

**The third project meeting took place in Germany and was hosted by Georg -
Büchner -Gymnasium Seelze.**



Participants

The Romanian team (Mariana Hudrea, Simona Dicu and Flavia Costin plus their pupils) arrived on Monday 30 November followed by the remaining teams the next day; Alasdair Watts and Colette Bourgeois from France, Huseyin Öztürk and Rafet Akay from Turkey, Monica Meneghelli and Patrizia Tommasi from Italy, Jola Prodanowska and Dorata Boryczko from Poland. Altogether 16 foreign pupils attended the project meeting from these five countries.

Accommodation

All staff were accommodated at the Hotel Waldersee in Hanover and pupils by host families. Teachers all expressed satisfaction regarding the choice of the hotel which offered excellent value for money. It should also be pointed out that staff had very positive feedback from pupils concerning host families.

Wednesday

The official meeting began on Wednesday 2 December. The head teacher Mr Gerold Muller greeted participants in the school auditorium with a short speech before a group of musicians offered us a rousing performance of some songs they had specially prepared for the occasion.

We were offered a brief tour of the GBG in groups and all were struck by the pleasant working atmosphere that pervades. Pupils remarked in particular how agreeable it was for works of art to be exhibited around the building.

We returned to the auditorium where the ‘serious business’ of the conference could begin. The Polish, Italian and Romanian groups presented films they had made interviewing immigrants. The two French pupils made a presentation, illustrated with photographs and a short video, of the ‘Jungle’ in Calais where hundreds of illegal immigrants, mainly from Afghanistan, are currently based with the expectation of somehow, or anyhow, crossing The English Channel to reach the UK. There followed a lively exchange of views particularly from those German pupils who have been studying this question in their English classes having watched the British film ‘It’s a Free World’ (on last year’s programme of activities) and the French film ‘Welcome’. The first morning’s activities concluded with the opportunity for pupils and teachers alike to observe classes. Teachers noted the ease and the frequency with which the German pupils participated in class.

In the afternoon we were taken on a guided tour of Hanover and the day concluded with an evening meal for teachers at the “Ständige Vertretung”.

Thursday

Thursday was devoted to the question of German immigration. The political scientist Franziska Woellert from the prestigious 'Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung' offered us some fascinating insights into the question illustrating her talk with graphs and statistics.

We were then introduced to three groups of immigrants (mainly parents) representing the different waves of immigration to Germany over the last thirty years; two Gastarbeiter (from Spain and Turkey), two ethnic migrants (Aussiedler from Kazakhstan and Romania) and two so-called economic migrants from Poland. Teachers and pupils were divided into mixed nationality groups and each group given the task of interviewing their immigrant. In the afternoon, groups had an hour to prepare the presentation they would make to the plenary session that followed. Pupils appreciated having the chance to express themselves in English at such length and share knowledge gained from 'their' immigrant with fellow participants.

Friday

Friday morning concerned the Turkish question. Wolfgang Mertens and Till Winkler started by showing us a film that they had made the previous summer starring our Turkish colleague Hüseyin Oztürk.

Hüseyin spent the first eleven years of his life in the town of Vlotho about 60 kms from Hanover before his parents decided to move back to Turkey. The film showed Hüseyin returning to the town of his childhood rediscovering places and people he hadn't seen for over twenty years. The film was very moving and taught us much about how uprooting an experience emigration must be.

A round table discussion involving two parents of Turkish origin and chaired by Canan Topcu, a former pupil of GBG and now successful journalist working for the Frankfurter Rundschau, dealt with the Turkish question. The debate was animated and informative with many pupils, particularly those of Turkish origin, joining in to relate their experience of living in Germany.

In the afternoon pupils were given free time. Teachers in the meantime were shown an excellent film made by the Romanian team of the second meeting in Baia Mare.

Plans for Bursa

We then got down to the business of discussing plans for Bursa. The first item on the agenda was the dates. We agreed that participants would arrive on Tuesday 25 May and that the official programme would begin on Wednesday 26 May and conclude on Friday 28 May with participants leaving on Saturday 29 or Sunday 30 May. We discussed activities for the meeting in Bursa. Hüseyin explained that he would build his programme around the theme of immigration while also offering teams an opportunity to discover Bursa and Istanbul. Between now and May our pupils will prepare

presentations on news items related to the theme of immigration or emigration covered by the media in our respective countries. These will be shown in Bursa. It was also agreed that we would continue the tradition at each of our meetings of placing pupils in mixed nationality groups, this time with the task of producing posters promoting the underlying message of tolerance and anti-racism that has been prevalent throughout the two years of our project.

Saturday

The official programme concluded with a visit to the Museum of Emigration in Ballinstadt where pupils learnt the importance of Hamburg as a port from which millions of Germans, East Europeans and Scandinavians left Europe in search of a better life in the 'New World'.

Teams returned home on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 December.

A word of thanks

On behalf of all teams I wish to thank our German colleagues for producing such a rich and varied programme that none of us shall ever forget.

Alasdair Watts
Project Coordinator