



We are Europe

News from the district Arnsberg

Cover picture:

AHS vocational college in Siegen

Emelie Jaschke, Julia Meiswinkel & Shanthi Zacharias
FSi221, PiA Trainee educators

Teacher: Samina Eickbusch

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Preface



75 years of the European Union - democracy, values and the vision of the founding fathers

Dear reader,

The present seems to be characterised by fears, the fear of economic losses, the fear of foreigners, the fear of being taken advantage of, the fear of loss of identity and, last but not least, the fear of military conflicts. Can the problems of our time be solved through democratic co-operation? The struggle for the supremacy of the respective political approaches and ideologies is already taking place. However, a look at the history of the EU shows that visionaries with attitude and courage have brought peace and prosperity to our society on the basis of a free and democratic order. It is this courage and these convictions that are the subject of this foreword.

The so-called Schuman Plan came into force on 9 May 1950. The idea of establishing a European economic area was developed by a group led by the entrepreneur Jean Monnet and announced by the then Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on that date in the Salon de l'Horloge of the Quai d'Orsay in Paris in a government statement to the press. The German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer had been inaugurated shortly before. This economic community for coal and steel was also open to other accession countries in Europe.

The aim of the Schuman Plan was to create comparable economic conditions in the accession countries and to prevent war:

“The solidarity of production thus created will demonstrate that any war between France and Germany is not only unthinkable, but materially impossible. The creation of this powerful community of production, open to all countries wishing to participate in it, with the aim of supplying all the countries it embraces with the necessary raw materials for their industrial production on equal terms, will lay the real foundations for their economic unification.”

Among the most important architects of this project were the so-called “founding fathers of Europe”:

- Robert Schuman (France): As French Foreign Minister, he presented the Schuman Declaration in 1950, which is considered the birth of European integration. His proposal for joint management of coal and steel production between Germany and France was the first concrete step towards preventing future wars.
- Jean Monnet (France): The economic advisor and diplomat was the spiritual father of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and worked tirelessly in favour of gradual European integration.

- Konrad Adenauer (Germany): As the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, he was a staunch European who promoted reconciliation with France and Germany's ties to the West.
- Alcide De Gasperi (Italy): The Italian Prime Minister promoted European unification and was instrumental in the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC).
- Paul-Henri Spaak (Belgium): As a Belgian politician and diplomat, he campaigned in favour of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which formed the basis of the later EU.

75 years ago, the foundation stone was laid for the European Union - a historic project that was to secure peace, democracy and co-operation on a continent previously torn apart by war. European unification is one of the greatest political achievements of modern times and has brought freedom, prosperity and security to millions of people. But it was not a matter of course. It was courageous visionaries who created the basis for today's Europe with foresight and determination.

Democracy is the foundation of the European Union. It guarantees civil rights, the rule of law and political participation for over 450 million people. But democracy cannot be taken for granted - it must be actively defended and further developed.

Despite all its achievements, the EU faces major challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important European solidarity is. The economic and geopolitical consequences of the war in Ukraine require a stronger common foreign and defence policy. The climate crisis is forcing Europe to find sustainable solutions. European democracies are also under pressure from populism, nationalism and digital disinformation.

But history shows: The EU grows with crises. It has repeatedly reformed and strengthened itself. The European idea lives on - supported by millions of people who believe in a peaceful, free, democratic and united Europe.

Because Europe is not just history and the present, Europe is our common future.

Karsten Mielke

Head of the EU Business and Vocational Training Office

Greeting



Dear readers,

The speed and intensity with which political and social developments are shaking the foundations of fundamental European values has continued to increase in recent years. Some current national, European or international trends are currently even in search of appropriate descriptions. Supposed certainties are eroding, trust in institutions is dwindling and society and the community are threatening to fragment. Unfortunately, the resulting rejection of democratic participation also affects young people in particular, as the turnout for the European Parliament elections in 2024 has shown.

Vocational education and training can make an important contribution here by trying to teach learners not only job-specific skills, but also critical distance, the ability to reflect, prudence and openness. This is particularly important against the backdrop of highly simplified, distorted or simply false representations of complex interrelationships, which often spread rapidly and reinforce each other.

Campaigns to strengthen democratic awareness, such as those organised by the Arnsberg district government together with educational institutions under the motto "We are Europe", impart both knowledge and values. Learners can thus better navigate increasingly heated and unobjective debates and actively participate in democratic life. European exchange can act as an antidote to populist, na-

tionalist or radical tendencies. Learner mobility in particular promotes intercultural competence, tolerance and the feeling of being part of Europe. It is therefore all the more important to give VET learners extensive opportunities to spend time in other European countries.

This applies in particular to trainees, who are still relatively little involved in European exchange programmes due to specific organisational hurdles. EU coordinators in vocational colleges play a key role in this context. They maintain partnerships with foreign educational institutions and companies, accompany and support trainees before, during and after their stays abroad and play an important role in convincing training companies.

As an association dedicated to the Europeanisation of training, we are particularly pleased to be working with the EU Business and Vocational Training Office of the Arnsberg district government. In the future, we would like to jointly promote the competences of EU coordinators and improve the exchange between the members of our networks. Within a recently established "Coalition for the Mobility of Apprentices", we would like to contribute to strengthening the European idea together with other European partner organisations that share our goals and convictions.

Andreas Gabriel
Euro App Mobility – Paris, France



EU Business and Vocational Education and Training Office - Promoting democracy in international projects

Promoting democracy in international projects

Teacher qualification for democracy education

Democracy has been under serious threat for years: human rights violations by authoritarian regimes around the world, nationalist government involvement in the centre of Europe, xenophobic and anti-Semitic attacks and assaults, including in Germany. In order to preserve our fundamental values of freedom and democracy, these threatening trends must be countered and European cohesion strengthened.

Vocational colleges are ideal places for attractive educational programmes through which young people can learn democratic values, tolerance and openness to the world, as they train young people who often obtain their information second-hand, have little prior historical knowledge and often grow up in a culturally pluralistic environment. In addition,

for a large proportion of trainees, vocational colleges are often their last educational institution, which enables reflection in discourse and aims to develop a democratic disposition. The teaching of vocational skills at vocational colleges goes far beyond pure application knowledge. In addition to professional skills, private and social action and decision-making processes are placed at the centre of company and school education.

With its initiative “Promoting Democracy in International Projects” (DiP), the EU Office for Business and Vocational Education and Training has been supporting vocational colleges in the administrative district in the implementation of international projects in the field of remembrance culture and democracy promotion since 2021. The DiP team was able to present its initiative last year at the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of vocational colleges in NRW. At the school management meeting on 16 May 2024



in Unna, the systemic anchoring of democratic values in vocational education was demonstrated using exemplary projects. A stand designed with a wide range of materials informed interested visitors to the central anniversary event of the Ministry of Schools and Education on 24 May 2024 in Düsseldorf about the successfully completed “Memorial Education Qualification” and the planned activities to promote democracy at vocational colleges.

In the 2024/2025 school year, the DiP team is offering the “Democracy Education Qualification”. This qualification consists of five modules, including a study trip to Gdansk in spring 2025. After the thematic and organisational introduction, the participants deepen their knowledge of the changing German-Polish relationship and the common path to democracy in the heart of Europe. With its history, the city of Gdansk and its immediate surroundings is an example of the constant struggle for freedom and democracy. In addition to these historical approaches, didactic resources and methods for imparting regional and political knowledge about Poland in vocational train-

ing are also provided. Furthermore, a humorous reading will demonstrate how pupils can be taught intercultural sensitivity in their interactions with Poles. The offers of the Poland Mobile will also be presented and tried out. The teachers will then collate the activities they are already carrying out to promote democracy education and develop new projects for their vocational colleges. During the study trip, the participating teachers will look at places in the history of democracy and also exchange ideas with staff from vocational schools and companies about democracy education in vocational training. Ideally, this meeting will lead to German-Polish projects with learning groups and even school partnerships. The participants create a project description with a concrete milestone plan for the realisation of their own project for their pupils. By participating in the Democracy Education qualification, teachers acquire comprehensive expertise in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of democracy education trips and also strengthen their personal and social skills.



In the 2025/2026 school year, the participants in the qualification programme will implement their projects at the respective schools. Professional learning communities will be formed to support and accompany the projects.

The current qualification programme for democracy education was presented at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training's symposium "Democracy education in the workplace - a task for all learning venues" on 21 and 22 January 2025 in Bonn. As part of the think tank, DiP was on site with an information stand as an example of best practice. Following the presentation of the initiative, the DiP team engaged in dialogue with participants in a discussion room..



As part of the Hermann Schmidt Prize 2024, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training is making further literature on democracy education in the workplace available online at www.bibb.de.



The authors

Sandra Hansen
Specialist advisor, Arnsberg district government

Richard Höffner
Specialist advisor, Arnsberg district government



Picture: Jewish Museum Berlin, © Yves Sucksdorff

Alice Salomon Vocational College Bochum

European engagement and democracy education

The Alice-Salomon-Berufskolleg (ASBK) is committed to promoting the European idea, democracy education and the culture of remembrance with a variety of projects and programmes.

As part of the 2024 European elections, the politics conference organised an election simulation at two school locations. The aim was to raise pupils' awareness of political participation.

In this context, polling stations were set up and run jointly by pupils and teachers. These enabled a hands-on approach to democratic processes and illustrated the importance of active participation in political life. This was accompanied by lessons on topics such as how representative democracy works, EU election programmes and the presentation of leading candidates. This not only gave the pupils a sound insight into European decision-making processes, but also gave them a deeper understanding of the impact of political decisions on their own lives.

Project with sevingardens

Furthermore, the Alice Salomon Vocational College has developed and implemented various projects in connection with sevingardens. This UNESCO-certified project uses dyer plants to promote integration and enable education for sustainable development (ESD). It is aimed at people of all ages and cultures - with or without German language skills. One focus is on the production of natural colours and the creation of dye gardens in schools, museums and parks.

The commitment of the Alice Salomon Vocational College was recognised in 2024/25 with a national award from the Ministry of Education and the German UNESCO Commission. The collaboration with sevingardens not only imparts knowledge about traditional craft techniques, but also about cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage. Participants learn to understand ecological and economic interrelationships and to assume social responsibility.

In Bochum, *sevengardens* is supported by the Municipal Integration Centre. Teachers from the Alice Salomon Vocational College have undergone special training to become *sevengardens* dialogue facilitators in order to promote the projects at the school. This initiative not only promotes the integration of newly arrived pupils, but also supports the appreciation of cultural diversity and the enrichment of different lifestyles.

Regular network meetings with other schools and institutions in Bochum enable a continuous exchange and further development of the projects. Participants come together four times a year to share experiences, develop new approaches and expand the reach of *sevengardens*.

Visit to the museum bus

Another highlight was a visit to the museum bus of the Jewish Museum Berlin. Two classes from the vocational college took part. Whilst one class explored the exhibits on the bus at , the other class took an in-depth look at the topic of anti-Semitism in an interactive workshop. This not only shed light on historical perspectives, but also made connections to the pupils' everyday lives. This encouraged empathy and a deeper understanding of tolerance and respect.

The "Tracing National Socialism in Bochum" programme took place in November 2024. This two-day project offered participants the opportunity to actively engage with the history of National Socialism. By visiting historical sites such as the Nordbahnhof railway station and the stumbling blocks, as well as working with source material, the pupils gained impressive insights into the Nazi era. These experiences sensitised them to the importance of a culture of remembrance and showed them how important tolerance and civil courage are in a democratic society.

Particular attention was paid to reflecting on the places visited. The pupils discussed the significance of these memorial sites and developed a deeper awareness of the responsibility they bear as part of the democratic community of values.

In addition, the Alice Salomon Vocational College is planning a trip to a memorial site in Poland in May 2025, funded by Erasmus+. This trip aims to promote historical reflection among the participants and facilitate intercultural learning. Visits to the Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II (Birkenau) memorial sites will take centre stage, supplemented by workshops and discussions with contemporary witnesses. At the same time, cultural exchange with Polish pupils will be intensified in order to develop a shared understanding of history and diversity.

Other cultural and professional aspects are also explored during the trip, including a visit to a Polish school, company tours and an exploration of regional sights. At the end of the trip, the experiences are reflected on and discussed together in order to anchor the knowledge gained in the school and personal context in the long term.

These diverse initiatives and projects impressively demonstrate how the Alice Salomon Vocational College successfully integrates European engagement, democracy education and sustainable development into everyday school life. They offer pupils the opportunity to actively participate in social processes, understand global connections and recognise their personal responsibility in an increasingly interconnected world.

The authors

Marion Westkamp | Chair of the social studies, politics and economics conference

Carolin Ritter | Head of educational programme 2-year vocational school Vocational knowledge in the occupational field of social and health care and nursing

Jana Müller
EU Representative

Julia Molero Azara
EU coordinators



Vocational college of the Olpe district **Europe Week 2024** at the vocational college

In the second half of the 2023/2024 school year, Europe Week took place for the sixth time at the Berufskolleg des Kreises Olpe with its three campuses in Attendorn, Lennebstadt and Olpe. The Europe team had put together a varied programme with the motto "My Europe - My Choice" due to the upcoming elections to the European Parliament on 9 June 2024.

Panel discussion

A panel discussion with European politicians took place in the run-up to Europe Week. "Use your vote!" - This election appeal got the pupils in the mood for the next hour and a half before the panel discussion began. The invited MEPs Dr Peter Liese (CDU) and Birgit Sippel (SPD), as well as Colin Stamm (FDP), a member of the state's European Affairs Committee, and Dr Gregor Kaiser (Greens), a member of the state parliament, were on hand to answer the

pupils' questions. The event was moderated by Asina Sting (vocational grammar school for education) and Tom Baier (apprentice mechatronics technician).

Video project

In a project phase during Europe Week, the two lower school classes at the vocational college for social and healthcare services produced the video "European elections 2024 - But WHAT? But HOW? But WHY?".

This video was created thanks to the financial support of the state of NRW through the "Europa-Schecks" initiative. The pupils tackled the question "Why I am voting in the European elections" and explain many questions about voting in their video in a creative and vivid way. The video can be found on the school's Instagram channel.

The cooperation with the local agency “Medienwerk Len-nestadt” was extremely positive, so that the aim of the video project was fully achieved. It succeeded in helping to encourage as many learners as possible to vote in the European elections and actively cast their vote for Europe.

Under the motto “Use your voice”, the video was presented to pupils in their classes before the European elections.



Graffiti workshops

The graffiti workshops with artist and muralist Julian Irlich were an outstanding highlight of Europe Week. Pupils at all three locations of the vocational colleges in Attendorn, Len-nestadt and Olpe planned and designed graffiti with a European reference in order to express the idea of Europe artistically.

This campaign was also made possible by funding from the state initiative “Europe Cheques”. The artistic forms of expression helped to promote awareness of the diversity and richness of Europe and to make the European idea visible and can be admired in the respective school corridors.

It turned out that graffiti is a very student-oriented form of artistic expression that is well suited to realising personal ideas and messages. The expert guidance provided by Julian Irlich was extremely professional and beneficial.



Activities in the classroom

The activities for the pupils in the classroom also revolved around the European elections on 9 June 2024.

Activities on the topic of Europe were organised in all classes. These included a Kahoot puzzle on the topic of Europe and the opportunity to try out the Wahl-O-Mat. These interactive elements encouraged the pupils' interest and knowledge about Europe and the upcoming elections.

It was compulsory to complete 3 activities, the other options could also be selected. The individual activities could be viewed directly using QR codes or downloaded from the school's internal learning platform.

Information events Erasmus+ internships abroad

During Europe Week, information events on the BKO's Erasmus+ internships abroad were organised at all three BKO locations. Extensive information was provided on internships abroad in Tralee (Ireland), Galway/Cork (Ireland), Córdoba (Spain), Ylivieska (Finland) and Brescia (Italy) organised by the BKO and funded by the EU as part of Erasmus+. The overall response to the mobility programmes offered abroad has been extremely positive.

Lecture “Importance of the EU for the Olpe district”

Another important event was the presentation by Ms Teresa Mason-Herrmann, partner and HR manager at KRAH in Drolshagen. In the forum at the Olpe site, she spoke about the “Importance of the EU for the Olpe district” and emphasised the role of women in management positions. Her very student-oriented and convincing presentation provided the students with valuable insights into the practical



significance of the EU for their region and inspired them to recognise and take advantage of the opportunities offered by a united Europe.

European competition of the sponsoring organisation

The Europe Week concluded with the presentation of prizes to the winners of the school's internal European competition organised by the Friends' Association and the awarding of certificates to the participants in the NRW EuroVisions competition.

The competition organised by the sponsoring association in 2024 was also held under the motto of Europe Week **My Europe – My Choice**. Students were asked to create a contribution on Europe that made reference to the 2024 European Parliament elections. 23 very interesting and diverse group projects were submitted and were recognised by an independent jury made up of teachers, members of the Friends' Association and alumni according to the criteria of originality, creativity, quality and relevance to the topic.

Conclusion

Europe Week 2024 at the Berufskolleg des Kreises Olpe was a complete success. Thanks to the support of the state initiative "Europa-Schecks", it was possible to realise diverse and creative projects that sustainably strengthen the European idea and promote awareness of a strong and united Europe. All activities have brought the idea of Europe into the school community and beyond, thereby helping to familiarise pupils with the various democratic facets of the European Union..



The authors

Stephanie Alff

Coordinator of European educational work at the BKO

Birgit Klingbeil

Member of the European team at the BKO



Vocational college for general trade, home economics and social pedagogy of the district of Siegen-Wittgenstein

My Europe - my choice: Europe Day at the AHS vocational college in Siegen

On May 28, 2024, the Berufskolleg AHS Siegen celebrated its Europe Day under the motto "My Europe - My Choice". Various workshops and exhibitions invited visitors to take an in-depth look at European politics and the upcoming European elections in 2024 and to gain an impression of the lives of young people in other European countries.

The "EU on tour - traveling exhibition on the European elections" could be viewed in the cafeteria of the vocational college and informed the interested students about the various aspects and challenges of European politics. Afterwards, the students had the opportunity to compare their own ideas and political positions with the election programs and solutions of the parties represented in the European Parliament. This enabled them to find out more

and view the solutions offered by the individual parties in order to make an informed choice in their first European election.

The action-oriented exchange and information forum "Europe in the Polycrisis" was very well attended. The pupils were encouraged to take responsibility for dealing with the various crises in the geopolitical context of their living environment. The students entered into an open discussion about perspectives and possible solutions for the current conflicts in Europe. An offer that seems even more relevant today than it did then.

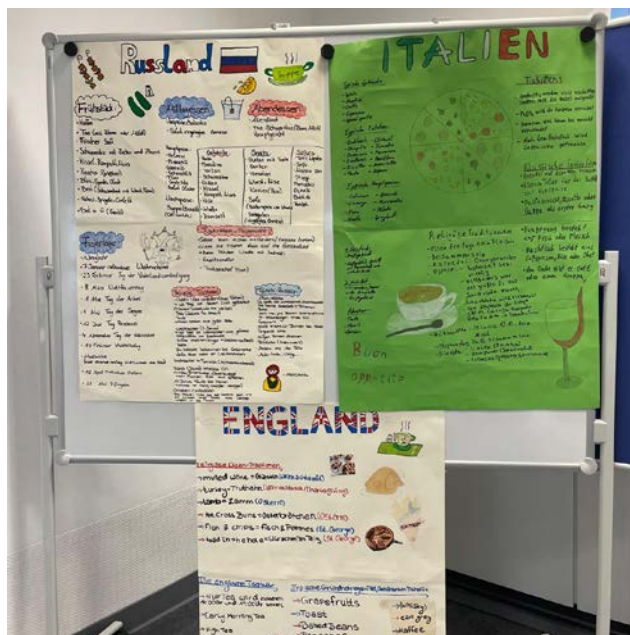
As part of an information event on internships abroad, the experience reports from FSP and FSA learners helped

to raise awareness of the importance of international internships and arouse the students' curiosity to become actively involved in the European community. The Europe Day at the AHS vocational college thus became an inspiring forum that not only provided information on political issues, but also promoted personal development and intercultural exchange.

As with every Europe Day, there was a wide range of activities for children and young people in 2024, which were lovingly prepared by dedicated colleagues and colleagues from the departments. Under the motto "This is how Europe eats", students and teachers were able to go on a culinary journey of discovery through the various European countries.

Not only were traditional dishes presented, but the cultural background and eating habits of the respective countries were also conveyed. Under the motto "The little star in Europe", the vocational school for childcare presented exciting activities for pre-school children. In addition, programs on mental health in Europe were presented, which are of great importance for both the children and the learners. These offers were gratefully received and helped to raise awareness of important issues.

The dedicated work of the colleagues and the exciting design of the activities made Europe Day an exciting day that was not only informative but also inspiring. The positive response from participants shows how important such events are in promoting interest in Europe and its many facets.



The author

Verena Sawatzki
Head of Internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training





Vocational College Berliner Platz of the HSK EU quiz enters the 2nd round

How well do you know Europe? This was the motto of the second EU quiz at the Berliner Platz vocational college on 7 June 2024, which put the students at the centre of the European idea two days before the EU parliamentary elections. The event was organised by the school's Erasmus and International Affairs team, which set itself the goal of promoting knowledge about the European Union as well as raising awareness of the importance of democratic co-determination.

Teachers and the team had already called on pupils to take part in the previous weeks. Those interested could register using the form. In the end, twelve classes from different educational programmes competed against each other. The field of participants was a colourful mix. The participants included classes from the business grammar school, the higher vocational school for business, the vocational school for business, the training preparation programme as well as training classes for retail sales staff and medical assistants. Each class was represented by three to four students, who tackled a challenging knowledge check in the preliminary round.

In the preliminary round, the participants had to demonstrate their knowledge of various topics relating to the EU. The questions covered key aspects of the EU, such as the founding of Europe, the European Monetary Union and, of course, the upcoming EU parliamentary elections. But it wasn't just correct knowledge that was required - the Kahoot quiz was also about answering the questions as quickly as possible. Those who were quick and accurate could secure one of the coveted places in the grand final.

Six teams that stood out for their quick and correct answers qualified for the exciting final. This was moderated by members of the student council and provided plenty of excitement and entertainment. In 20 tasks, it was not just about classic knowledge questions. Among other things, the participants had to find out which language was spoken in videos recorded by members of the Erasmus and International Affairs team and translated and synchronised by the AI assistant HeyGen. They had to match country outlines, recognise the correct leading candidates and parties using a picture carousel and put parts of the first sentence of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in the correct order.



Another highlight was that the remaining class members, as well as the classes that had been eliminated in the preliminary round, not only followed the action from the audience, but were also able to actively participate in the guessing. At all times, all pupils had the opportunity to participate in the answers, as the candidates were exchanged in between.

It was particularly exciting in the play-off for third place, which was decided by a tricky estimation question: "How far is the Berliner Platz vocational college from the EU Parliament in Strasbourg?" This question decided the final neck-and-neck race in favour of the third-placed team.

At the end of the competition, the winners were announced: three classes from the business grammar school came out on top thanks to their detailed knowledge and quick answers. As a reward, the winners received vouchers with a total value of €300.00 from , which were donated to the school's own cafeteria by the school's support group. The successful teams not only earned fame and honour, but also a nice moment of enjoyment in the cafeteria.



The atmosphere in the audience was excellent. Many pupils were already talking about taking part even more next year. Everyone involved was delighted with the successful event, which not only promoted knowledge about the EU, but also strengthened the sense of community and enthusiasm for the topic of Europe.

With the successful conclusion of the EU quiz, the Berufskolleg Berliner Platz has once again fulfilled its vision of familiarising pupils with the European idea and awakening their interest in participation in democracy. There is already great anticipation for the next round and many are eager to see what new questions and challenges the third edition of the quiz will hold in store.

Those responsible in the Erasmus and International Affairs team look back on the event with pride and are already looking forward to the further development of the project. The challenge of imparting knowledge in a playful way and awakening interest in political processes is an important contribution to promoting European identity and a strong democratic culture..



The authors

Anna Fahle
EU coordinators

Berthold Hohmann
Headmaster

Photos: Thomas Grimm



Brilon Vocational College

Democracy in Europe

In elections, the participation of citizens in our democracy becomes clearer and more important time and again. In the last European elections, young people aged 16 and over were allowed to vote in the European Parliament elections for the first time. The European elections therefore also offered our pupils an opportunity to actively influence the policies of the European Union with their vote. Some of our pupils were motivated and looking forward to their first election. Others, however, were unsure, less motivated or did not even know about the new voting age. Some did not feel competent enough to go to the polls, partly because they had little knowledge of political processes at European level.

Unlike the upcoming Bundestag elections (23 February 2025), the 2024 European elections were not accompanied by the "Junior Election" school project at Berufskolleg Brilon, but were dealt with individually in class. The motives and reasons for pupils to go to the polls and reasons for "not voting", the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 were discussed. This topic made it clear that there is a great deal of basic trust in democracy as a system. However, the problem-solving skills of EU politicians are not at the top of the young people's trust scale:

"I didn't get the feeling from any of the parties that they were really committed to us young people."

"I don't see the point of voting for the least evil. I don't really feel represented by anyone in the EU elections."

Another topic was the European elections and everything behind them - from the voting process to the individual institutions of the European Union.

The students were also introduced to the Wahl-O-Mat, where they could compare their positions with the answers of the 35 parties. The Wahl-O-Mat served as an approach to take a closer look at the individual positions of the parties. It was not intended as a voting recommendation, but rather as an information basis for analysing the individual positions of the different parties.

Finally, the election to the European Parliament was simulated and the results discussed in individual vocational college classes in social studies with politics or history. It was recognisable that conservative, right-wing and anti-European parties did well, while green and left-wing parties were left behind. At the same time, smaller parties that are not represented in the Bundestag, such as Volt Europa, were also elected.

In the European elections, the AfD enjoyed great success among voters in the 16 to 24 age group, i.e. the same age as our students: a 12 per cent increase in votes. In this election campaign, the AfD discovered and utilised TikTok for its own purposes, particularly with steep theses, exaggerations and populist statements. A future project day is therefore planned at Brilon Vocational College to analyse social media: "TikTok, Instagram and Co. - Curse or blessing for our democracy?"

The author

Rainer Molitor
European Representative



Vocational college of the Märkischer Kreis in Iserlohn

Europe at the vocational college of the Märkischer Kreis

The idea of Europe has played a decisive role at the MK vocational college for many years. This is also made clear in the mission statement: "The basic idea of unity in diversity is implemented across all departments at our bundled school with external partners, in particular through cooperation with institutions in other EU countries." This takes place in the classroom, in extracurricular events and in activities abroad.

For example, foreign trade and French as a second target language are taught in the "EU industrial clerk" programme; a three-month work placement in Ireland is an integral part of the training. Among others, EU representatives are invited to the school-wide Europe Days to discuss current topics. With the support of the ERASMUS programme, pupils in almost all departments undertake work placements abroad in numerous EU countries. Teachers are also increasingly taking part in courses and job shadowing programmes in other EU countries.

Events with politicians

In March, MEP Dr Liese (CDU) and local politician Janine Winzer (Linke) were invited to an event on the topic of the EU asylum pact. Not only the two politicians, but also the students from various departments who were present discussed the topic controversially. In view of the upcoming European elections, the interest of the first-time voters was immense and they realised the importance of the EU.

Internships abroad

The internships abroad in particular offer our students the opportunity to expand their linguistic and intercultural skills and at the same time raise their awareness of Europe.



Students from the EBC (European Business Class of the two-year vocational school for business and administration) and trainees (industrial clerks EU) have familiarised themselves with Irish culture, lifestyle and working methods in Athlone as part of their work placements.

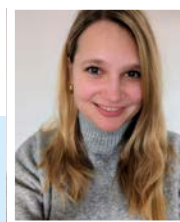
In collaboration with the organisation Europe for you, several students from the Higher Vocational School for Social Work and Health were sent to Malta for four weeks in February, where they completed internships in Valetta in childcare facilities and got to know the work of educators better. They improved their English skills and explored the country and culture, e.g. on excursions to the island of Gozo and the Blue Grotto. A special occasion was the presentation of the European passports at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, where they were accompanied by Erasmus coordinator Mr Boeck and the Erasmus officer from the Food and Supply Management department, Ms Gerhardt. Three students from the same programme completed a two-week work placement in a day care centre in Valencia (Spain). Here too, the programme included a number of cultural activities, such as a visit to the Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències and Valencia Cathedral.

Internships were also completed in the catering sector in Malta: A student from the Food and Supply Management department learnt more about everyday working life in Malta, improved her English skills and met lots of nice people. The stay abroad was so successful that a second voluntary internship followed.

The Design department was able to successfully continue and even further develop its European activities this year. Four students from the GTA (Design Technical Assistants) course completed their eight-week compulsory internship, organised by the organisation Vividus Interna-

tional, in Dublin in various design companies and advertising agencies. Here, the students were able to put their expertise to the test by designing a website and working with 3D printing, among other things. A successful student exchange programme was also carried out with the Ensor Institute in Ostend (Belgium). Among other things, the students worked on a long-term project and designed posters for an upcoming parade in the city. This co-operation is to be further expanded in the future.

Many other trainees have also completed internships abroad: Automotive salespersons (Ireland), hairdressers (France), wholesale and foreign trade management assistants (Malta), painters and varnishers (Poland).



The authors

Michael F. J. Boeck
EU Coordinator

Miriam Schmidt
ERASMUS team



Meschede Vocational College of the Hochsauerland District

eTwinning project “European democracy: Fostering democratic values and citizenship”

Since the start of the 2024/25 school year, two classes at the Berufskolleg Meschede have been running an eTwinning project with their European partner schools with the aim of strengthening democratic values.

The project is being carried out by Ms Stockhausen, who is in charge of an upper level of the two-year higher vocational school, type business and administration, and Ms Overhage, who is taking part with the one-year vocational school 2, type business and administration. The European partners are schools from Croatia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain and Turkey.

At the beginning, the pupils' prior knowledge of Europe and democratic values was tested in a survey. In the discussions that followed, it was possible to establish a common understanding of how democracies differ from dictatorships, for example.

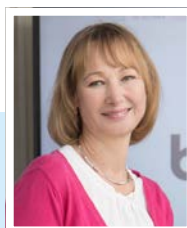
The actual project work started with familiarising themselves with the different democratic systems in the participating countries. To this end, the students from each country created a presentation on how the democratic system works in their country. How often are elections held, how many parties are there, what are the duties of the president, etc.?

Learners learn that all democracies are based on the separation of powers, that there is freedom of expression and that all democracies protect human rights. However, they also learn that there are differences in the electoral systems. These differences are analysed and the advantages and disadvantages discussed.

The centrepiece is the implementation of a school project on the topic of democracy next spring. This project can be organised in many different ways and the young people can contribute their ideas. Concrete projects in which schools open up are possible, but also an artistic exploration of the topic. All learners will then work together to develop a positive vision of the European democracy of the future.

A special highlight will be that four students from the one-year vocational school 2 will visit the partner class in Luxembourg with their teacher Mrs Overhage in May 2025. The visit will take place via the group mobility of the Erasmus+ programme. Together with the pupils from Luxembourg, the German pupils will carry out a role play on the European Union and design a joint democratic city (Democracy).

The eTwinning project will run until the end of the 2024/25 school year. The results will be reported on our homepage and via social media. In addition, all participating pupils will give a presentation to the school community at the end of the school year.



The author

Daniela Overhage
Deputy Headmistress



Olsberg Vocational College of the Hochsauerland District

Why commitment pays off – MEP Dr Peter Liese at the vocational college in Olsberg

A small group of school leavers in the Sauerland region are upset that the small Valme stream in their village is to be piped. They protest and try to preserve the stream. The older people wave it away, saying that none of this would help. They are stubborn and don't give up easily and they succeed. The stream is still flowing in its natural bed today. The young people have learnt an important lesson - something can be done after all.

One of them is Peter Liese, who studied to become a paediatrician. He is also involved in politics, becoming a Member of the European Parliament, representing the Sauerland region and several other regions. He specialises in the health sector, among other things. And now he is standing in front of around 80 pupils at the vocational grammar school in Olsberg. Most of them are school leavers like him. The school invited him and he was happy to come, and you can always tell how important it is for him to talk to the younger generation. It's not about the election campaign, not a single word is said. Headmaster Volker Dietrich emphasised this in his welcome address. It is all about Europe

and there is a lot to say about that. Dr Liese repeatedly drew the line from Sauerland to Europe and back again. He mentions the funds with which the European Parliament also supports local projects, but he also shows how ideas and products from the Sauerland help the European community to contribute to climate change, for example. A company that manufactures thermostats, among other things, in the immediate neighbourhood of the school is a good example of this.

Europe is also a topic at school. The two teachers Anne-Sophie Friedrichs and Jana Rehrmann work intensively with the pupils on the topic of Europe, as strong cohesion is particularly important in today's world. The resulting catalogue of questions reflects the intensive examination of various European topics. It is about climate and energy, the climate targets and the "Green Deal". Questions were asked about the stability of Europe and a possible "Dexit". These are their issues and those of the future. Dr Liese answers calmly and precisely, formulating his positions openly and clearly. Of course, some things are tedious and



take time in the European Parliament. There are challenges and tasks that take a long time to solve. A community of 460 million people in 27 countries, each with its own history and interests, cannot be brought together so easily. The unanimity required in matters of foreign and security policy also proves to be a problem time and again. Nevertheless, decades of peace are a European success.

Many MEPs are clearly in favour of more freedom for the economy and a reduction in bureaucracy. When asked whether more countries could be admitted, he refers to the Copenhagen criteria. This is about participation in the European single market on the one hand, but also about democracy and the rule of law. Europe is a community of values, that must not be forgotten.

In the end, health is the topic, which is obvious, especially as Dr Liese is considered by some to be the “Karl Lauterbach of Brussels”. His view of the coronavirus era is self-critical; other solutions could have been found for schools in particular. Other countries have come through this time better - that too is Europe, there is the opportunity to learn

from each other through direct dialogue. Another issue is the supply of medicines, where dependence on China and India is too strong. Agreements with other countries, for example in South America, need to be considered and the criteria for authorisation need to be reviewed. Price alone cannot be the deciding factor. He describes the next tasks in just a few sentences. You can sense that this is his topic.

And despite all the theory, Dr Liese remains a practitioner. When there was an emergency in Paderborn during the Christmas holidays, he put on his white coat and helped out as a paediatrician. And what the European Union is so often accused of being far away from the people, here it is very close to them.

The pupils follow his speech attentively, often agreeing with him, sometimes pausing for thought. It is a plea in favour of Europe and that it is worth getting involved. The applause is long-lasting - thanks to the passionate European politician, but also thanks to the two teachers and the committed Mr Milstein, who made this impressive event possible.



The authors

Anne-Sophie Friedrichs

Contact for EU and international projects

Jana Rehrmann

Educational programme manager vocational grammar school Recreational sports manager



Vocational College for Business and Administration Siegen

“Our Europe” at the BK

As a European school, the BK Wirtschaft und Verwaltung Siegen focussed in particular on the European elections this year alongside other Europe-related activities. The lowering of the voting age to 16 meant that the European elections were the first opportunity for many students at the BK to actively participate in a political election. This thematic focus was reflected in the programme of the European project day, but also in the participation in the junior election and a study trip to the European institutions in Brussels

Europe 2024 project day: Our Europe

On 8 May 2024, the Europe Project Day was on the agenda at BK. Under the title “Our Europe”, numerous activities were offered and carried out for the pupils.

The “Our Europe” simulation game organised by Planpolitik Berlin was a key component of the event. Around 60 students from various programmes at the vocational college spent an entire morning dealing with European topics in this simulation game in a student-friendly way.

“The pupils take on different perspectives from the individual countries. We want to convey an understanding that compromise is at the heart of democracy education,” said Stephan Naumann from Planpolitik. The upcoming European elections in 2024 were also discussed intensively and vividly.

In addition to simulation games, workshops and discussion events, the Europe Project Day placed a special emphasis on the artistic and creative exploration of the topic of Europe. In a spray workshop led by Siegen graffiti artist Julian Irlich, pupils had the opportunity to express their thoughts on the topic of “Europe” in a creative-artistic process in the form of spray artworks. The impressive results were then permanently exhibited in the school building. Beyond the project day, they impressively convey to the entire school public as well as to guests from outside the school that Europe is a living reality at the vocational college that is visible to everyone.

The well-known Siegen rapper Mohamed “B.E.” El Char-touni, a former pupil of the BK, knows exactly what makes a good rap and showed in his rap workshop that words can



break boundaries. Two theatre teachers from the Junges Theater Siegen also ran a theatre workshop in which the participants explored issues such as home, culture and identity.

The “School of the Future” working group took part in Europe Day with a clothes flea market and a “blue bin” for recycling jeans.

There was also plenty of fun and exercise on Europe Day. The Wannabuy school company organised a human soccer tournament as a European championship in the school playground, in which pupils from various classes took part with great enthusiasm.

At other events, the BK’s Europe team provided information about opportunities for internships abroad as part of Erasmus+ (Finland, Spain, Poland, Ireland) as well as the additional international training programmes on offer (European/Asian business administration). The interest of the students, especially in the internships abroad, was huge.

The diverse activities of the project day were financed by funds from the Ministry of Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs and Media as part of the state initiative “Europe Cheques”.

Preparations for the next Europe Project Day on 8 May 2025 are also already in full swing. On the topic of “Can Europe still be saved? Climate change and other challenges for our common Europe”, a varied programme is once again being put together for our pupils.

Participation in the junior election

The vocational college took part in the Junior Election for the 2024 European elections with several classes. The Junior Election is an action-orientated concept for political education at secondary schools and aims to enable students to experience and learn about democracy. As part of the European elections, teachers and learners are supported in organising and carrying out a realistic election simulation at their school. Teachers were provided with didactic teaching materials to prepare for the election as well as all the election documents and materials required for the Junior Election. The highlight of the junior election was the voting process. The candidates were those politicians who were publicly standing for election in the school’s constituency. After the election, the results of the junior election could be viewed on the junior election website and compared with the actual election results of the European elections, which led to a number of surprises.





Study trip to Brussels for administrative staff

The two-day study trip to Brussels in November 2024, organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, was a special experience for two classes of administrative assistants. The trip focused on visiting various European institutions. In addition to the European Parliament and the European Commission, the group also visited the European Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in Brussels. The lecturer from the NRW representation gave a very good insight into the work and the necessity of a federal state representation on site. She always made the connection to the region so that the pupils were able to categorise the state of NRW within the larger European system. The classes also visited the House of European History and the Parliamentarium, whose interactive design provided opportunities to test their own knowledge on the subject of Europe and establish links to political education.



The author

Patrick Helle
EU Representative



Börde Vocational College Soest

The Börde-Berufskolleg – European School in NRW

Börde-Berufskolleg Soest has been a “European School in NRW” since November 2021. Promoting the European idea is a central concern for the school management. The aim is to prepare young people for living and working in an increasingly integrated Europe. This idea is not only expressed in the wide range of European mobility opportunities, but is also firmly anchored in the school programme at Börde-Berufskolleg and has a lasting impact on everyday school life.

A central element of the practical implementation of the European concept at Börde-Berufskolleg are the foreign language certificate examinations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK), which are offered to learners of all educational programmes in various vocational fields. In addition to this, bilingual teaching plays an important role in the vocational college’s European orientation. For example, a bilingual politics course is offered in the sixth form of the specialised upper secondary school as well as bilingual modules in the dual training system.

The European idea not only characterises foreign language lessons, but also finds expression in the in-depth examination of European topics in various subject areas such as social studies, politics and economics. This commitment is complemented by participation in simulation games. The aim is to strengthen the school community’s awareness of European issues and at the same time to link these with key aspects of school development.

As part of an interactive simulation game on the topic of “migration policy”, around 50 students from secondary school 12 were given an insight into the complex decision-making processes of the EU in the area of migration and asylum. In collaboration with experienced team leaders from the Berlin-based organisation “planpolitik”, the students intensively explored the current challenges and political debates in the European Union.

Under the title “Managing Migration - The EU on the way to a harmonised migration policy?”, the participants simulated a meeting of the Council of the European Union.



They were faced with the task of balancing pragmatic solutions with the preservation of fundamental EU values. The simulation offered a realistic depiction of the difficulties associated with developing a common migration policy and sharpened understanding of the complex interests and lines of conflict within the EU.

In preparation for the 2024 European elections, a full-day Europe Day was organised in all classes of the dual system. The pupils took an in-depth look at the election programmes of the various parties standing for election.

In cooperation with the "Citizens of Europe" association, around 160 pupils also learnt about how the European Union works and current political problems in Europe. Pupils from various classes in the dual education system were given interesting facts about Europe in a fun way with questions relating to their everyday lives. An interactive quiz served as an entertaining format to test and deepen knowledge about the European Union.

Afterwards, the students from the vocational fields of construction, electrical, automotive and air conditioning, heating and sanitary engineering had the opportunity to talk to MEP Dr Peter Liese. They were able to ask specific questions about the work of the European Parliament. Among other things, they discussed the Supply Chain Act, measures to combat climate change and the status of negotiations on the abolition of the clock change.



Last April, pupils from the vocational grammar school and FS took part in the "My Climate" simulation game. This was organised at Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg as part of the network of secondary European schools in the district of Soest. By taking on different roles and changing perspectives, the students were able to better understand the different interests in relation to one of the most pressing problems in EU policy and deepen their intercultural skills.

The "Young Climathon", another simulation game organised by the secondary European schools in the district of Soest, is already planned for 2025. In addition to the district of Soest, local companies will also be involved so that schools, local authorities and businesses can work together on the topics of democracy, Europe and climate change. As part of the simulation game, sustainability projects will be presented and developed further together.

Participation in junior elections is a firmly established part of school life at Börde-Berufskolleg. This year, the students once again took part in the junior election for the 2024 European elections. This simulated election, accompanied by intensive preparation and follow-up work in class, gave the students a practical insight into how the European Union works. At the same time, voter turnout among first-time voters is demonstrably increased and confidence in democratic processes and institutions is strengthened in the long term.

The authors

Felix Padberg

Politics teacher in the bilingual course / contact person plan-politik

Julia Richter

Coordinates simulation games on European topics and networking

Martina Busse

Overall coordination, realisation and co-design of Democracy Day / EU Project Day in the dual system



Elisabeth Lüders Vocational College Hamm **“We are Europe” at the Elisabeth Lüders Vocational College**

The Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg (ELBK) in Hamm is actively committed to integrating the European idea into everyday school life and making it tangible. Under the motto “We are Europe”, we want to give our pupils, trainees and students the opportunity to live and strengthen European values such as democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. With a view to the 2024 European elections, awareness of the importance of democratic processes and participation in political events was particularly emphasised.

eTwinning at the ELBK: My Planet, My Future

The interdisciplinary online project eTwinning is a central component of our European focus. In year 11 of the upper secondary school, a weekly lesson is available for this purpose. In the last school year, a course worked on the topic “My Planet, My Future” together with pupils from Greece and Cyprus.

- Exchange platform and Zoom meetings: The learners exchanged their visions of the future in virtual meetings and used the eTwinning platform for project work.
- Job shadowing: A colleague from Cyprus completed a job shadowing programme at our school as part of Erasmus+ and was able to get to know the German education landscape in depth.

This project is an example of how our school promotes digital collaboration with European partner schools. At the same time, the topic of sustainability is moving centre stage - an aspect that is playing an increasingly important role in the context of European values and goals.

Europe Day at the ELBK

On the annual “European Day” at Elisabeth Lüders Vocational College, artworks and photographs by students were presented in the school building. In addition to works by our own students, there were also photographs from our partner schools in Croatia, Greece and Cyprus, which were created during the eTwinning projects.



Elisabeth-Lüders-Berufskolleg Hamm - For living diversity, European encounters and a strong common future in Europe.

- Making European diversity visible: The exhibition made it possible to experience not only the creative work, but also the cultural diversity within Europe.
- Reflection and exchange: Through discussions and joint activities, awareness of European topics and connections was strengthened.

Pupils are encouraged in their personal development by learning to find their way in new environments, overcome language barriers and familiarise themselves with different cultural circumstances. This also raises awareness of the importance of human rights, freedom, equality and tolerance in Europe.

Open Day: Focus on mobility

At the "Open Day" at the ELBK, we presented our current and planned stays abroad as well as exchange and project opportunities. A particular focus was on the wide range of Erasmus+ mobility programmes that enable our students to gain professional experience in other European countries.

European engagement through internships and projects

The Elisabeth Lüders Vocational College sees itself as a place where international encounters and mobilities are lived. In this way, we directly tie in with the democratic values of Europe and strengthen the civic engagement of our students. The stays abroad are funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme and offer insights into various professional fields and cultural contexts.

The aim of all projects and mobilities is to experience and consolidate the fundamental democratic values of the EU.

Outlook

The Elisabeth Lüders Vocational College can look back with pride and gratitude on numerous successful European projects. We are also planning to expand our commitment in the future in order to enable even more students to take part in international encounters and co-operations. In this way, we are making an active contribution to strengthening the European idea and democratic participation.

Conclusion

With this year's motto "We are Europe", we want to encourage our pupils to engage with European topics and actively participate in political and social life. Our diverse eTwinning projects, Europe Days, mobility programmes and international partnerships bring the fundamental European values to life in everyday lessons and at the same time promote global skills. In this way, we raise awareness of shared values, develop an awareness of social responsibility and strengthen cohesion in a diverse Europe.

The author

Stephanie Lemke
EU Coordinator at ELBK Hamm



Eduard-Spranger-Berufskolleg Hamm

Successful internships abroad in 2024

Hamm – Ten students from Eduard-Spranger-Berufskolleg Hamm took part in exciting and instructive internships abroad in 2024, which gave them not only professional but also valuable intercultural experience. The internships took place in four different countries: France, Spain, Greece and Malta.

Successful start in the automotive sector

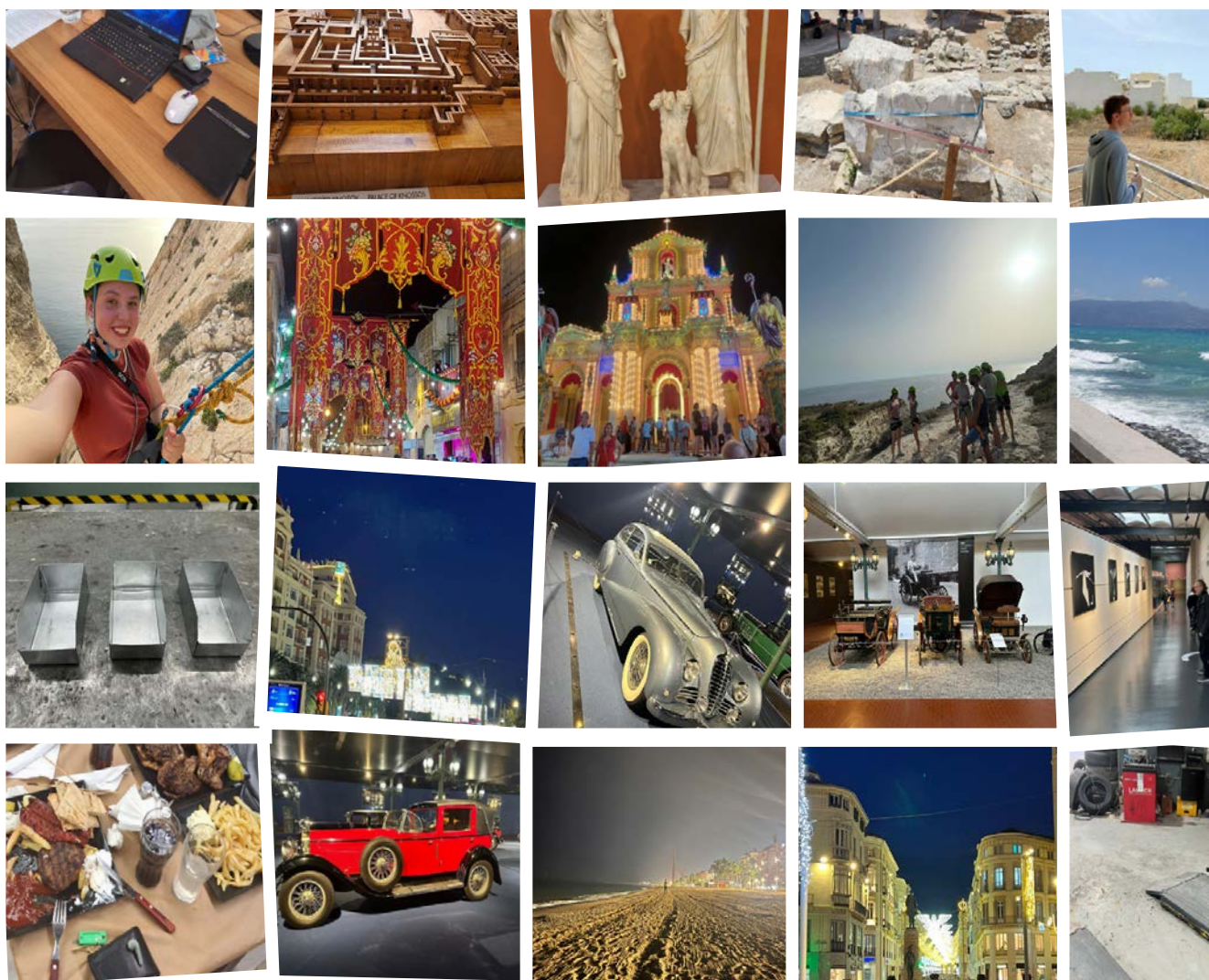
In December 2024, five students from the Automotive Engineering department travelled abroad for a fortnight. Three of them took part in the internship in Mulhouse, France, while two others travelled to Málaga, Spain. The internship in Mulhouse, which took place for the third year in a row, was particularly noteworthy. For the first time, however, the trainees were not accompanied by a teacher - a first that demanded more responsibility and independence from the trainees. In French workshops and automotive companies, the students expanded their practical skills on modern vehicles and improved their language skills in a professional context. As an obligatory highlight of this internship, the

students traditionally visited the famous local automobile museum (Musée National de l'Automobile).

The internship in Málaga offered the other two trainees the opportunity to further develop their technical skills in a Spanish workshop. In addition to the practical work on vehicles, cultural exchange was a central part of the stay. This included a visit to the beach and extensive hikes through the breathtaking scenery of the region.

Four-week IT internship on Crete and Malta

Five students from the vocational high school with an IT focus travelled to the Mediterranean islands of Crete and Malta just before the 2024 summer holidays. Three of the interns travelled to Crete to expand their skills in software development, network security and web programming at various IT companies. The four-week experience not only offered the students deeper insights into Greek culture, but also the opportunity to strengthen their English skills in an international environment.



Two other interns from the IT sector travelled to Malta, where they worked in modern IT departments. Here, too, the focus was on topics such as web development and network technologies. The stay in Malta gave the students valuable insights into the island's dynamic IT sector and enabled them to work in an international team and further develop their professional skills.

Cultural experiences and professional networks

In addition to the professional training, the interns' cultural experiences were another highlight. In France, Spain, Greece and Malta, the participants not only gained valuable knowledge in their specialist areas, but also learnt about local traditions, visited historical sites and made culinary discoveries.

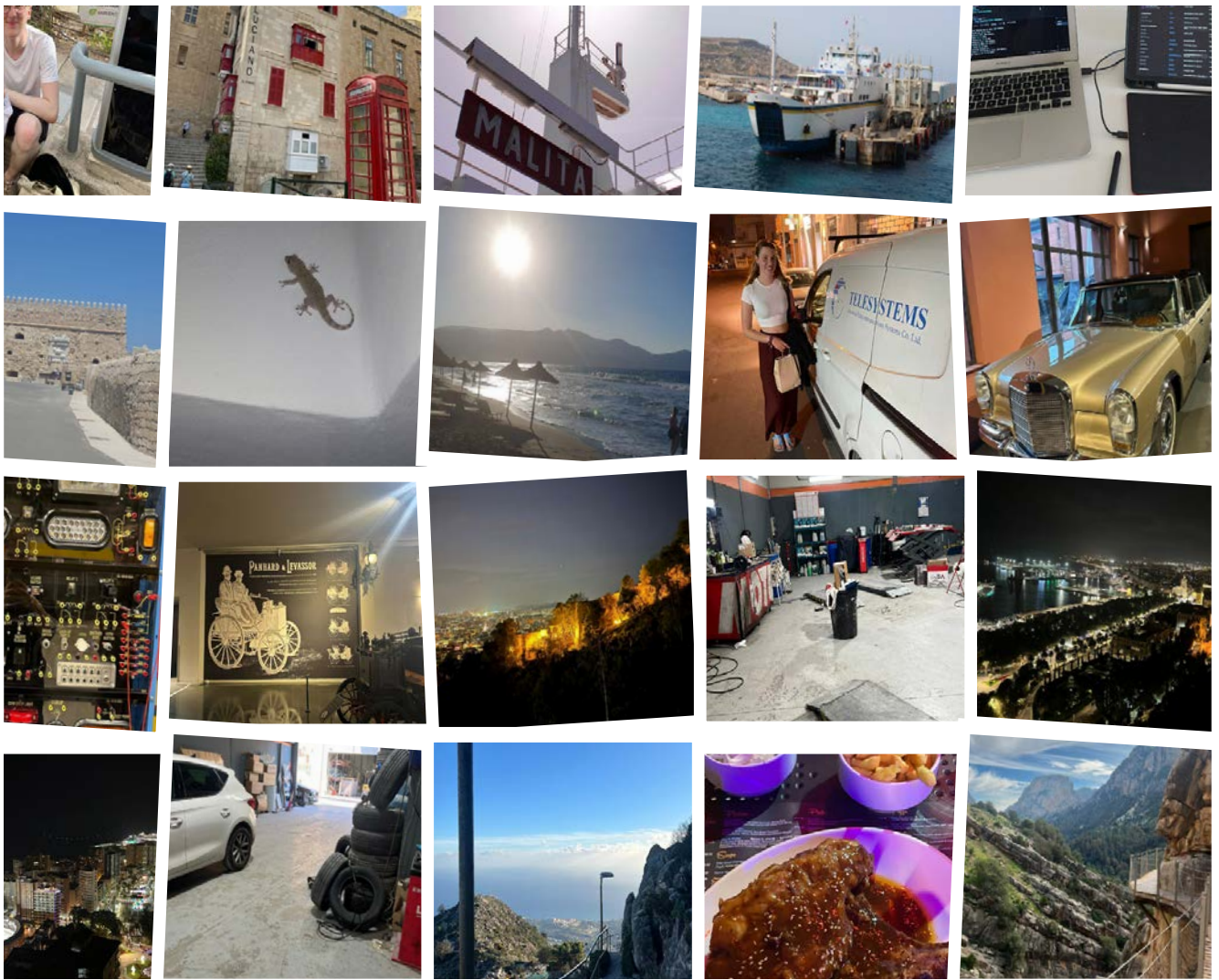
"It was a unique opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. Working in international teams not only expanded my technical knowledge, but also helped me to im-

prove my language skills," reported one participant of the IT internship in Malta.

In addition, the interns were able to build professional networks that should be useful to them in their future careers. The exchange with professionals from different countries not only promoted the transfer of knowledge, but also a better understanding of the working methods and challenges in other cultures.

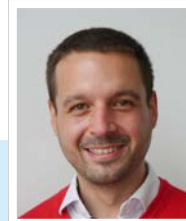
Conclusion and outlook: International prospects for the future

The internships abroad at our vocational college in 2024 not only gave participants the opportunity to expand their specialist knowledge in an international environment, but also to strengthen their intercultural and language skills. The internships in France, Spain, Greece and Malta have given the students a global perspective on their professions and significantly improved their future prospects on the international labour market.



The successful internships in 2024 have once again shown how valuable international experience is for professional and personal development. For the students at our Eduard-Spranger-Berufskolleg in Hamm, this was a step towards an international career - and an unforgettable experience.

Based on these positive experiences from 2024, the Eduard-Spranger Berufskolleg is planning to expand its activities abroad. The number of participants in the upper secondary school is set to double in 2025 (from 5 to 10) and trainees from the IT sector are also set to emphasise the school's growing ambitions in the area of internationality for the first time.



The author

Dominic Schulz
EU Coordinator



Hansa Vocational College Unna

Europe Day on 9 May – Pupils talk about the Erasmus project

Unna district. 9 May is Europe Day: on this day 74 years ago, French Foreign Minister Robert Schumann proposed the founding of a European Community. Reason enough for District Administrator Mario Löhr to draw attention to the “Europe” project - with a video in which pupils talk about their experiences with the EU-Erasmus project.

“Robert Schumann said that Europe is created through concrete facts. Europe is therefore a project of all those who bring it to life,” says District Administrator Mario Löhr. “Pupils from our European school, the Hansa Berufskolleg, who had the opportunity to spend several weeks abroad in Europe as part of a European internship, are a good example of this.”

Video interview with pupils

In a video interview, which can be found on the district's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@kreis_un, three schoolgirls and one pupil talk about their experiences during their Erasmus internship on Europe Day on 9 May. Janine Asseburg spent four weeks in Italy, in Tuscany. Pauline Mester and Maximilian Happe talk about their ten-week stay in Ireland and Hanna Greulich worked for four weeks in the Unna district's partner district Nowy Sacz in Poland.

The Erasmus project at Hansa Berufskolleg is funded by the EU. All students gain a wide range of experience that not only helps them in their careers. “An internship abroad is also hugely important for personal development,” says Marion Kadoch, project manager at Hansa Berufskolleg. “We’ve been doing this for 25 years and our experience shows: The interns benefit from these experiences even after many years.”

European elections on 9 June

“The European project, which benefits so many people in the EU, is currently being put to the test,” said the District Administrator, calling on people to get actively involved. “The European elections are on 9 June. Get informed, go and vote,” is his appeal to the people of the district of Unna.

The district of Unna is part of the “Let’s Europe” campaign organised by the Ruhr Regional Association. A bus from the transport company VKU is travelling through the district of Unna with a corresponding sticker. District Administrator Löhr, Deputy Headmaster Christian Nübel and Marion Kadoch from Hansa Berufskolleg spray-painted the “Let’s Europe” lettering in front of the school.

The campaign is intended to be an expression of living diversity. Above all, it aims to sensitise young people to the fact that it is worthwhile to remain committed to a Europe of open borders and solidarity in the future. The participating partners want to use the joint campaign to campaign for the preservation of peace, freedom, democracy and tolerance.

Yesterday, the Wahl-O-Mat for the European elections was launched online by the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Anyone can find out which party they would like to vote for in the European elections by answering questions: www.wahl-o-mat.de.

“Diversity Day” project day at Hansa Berufskolleg: A world tour of cultures

On 27 June 2024, a special day took place in the schoolyard of Hansa Berufskolleg, on which the pupils embarked on a journey through the diversity of cultures. Each class presented a country and introduced it with creatively designed posters and typical local specialities. The pupils gained exciting insights into foreign cultures and discovered the colourful diversity of our world.

A special highlight of the day was the performance by beatboxer Kevin o Neal. He thrilled the audience with a rousing performance and also offered a workshop in which interested students could learn the art of beatboxing and create their own beats.

Another creative element was a wallpaper on which the pupils immortalised themselves with their handprints. This symbolised their signature under the “Charter of Sympathy”, which set an example for cohesion and community.

The event was rounded off with an entertaining duel between pupils and teachers. Exciting questions and humorous tasks provided plenty of laughs.

The crowning finale was provided by talented schoolgirls who enchanted the audience with an energetic dance and soulful singing.

The project day was a complete success and showed how much fun community activities can be. A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this special day.



The authors

Lucia Tozzi
European team



Hubertus Schwartz Vocational College Soest **Successful German-Polish student exchange at HSBK**

In May 2024, students from the Hubertus Schwartz Vocational College in Soest and the Liceum Sztuk Plastycznych in Rypin, Poland, once again took part in an exchange programme. This year's meeting took the young people to the picturesque region around Zakopane, where they spent a week learning, working and spending their free time together.

The theme of the exchange was healthy eating. In theoretical units and practical cookery sessions, the pupils explored the basics of a balanced diet. They prepared healthy meals together and discussed their eating habits.

There were also numerous other activities. For example, the young people went on a hike in the Tatra Mountains, visited the historic city of Krakow and toured the Wawel. These shared experiences strengthened the cohesion of the group and promoted intercultural exchange.

The partnership between the two schools has existed since 2016 and is funded by the German-Polish Youth Office. It has developed into a permanent fixture over the past few years. In addition to the annual student exchanges, our schools also regularly work together on joint Erasmus+ projects.

The exchange programme will continue this year. The German-Polish school exchange enables pupils to improve their language skills, acquire intercultural competences and make friends across national borders.

#Your regional future - EU project day with eight guests from politics

A successful EU project day took place on 6 February 2024 at the HSBK, organised and accompanied by Ms Jutta Berkemeier and with the participation of the VM1 (administrative assistant, KL Ms Dietz) and IU2 (industrial clerk, KL Mr Schöncke) classes. The event was held as part of the “#Deine Regionale Zukunft” programme, which was launched by EUROSOC#DIGITAL gGmbH.

The aim of this EU project day was to encourage pupils to take an in-depth look at the future of their own region in the context of the European Union. Under the guidance of the two facilitators Mareike Meyer and Janosch Ptasek, the students used the Design Thinking method to develop their own project ideas that could contribute to the development of their region. Important aspects of the European Union's regional policy were also explained in order to give

the students an understanding of Europe's role in regional development. A particular highlight of the day was the final project presentation with eight political guests from the district of Soest. This large presence of politicians during the project day emphasised the appreciation for the perspectives and ideas of the trainees. In particular, the exchange deepened their understanding of democratic and European values. The trainees learnt how to present their thoughts on shaping their home region of Soest and received encouragement from the political guests to actively participate in the development of society, e.g. in youth work or voluntary work. Especially in these times, when young people are confronted with a variety of social and political challenges, it is important that their voices are heard and taken seriously.

“Go to the European elections - every vote counts” - Lecture on the importance of the EU for Germany

“Go to the European elections - every vote counts”, with this clear appeal, Sales Manager Lukas Balke and Project Engineer Marc Stange concluded their presentation on the importance of the European Union (EU) for Germany in general and their employer Gebhardt Stahl GmbH in Werl in particular. Beforehand, the two of them introduced their employer to around 50 budding industrial clerks from the Hubertus-Schwartz vocational college and used specific examples to explain the advantages the EU offers the medium-sized company.

Gebhardt-Stahl GmbH is known in Europe and worldwide as a reliable supplier of high-quality steel products in the areas of reinforcement profiles, air technology and special profiles. The regionally rooted company has a total of seven sister companies throughout Europe and generates almost 40% of its turnover with countries from the EU. The company clearly benefits from the four fundamental freedoms of the EU. The two speakers consistently emphasised the importance of Germany for the EU and vice versa.

There was further added value for our pupils. The speakers repeatedly made references to the content of vocational school lessons, for example by talking about ecological corporate goals or the European Central Bank. A recurring theme throughout the event was the private involvement of each individual with the EU. “Our pupils are European citizens and should always have the European labour market in mind,” emphasised Deputy Headmaster Hubertus Gosmann.

In the discussion that followed, it became clear that the European elections on 9 June had hardly played a role among the young voters present or in the social media. The two speakers motivated the trainees to actively engage with the European elections. For Marc Stange, it is “a privilege to be able to participate in a democratic process! The EU is and remains an important factor for the economy, security and the environment! Therefore: Go to the European elections - every vote counts!”

Background:Our colleague Mr Schöncke organised this lecture and discussion round (“IHK brings Europe into vocational schools”) together with the IHK Arnsberg.



International guests at the Hubertus Schwartz Vocational College

A special international atmosphere prevailed at the Hubertus-Schwartz-Berufskolleg (HSBK) in the second week of December. Pupils from Logroño, Spain (IES Comercio) and Vichy, France (Lycées Albert Londres) were guests and took part in an Erasmus+ project on the topic of "Consumer education - a contribution from European schools to sustainable behaviour and critical use of digital media".

Acting headmaster Hubertus Gosmann was delighted to once again welcome guest groups from other European countries to the school. Head of school department Mirko Hein from Kreis Soest emphasised how important it is for young people in Europe to meet and socialise.

The planned project is based on the 4 fields of action (HF1: Sustainability, consumption and globalisation, HF2: Finance, market events and consumer rights, HF3: Media and information, HF4: Nutrition and health) of the Federation of German Consumer Organisations.

It was agreed with the partners that the two-year project would jointly address the topics of "e-commerce/online shopping", "private sales on the internet", "first apartment/

share flat", "AI chatbots" and "(school) bullying in social networks". The first meeting in Soest focussed on the topic of "fake news". Support was provided by a journalist who used examples to illustrate the impact on news and the media world. The students took the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the challenges of journalism in the digital era. To deepen their understanding of the changing media world, the pupils also visited the Heinz Nixdorf Museum in Paderborn. Here they were treated to an exciting lecture on the history of communication channels and current developments in the digital world.

By addressing these topics, the participating schools are helping to tackle the digital transformation by strengthening their pupils' digital skills and competences, teaching media literacy and helping to combat disinformation.

The project meetings not only offer the young Europeans the opportunity to make new friends, but also to share their own cultural backgrounds with those of their exchange partners.

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



The authors

Reiner Linpinsel
EU team

Ulrich Nettelhoff
EU team



Louis-Baare-Berufskolleg Bochum

Europe in the classroom – and beyond

Love Europe - Building Europe - Being Europe: This motto has characterised the Louis-Baare-Berufskolleg (LBB) in Bochum for 15 years. To mark this anniversary, we were honoured as the “senior” European school in NRW in the state parliament. The Ministry of Schools and Education honoured our commitment to intercultural exchange and European values. Our preamble states: “We see ourselves as a learning and goal-oriented community that, as a European school, enables learning across cultural, language and national borders in order to actively shape integration processes in our society.”

This can be experienced in everyday school life through numerous offers: Erasmus+ enables internships abroad, exchange programmes and study visits to Ireland, France, Spain and Turkey. Since 2022/23, we have also been promoting foreign language and intercultural skills through an “online chatting project” with a partner school and Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei, Taiwan. This project enables students in Bochum and Taipei to engage in intercultural dialogue on a digital level.

Projects 2024: European election year and democracy promotion

2024, the year of the European elections, characterised our school activities. Election day on 9 June was the focus of many projects. With the decision to lower the voting age to 16 in 2022, almost all students at the vocational college are eligible to vote. It is therefore particularly clear that our students need to be well prepared to exercise their right to vote in an informed and confident manner. Our aim was to promote political education, teach basic democratic values and develop the skills to distinguish fake news from serious news. For us, democracy also means strengthening the ability to recognise one’s own interests and stand up for them.

We also prioritised the promotion of democracy. The focus here was on topics such as human rights, the protection of minorities and dialogue to promote tolerance. This content is essential for a school like LBB.



Europe Day 2024

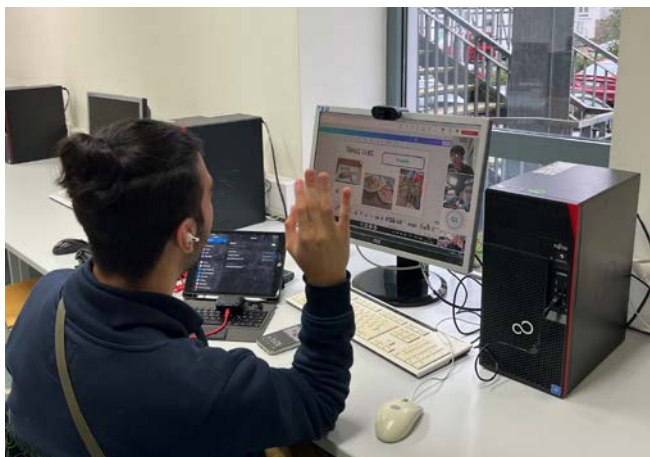
Our annual Europe Day took place on 7 May, which was dedicated to the European elections in 2024. In workshops such as “Ruhrpott für Europa” with Milad Tabesch, the initiator of this project, and accompanied by Sat1 Regional and dpa, the students intensively explored their European identity. A travelling exhibition of the European Parliament, “EU on tour”, conveyed the history and development of the EU. Creative workshops - including a graffiti project, a theatre workshop and a sewing project - promoted an understanding of the European community. Culinary highlights with dishes from different countries rounded off the day. The foyer, in which the classes of the Wirtschaftsgymnasium and the Höhere Handelsschule presented their project work on various EU countries, became a place of encounter and inspiration.

A special event was the junior election, which introduced pupils to the electoral process in a fun way. With a voter turnout of 76%, it was significantly higher than the real European elections in 2019 and 2024. This result illustrates how important it is to involve young people in political processes at an early stage.

Cooperation with European schools

As part of the network of European schools, LBB actively participated in the City of Bochum’s European campaign, “Let’s Europe. Together more us. Bochum for Europe.” Pupils wrote poems about Europe and designed election posters for a joint social media appeal by all European schools. Supported by “#netzTalente” from Talentmetropole Ruhr, they took a critical look at digital communication, campaigned against hate speech and reflected on the importance of elections. They also created poems and social media campaigns for the European elections in class. These works created a bridge between creativity and political education.

Another group took part in the “kick-off” for the European election tour at the German Football Museum. Together with Culture Minister Ina Brandes and former footballer Lars Ricken, our participants campaigned for borderless democracy. “Europe is a team sport” became the guiding principle here. This initiative shows how versatile European education is organised at LBB.





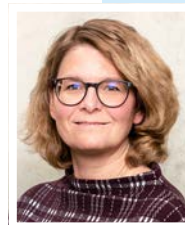
Promoting democracy at LBB

Since 2006, the city of Bochum has been awarding the Abraham Cup, which encourages schools to engage with tolerance and interreligious dialogue. The LBB has initiated numerous projects aimed at promoting democracy in the long term. Particularly impressive was the participation in the commemorative event on 9 November at Dr. Ruer-Platz. Pupils from the business high school told the moving story of a Bochum citizen who had to flee from the National Socialists and later helped to rebuild the New Bochum Synagogue. The examination of individual biographies raises awareness of historical responsibility and democratic values.

Challenges and outlook

A memorial trip to Weimar and Buchenwald was planned, but could not take place due to financial hurdles. An evaluation showed great interest, but a lack of funds among many families. For 2025, we are therefore increasingly seeking funding to realise such important projects. It remains our aim to familiarise pupils with the importance of history and democracy through direct experience.

LBB remains true to its mission: to bring Europe into the classroom and the world into the school. We see it as our task to turn our pupils into open-minded, reflective and committed citizens who are committed to a better future in Europe.



The authors

Ekaterini Kotaidou
EU Coordinator

Hanna Marquaß
Erasmus+ Coordinator

Susanne Muthig-Beilmann
Headmistress

Melanie Tajnsek-Gehne
Head of International
Projects Department



Märkisches Berufskolleg Unna Europe at MBK

The Märkische Berufskolleg vocational college in the district of Unna offers its students various opportunities to engage with democracy and the European idea. Last year, various projects were carried out with great success. In addition to language certificates and participation in various competitions, we would like to shine the spotlight on a few experiences that made 2024 a very special year.

In April 2024, six participants from the inclusion group at Märkisches Berufskolleg visited the long-standing partner school Hollybrook Academy, a special school in Glasgow, as part of the TeamUp 2024 project "Inclusion in the context of a healthy lifestyle and sport and leisure activities". During the week together, young people with and without support needs experienced inclusion in practice. The participants had already got to know each other and made their first friends when the Scottish project partners visited Unna in February 2024. The joy of seeing each other again was great!

On a health-orientated project day at Hollybrook Academy, participants cooked a healthy Scottish vegetable soup together and then dedicated themselves to physical fitness and relaxation. In a Taiko workshop, drumming was performed with the whole body and the pulse was set racing. Afterwards, relaxation techniques with yoga elements were tried out.

On another day, the hiking boots were laced up and Ben A'an, situated at the foot of the Highlands, was climbed. The Scottish and German flags were proudly hoisted at the summit as a symbol of the school partnership!

Over the course of the week, they also visited the University of Glasgow and the Kelvingrove Museum with its many scientific and health-related focal points.

At the end of the school year, the project results were presented in the form of a photo exhibition at the Märkisches Berufskolleg.

The project was part-funded by the youth competition "TeamUp! Youth Exchange NRW-UK" organised by the Minister for Federal and European Affairs and International Affairs.

The hairdressing trainees also travelled to other European countries this year. As part of the "Patent im Handwerk" project, the project was launched and inspired teachers and trainees alike.

In February, six trainee hairdressers spent a total of two weeks in Cahors, a small town in the Occitanie region of France. Between picturesque rivers and mountains, the apprentices completed a variety of work placements, made



friends and work contacts and were even able to meet a representative of the French Chamber of Commerce.

The many comparisons between the working methods of the salons in France and here in Germany were particularly exciting, with the similarities clearly outweighing the differences. Many contacts were made as a result, and we even made friends with a German expatriate who looked after all the travellers in Cahors. The exchange was a complete success and shows once again how interesting and important opportunities for international meeting places are.

International relationships have also been established within the framework of the voluntary organisation "Europa macht Schule", which brings students from Europe and around the world into classrooms throughout Germany. The student Jhanvi Mishra from India was a guest at the MBK and gave great workshops focussing on mindfulness and meditation to prospective educators. Marisol Recktenwald from the Dortmund site team provided us with marvellous support.

The linking of the exercises for the private sphere and the possible application within work practice were a particular success.

The project has been popular for years, so the MKB will be taking part again next school year and everyone involved is already looking forward to exciting workshops.

Last year, we at MBK Unna enjoyed active support not only from India, but also from Spain. For the second year, Lucía Lemus honoured us as a foreign language assistant in Spanish and carried out great projects with our students. On In-



ternational Women's Day, for example, a Spanish feminist song was analysed and the students themselves recorded videos in Spanish in which they went into more detail about this special day. The students from Alicante are now an integral part of our college.

The future of Europe, and the European Union in particular, was a particular focus of two learning groups. As part of the "Eurovisions" competition organised by the Münster district government, AHRF12 worked in small groups to create pictures that reflected their hopes, wishes and visions - in line with the competition motto - for a "strong Europe". The results are impressive works with profound meaning.

In May in particular, the focus in Europe was on the upcoming European elections. In order to raise awareness of these elections and thus contribute to the promotion of democracy, the current AHRG13 (then AHRG12) created posters on the respective parties and made them available to the school community in the foyer. "Go to the polls and get informed here" was the motto.



The authors

Kyra Orgelmacher
EU coordinators

Nicole Kattinger
EU coordinators

Frau Christiane Roth
Teacher of the MBK inclusion group



Paul-Ehrlich-Berufskolleg Dortmund

Field report Salamanca – June 2024

During the Erasmus programme, we had the extraordinary opportunity to spend two weeks in Salamanca, Spain, in June 2024 and complete an internship in various kindergartens there. It was the first time for many of us to experience this impressive city with its historic buildings and lively streets. But it was above all the work in the kindergarten that made our time there so special and unforgettable.

We were warmly welcomed into the kindergarten right from the start. Our tasks were varied: we helped the children with creative activities such as painting and handicrafts, accompanied them at play and developed small projects that enriched their everyday lives. It was particularly moving to see how quickly the children placed their trust in us. Their openness and enthusiasm for new things were infectious and created an atmosphere in which we felt part of the community after just a few days.

The language barrier was a challenge at the beginning, but thanks to our daily Spanish exercises, our language skills improved quickly. With every new word and every conver-

sation, our confidence grew - whether working with the children, talking to the teachers or ordering a "café con leche" in a small bar. We were impressed by how quickly we got used to the new language and Spanish culture.

In addition to our activities in the kindergarten, our stay also gave us the opportunity to get to know Salamanca better. The old town with its narrow, charming streets, the magnificent Plaza Mayor and the famous university left a lasting impression. Our joint excursions allowed us to immerse ourselves more deeply in Spanish culture and learn more not only about the history of the city, but also about the way of life of its inhabitants.

The two weeks in Salamanca not only enriched us professionally, but also personally. We learnt to take responsibility, react flexibly to new situations and find our way in a foreign environment. Working with the children showed us how fulfilling it can be to help others and bring joy with small gestures

We returned home with many new impressions and a deeper understanding of Spanish culture. Above all, however, we will remember a trip that brought us closer together as a group and allowed us to grow personally. Salamanca will always be a special place for us - a place where we not only worked and learnt, but also experienced unforgettable moments.

The authors

ERASMUS+ participants,
Paul-Ehrlich-Berufskolleg Dortmund

Hiba Benali

Intissar El Madkouri

Deiana Habibi

Yasmina Oualid-Abdelkarim





Technical Vocational School 1 in Bochum

Promotion of European awareness and fundamental democratic values at TBS1

The projects of recent years, which have focussed on topics such as promoting democracy and the culture of remembrance, have impressively demonstrated how vocational colleges can contribute to strengthening a vibrant and open society. This year, too, we would like to carry these values forward and work with you to identify ways in which European awareness can be promoted and consolidated.

On the occasion of the European elections, many people throughout the Ruhr region got involved under the motto "LET'S EUROPE!" in order to shape the Europe of the future together.

On 6 May, pupils from TBS1 had the opportunity to get actively involved in the Europe Weeks at the Rotunde Bochum and to engage with the structures and processes of

the European Union and strengthen their role as committed citizens in a democratic society.

Participants took part in interactive workshops focussing on the importance of the EU, its decision-making processes and its role in global politics. A mobile polling station was set up to give participants the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the electoral process in the EU. Here they were able to cast their vote in a simulated election. Open discussion rounds provided space for the exchange of opinions and ideas. These rounds encouraged dialogue on current European issues and the importance of the EU for young people.

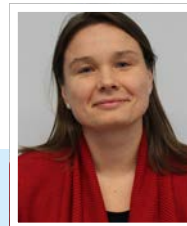
As part of the preparation for our annual ERASMUS+ internship abroad, German students have spent a day in



Düsseldorf at the German-Polish Institute in recent years. On 10 September 2024, however, the German-Polish Institute visited our school, TBS1 in Bochum. The trainees were given the opportunity to learn the first sounds of the Polish language and basic vocabulary. They were also taught the basics of Poland's geography and historical development, with a particular focus on recent history and the impact of the world wars on the country.

The subsequent reflection on the historical development of Poland and its connection to German history led to lively discussions among the trainees about the historical change of perspective, the influence of the world wars and the importance of democratic values. The exchange about the global political influence on Europe and the resulting personal concerns contributed to a deeper awareness among the trainees of the importance and also the sensitivity of a democratic system.

Such initiatives strengthen European awareness and emphasise the relevance of fundamental democratic values in today's society. We look forward to continuing to facilitate such valuable experiences in the future and to deepening our cooperation with our European partners.



The authors

Aleksandra Kaczmarek
EU Representative

Inga Riedl Leuenstern
Member of the EU team

Julia Weßel
Politics teacher



Walter-Gropius-Berufskolleg - Technical School of the City of Bochum, Vocational High School

Participation in the EuroVisions competition

Pupils from the GA2 course for design assistants at Walter-Gropius-Berufskolleg in Bochum once again took part in the “EuroVisions” competition in November 2023. This has been organised since 2006 by the Ministry of Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs and Media of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia with students from lower and upper secondary schools in NRW. Every year, young people creatively explore the Europe of tomorrow in short films and photos in order to consolidate European values and ideas in a world increasingly dominated by populist and nationalist forces.

In the subject of photography, the students created photos in small groups on the topic of “My first choice: Europe” and were able to win 1st place in photography in the upper secondary school category with their entry. The small group received the prize of 750 euros at a ceremony in the State Chancellery in Düsseldorf in April this year. The photo was then used as a postcard campaign for the European elections in May 2024. The students’ intention was to use the unusual and attention-grabbing presentation of the

winning photo to consciously focus on the topic of diversity and thus appeal to young people in a target group-oriented manner for the election.

The programme is also taking part in the current “EuroVisions” competition. Under this year’s motto “Strong Europe”, the GA3 students explored their visions, ideas, wishes and hopes for a future Europe. They captured these in a short film and 13 photos in audio-visual, which they submitted to the Ministry on 15 November 2024. The evaluation is still pending.

Project overview for the 2024/2025 school year

In 2024, the Walter-Gropius-Berufskolleg organised a variety of projects on the topic of Europe and democracy. On the one hand, a dialogue with Shai Hoffmann took place as part of the Middle East conflict. This focused on the conflict after 7 October 2023 and examined the conflict from

multiple perspectives. The pupils had the opportunity to ask numerous questions and verbalise their feelings.

A politics workshop was also offered as part of the project week, which was attended by the majority of pupils from the vocational grammar school. The workshop focussed on the importance of Europe for each individual, which values we want to represent as a community and which we consider to be particularly important. A workshop was held at the BVB Learning Centre, which dealt with the challenges facing Europe, such as prejudices against refugees, and the actual financial and resource distribution in the world. What role does Europe play in this?

The students from the vocational school got to know the centre of Europe by taking a trip to Brussels and having an in-depth discussion with MEP Dennis Radke in the European Parliament.

At the end of the year, the Jewish Museum visited the Walter-Gropius-Berufskolleg with its mobile exhibition. The students from the specialised secondary school attended workshops on the topic of "Countering anti-Semitism". They learnt how anti-Semitism has developed throughout history and how Jews still have to contend with prejudice today. At the same time, the pupils internalised the fact that many of their classmates have experienced exclusion and racism in their biographies. Other groups of pupils have worked with the mobile exhibition, examined the exhibits and learnt more about Jewish culture as a result.

A trip to a memorial site is planned for the calendar year 2025.

Furthermore, a large school-wide project day is planned at the Walter-Gropius-Berufskolleg, which is to be integrated into the school programme in the long term. On 11 February 2025, the entire school will focus on the topic of democracy and Europe in depth. All educational programmes are to take part in this project day, whereby there will be different thematic focuses that will be prepared and followed up in class. The theoretical links will be made in the subjects of religion, politics and social studies with history: Education in values and democracy. Examples of this are the simulation of a European plenary session in the form of a simulation game, a discussion with a drop-out from the Nazi scene with the automotive mechatronics engineers to understand the dangers of a dictatorship and right-wing extremism, as well as a visit to the state parliament in Düsseldorf with a member of parliament with whom the pupils can enter into discussion. There will also be a visit to the Dortmunder U, where the pupils will expose the design of fake news. The teaching of values is supported by a visit to the Technical Relief Organisation. There, the learning groups will learn why people are socially committed and how this is possible in the technical field. The learners will experience the culture of remembrance by visiting the Steinwache Dortmund and deepen their understanding of the significance of forced labour today. Other school groups will attend workshops on anti-racism and the European value system. There are a number of other workshops and extracurricular partners that the pupils will engage with on Democracy Day and in class.



The authors

Magdalena Sidiropoulos
EU coordinators

Beata Scheychon
Member of the Democracy Education team



Kaufmannsschule II Berufskolleg der Stadt Hagen Promotion of European values

DPJW-Projekt „The Hag-worzno Connection. Exploring Diversity”

The Polish school II Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Jaworzno near Krakow and the Kaufmannsschule II have been cooperating for over 10 years as part of eTwinning projects. In the 2023/2024 school year, the wish for a group of pupils and three teachers to visit Hagen was realised thanks to funding from the Deutsch-Polnisches-Jugendwerk. The 48 pupils quickly got to know each other through speed dating.

The young people then worked in international groups to present the prepared presentations on the topics of geographical location, history, political system, inhabitants, tourist attractions and schools and compared the two cities and countries. Similarities and differences were recorded on posters and supplemented with visual material. The learners then discussed the comparative posters in mixed groups.

The topic of diversity was examined from the aspects of intercultural coexistence, nation-building, labour migration, religion, gender diversity and regional stereotypes. The groups of pupils created posters for a joint exhibition with the help of information texts.

On the joint excursion to the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne, the participants learnt how different cultures around the world live the topics of coexistence and religion. The colonial past and the responsible handling of cultural artefacts imported from abroad in the past were also discussed. In this way, transcultural thinking was promoted. Together, the multi-religious group visited Cologne Cathedral and climbed the tower with its spectacular view over the city.

The Polish and German pupils jointly created an exhibition on Hagen, Jaworzno and diversity. They also created two joint artworks in which they expressed their impressions of the week. After the presentation at Kaufmannsschule II, the exhibition was divided between the two schools.



One afternoon, the German pupils invited their guests to a family afternoon where they showed them their homes and/or their favourite places in Hagen. That evening, a joint dinner was organised at the school. The pupils put together a buffet with various international dishes. The Polish guests also learnt about the Muslim tradition of Ramadan and breaking the fast.

The cheerful and happy faces of the young people during the project week whet their appetite for more.

Europe project days “Democratic values in Europe for you, for me, for us”

With unusual, creative and informative projects on the topic of “Democratic values in Europe for you, for me, for us”, pupils at Kaufmannsschule II concluded the school year 2023/24 with the annual Europe Project Days and expanded their knowledge of Europe and democracy.

During the two-day Europe project in the last week of school, the pupils carried out a wide variety of activities and also went on class excursions, for example to Cologne (“European art and culture”) or to the Hagen bunker (“Remembrance in Europe”). In order to record their results and experiences, the pupils created a wide variety of digital and analogue products with positive energy. The contribution of the international support classes was particularly creative: together with a graffiti artist, they depicted the EU motto “United in diversity”. The commitment and work of the pupils was honoured with an award ceremony. The winning entries were chosen by a jury.



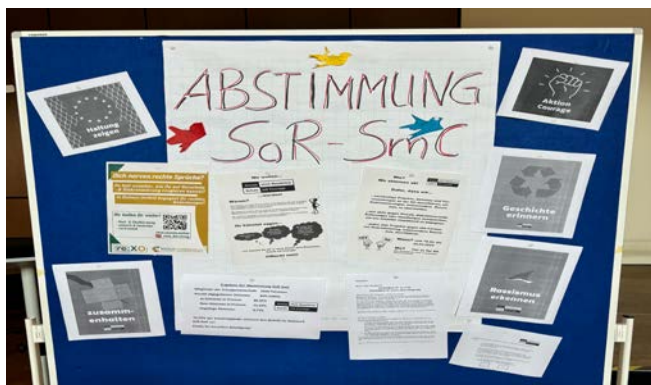
Participation in the junior election for the 2024 European elections

Kaufmannsschule II took part in the junior election for the 2024 European elections. From 23 May to 29 May 2024, all pupils at the vocational school were able to take part in the election. There were two fixed election dates for pupils in the full-time classes, 27 May and 29 May 2024. Voting took place in the respective class group in a polling station specially set up for this purpose.

The aim of the junior election was and is to introduce pupils to the processes of democratic decision-making by simulating the voting process and to prepare them for their own participation in the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany. This takes place in a realistic election simulation with voting notices, polling booths, a ballot box and ballot papers. The pupils also formed the electoral boards themselves, drew up electoral registers, distributed voting notifications and supervised the entire process at the polling station.

Before the election, extensive preparation took place in the respective politics lessons by the relevant subject teachers. The result of the vote in the junior election for the European elections at Kaufmannsschule II was then discussed and analysed in politics lessons.





Award ceremony: School without racism

As part of the International Weeks against Racism in Hagen from 4 March to 24 March 2024, Kaufmannsschule II also wanted to set an example and stand up against racism and for human rights. Students from the two-year vocational school and the student council (SV) organised a vote to join the “School without Racism – School with Courage” network. In this vote, all members of the school community were asked whether they would like to actively campaign against discrimination, especially racism.

In this context, some HöHa11 classes worked on the lesson series “**Democracy in danger?**” in their politics lessons. In this series, the pupils analysed current political events and potential threats to democracy in Germany. The pupils picked up on the motto of the International Weeks against Racism, “**Human rights for all**”. They prepared collages on the individual human rights and designed a gallery walk.

The vote for SoR-SmC, organised in collaboration with the student council, concluded the series of lessons. This took place from 18.03. to 12.04.2024. As all classes at Kaufmannsschule II were to be reached, the voting had to be organised flexibly. At the time, there were a total of 1,025 eligible voters (pupils, teachers and administrative staff). 828 eligible voters took part in the vote, which corresponded to a voter turnout of 80.78%. In order to be included in the SoR-SmC network, 70% of all eligible voters were required to vote in favour. Kaufmannsschule II achieved this goal, as 722 eligible voters spoke out in favour of joining the network and thus actively opposing racism and discrimination.



The official SoR-SmC award ceremony took place on 6 September 2014. In this context, students presented their experiences and reflected on why social commitment is so important, especially in today’s world. The sponsor Eric O. Schulz, Lord Mayor of the City of Hagen, rounded off the event with a speech.

AG Remembrance culture including a trip to a memorial site

Democracy education is an essential building block in the current crises of our time. The aim is to compare the dangers of democracy in Germany and other European countries, as all cultures are heterogeneous, controversial and dynamic in themselves and are also constantly evolving. In this context, important places of democracy both in Germany and abroad are to be experienced in the footsteps of freedom, resistance and remembrance.

To this end, Kaufmannsschule II is offering a working group in the 2024/25 school year entitled “**Promoting intercultural competence through a living culture of remembrance**”. The working group is aimed at pupils who want to actively engage with the past in order to meet the challenges of the present.

On 17.09.2024, a project day was organised with the association **Zweiteugen e.V.** to introduce the working group. The project day offered the opportunity to share the stories of contemporary witnesses of National Socialism. The aim was to learn about the stories of Holocaust survivors so that their fates are not forgotten and their memories are passed on. A total of 28 pupils took part in the project day.

Furthermore, participants in the working group created a programme item for the official commemorative event **“Against Forgetting – For Peaceful Coexistence”** on Saturday, 9 November 2024, in Hagen. The occasion was the anniversary of the Reichsprogromnacht on 9 November 1938. The pupils produced a film entitled **“Remembering for the future”**, in which they addressed the question **“Why is remembering important?”**.

A memorial trip to Auschwitz Birkenau in Poland is also being planned for March 2025. The visit is intended to confront the pupils with the history of the Holocaust and give them the opportunity to understand the horrors of National Socialism. In addition to the visit to the concentration camp, the pupils will exchange ideas with pupils from the Polish vocational school Powiatowy Zespół Nr 4 Szkół Ekonomiczno-Gastronomicznych im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej in Oświęcim, visit Krakow and have a conversation with a contemporary witness.



The authors

Sandra Hansen

EU coordinator, teacher for German and English

Constanze Lugner

SoR representative, organiser of the junior elections, teacher of business studies and politics

Miriam Schulte

Organiser of the Europe Days, teacher of German, English and politics

Julia Volbers-Jegotka

DPJW project “The Hag-worzno Connection”, teacher for English and politics



Robert Schuman Vocational College Dortmund Vote Europe for our future

Over four months of great events, interesting lectures, cool activities - in class and outside! Many classes discussed political topics and personal values, developed posters to draw attention to the election and motivate people to vote... European education live! It got European at the Dortmunder U.

Together for Europe! Our **network with the European schools** in Dortmund and Iserlohn once again organised a project lasting several months for this election. Together with primary school pupils, our prospective school leavers designed election posters and postcards with wishes for their own future and a united Europe, which were presented in and around the schools. This network cooperation also produced a great election advertising video that went viral on social media - this time among the 16-year-old sixth form students from the various network schools. The groups reflected on the following questions: What do young people want for Europe in the future? What is Europe for

us? Most of them answered "security". In this context, one pupil said that younger people in particular often do not realise what a privilege it is to live in Europe. You can find the video on Instagram: [robertschumanberufskolleg](https://www.instagram.com/robertschumanberufskolleg)



To kick off the European election activities, our schoolyard became more colourful. **Let's Europe!** was the motto of the Ruhr Regional Association's campaign, which we were also happy to support with spray cans in our luggage. The blue and yellow message was sprayed on paths and walls.

One floor below, interested pupils discussed with Mirco Jularic from the NRW Representation to the EU Commission in Brussels in the assembly hall. He answered our many questions about European policy as part of the **"Back to School"** programme. Sixth form students from the other network schools were also invited to this discussion round.

This also applied to the **EU pub quiz**. Knowledge was required here - and a willingness to take risks... The digital knowledge and guessing game not only revealed exciting and curious facts, but also required speed in answering the questions. For the quiz, we had our extracurricular partners from the EU Commission's Europe Point in Bonn and Europe Direct in Dortmund in the building.

What does Europe actually have to do with me? Some classes tackled this question at the **Europabus** as part of the nationwide campaign by the State Centre for Political Education. At activity stands on the European Union and life in Europe, those interested tested their knowledge and discussed a wide range of topics with the team members.

The **"Your Voice for Europe"** workshop took some pupils to Dortmund's town hall. Here they learnt about the history of Europe. They found out about the parties' current election programmes and experienced political action on the ground. The idea of motivating other pupils to vote in the European elections was also born there. With a very special photo frame, they paraded through our building and became a popular and much sought-after break activity, taking great pictures that found their way online under #rsbkeuropawahl.

Another highlight was the lecture by Prof Dr Hardt from Münster University of Applied Sciences, who convinced us of the importance of a strong and united Europe for peace and freedom. The students of the FH had also designed election posters. **"Add your two cents!"** was voted the best poster message by the students present.

With these experiences in our luggage, we were ready for the European elections - not least thanks to the simulation in the **junior election** the week before. A total of 557 pupils cast their votes in a polling station specially designed for the election. Some of them volunteered as polling assistants and accompanied the election simulation. One poll worker encouraged his fellow pupils to take part with the following words: "It is not a matter of course to be able to vote and participate in society without being exposed to



danger or consequences. Without voters, there is no democracy! Go and vote!" Many RSBK voters supported his statement and want to play an active role in determining their future. Even after the stirring election results in the European elections, they agree: "We continue to hope for a united and peaceful Europe. For our future and the future of our children."

We have also planned another project in the Dortmund European Schools network for 2025. This year's central theme will be the influence of social media, hate speech and targeted misinformation on the internet on opinion-forming. Instead of anti-democratic and anti-European statements, the pupils will certainly formulate many positive messages and make them visible as graffiti around the participating European schools.

Information and a [video](#) about some of our activities can be found on our homepage www.rsbk-do.de as well as on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) under robertschumanberufskolleg.



The authors

Julia Halbach
Team Europe

Silke Raffo
EU coordinators



Kontakt



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



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



**Managing Director of the EU
Service Centre**
Andrea Stein
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3024
andrea.stein@bra.nrw.de

Advice on 'Learning Mobilities and Small Partnerships'



Verena Sawatzki
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3011
verena.sawatzki@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: mittwochs und Fridays



Michèle Kwiatkowski
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3171
michele.kwiatkowski@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Tuesdays und Fridays

Advice on finances and statistics



Dominik Lux
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3180
dominik.lux@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Mondays und Fridays



Alexander Gerber
Telefon +49 2931 82-3167
alexander.gerber@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Mondays

Advice on German-French cooperation



Tatjana Rosenthal
tatjana.rosenthal@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Wednesdays

Advice on promoting democracy in international projects



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

Advice on Industry 4.0 projects



Kirsten Wagner
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3385
kirsten.wagner@bra.nrw.de
Office hours: Thursdays

Consultancy on networks in the region



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

Consultancy on further training and information events



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



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

Advice on projects for digitisation, ESD and certification



Anina Wellers
Telefon: +49 2931 82-3190
anina.wellers@bra.nrw.de

Advice on media and public relations work



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

