

Event 5

Participation: *The event involved 53 citizens, including 4 participants from Judenburg, Austria, 5 participants from Škofja Loka, Slovenia, 7 participants from Kőszeg, Hungary, 20 participants from Bad Kötzing, Germany, 3 participants from Sušice, Czech Republic, 3 participants from Rokiškis, Lithuania, 7 participants from Meerssen, Netherlands, and 3 participants from Bundoran, Ireland, 1 participant from Altea, Spain.*

Location / Dates: The event took place in Bad Kötzing, Germany, from 21/04/2022 to 23/04/2022

Short description:

The event in Bad Kötzing focused on the forms of housing and ways of life as well as the possibilities of living together in the European partner cities. Offers in the cities of Europe were also presented that promote the coexistence of young and old people and examples from practice were shown directly on site in Bad Kötzing.



Thursday, 21st.04.2022

All delegations from the European partner cities arrived in the course of the morning. Immediately after checking in at the hotel, all participants received an information bag about Bad Kötzing, the Bavarian Forest holiday region, the Cham district and flyers about interesting places that were promoted by the European Union in terms of international understanding on the German-Czech border. The border region in the Bavarian Forest near the Czech border offers some interesting leisure activities that are funded by the European Union. Particular attention was paid to these during the compilation of the information bags.

In addition, information material from the "Europe Direct" information center in Furth im Wald was enclosed. The bags were put together, packed, and distributed by young people from Bad Kötzing.

All participants who arrived by plane were received directly at the airport by the main organizer Julian Preidl. The guests exchanged ideas in English, German and French. During the trip to Bad Kötzing, there was a small tour through interesting places in Lower Bavaria such as Deggendorf and Viechtach.



Note:

In the following descriptions of the Juniors for Seniors - active aging weekend in Bad Kötzing, the so-called "Jugendrat Bad Kötzing" is written more frequently. This is a non-partisan youth committee of the city of Bad Kötzing with many committed young people. The aim of the main organizer was to inspire as many young people as possible for Europe and European values. Through co-organization and responsibility during the events, barriers were broken down, a European youth network expanded and the number of sympathizers for a peaceful, intercultural exchange increased. The Bad Kötzing youth council has already taken part in projects of the Douzelage town partnership several times. By co-organizing events in one's own home town, the popularity of Europe and the joy of intercultural exchange was again significantly increased. Since the joint meetings as part of the Juniors for Seniors - active aging events, some young participants have been exchanging ideas almost daily via the social platforms Instagram and Snapchat.

Official opening of the event

After the delegations had checked in, the guests were picked up from their accommodation and escorted to the park in the town of Bad Kötzing. The European guests were greeted by traditional Bavarian brass band music near the so-called "Europe Stone Circle" in the park. The well-known brass band "Die Weißenregner" from Bad Kötzing played some traditional marches from Bavaria, Bohemia, Austria and Slovenia. The youth council members organized the opening and wore traditional clothes. The war in Ukraine and the coming challenges for Europe were discussed in the opening speeches of the main organizers.

Here is a quote from the speeches:

“A lot of worrying things have changed since the start of the series of events in Europe. Can you still remember when we discussed the Cold War on stage in Köszeg last fall? About the experiences from back then? Also here in Bad Kötzing we can see the secret service towers that spied on the Soviet Union 40 years ago. Unfortunately, just a few months later, the world has changed for the worse again. Ukraine is much closer to Bad Kötzing than our sister city in Portugal. Fear and terror are spreading among our friends in Eastern Europe. It's war in Europe again. The experiences we were told about in Köszeg could come back faster than we would like. Is it freedom and openness that tempts some to commit atrocities? I'm shocked by the pictures, the aggression, the many innocent deaths. Our freedom and our community is under threat like never before. I hope for peace and that towers similar to those we see in Köszeg, Susice and here in Bad Kötzing will not be built again near our partner cities in Eastern Europe. The message of peace is therefore more important than ever, Douzelage is more important than ever. Europe thrives on togetherness and a network that guarantees peace. This event and Douzelage stands for all of that. We are the message that Europe needs now. Our town twinning is a ray of hope in these dark times. We keep in touch and welcome everyone. That's why I'm pleased that representatives from France and Spain, who weren't actually part of the program, came. Here, with us, everyone is welcome. Because although we are all different, we are a European entity because we face basically the same challenges, because everyone tries to do their best and we inspire each other with that. In Skoja Loka, Judenburg and Köszeg, we were impressed by the many new innovations that combine the tried and tested with the new. Ideas for young and old, new perspectives that enrich our lives. Because our goal is to bring people together with “Active Aging – Juniors for Seniors”.” (Julian Preidl)

After the speeches, the participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas at a small reception. As a sign of hospitality, representatives of the city and the youth parliament presented typical Bavarian gingerbread hearts that were made for the project and name tags to facilitate the exchange. This was followed by a joint dinner with typical dishes from the Bavarian Forest region.



Friday, 22nd.04.2022

After breakfast, young people from Bad Kötzing accompanied the delegations to the local high school.

At the beginning, Spela Justin and Miha Jese presented the results of the survey. A few weeks in advance, the participants were sent questionnaires for seniors, young people and the city administrations, asking about the living arrangements in the respective twin towns. A total of over 500 people in the European partner cities took part. For young people, it became apparent that most respondents attend secondary school or university, live in a city of between 3,000-20,000 people and are not in a partnership. The majority of the seniors surveyed also live in cities of this size and are between 65 and over 90 years old.

Young people indicated that the majority lived in a two-generation house, while the seniors surveyed lived in one-generation houses. It is reasonable to assume that young people also describe their parents as a different generation. Together, however, the two age groups stated that a clear majority has more than 60m² of living space available. However, more than 75% of seniors stated that they have the entire living space to themselves, while young people mostly have between 20-30m² at their disposal. Interestingly, with regard to their type of housing, young people state that more than 60% of the houses are 40 years old or younger and are in good condition, while the majority of the houses of the elderly are over 40 years old and only partially renovated. The costs for living space per person are at the same level for both age groups. Half pay less than €200 per month, a quarter up to €300. Only the additional costs are slightly higher for seniors. Fortunately, the majority of young people can imagine living together with several generations. Visit the [Active Aging Program webpages](#) for more information.



After the presentation of the results, the participants were invited to speak, discuss and comment on the results.

After that, the participants were divided into groups and discussed prepared questions. In the following you will first read the questions and then briefly summarized answers that arose in the course of discussions.

- ***Are there enough activities for Juniors AND Seniors? Which ones are there? Where is still need for action?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

Many activities are set in clubs, this applies to almost all cities at the table.

Differences arise from the fact that the funding models in the individual countries and cities are very different. Brass bands, fire brigades, football clubs and theater clubs are suitable for cooperation between juniors and seniors. In addition, almost every town has its own pensioners' associations, so it is important here that knowledge and experience are exchanged between the generations. Cooperation with schools and cultural centers often promises success.

Challenges:

- financial barriers
- legal barriers

However, ideas must come from the population so that they can support and implement politics. This is also important so that the population supports these initiatives.



- ***Under what conditions does it work best for several generations to live together in one house? Is dispute guaranteed? Example: Seniors may want quiet, while grandchildren want the exact opposite. How can problems be solved?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

One cannot impose one idea on all citizens here. Every situation has to be considered and solved individually.

The most important aspects seem to be as follows

- It is a giving and taking
- Quite simply, living together is often not desired, and no coercion should be exercised.

Ideas:

- citizen participation e.g. with questionnaires
- combined flats with services (e.g. Kindergarten and assistance services)
- Shared places (e.g. multigenerational playgrounds)

- ***The Juniors survey shows that if young people had enough money, they would not live with the older generation. How far away is our society from living together in reality? Is living together always due to financial reasons?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

You must rethink the respective funding models. Depending on the country there are incentives for people to have their own apartment or the “Hotel Mum”. Circumstances change over the course of a lifetime, and one often has to become independent in order to return to a multi-generational home.

Conclusion:

- We must learn to live together again



- ***What are the reasons why so many seniors live alone (with their partner)? Why are the kids moving away?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

You don't want to move out of the house you've lived in all your life. Another challenge is often the money, it is often more expensive to take a smaller apartment than to stay in the old apartment/house.

One of the most common reasons children move away is for career changes and college.

- ***More efficient use of living space: how do we do that? Does your government support it?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

Dedication policy and building plans must be adapted. The housing construction of 50 years ago can no longer be compared with today.

Ideas:

- Tax reductions
- more flats in public hands
- airBNB regulations



- ***Which offers must clubs offer to bring juniors and seniors together?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

- Attractive offers for both age groups, such as bicycle tours
- Improved communication between the clubs, because the offer is only used if it is communicated in the best possible way. Many don't notice the offer, but would like to take part

- ***Juniors and Seniors speak the same language but use different words. Can this cause communication barriers? How to overcome the communication barriers between juniors and seniors?***

Extract from the answers of the participants:

Linguistic development has always existed and always will. These language differences were not considered significant in our group.



After a short coffee break, the delegations from the European partner cities prepared for their presentations on their respective hometowns. A few weeks before the start of the event in Bad Kötzing, the guests were asked to prepare presentations. These presentations aim to answer the following questions:

- *How do people (students, (young) families, seniors) live in each town?*
- *Is it easy to buy or built a house in your town? If not, why?*
- *Do older people still live in a house without using every room while young families live in small flats because they don't find houses?*
- *Do you have institutions where juniors and seniors are living together?*
- *Are there living spaces explicitly for juniors/seniors?*
- *Are demographic and social changes to be expected in your city that will change the way people live? What are the solutions to the challenges of the future?*
- *What problems and solutions exist in your city/country about housing?*
- *Is there a governmental contact point in your city/country that is dedicated to the topic of "housing"? What do they offer?*
- *Are there any projects in your city on the topic of "shared apartments for juniors/seniors"?*

The presentations including the detailed results can be found on the "Active Aging - Juniors for Seniors" website. The purpose of the presentations was to find projects and best examples of successful implementation in the respective partner cities. The idea of the event is to inspire each other in Europe, so that good projects that have a positive impact on society can also be used in other European countries. Interestingly, it turned out that some of the partner cities have similar challenges and problems, but sometimes solve them in different ways. The results of the different approaches were presented, discussed with each other and already adopted.



After lunchtime talks about the similarities and differences in Europe, the delegations from the partner cities set out for the first best-practice example in Bad Kötzing. It is a retirement home with a kindergarten. Seniors and children live together here and enrich each other. Young and old come together in a shared dining room and during daily activities. Children are cared for in small groups. Seniors look forward to singing, talking and laughing with the children every day. The European guests had some questions about the realization of the project. The head of the kindergarten and the management made it possible for the participants to visit the house and were ready to answer questions.



After that, the participants went in the direction of the city center. There they were received by the archivist of the town of Bad Kötzting. This is a well-known historian who, in addition to his work in the town hall, provides extensive information about the history of the city on his own personal blog. He reported on the best-known tradition in Bad Kötzting, which is known beyond the national borders. The Bad Kötzting Pentecost Ride. So that the tradition can last for more than 600 years, young and old Bad Köztingers take part in the Whitsun ride every year and revive the tradition. Age doesn't matter, the tradition is lived together. Common experiences during the ride take place without differentiating between young and old. The archivist's historical accounts were supplemented by a short city tour, during which the Douzelage sister city house was also presented. This is one of the oldest houses in the city center and is an artistic highlight. The European friends looked for the facade of their own city and that of their friends and then took a group photo together.



At the end of the workshop day, the participants visited the so-called "Sinocur" building. There the guests heard an interesting lecture by Prof. Dr. Wühr about the unique health offer for the residents and visitors of the city. The focus was on living as stress-free as possible, healthy nutrition and the impressive results of traditional Chinese medicine. The clinic for traditional Chinese medicine in Bad Kötzing works with a world-renowned university in Beijing. In addition, the idea behind the so-called Kneipp cure was explained. During a tour of the health rooms, the Sinocur concept was explained to the Europeans in more detail and Kneipp applications were demonstrated.



After a short break, the guests from Europe were invited to dinner together. The members of the youth council organized the evening. Under blue light with a starry sky, based on the European flag, the participants could enjoy typical Bavarian specialties. Pro-European stickers were distributed on the tables, which the participants could take with them. A DJ provided a good atmosphere. After the meal, the young people from Bad Kötzing presented their specially developed Europe quiz. The sometimes tricky questions about the European Union challenged the guests, who took part with great enthusiasm. The three best European teams received non-cash prizes from shops in Bad Kötzing. Afterwards, the delegations presented the hosts with wonderful gifts related to their respective hometowns. The participants let the evening end together until late at night.



Saturday, 23rd.04.2022

The program on this day was a voluntary, additional program, which was largely organized by the young people of the city of Bad Kötzing. During the offers, the European friends exchanged ideas. Strangers became friends through joint activities. The delegations that have not yet left could choose between three leisure options:

Visit of the SPA AQACUR

The Bad Kötzing swimming pool has a number of different pools, a large sauna area and a number of slides for children and the young at heart. During the visit, the guests from Bad Kötzing's European partner cities were able to experience the diverse possibilities of the bathing and sauna landscape, which makes the tourism region in the Bad Kötzing region so special.

Walking on the Planet-Way with a visit of our Geodetic Observatory in Wettzell

The subject of planets and the universe also plays a major role in Bad Kötzing. The reason is the geodetic observatory in the Wettzell district. There, ground measurements are carried out by the Federal Agency for Cartography together with the Technical University in Munich. The data collected there are used to calculate coordinate systems in the field of geosciences. The special place on the outskirts of Bad Kötzing was explained by an interesting tour by a geodesy employee. For example, she explained how the laser telescope works to measure distances to satellites and the moon.

Hiking on the mountain "Kaitersberg"

Hiking on Bad Kötzing's most famous mountain with a height of exactly 999m was gladly accepted by some participants. Arrived at the summit, the participants could look over the so-called "Zellertal" and Bad Kötzing. Afterwards the group had a meal together in a mountain hut.

In the evening, the delegations visited the state-run casino in Bad Kötzing. There the guests were welcomed by the head of the house and were able to get an impression of the unique architecture of the building. The Bad Kötzing casino represents a blue gem that plays with the light. Art and cultural events are offered in the CasinoLounge. By candlelight in the casino atmosphere, there was a last dinner together.

