

EUROPAHAUS
MARIENBERG



Virtual
Youth
Exchange

Rhineland-Palatinate & Rwanda



THE IDEA

Establishing, extending and intensifying the partnership and contact between young people of Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda are the core goals of this educational project within the partnership of Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda.

This project focuses primarily on establishing virtual youth exchange(s) between young people from Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda.

Virtual youth exchanges offer great opportunities for young people to get in contact with peers from the other country without the obstacles of traveling and the need to have larger amounts of money available.

The partnership between Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda offer a huge potential to establish this educational settings in the framework of the partnership and connect to existing resources and networks.

The project contributes to the empowerment of young people on various levels as well as to the vitality of the partnership between Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda. The Network of „Europe Schools“ (Europaschulen des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz) and the existing network of school partnerships with Rwanda will function as the motor on the German side. In this way the two networks and the individual schools will be strengthened. As a result increased intercultural, digital and social competencies will be generated.

The young people and the participating schools will delve concretely into the topics of Global Education, intercultural learning and Education for Sustainable Development.



THE INITIATIVE



The European education center Europahaus Marienberg is the motor of this educational project. The pedagogic team of the Europahaus consists of experts in non-formal European youth education trained and qualified for innovative concepts in international youth work.

Concept, content, methodical approach and project management are designed by the Europahaus to be implemented with cooperating schools and institutional partners of the different school networks as well as partner institutions of the project.

In 2015 Rhineland-Palatinate certified the first 18 schools to be official „Europe Schools“. Up to 2020 the network grew annually having today (by the end of 2020) 77 „Europe Schools“ including all types of schools from primary school up to the Gymnasium (High School). The European education center Europahaus Marienberg accompanied this process from the very start. Since 2019 the Europahaus is acting as the official coordinating unit for the network of „Europe Schools“ in RLP.

Institutional partners of the network of „Europe Schools“ in Rheinland-Palatinate are the Ministry for Education Rhineland-Palatinate, the State Chancellery Rhineland-Palatinate and the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Germany (Bonn).

The network of schools in RLP already active in partnerships with Rwanda is also actively incorporated in this new educational approach.

VIRTUAL YOUTH EXCHANGE

The project will bring young people from Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda digitally together to experience international exchange, learn together and to be empowered.

Technically a „Virtual Youth Exchange (VYE)“ consists of two groups of young people, one in RLP one in Rwanda. If a school class, a course or a group of students are seen as one acting unit in a country the size of the VYE could range from approx. 20 to 50 participants. The age group should be taken into account that both groups match each other. Otherwise there is no age limit, even VYEs with primary schools might be possible. But language and other skills have to be taken into specific considerations.



Topic, duration and workload are flexible factors that can be adapted for every VYE anew. All items will be discussed between the Europahaus as facilitator and both partner groups from RLP and Ruanda if not a ready-made VYE (see section „Project market & ready-made VYEs“) is chosen.

Each VYE consist of online and offline sessions, national and international cooperation, individual and group work. The VYE focuses on participatory and non-formal education, is experiential and learner-led.

Although the learning process is very much learner-led a VYE needs at least one ‚connection link‘ to each national group for administrative and infrastructural purposes. That may be e.g. a teacher, parents, a youth worker etc. If a national group consists of young people from different schools / organizations this ‚connecting link‘ is even more important for a sound implementation.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

„Virtual Youth Exchanges“ in the setting of the partnership between RLP and Rwanda offer a broad variety of learning experiences and aspects for empowerment:



- Creates the opportunity to get in contact with other young people from another country with another cultural background
- Promoting inclusion, intercultural competencies and empathy
- Learn, work and cooperate in a digital set-up, increasing employability
- Enhancing active and democratic citizenship
- Experiencing fun, exchange and daily life with peers from the partner country
- Increasing language skills in an education-related environment
- Gaining knowledge and learning to learn competencies
- Establishing international networks for the partner organizations
- Enriching the portfolio and activities for young people in school
- Contribution and strengthening of European-African dialogue



PROJECT MARKET & READY-MADE VYEs

Every group that is willing to take part and establish a VYE may fill out a „VYE project proposal“ to find a corresponding partner group in the other country. Thus, a project market for VYEs will be created that visualize the proposals available. This project market will be an open accessible platform in the internet. If two partner match and find each other on the project market the Europahaus will join this project partnership to develop a joint „Virtual Youth Exchange“. This approach offers schools to find a partner group according to their very own wishes and ideas. Existing partnerships can join as well.



Additionally the Europahaus will also publish ready-made VYEs that allow groups that are interested to chose one of these options to work, learn and experience together. In this option a topic is already proposed and the general setting of the VYE is already done. This option will be a more easy way for groups to join the world of VYEs without having the pressure to work out many aspects and details on their own beforehand.

METHODOICAL SETTING

VYEs consist general of online and offline activities. Both are always constructed to support and enrich intercultural learning and international exchange. Both groups work offline and online on specific topics, in pairs, smaller groups or with the whole group including all participants. Group work will be nationally and internationally. Learning results and educational products will be generated collaboratively online or will be shareable and accessible after offline production. The two groups will have joint online sessions via video conference as well as additional online tools for texting and sharing to keep the contact in between vivid. A VYE happens in a process-oriented education setting that includes a coherent project circle from kick-off until the very final evaluation of the whole project. The VYE is facilitated by the team of the Europahaus Marienberg. Teachers can be fully included in the learning process if wished or stay ready to support participants in the different stages of the project process.



FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

The central information platform of the project is the website:

www.virtualyouthexchange-rlp-rw.de

Different information will be accessible for potential project partners, schools and youth groups that are interested as well as for the broader public: The market place with project proposal, requests for partnerships, pics and video impressions, learning outcomes, information about the partnership and RLP and Rwanda itself, contact details, etc.



PROJECT PARTNERS

With the network of „Europe schools“ of Rhineland-Palatinate and the network of existing partnerships with Rwanda we could base the whole project initiative already on sound partnerships.

The Europahaus Marienberg as the coordinating unit for the network will be in charge of the whole project management. It will function as the core institution who coordinates the initiative and keeps partner informed and included.

The network of „Europe schools“ brings also the three institutional partners in: the Ministry for Education Rhineland-Palatinate, the State Chancellery Rhineland-Palatinate and the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Germany (Bonn). Via the network they are included in this initiative as they wish and have resources.

Via the Partnership Association Rhineland-Palatinate/ Rwanda the Ministry for Interior and for Sport Rhineland-Palatinate is include as well as the Coordination Office in Kigali. As VYEs target on young people the cooperation with Ejo-connect would be another enriching element.

In general this initiative shall be open and flexibel to integrate new partners and cooperations that occur out of the running process of the project.



CERTIFICATION - DIGITAL BADGE

The young people of a VYE will receive a certificate after the project as a documentation for their participation as well as a recognition for their learning experiences and acquired skills and competencies.

In the development process for the certification it will be checked whether a digital badge system will be additionally implemented. Educational digital badges can create extra motivation and recognition for and about the learning process.



SUSTAINABILITY & LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

The whole concept is designed to run for an unfixed time. As long as groups in both countries are interested and ready to join a VYE a concrete project can be set up. Groups may even do more than one VYE if their first experience was successful and beneficial (and also if a VYE created unsatisfied results and groups want to go for a second try). The intensification of an existing partnership between two groups or the establishment of a new partnership can be effectively supported by becoming an active partner in this project concept.

The central website will accompany the whole process and will function as an 'open window' of the project to the broader public. Impressions, partnerships, learning results etc. will be presented and available.

The project could be multiplied and opened to more interested groups outside of the networks of „Europe Schools“ / existing Rwanda partnerships thus including all schools interested or even groups from outside of the schools system (youth work, youth associations, etc.).



Face-to-face meetings are not part of this concept. If groups run fantastic VYEs together there are no restrictions to develop the partnership further. Possibly this concept can support extended partnership development in later stages but it's not the core purpose of the project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & CONTACT

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