerber@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Mondays

Advice on German-French cooperation



Tatjana Rosenthal
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3089
tatjana.rosenthal@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Wednesdays

Advice on German-Polish cooperation



Aleksandra Lass
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3385
aleksandra.lass@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Thursdays

Advice on promoting democracy in international projects



Sandra Hansen
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3360
sandra.hansen@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Fridays

Consulting on German-British cooperation

Guidance on the certification of students and vocational colleges

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Alexander Koltzsch
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3386
alexander.koltzsch@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Tuesdays

Advice on continuing education and informational sessions

Advice on networks in the region



Waldemar Raabe
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3382
waldemar.raabe@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Mondays and Tuesdays

Advice on training and informational events

Advice on networks in the region



Christina Stube
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3156
christina.stube@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Tuesdays

Public Relations Consulting



Jakob Terlau
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3129
jakob.terlau@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Tuesdays and Fridays

Advice on projects related to "digitization"



Anina Wellers
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3190
anina.wellers@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays through Fridays



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**State of North Rhine-Westphalia
represented by the**

District Government Arnsberg

Seibertzstraße 1

59821 Arnsberg

GERMANY

Telefon +49 2931 82-0

Telefax +49 2931 82-2520

poststelle@bra.nrw.de

www.bra.nrw.de

