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Faszinosum Sprachen



„Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa“ Projekt

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Angefertigt im Rahmen von CertiLingua



von
XXX

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1. Faszinosum Sprachen – CertiLingua Exzellenzlabel Motivationsschreiben

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

mit diesem Schreiben möchte ich zeigen, warum ich mich in einer Zeit, die mit dem Abitur und dem letzten Schuljahr schon viele Herausforderungen mit sich bringt, dieser besonderen Prüfung zum Erwerb des CertiLingua Exzellenzlabels für mehrsprachige, europäische und internationale Kompetenzen unterziehen will.

Wer bin ich? Mein Name ist XXX, ich bin 18 Jahre alt und wohne in XXX-Friedrichshain. Zurzeit besuche ich die 13. Klasse des bilingualen XXX-Gymnasiums in XXX. Meinen Schulbesuch schließe ich im Juli 2011 mit dem Erwerb des Abiturs ab. Als Leistungskurse habe ich die Fächer Physik und Englisch gewählt und kann auf diese Weise die Gebiete, die mich begeistern, auch in der Schule in Einklang bringen: die Naturwissenschaften und die Sprachen. Ein Grund dafür ist sicherlich das multikulturelle Umfeld, in dem ich durch die Herkunft meiner Mutter aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion aufgewachsen bin. Mein naturwissenschaftliches Interesse hat mein Vater, der studierter Physiker ist, bereits in der frühen Kindheit geweckt und vom heutigen Standpunkt aus gesehen, wird sich an meiner Passion für diese zwei Welten nichts mehr ändern.

Zunächst möchte ich jedoch zeigen, warum ich sofort begeistert war, als uns in der Schule angeboten wurde, das CertiLingua Exzellenzlabel zu erwerben. Fremde Sprachen und Kulturen waren schon immer treue Begleiter meines Lebensweges. Von Beginn an wurde ich mit Russisch und Deutsch zweisprachig erzogen und da meine Eltern mein Interesse für Fremdsprachen erkannten, besuchte ich ab der 1. Klasse die xxx Schule in XXX. Diese Schule ist bilingual ausgerichtet und die Schüler erhalten ab dem ersten Schuljahr nicht nur Unterricht im Fach Russisch, sondern auch andere Fächer, wie zum Beispiel Sachkunde oder Musik, werden in Teilen in dieser Sprache unterrichtet.

Aufgrund meiner dort erzielten hervorragenden Leistungen konnte ich ab der 5. Klasse den Englisch-Zug des ebenfalls bilingual ausgerichteten XXX besuchen. Da diese Schule ihren Schwerpunkt insbesondere auf die modernen Fremdsprachen ausgerichtet hat, war und bin ich mit der Möglichkeit, diese Schule zu besuchen, sehr zufrieden. Seit mehreren Jahren lerne ich hier Englisch, Französisch und Russisch. Dazu werden mehrere Sachfächer, wie Erdkunde, Geschichte und in der Oberstufe die Politikwissenschaft auf Englisch erteilt. Auf diese Weise konnte ich mir Kompetenzen aneignen, die durch normalen Englischunterricht vermutlich nur schwer erreichbar sind.

Doch wie weist man nach, dass man diese Kompetenzen hat? Sprachen sind heutzutage, in einer globalisierten Welt, der Schlüssel zum beruflichen Erfolg und gewiss nicht nur das. Wer weiß heute genau, was die Zukunft mit sich bringen wird? Durch das zunehmende Zusammenwachsen unseres europäischen Kontinents und die vielen Möglichkeiten, die sich daraus ergeben, ist es sehr wahrscheinlich, dass man einmal im Ausland studiert, arbeitet oder womöglich dauerhaft dorthin umzieht. Und es ist nicht nur dieses Europa, das kontinuierlich zusammenwächst. Nein, durch die fortschreitende Globalisierung rückt die ganze Menschheit immer enger zusammen. Heutzutage gibt es so gut wie kein Land, das von diesem Phänomen

nicht betroffen wäre. Will man in dieser globalisierten Welt Erfolg haben, dann muss man Fremdsprachen beherrschen! Dies verlangen inzwischen so gut wie alle Arbeitgeber und um solche Kenntnisse nachzuweisen, sind Sprachzertifikate ideal. Deshalb habe ich schon vor 2 Jahren an der Prüfung zum Erwerb des TRKI-I Russisch-Sprachzertifikats der Moskauer Lomonossov-Universität teilgenommen und dieses erfolgreich erworben. Doch weist ein solches Zertifikat natürlich nur gewisse Fähigkeiten in einer Sprache nach.

Obschon bereits das Abiturzeugnis zeigt, dass man diverse Sprachkompetenzen erworben hat, habe ich jedoch die Erfahrung gemacht, dass viele Universitäten und Personalabteilungen diese Fähigkeiten über ein Schulzeugnis oft nicht korrekt einordnen können, da das Unterrichtsniveau an vielen Schulen sehr unterschiedlich ist. Doch insbesondere mit dem Sprachenportfolio des CertiLingua Exzellenzlabels erhält man als Schüler die Möglichkeit zu zeigen, wie intensiv man sich tatsächlich mit mehreren Sprachen auseinandergesetzt hat, welches umfangreiche Wissen und welche Kenntnisse man im Laufe seiner Schullaufbahn erworben hat. Aufgrund all dieser Vorzüge habe ich mich entschieden, an dieser besonderen Prüfung teilzunehmen. Denn ich bin mir sicher, dass ein solches Zertifikat viele Fragen zu den eigenen Fähigkeiten beantwortet und dass einem dadurch berufliche Chancen eröffnet werden, die ohne CertiLingua nicht oder nur schwer zu erreichen wären.

Darüber hinaus finde ich sehr wichtig, dass das CertiLingua Exzellenzlabel nicht nur einen Nachweis für sprachliche Fähigkeiten darstellt, sondern auch zeigt, dass der Träger, zum Beispiel durch die Teilnahme an einem internationalen Projekt, interkulturelle Kompetenzen erworben hat. Ich habe an einem trinationalen Workcamp des Volksbundes in Frankreich teilgenommen, wodurch ich Menschen aus anderen Kulturkreisen so intensiv kennen lernen konnte, wie nie zuvor. Es ist außerordentlich lehrreich, wenn man sieht, wie Menschen aus anderen Ländern auf bestimmte Probleme blicken.

CertiLingua bestätigt insofern auch europäische Kompetenzen und zeigt, dass man ein informierter Europäer ist. In mehreren Schulfächern und -projekten haben wir uns intensiv damit beschäftigt, was es eigentlich bedeutet, eine europäische Identität zu besitzen und wie viel Stabilität und welches friedliche Zusammenleben wir der Existenz der Europäischen Union eigentlich verdanken, auch wenn diese Fakten in letzter Zeit leider von vielen Bürgern dieser Gemeinschaft häufig missachtet werden. Ich bin der Meinung, dass auch dieses Wissen heutzutage unverzichtbar ist und dass es beeindruckend ist, wenn man mit dem CertiLingua Exzellenzlabel für mehrsprachige, europäische und internationale Kompetenzen die Möglichkeit erhält, wann immer es gefordert ist, schon im Voraus solche Fähigkeiten nachweisen zu können.

Ich stelle mich der Herausforderung, die CertiLingua mit sich bringt und würde mich sehr freuen, wenn ich diese besondere Prüfung erfolgreich absolvieren darf.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

XXX

The “Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa” Project

2.1 Introduction

This brochure will present the “Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa” project in which I participated and which was organised by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V., Landesverband XXX. It took place from July 16th to July 31st, 2010 at different places in France.

When we were informed at school about the challenging possibility to achieve the CertiLingua excellence label we also got to know that it must be proved that the receiver of the award is able to collaborate with foreign students in an international project. I was handed a Volksbund flyer that presented several work camps of this organisation and after some Internet research I decided to take the opportunity and to take part in the appealing “Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa” Volksbund work camp in France.

2.1.1 Description of the project

The project is designed for young Europeans that are interested in exploring history through different challenging tasks and the rehearsal of a theatre play. It is planned that the participants stay together for 16 days and visit several places in France. The group will consist of French, German and Polish students from the age of 16 to 25. The Volksbund cooperates with the Robert Schuman European Centre and the Kopernikus-Lyzeum Kołobrzeg.

Together the adolescents will get to know each other through various common exercises they have to solve, such as maintenance works on the German war cemetery in Berneuil and projects on Europe’s history and the European Union. The results will be transformed into a theatre play and presented in the Abbey of Sainte-Marie-des-Dames in Saintes.

2.1.2 Personal outlook before the project

After researching the details of the “Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa” project I knew that it would be perfect for me. I am strongly interested in the history of our continent. I see the European Union as an essential institution for our peace and prosperity and I would like to find out how it developed after the Second World War. Furthermore, I always enjoy taking part in theatre plays but I cannot imagine how historical facts and results of our research on the EU could be presented as a play so that I am very interested how this will be realised. Although the working language within the camp will be English, I hope that I will get the chance to test to what extent I can participate in French conversations with peers. Besides, through the intensive contact with Polish students and some language courses I expect to get to know a new language and culture I have not really dealt with before. The maintenance works on a German military cemetery with an international group seem in some way bizarre to me as it is the last resting-place of a few German war criminals from the Second World War. In addition, I do not know how young people from countries whose ancestors suffered incredibly under German occupation atrocities will react after

being confronted with this. However, I am sure that I will meet a number of interesting people so I am looking forward to expand my circle of friends internationally.

2.1.3 Connection to the curriculum

The Volksbund project I am going to participate in fits superbly in my school's curriculum – the Johann-Gottfried-Herder high school in XXX-Lichtenberg. The intensive examination of the European history of the 20th century equates to the most important topics we deal with in our history lessons, in which we discuss this epoch and its impacts on Germany. However, as the work camp also focuses on significant events in countries we usually don't work on at school such as Poland, I expect to broaden my mind regarding the era of two world wars and so many other developments within this period that still influence our lives today. Moreover, the exploration of the European Union that will be also part of the project prepares me for our political science lessons in which we are going to discover this institution. Furthermore, the Johann-Gottfried-Herder high school is specialised on languages. I attend the English classes of this school which means that this language is taught intensified and subjects such as geography, history and political science are taught in English for several years. So I am convinced that I can lively participate in all English discussions waiting for me during the project and I would be happy about expanding my vocabulary.

2.2 The project

2.2.1 Project history 16th – 31st July 2010

Day 1

The "Geschichte erspielen – Perspektive Europa" project starts in XXX in the early morning of Friday, 16th July 2010. All 18 German and Polish participants meet in front of the head office of the Volksbund organisation in XXX. Several of them have already stayed for a few days in the city but now we have to hurry as the bus driver wants to avoid traffic jams so that I have no possibility to get to know the others yet. Our first route to Metz, where we want to stay for the first day, is relatively uneventful. However, it takes a very long time until we finally arrive late in the evening at our "auberge de jeunesse". After the room allocation we have a savoury supper. Thereupon the youth workers have organised a number of games for us. So now we could get to know each other. By that time, also the seven French participants join our group. Unfortunately, many of us are tired after the long trip so we have an early night.

Day 2

Saturday starts with a language course in which we youngsters present each other basic phrases of our mother tongue, for example how to say "good morning", "my name is..." and so on. Here I have the first chance to become acquainted with the Polish language and pronunciation. Afterwards the whole group goes to a park in the city centre of Metz where the group leaders tell us what the program of the work camp looks like and also explain the rules we must obey. One important point is that alcohol and smoking is completely forbidden for youth groups in France. We have to sign these rules to show that we internalised them so that the stay will be a positive experience for everybody.

By coach we go to Scy-Chazelles, where we visit the birthplace of Robert Schuman, who was one of the initiators of the foundation of the European Coal and Steel

Community in 1951, which was the basis for the later European Union. Here we are informed in detail about how the convinced and visionary European Robert Schuman paved the way for the Europe we live in today but also how institutions such as the European Council or the Council of Ministers work.

After returning to Metz and having a picnic, we take part in a scavenger hunt. In teams of 4 that consist of French, German and Polish fellows, so that we have to use English for our conversations, we have to find different places in the city and must solve a riddle as fast as possible. As my team mates work together impressively we finish the task fast and reach a 3rd place in this competition. After this success we get some leisure time. I use it to explore together with other peers parts of Metz I have not been to yet. In the evening we meet in front of the coach and continue our route to our destination in South West France.

Day 3

After an exhausting night of travel, we finally arrive in Saintes on Sunday morning. In the Abbey of Sainte-Marie-des-Dames which will be our main activity area apart from the German military cemetery in Berneuil the theatre expert that will work with us for the next two weeks explains us what he expects of us and motivates us to collect our impressions that could be used for a theatre play. With a number of Polish and French students I already could make friends with I use the next hours for going on a walk through the town to explore the place that will be our home for the next couple of days. In the afternoon, we return to the Abbey where Polish and French language courses are waiting for me. Having learned some expressions, the team leaders ask about our expectations and wishes regarding the work camp. Then the keys for our hostel rooms are distributed. This is organised in the way that in each room all nationalities must be represented. Together with a French and a Polish student we move into our rooms and prepare the next task which is a new scavenger hunt in Saintes. With the help of some cooperative locals and the experiences we made earlier this day when we had our first walk we easily solve this exercise and go back to the hostel. Here we organise a gaming night for the whole group which is well received and we get to know typical French, German and Polish habits. Moreover, this evening creates many new friendships and the group members become very well acquainted with each other.

Day 4

Having continued our language courses, we visit the German military cemetery in Berneuil for the first time on Monday. At this place we have to do a lot of maintenance works for the next time. Our team leaders present the history and significance of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. to us. A main task apart from conserving military cemeteries and searching for soldiers killed in action is the youth work. In international groups the organisation wants to reach a better understanding and rapprochement between the people of those countries who suffered under German occupation and the Germans. This is why we are in Berneuil today. Here we help the sexton to tidy up the cemetery area and he shows us how the memorial and gravestones of the soldiers and civilians killed during the Second World War are optimally refurbished. The work is accompanied by the presentation of the fate of individual victims to show us what we are labouring for. After this effort, our group goes by bus to Royan where we use the rest of the day for recovering at the beach and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean.

Day 5

Tuesday is firstly reserved for the theatre play we want to perform. Our theatre expert asks us for impressions we could get over the past days that we would like to install

in the play. At first, nobody has resounding ideas. Soon, however, we develop the plan to show our experiences the way that we want to present the development of European relationships from pure hate in war times to reconciliation within the EU and even friendship between the peoples nowadays. Subsequently, we continue the day with a new language course. Today we learn to count in the languages of the participants.

The rest of Tuesday we spend on the cemetery. Now, we really have to refurbish the memorial and gravestones on our own. At first, we polish the stones intensively so that dirt and old illegible scriptures disappear. Having finished, we recolour them with special mixtures and instruments in groups of two which is an absolute precision work. The sexton is impressed how fast we learned to get on with this difficult task and tells us that we are working better than experts he could engage. Being thereby even more motivated, we finish this day almost half of the work that is planned for the whole stay here in France.

Day 6

The sixth day begins quite similar. First, everybody has the possibility to learn new German, French and Polish words and we try to introduce ourselves to the others in those foreign languages. This is sometimes very funny as the pronunciation is often not correct and in some cases the sense of the sentences is completely changed resulting in comical remarks. Then we continue rehearsing our theatre play.

The day before we detected that it is almost impossible to fabricate a spoken text for the play because three different languages must be involved. So today we get to know how language can be replaced by gestures, mimic, special movements and the use of items and how to make clear to the audience what we want to express without saying it. After some training, everybody has to invent a special situation and play it and the others guess what it might be. Unfortunately, many of those small riddles cannot be solved so that the theatre expert wants to continue with us training facial expressions and gestures the next time.

After the lunch break, each of us gets a portfolio that presents the fate of a soldier or civilian whose grave we have refurbished. The soldier I have to deal with was very unlucky. He was an officer leading a battalion of Wehrmacht combatants. In spring 1945 his division fought against well equipped and far superior American soldiers in southern France. Seeing the dilemma waiting for his soldiers, the officer wanted to stop fighting and surrender. Unfortunately, however, a nearby positioned division of the Waffen-SS came to know this and executed the Wehrmacht officer to create a precedent and to force his combatants to continue their mission although the war was almost over thus causing the completely senseless death of further young men. One of the team leaders asked me whether I would like to show this interesting fate to the others so I finish my research and present my results to the group.

Afterwards, the German participants plan a "German evening" and I go on a shopping tour to buy some typical German food. Each nation within this work camp has to organise an evening in which they present their customs and traditions and in some way also the cuisine of their country. My German group opens the evening with a buffet where you can find typical dishes such as sausages with potato salad. Then, we play with the French and Polish students some games, that are popular in our country, for example musical chairs, in which everybody runs around the room and when the music stops, you must sit down on a chair. However, each round there is always one chair missing and the person getting no seat must leave the game. Thus, only one winner remains in the end. Thereafter, our participants from the Rhineland present us carnival habits and teach us some dances popular for these occasions.

The German evening ends with a slide show in which each of us presents the city or province he comes from, which in my case is XXX.

Day 7

The next morning we get up early as we go to Oradour sur Glane today. After several hours in the bus, a tour guide welcomes us in this memorial village where German SS soldiers committed terrible war crimes in summer 1944. We get to know that on 10th June 1944 the SS division "Das Reich" entered Oradour sur Glane as they were told to kill several villagers in retaliation for insurgency operations of the French resistance movement. However, the fanatic leader of this division decided to kill all inhabitants. So the village was surrounded and the soldiers pretended to exercise a passport control. Instead, they separated men and women and burned and shot them all. 642 people died and only 6 survived. Learning about the history of the place, the tour guide shows us the sites of crime which intensely impress the group. On the return voyage we exchange our experiences and it becomes clear that especially the German participants feel strongly ashamed that their fellow countrymen were capable to commit such crimes. However, the other participants even try to calm us Germans down as they say that it is not our fault that this happened more than 60 years ago and that it is important to learn from history to avoid new mistakes.

Days 8 and 9

Friday and Saturday are quite similar. On both days we continue in the morning our maintenance works on the military cemetery in Berneuil and we manage to finish all the work that was initially planned till the end of our stay. The afternoons start with history and politics lessons and end with the continued preparation of our theatre play. On Friday we are separated in trinational groups and work out how Franco-German reconciliation functioned after the Second World War. We can find out that initially the relationships between political leaders of the countries such as Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle improved significantly. Later on a friendship developed between the formerly hostile French and (West) German nations with the aid of organisations, such as the Franco-German Youth Office as well as the EU in general. The same actions are repeated nowadays regarding Poland and Germany as the majority of the political parties tries to establish amicable relations and the German-Polish Youth Office founded in 1991 tries to iterate the success of the German-French counterpart.

On Saturday the same trinational groups get the task to invent small sketches in which they present the main tasks of the institutions of the European Union. My group has to deal with the EU legislation. The task is very difficult as the material we receive is almost only in English and some participants have not treated these topics using the English language before. Some language problems become noticeable. However, in the end we manage with the help of intensive team work to show how a law is passed from the first draft of the European Commission till the ratification in the national parliaments. Each of us takes the role of an institution involved in the EU legislation and shows to the others what "his or her" task is to create a presentable law.

These two days are completed with the "Polish evening" where the Polish participants present us typical dishes, traditions and dances. After showing us popular Slavic fairy tales, we reach the peak of the evening where we simulate a Polish wedding and get to know all the merry customs from eating, dancing and many other games and contests till the final wedding vow.

Day 10

Sunday morning starts with a Brunch in our hostel garden and some of us visit the town centre and Saintes Cathedral, which is a national monument of France, to go to mass. Then we have a new language course in which we especially learn new words in English, French and Polish that can be used when we talk about theatre. In the following, we use the rest of the day to develop stage props for our theatre play and with the aid of all materials we collected over the last days we create a script in which we plan all details of the course of action. Being finished, we practise our roles. The theatre expert assists us with advice. He tells us how we have to act so that our actions become clear to the audience as we only use movements, gestures and objects in the play and we absolutely avoid using language. Then the Sunday evening fades away with a first successful dress rehearsal of our play from start to finish without any interruption.

Day 11

The last week begins with a new visit on the German military cemetery in Berneuil. We decided earlier to do even more maintenance works as planned as the task inspired and pleased all participants. So today we refurbish with new teams another part of the cemetery where we have not been before and where especially a lot of memorial stones for killed civilians need a new paint finish. As we already know how to handle all necessary instruments and as we are used to do these works we manage to clean this area within 3 hours. After a picnic in the recreation centre of the cemetery, we go back to Saintes. At first, we have our last dress rehearsal which runs again without problems so that we feel well prepared for the performance. Then we collect all our stage props and build them up in front of the Abbey of Sainte-Marie-des-Dames in Saintes where we want to perform our play. Meanwhile, our team leaders go through the town and invite citizens to come and watch us. Having a last meeting where we discuss the few remaining moot points, our theatre expert explains to the audience what we want to present now and what we were doing over the last 10 days here in Metz, Saintes and Berneuil in the name of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. Then the music starts and our play comes alive. We show the pains that people had to undergo during the Second World War and how the hostility in Europe turned to a union of peace and friendship. An important part of our performance is where we portray how important it was for us to work on the cemetery as it is necessary to retain this monument of sorrow to avoid the repetition of mistakes we have made already too often here in Europe but also in the whole world. In the end we show how the treatment of this pain and sorrow led from reconciliation to friendship within our group of French, German and Polish students. The audience is content and applauds and thanks us for the play. Some people come after the performance to us as they are interested in our work and want to find out how we interact in this trinational work camp. They ask us why we participate here labouring during summer holidays instead of for example enjoying the great weather at the beach. Many of us explain to those asking that we love being here and doing this work. For us it is a great feeling to work with foreign young people in such a project. Then even the local press arrives and takes respectively a French, German and Polish student to interview them. I am not interviewed and the team leaders invite us to have pizza and ice cream with them. The evening is free and we can use the time as we want. So the majority of our group spends the rest of the day in a club in the centre of Saintes.

Day 12

Unfortunately we have to get up early this Tuesday as we go to Bordeaux. In the bus we have a further language course but as most of us are very tired our course instructor interrupts the lesson soon. After arriving in Bordeaux at about noon, we visit the Centre Jean Moulin where many aspects of the French Resistance movement are presented to us with a focus on one of its leaders – Jean Moulin. We get to know that on the one hand French people fought against the German occupants while others collaborated with them and helped the Nazis to install their inhuman regime in France. Some even helped to deport French Jews to extermination camps while the Resistance used all forces to fight for their liberty. However, we also learn that the Resistance was a relatively small movement. Most of the people tried to stay neutral during the German occupation.

Finishing the visit to this museum, our team leaders distribute sandwiches among us and after the meal we go to the tourist office where each of us takes a map of the city with information about the most interesting points in Bordeaux. For the next 2 hours we can do what we want so I go on a short walk through the city centre with my roommates where we visit some sights that are part of the UNESCO World Heritage such as the Saint-André Cathedral. However, most of the time we use to do some souvenir shopping as we had no possibility to do so before.

Back at the meeting point, our group takes the bus to go to an oyster farm. The owner, a German emigrant, explains to us in all details how oyster farming works and offers us a plate of them for tasting. At first nobody wants to try them as the oysters look a little bit strange but after the Polish team leader takes the first turn everybody brings himself to eat one. In my opinion they tasted eatable but I would not call them a delicacy. Then we all have a pizza in a restaurant nearby and visit the Great Dune of Pyla which is the tallest sand dune in Europe. Here we stay for several hours before going back to Saintes.

Day 13

The next morning we spend our last hours on the German military cemetery in Berneuil. At first, we inspect the memorial areas we refurbished the last days together with the sexton and search for imperfections that we repair. Having finished, we meet a division of French soldiers of a nearby military base and deposit flowers together with them in front of the main memorial and rest a minute in silence in commemoration of the victims of war and tyranny. Then we have a last walk over the cemetery to say goodbye to the place where we worked for the last 2 weeks. After a picnic in the recreational centre we take the bus to go to Cognac. A tour guide shows us the town with its interesting old medieval centre and presents us the person of Jean Monnet, who was born in Cognac. He was a secretary general of the League of Nations in the 1920s and after the Second World War he worked out a plan to merge German and French coal and steel industries to improve the relations between the countries and avoid further armed conflicts. This plan was adopted by the French foreign secretary Robert Schuman, we already got to know when we visited his birthplace in Scy-Chazelles. The result was the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community.

Then we visit a Cognac distillery where all processes of the production of this world-famous alcoholic beverage are presented to us. After the guided tour those of us who are of full age can taste different sorts of Cognac and some of us buy a bottle of this drink.

With a dinner in a restaurant and the return to Saintes the day is completed.

Day 14

Thursday is our last day in Saintes. For a start, we finish our language course and show each other what we have learned trying to talk about our experiences using a foreign language. This of course is not so easy as we learned in general basic vocabulary over the last 2 weeks but most of us are now able to introduce themselves in English, French, German and Polish.

Finishing our lesson, we discuss with all participants and our team leaders what we liked and disliked about our stay. However, most of us are very contented and satisfied and almost no criticism appears as both the work and the trips to different cities and the ocean delighted all of us. Only the breakfast in the hostel is criticized as the variety was very sparse and all dishes were sweet. However, we learn that this is typical of France and this would not have been different if we had stayed somewhere else. Then we have our last lunch in Saintes and get some time to pack our bags. In the afternoon we take the bus one more time to go to the beach where we sunbathe, swim, play cards and do sports. The French leave us a little earlier as they have to prepare the "French evening". When we join them, we can enjoy a buffet of French cheeses and the French show us a slide show in which our whole stay here in France is recapitulated. In the end we play games such as boules where we have to get heavy metal balls as close as possible to a small target ball. This way our last day in South West France ends.

Days 15 and 16

On Friday we have to get up early and leave our rooms. After breakfast, we meet at the coach and the next 12 hours we spend on the road. In the bus we discuss intensely our experiences and it becomes clear that everybody really loved the stay. Also, we use the time to exchange our phone numbers, e-mail addresses, Facebook accounts and so on so that we can keep in touch. Late in the evening we arrive in Metz, where we say goodbye to the French participants. We have a farewell party in which our team leaders thank us for our great work and we receive a certificate of the president of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. and the European Centre in Scy-Chazelles for our participation in this trinational project.

On Saturday the remaining Germans and Poles tackle the last part of the route to XXX. The atmosphere is a little saddened as now it becomes clear – our inspiring work camp is over. Arriving in XXX, the German participants continue their way to the places where they live. The Poles take a bus to Kołobrzeg which is organised by their school. At 9 p.m. I am finally back at home.

2.2.2 Personal experience

My first impressions were already completely positive. In the beginning I was a little scared that the team leaders might be very old and strict as I imagined the Volksbund organisation this way. However, luckily this is not true and all of them are young and open-minded French, German and Polish students in their mid-twenties that enjoy their work with younger participants.

In France I have experience very different but all in all mostly positive feelings. As I wrote earlier, I did not know how the Polish and French students would treat us Germans when we work on the German military cemetery or when we visit memorial places where German soldiers committed war crimes, especially as I know how difficult the relations between the older generations from these countries still are. However, the young generation is completely different. Dealing with the terrible actions of the Nazis, nobody accuses me or the other Germans in any way. Far from

it, it is us Germans who feel guilty while the Poles and French encourage us not to feel like this. This impresses me a lot and makes me happy as I can see that the youth today has a lot in common. We have similar hobbies, enjoy listening to the same music and follow in general the same path of life. This way we can create a common European future if we work on a large scale as well together as in the Volksbund work camp and overcome old stubborn animosities.

What surprises me, is how different politics and history are taught in different countries. Of course, I understand that we cannot handle the whole history of for example France and Poland additionally to the German history at school. However, I am ashamed that we usually do not get to know anything else about for example Poland than how Hitler attacked the country, how it surrendered fast and that the extermination camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau were built up there by the Nazis. The knowledge about France is not much better. I feel ashamed when the French and Poles can lively discuss about the whole European history of this time while we Germans cannot really contribute anything when we talk for example about resistance movements in other countries. The other way round it looks like when we start examining the European Union. In Germany we often talk about the EU at school so that we are all in all well prepared when we receive the task to present the different institutions. While the French students have at least a general overview over the topic, the Polish students are completely uninformed and we have to explain a lot to them until we are able to show our sketch of the EU legislation to the others. So what surprises me most, is how different our level of knowledge is, even though we are peers and finish the school passing our A-levels soon.

2.3 Review of the project

In my opinion the project was a complete success. I still cannot believe that our group of 25 students managed to refurbish a significant part of the German military cemetery in Berneuil within two weeks and at the same time to create a challenging theatre play that we performed in front of an enthusiastic audience. Besides, we should bear in mind that each of us additionally learned at least the basics of one new foreign language which is Polish in my case. This sounds as if this work camp consisted only of hard labour. However, as my report shows, this is not true. Of course, we worked a lot, but our team leaders also organised trips to the Atlantic Ocean and different interesting places in the region. We always had the possibility to recover and distract us from the work. I must say that through the satisfaction that our success caused I felt even more relaxed when I arrived back in XXX than after a holiday at the beach.

And as it maybe already became clear through earlier comments: Being together with the Polish and French students inspired me a lot. It was a pleasure to meet so many peers from different countries that have the same interests as me. And I am not talking about interests such as music and hobbies which were also similar. No, I was happy to see that so many young people can be fascinated by a common task and discuss about historical and political topics in a way I have not seen before. Above all, I could make many new friends which is always a great experience.

There is one point about the work camp I would criticize. The politics lessons themselves were relatively uninteresting as we had to deal with confusing and overcharged material that some had problems with and the course was quite similar to lessons at school. In my opinion this could be presented more attractively as even our very interested group lost sometimes its motivation sitting there as if being at school. However, we discussed this problem with our team leaders and they knew that this part of the camp is not very popular, but the European House in Scy-

Chazelles that co-financed our stay in France in the name of the EU demanded these lessons to be taught in this way.

As expected I could broaden my knowledge about the history of Europe in the 20th century and the European Union on a large scale. I am sure that I can use this information to participate actively in the history and political science lessons at my school and to present facts that are not commonly known yet. Moreover, I could not only improve my English and French, but also learn the basics of the Polish language.

2.4 Future perspectives

The work camp I participated in from 16th to 31st July 2010 was an inspiring experience so if I get the possibility, I am convinced that I will again participate in such an international project as I enjoyed working with foreign students in a way I could not experience before. A direct result of my stay in France is that I am now a member of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. In the youth team of the Volksbund XXX I can at least monthly participate in interesting projects with young people from the whole world dealing with our history but also trying to improve our future. And exactly this organisation I was searching for and now I can finally get involved.

A further effect of the summer work camp is that I decided to learn the Polish language. I already started to make an audio course, but as I will have to pass my A-levels soon I will be busy with learning other subjects a lot. However, after finishing school, I plan to take a Polish language course, maybe even in Poland.

Regarding my choice of career, I am still interested in becoming an engineer. However, I am looking for a job where I can combine my fascination for technique with the possibility to work in foreign countries or at least in teams with people from different origins. I think that this should be possible working for an international company, but I know that some hard work is waiting for me finishing school and finding the right profession and I am looking forward to successfully gain the CertiLingua excellence label that would assist me on my further way.

Anmerkung zu den in dieser Arbeit verwendeten Bildquellen:

Deckblatt (Seite 1):

- Logo „Sprache mit Globus“ in Anlehnung an <http://www.wordia.com/images/tour/language-world.jpg> [23.03.2011] erstellt.
- Logo „CertiLingua“: <http://www.certilingua.net/> [05.02.2011]