

International University Week (IUW) Jena 2013

In the week from the 15th to the 19th of April 2013, the 15th International University Week (briefly IUW) took place at the Ernst Abbe University of Applied Sciences in Jena (EAH), Germany. At this event, 33 students and 8 lecturers of the partner colleges of Hasselt and Leuven (B), Linz and St. Pölten (A), Odense (DK), Malaga (ESP), Groningen (NL), Porsgrunn (N) which are members in the European Network of University Schools of social workers (SocNet98), as well as guest of Poland, Italy and Finland visited us. Together with 49 students and 10 lecturers of Jena it was a pretty big IUW group. The IUW Jena was organised and carried out by the students under the direction of Prof. Dr. Trenczek. The accommodation of our guests occurred at the apartments or flat shares of our fellow students. Thereby they received an insight into the everyday life of the students from Jena.

While some guests already arrived on Sunday, the bigger part arrived in the morning of the opening day in Jena. The first approaches took place at a big cake buffet and coffee. Afterwards the official introduction occurred in the media studio, where the dean of the welfare department, Prof. Dr. G. Neubauer, and Prof. Trenczek welcomed the guests. Accordingly, the participating European colleges briefly introduced themselves. After a small break, Prof. Dr. M. Opielka gave a lecture about the welfare state in the future and the role of the social work which led to a interesting discussion. The following informal part contained amusing icebreaker-and get-to-know-each-other-games and a city rally.

In the evening everybody met at the Welcome Dinner in the youth club Hugo (Winzerla), where a rich buffet with cold and warm dishes invited our participants to dinner. The first evening of our IUW was finished with music of the rock 'n' roll band "The Panjabys" and our DJ from Austria "DJ Flo" who was able to lure all students and lecturers over again on the dance floor in spite of the long day.

During both next days the workshops took place at the EAH. They were held from the lecturers and professors of the EAH, as well as from our participant lecturers and professors of the other universities. Subjects were, among others, interactions between social workers and parents during the child welfare investigation process, experience based learning/education and outdoor training, transnational exchanges as a new chance for disadvantaged and unemployed youth, migration and transcultural society, social work with youth at risk, street work in Jena, social rights of disabled people and the transmission of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, music as a tool for building interaction, rock as the only drug, chances of keeping or becoming clean in the scene, peer relations, mental distress and quality of life in schools, sexual negligence within adolescence - construction of a problematic issue, conflict resolution by mediation. In the workshops, not only interesting and new information could be given, also the relations and friendship could further tighten.

On Tuesday evening all participants had free time. Some rested, other explored the town and went shopping at the Goethe Gallery, and again others met at the paradise park to enjoy the nice weather. In the evening the bars of the Wagner's lane were explored together with the students of the EAH.

Wednesday evening a barbecue was arranged at the youth club "Treffpunkt" (Lobeda). While the first Thuringian sausages and for our vegans/vegetarians halumni cheese and small vegetable packages lay on the grill, all could play beach volleyball and Viking's chess or simply enjoy the sun. A small salad refreshment bar was enabled thanks to our committed students who have had prepared the salads. Later, a still quite young jazz band of students entertained us and also asked our guests to catch an instrument to jam together in the cultural and international harmony.

Thursday the cultural visit of Weimar was on the program. The one who wanted could take part in guidance at the former concentration camp "Buchenwald". Afterwards, the city centre was visited. Everybody was free to visit a museum, the shopping centre or simply go for a walk.

In the evening all participants met to the final farewell party at the “Kulturbahnhof” (North of Jena). Besides, the highlight of the warm refreshment bar was the big suckling pig from which at the end nothing more was left. After dinner DJ Flo hung up the last time and all participants, students as well as lecturers, danced into the night and rang in the end of the week. About the whole evening envelopes with the name of every one hung on the wall. All participants could hand over small news, wishes and contact addresses.

The next morning a common breakfast with the following evaluation was organised at the „Haus auf der Mauer“ (Jena City Centre), where everybody received a certificate for his participation. Small gift bags were handed to the lecturers. Afterwards there was a small pantomime play in which all groups explained once again what they liked or what could be changed. During all time, photos have been projected in the background, which Christian Strohbach had shot over the whole week (each participating university did get a DVD with the pictures). All too fast the time to say goodbye was there.

The international university week in 2013 had completely succeeded. Unfortunately we had faced unexpected difficulties due to the fact that a few students have lacked basic English language capability. Nevertheless, according to the feedback of the (foreign) participants the IUW Jena 2013 was a big success with especially with regard to the organization, content and level of workshops (ratings between 1 - 4; mostly 1 - 2), the social activities, the student hosts (rating 1,2!!) and the overall evaluation (rating 1,3).

Thanks to all the participating lecturers and students who came to Jena and contributed to the IUW 2013! Thanks to the fantastic dedication of the student organisation group under the guidance of Prof. T. Trenczek, but also to the hidden commitment of many students and members of the Department of Social Work, the EAH was able to offer an extensive programme to our guests with many different facets. The exchange was recognizable not only at the professional level, but also at the emotional and cultural level we could learn from each other and enjoy a wonderful week.

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