

**Review of Final Meeting of the Comenius Social Integration Project  
Herzogenaurach, Germany May 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
FZH Förderzentrum Herzogenaurach**

The delegations from Estonia, Greece and Bulgaria arrived on the Sunday evening and Monday morning to stay for the week in a local hotel, within walking distance of the school.

The opening meeting on Monday started with an address by the school headmistress, Mrs Anders, who with the assembled staff, warmly welcomed the groups. She reviewed the importance of the project- Social Integration- and wished all delegates to learn as much as they can from one another during their stay. The Chairman of the local district government, Mr Irlinger, after welcoming the visitors then spoke of his district's commitment to the school. Three members of the school's Pupils Association also made a welcoming address. Miss Hauck as FZH delegation co-ordinator and Mrs Greenwood then made a presentation to review the progress and topics covered in Bulgaria, Greece and during the last visit in Estonia.

The visitors were shown round the school in order to introduce the teachers and facilities. The school had recently completed a major renovation and additional building works so the visitors were able to see some of the new rooms (eg. special bathroom, students library, teaching kitchen and computer centre) as well as the original rooms.

Tuesday morning started with delegates being allocated to active classrooms to see what and how staff worked with various classes and subjects; for example in Art, Indoor Sport, Non-Verbal Communication and Topical Instruction. One teacher showed the use of Montessori teaching methods. The guests' lunch which followed was made by pupils of the vocational group.

Everyone re-assembled in the FZH staff room to hear two presentations about organisations who assist the school. Mrs Schmidlein from the organisation 'Access' explained how they assist pupils with learning difficulties to find work in the open labour market. Following this Mrs Oberle gave a talk about the organisation 'Lebenshilfe' which was founded by parents in 1958 and campaigned for mentally handicapped children to receive education and public care. Today they provide many support functions from pre-school facilities through to retirement provisions. As the delegates were shown in the next building, the "Lebenshilfe" provides the afternoon care facilities for the school.

In the evening the whole project group was invited by the local district government Chairman, Mr Irlinger, to a typical meal in a Franconian restaurant.

On Wednesday morning the delegations visited the sheltered workshop and residential home run by the organisation 'Barmherzige Brüder' at nearby Gremsdorf. Here there are facilities for mentally and physically handicapped adults to work and live when outside living is too challenging. The guided tour started with the special occupation group for very handicapped adults to show ideas of how the very severely handicapped can be helped. The tour then visited the sheltered workshops which take in commercial local assembly work and finally to the Table Football workshop, now made world famous by their construction of the longest football table recognised by the Guinness Book of Records. Lunch was taken in the workshop canteen.

Back in FZH Herzogenaurach the four delegations assembled each country's presentation poster to illustrate their school with photographs and work by their children in the theme of Social Integration.

On Thursday the group visited Nürnberg. In the morning they were given a tour of the Kaiserburg (Imperial Castle) with guides from the 'Geschichte Für Alle' (History for All Association). The tour was

designed for people with learning difficulties and so the guests were accompanied by a class from FZH. This allowed the delegates to see a variety of presentation methods in an alternative setting. The delegates then had a short time to walk through old Nürnberg and re-assemble at the “Erfahrungsfeld der Sinne” (Summer Garden of the Senses). Here they were guided through and experienced examples of a whole range of sensations some of which could be incorporated in teaching pupils about body and perception.

In the evening everyone returned to the school for a Franconian Evening. Mrs Anders made a closing address summarising the week’s activities. Then Mr Irlinger, Chairman of the local District Government, spoke of how proud he was to meet these European visitors and emphasised the importance of social integration. The third speaker was Mr Kleindiek, the Head of Special Education from the Middle Franken government, who spoke of the special work made by Förderzentrum Herzogenaurach and the prestige of representing the county in an important European project. After the meal there developed an informal evening of music, singing and dancing from the four group countries.

On the last morning, Friday, the group were invited to the local Montessori School to sit in and actually see this special method of teaching. This was included as FZH had integrated some Montessori methods in a number of classrooms. On return to FZH the party were able to have a snack at the pupils' café ‘Kunterbunt’ run by the vocational group. Mrs Anders the FZH headmistress chaired a final discussion and personally wished everyone a safe journey home and good-bye. Finally, the school drumming group made a special performance to finish the proceedings.