

Diversity and Innovation in European Social Work and Welfare States - Europa

17th International University Week at EAH Jena - April 2015

The 17th International University Week (IUW) of the SocNet98 network took place from 20th-24th April 2015. Apart from Jena students from the participating universities could also go to Denmark or Norway but still 41 international students from the Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, Austria and Germany came to Jena as well as 12 international lecturers from the same countries plus Finland.

Under the motto "friends visiting friends" the participating students were not staying at a hostel but were accommodated by students from Jena. This model is unique all throughout the IUW and has so far only gotten positive feedback from the students. Most of the participants arrived already on Sunday evening and therefore had time to already get to know their hosts, Jena and its culture.

To start into a marvellous week, the Monday began with a variety of snacks and cake provided by students of the department of Social Work. Afterwards all the participants were welcomed by the dean of the department, Prof. Dr. Arne von Boetticher, and his colleague Prof. Dr. Thomas Trenczek who organised the whole week. Also Prof. Dr. Michael Opielka had the chance to welcome students and lecturers by giving the welcoming speech about *Social Work and the Future of the Welfare State*. In order to get to know the participants better, every delegation had to present something about their countries and home universities. A great variety of presentations was given including songs, dances, food and other creative ways. To loosen up the lecture-like setting it was time for icebreakers which had the delegations split up so everyone got to know someone from another country. A city rally throughout Jena concluded the official programme of the day. To get this Monday to a perfect end, Prof. Trenczek and his organising team had prepared a welcome party for everyone that took place in the Youth Centre *Hugo* in Jena Winzerla. The participants had the chance to eat some nice treats prepared by students from Jena, dance to live-performed music, play foosball or engage in conversation with each other.

After a short morning activity the students had the chance to take part in different kinds of workshops, such as: Experienced based learning/education and outdoor training, Migration and Transcultural Society, social work with disabled people – actual changes due to the UN convention, Citizenship and participation, Family Group Conference (morning sessions), Integration through Exchange – Transnational Exchanges as a new chance for disadvantaged and unemployed youth, Poverty: Is being poor a choice or not?, Supported Education: The need for collaboration between mental health care and Education, Young people's participation in local decision-making (afternoon sessions). In the evening the students from Jena had the possibility to show their guests what they normally do on a nice and sunny evening. This had most of the group enjoying food, drinks and games at the Paradiespark with some of them continuing the night at various parties.

Yet there was no time to sleep in the next morning as the whole group had to catch a train to Weimar at 9.16am. This trip took the participants of the IUW to the former concentration camp Buchenwald where guided tours in both English and German were possible. Even though the weather was pretty harsh (very windy and cold), especially the internationals were very interested in Buchenwald and its history. After the tours and a short lunch break the group had the opportunity to choose between several field visits. Namely these were: a guided city tour through the historical and classical sites of Weimar, a visit of the refugee centre in Weimar, a visit of the centre for disadvantaged youth (Tibor e.V.), a visit of the Jugendförderverein Weimar e.V. (social work with delinquent youth) or a visit to the Multi-Generation-House Weimar. Even though the weather had gotten worse than in the morning, the

field visits were successful and were a nice ending of the official programme on Wednesday. The evening programme was once again in the hands of the hosts and individual planning.

As well as on Tuesday, Thursday started with a morning activity before the workshops began. These were: Social Work with youth at risk – streetwork in Jena, Opportunities of Social Work in support of caring families in the case of dementia, Healthy Teaching and Learning, Participation – a way to include or to oblige the unemployed in the production and development of employment services?, Ethical Dimensions of Social Work practice (morning sessions), the beauty and the beast – Social Work between self-optimization and autonomy, behind socialization and emancipation – reconciling our common perspectives on learning, the family networks and its contribution and support to the family members, education and social issue, as well as three field visits from workshops before (afternoon sessions).

The end of this wonderful week took place at the youth centre *Treffpunkt* in Lobeda-East. The students from Jena had organised a farewell party including a barbecue with special treats from Thuringia, the opportunity of taking funny pictures, loads of intercultural conversations as well as karaoke. Even the lecturers showed some amazing karaoke skills, singing songs from their own countries. On Friday, it was unfortunately already time to say goodbye as everyone had to travel back to their homes.

We would like to thank everyone for taking part in this marvellous week, especially Prof. Trenczek and his organisation team for all the time and effort they put into it. It was once again an amazing time and we're looking forward to the next IUW – wherever it may be.

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Fotos: Robin Altmann & unbekannt