

The International University Week in Groningen

A feedback from the Jena participants

On the 30th of April 2017, we departed from Jena to the Netherlands. After a long and exhausting voyage per train, we reached our destination – Groningen, where we were going to stay for four days to take part in the International University Week which was put under the motto: “A world on the move: social work in times of migration”.

The university city Groningen, capital of the province of the same name, is in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands and has about 200.000 inhabitants, one quarter of it students.

The organisation team of the Hanzehogeschool has been booking some rooms for us in the “Bud Gett Hostel”, which has emerged as an excellent choice for the accommodation was neat and located in the heart of the beautiful city centre of Groningen.

On Monday morning, after having a rich breakfast at the hostels buffet, we took the bus to Zernike Campus. By arriving there, we were astonished and impressed by the mere size of the site and the amazing modern architecture of all the surrounding buildings of the college.

All of us participants were supposed to meet for official registration and a pleasant welcome event with coffee, tea and delicious “stroop waffels”. We have been warmly welcomed by Jelco Caro, the international coordinator of the Hanzehogeschool and the organisation team of the IUW, consisting of students and teachers, who introduced themselves, the college and the city of Groningen to us. Following that, Dr. Rob Verhofstad (member of the Executive Board, Hanze UAS) introduced the topic “A world on the move” to us by talking about how the typical refugee policy in Europe and the concomitant difficulties influence the tasks of social work.

After a short refreshment, we had the chance to get to know all the other participants from Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Germany a little bit better by playing a funny speed dating game. Afterwards we could choose several of 19 workshops from a wide variety of topics, which we were going to attend after the lunchbreak. In the following, we will summarize the workshop of Mr. Nico Barning (MSc.; Director Hanze Foundation) that we could attend during the IUW to give an impression of the atmosphere and content of the workshops.

Nico Barning: “Development cooperation and migration: two strongly interlinked phenomena”: This workshop discussed the link between development cooperation and migration. We started with exchanging subjective experiences we made with developing countries, quite a lot of the participants have travelled around a developing country once or even grew up in one. Together, we pointed out characteristics which define a developing country as such and which all developing countries all over the world have in common. These are poverty, malnutrition or starvation, a sharp increase of population, an overriding importance of agriculture as the primary sector of economy, increasing urbanisation, an elevated level of corruption, political unrest, pollution and unemployment. The fact, that these conditions inevitably lead to migration was evident to us. In the following, we discussed the goals of development cooperation: fighting poverty, political, social and economic problems and we examined the differences between short- and long-term development cooperation, such as providing financial aid or microcredits on one side and a structural socioeconomic change of society on the other side. We could contribute to the topic by developing own ideas about support assessments and theories of modernisation and discussing about the role of industrialised countries causing poverty and suffering in developing countries for the most part by agricultural subsidy,

exportation of weapons and failed attempts of financial aid and political interference in past times. In conclusion, this workshop was an enrichment which truly pointed out the link between development cooperation and migration by creating an interactive learning atmosphere in which all of us could take part. By that it can be taken as a good example for the whole IUW, which provided a great gain of knowledge to all of us.

Further highlights of the lecture and workshop program have been the presentation of Oomar Mulbocus about "Countering Violence and Extremism", the workshops of Mr. Lenny Kruit (Hanzehogeschool Groningen) about Photovoice and Dr. Kasule Kibirige (Uganda Christian University, Mukono, Uganda) about "Exploring collaborative synergies to improve social work education and training in Uganda" as well as the interactive workshop of Professor Trenczek (Jena) about "Mediation and Conflict Management".

Next to all the interesting workshops and lectures at Zernike Campus, there was a varied range of leisure time activities offered to us by our hosting students, which was giving us the possibility to discover the beautiful city of Groningen as well as supporting international exchange and networking between each other.

The first possibility to make some international acquaintances was offered to us right on Monday evening, where we had a nice barbecue together, which was the perfect start to our common experience of the IUW.

As successful as interesting was the all-day city tour around Groningen on Wednesday with our hosting students as guides. The highlights of this activity were on one hand the guided tour around the historic synagogue and on the other hand a funny game called "crazy 88" which was prepared by our hosts and was played alongside the sightseeing tour. It led to a lot of funny situations and special contacts with Dutch culture. For example, we had to find out curious facts about Groningen and taste some typical Dutch food like the famous "Eierbal".

A historical highlight was the participation in the festivities around the "Bevrijdingsdag" which marks the end of World War II by the liberation of the Netherlands through the Allied forces on the 5th of May.

Finally, this eventful and unforgettable time was brought to a close by an amazing farewell party, which was prepared with a lot of love and effort by our hosts.

To sum up this experience, we can say that the IUW was not only passing on a lot of knowledge about migration and social work in general but also offered the opportunity to build an international network of social workers and friends all over Europe. While gaining knowledge about the diversities was the main issue of this event, we can only admit that the concentrated atmosphere of learning was completed by all those interesting and funny supporting programmes, which committed this amazing time in our memory.

All of us could take exciting experiences, new insights and even some friendships back home.

Thank you very much for making this experience possible!

Greetings from the students of Jena: Julia Heidrich, Marina Fick, Anne-Kathrin Goes, Corbin Schrupf, Johann Roß