

## International-University-Week 2016 in St. Pölten Austria

### „Voices - Voices of Social Work“

The International University Week 2016 took place in Austria (St. Pölten), Belgium (Hasselt) and Germany (Emden). Six Students of the University of Applied Science Jena, participated in the IUW in St. Pölten Austria. The main topic of the week was: „Voices of Social Work“.

Four days full of program, workshops, discussions, excursions in the morning and afternoon, parties and smalltalk in the evening, it was impossible to get bored in the IUW. About 100 Students joined from Austria, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Czech Republic, even from Finland and Norway and of course from Germany. That which all these students had in common was their studies: Social Work. The theme of the week from 11 - April 14 (the fifth day was optional) was called "Voices of Social Work". It was organized and planned by students of the University of Applied Science St. Pölten and their professors. And they did an awesome job! At this point we want to say again a big thank you for what they've done for us.

The 6 students from Jena started their trip to St. Pölten already on Sunday morning the 10. April and



arrived in the late afternoon in the lovely accommodation „Lilienhof“.

We were warmly welcomed by the responsible students from Austria and they showed

us our rooms. There were 2-bed doorms and two 12-bed doorms, which have allowed personal interaction with other students on a quick and easy way. The most students were hosted there and already on the evening the first interaction started and getting to know each other with pizza, coca cola and beer. During an IUW the communication is normally in eng-



lish and some people were afraid about their english skills. However the fear about talking in english was quickly overcome by the most students and everyone was curious to see what will happen in the next days. The first day began early, at 08:00 we went to the FH St. Pölten, to reach the University, it was necessary to go by bus to the citycenter and take a little walk. This required a good organization of the hosts, which was found throughout the week again and again. They informed us about everything and bought us a weekticket for the city bus or the trainticket to Melk. On the university we started with an official welcome word. After the official welcome, each group presented their country or hometown. The presentations were really different from each other, which made it really interesting for everyone. Some groups have presented a Powerpointpresentation, others presented a classic song of their country and others presented some recorded interviews of social work. Many students used the lunch break after the long morning to continue with the personal exchange. At the same time it was possible to sign in for the different workshops for the following days. For example, there were a radio workshop, theaterforum, a visit of a city garden integration project or producing a one-minute movie about empowerment. Other seminars were held about the social work with Roma, the current situation with refugees in Belgium, youth work or minors in France. The lecturers and some students of the participating countries and the FH St. Pölten hold the seminars and workshops. The days were divided so, that a student choose one large workshop (3 hours) or 2 small workshops (each 1.5 hours) in the morning, followed by a lunch break and more workshops or activities in the afternoon. On Monday evening there was a welcome party, with a live band and homemade austrian buffet. At the end of this long day, the atmosphere was really good and many people got to know each other better and better. On tuesday the day started for everyone with 4 different radio workshops of the Campus- and Cityradio which is a part of the University St.Pölten. We visited the Studio, tried the technique and there was plenty of time for questions. In one of the workshops was the possibility to talk with three people with disabilities, who each one of them got an own show on the radio and to ask why they want to work there and so on. Impressive was that you could feel how much they enjoy the work and how it helps in their daily life. The radio broadcasts a live program on cultural and political issues in the region and sees himself as a way for minority populations to raise their voice. Furthermore, there was a theater workshop of the danish group and many students described this as an extremely interesting and helpfully workshop. There was some constructed cases and one student getting the the role of a client and the other of the social worker. The task was how should i act as a social worker in each case and the other students were observing the roleplay. It was possible to help when it was needed and bring new aspects in. The roles was changed after some time. The effect in the role as a social worker is, that you can try out your learned theories in practical exercises. On the other hand in the role of a client you learn more about empathy and which special needs clients can have. On the evening there was the offer to visit

the Campus Cinema or to go back to the accommodation. The Wednesday was the day with various fieldvisit options such as an Archaeological reintegration project. At noon we took the train to the small city Melk which is close to St. Pölten. We visited the Melk-Abbey and additionally there was a workshop with the name „Give silence a voice“.



Before we could enter the workshop room every student was getting a sheet of paper with the order: Not to speak during the next 1 hour. In the workshop the 2 lecturers gave us some notes with different task, like welcome everyone in the room, split up by Zodiac or age, or put a

tenis ball on a string construction on a bottle. All these tasks had to be solved without talking, but it worked in the end. The conclusion of the hour: you can also achieve a lot if you do not even speak. If we focus on other senses, listen to new sounds, we can gain new experiences and engage us some distance to each other, only on a different level. At the same time, one can understand the seminar as a call to listen, for concentrated, conscious listening and taking the view of the people around me. But social workers should not only listen. They also have a responsibility to all the voices that are not heard in our society, - and to ensure that people are heard and that their needs and problems get visible to others. After the visit of the abbey and a short city tour, we went back to St. Pölten. Already the last day was knocking on the door, because Friday was an optional trip to Vienna. Thursday morning were other excursion possibilities, such as the visit to a youth center, the afternoon was still used for the last workshops and the final event. After a short rest with pizza for everyone, we went to a disco for the farewell party. There was the party with all students, lecturers, the organization team and so on. The night was long and a short sleep for many people. Because of the long way home for most of the students, only a few joined the trip to Vienna and it was already time say goodbye in the morning. Time to say goodbye to new friends, exiting moments and an awesome week.

Our head is full of new experiences, knowledge, ideas and new friends from this week and we would advise everyone to participate in an IUW. The workshops were interesting and exciting and also, we have seen that the personal interaction with students from other universities and from

other countries is at least equal to the workshops. Despite the fact that we have chosen all the same degree, there are surprising differences in the study design and the module coverage. However, we have all one in common. The practical relevance. Sometimes more in the foreground studying, sometimes incidental, but always present.

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