

Stuttgart Erasmus 2024



In March 2024 one of Dublinias assistant coordinators, Katherine McCormack, travelled to Stuttgart Germany as part of an Erasmus + job shadowing programme. The programme was held in collaboration with the Volkshochschulverband Baden-Württemberg. The Volkshochschule is one of the biggest providers of adult education in Germany. They provide numerous courses to people from all walks of life. They strive to ensure all adults have the ability to return to education by removing barriers which can impede many who wish to return. As part of the job shadowing programme key ways in which the Volkshochschule help particular groups of adults engage in adult education were explored, these were

1. Adult literacy
2. Adult inclusion
3. Supporting adults from a migrant background
4. Providing childcare

Theme 1: Adult Literacy

A barrier which can face a number of adults is literacy, therefore the State Office for Basic Education and Literacy in Baden-Württemberg was created in 2016 to offer support. It helps to provide basic education to companies to improve their staffs literacy. They provide bespoke courses which fit the need of a specific types of language used in the workplace. This method meant that staff members could improve their own literacy skills in a way that was both beneficial to themselves and the company. The example given was their work with a nearby chocolate factory Ritter Sport. This demonstrates how educators can improve the literacy levels of adults who may already been in the workforce and out of formal education.



Ritter Sport Chocolate

Theme 2: Adult inclusion



Katrin Wahner giving a presentation

A wonderful talk was presented by Ms Katrin Wahner who discussed the ALE programmes, these are a group of courses which are offered to people with and without specific needs. They are designed to be inclusive and specifically to offer a classroom environment whereby adults with mixed abilities and specific needs come together and are not separated. They

teach in a relaxed non-formal manner and the tutors can alter the speed of delivery for their group as needed. The outcome has been very successful, they have created spaces of inclusion which have greatly benefited their participants. The non-judgmental classes demonstrate that people of all abilities can work together and most importantly, learn together.

Within the Volkshochschule Stuttgart canteen itself is run by individuals with who have specific needs. This was particularly powerful to see as it enabled these individuals to get out into the work force and fostered a sense of inclusion within the school itself.

Theme 3: Supporting adults from a migrant background

Our host Andrea Bernert discussed with us how Volkshochschule Stuttgart offers initial orientation courses (Estorientierugskurse EOK) for people who have newly migrated to Germany. These courses provide excellent introduction to the German language with a focus on daily communications and introduction to life in Germany. They take their students on small excursions to supermarkets to practice their language skills. They also organise work experience for the learners which has a high rate of success of employment after finishing the programme. The course helps to amalgamate new migrants into German society and helps them to secure jobs which aids again with assimilation.

The group also met the creator of the Support Group Network Stuttgart, Mosab Tato. He himself had fled Syria and began a new life in Germany. He created the Support Group Network Stuttgart after attending an Erasmus programme himself to Sweden whereby the Support Group Network was well established and running in numerous cities. The Support Group Network is run by migrants for migrants. They provide support and advice as well as educational and cultural activities. This has been well received by individuals in Stuttgart and has created a sense of community.



Erasmus Group meeting Mosab Tato

Theme 4: Providing childcare

A key barrier faced by many adults who wish to return to education is the issue of sourcing childcare. The Volkshochschule Stuttgart has identified this and has developed a fantastic in house creche for learners who need extra childcare support. It is open during class time so as the parents are in class taking courses their little ones are being looked after just down the hall. As some of the children come from migrant background the creche provides a wonderful introduction to the German language. The children learn new German words through playing with their friends. The creche has been incredibly successful however it is limited to the numbers of children it can accommodate for, they hope for more funding in the future to be able to expand this service to more parents.



Erasmus Group exploring the creche

What can Dublinia learn from this Erasmus?

It fantastic to see was just how hard the Volkshochschule works to ensure they are inclusive and can meet the needs of their learners. At Dublinia we strive to do the same, ensuring that we provide extra support to those who need it during our courses. The education team will be in talks to see if we can implement any of the strategy's seen over the course of the job shadowing programme and are excited to see how this can improve our learners experience.