



Some 150 students from the Balkans explored Berlin with a scavenger hunt.

Photos: Tobias Bohm

Seeing Europe at long last

This summer, 150 students from Balkan states that were formerly enemies came together to explore their **choice of destinations in western Europe**

For many, it was the first flight they'd ever taken, their first subway ride, or their first visit to Berlin, Paris, or Amsterdam. They had the freedom to criss-cross Europe, without limits and without the need to worry about money. This past summer, some 150 students from the Balkans started their tour of discovery across western Europe in Berlin at the invitation of the Robert Bosch Stiftung. They received a free trip to Berlin, a rail pass valid throughout Europe, health insurance, and a small stipend to allow them to explore whichever cities they wished in small groups - to discover Europe for themselves.

26-hour train ride

Blerta Thaçi, a 22-year-old student from Kosovo, wants to travel to "the Netherlands - to Amsterdam - Brussels, Paris, all across France, and to Italy." Thaçi is standing on the rooftop terrace of the Berlin office of the Robert Bosch Stiftung with her friend Mimoszë, basking in the evening sun. Markus Lux from the Robert Bosch Stiftung held a little barbecue here to welcome the students. "Your countries may not be members of the European Union, but they're definitely part of Europe. And when you travel through western Europe, you'll be like ambassadors for your respective countries." For many of the students, Berlin is the starting point for their first major trip abroad. For example, 75 percent of Serbs under 25 years old have never left their home country.

The Serbian students spent 26 hours on the train to Berlin. They took part in a scavenger hunt, which allowed them to explore the city alongside students from Montene-



Meeting point on the terrace at the Robert Bosch Stiftung in Berlin.

gro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia. That is followed by a discussion with former EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen about the future of the Balkans. "In Europe, the main focus is more on peace and values than on the European Commission's criteria and regulations," says Verheugen. Andjela Vujković from Montenegro feels the same way. She is 21 years old and a student of political science and international relations. Like that of many Balkan nations, her country's main goal is to become a member of the EU. "However, it's important to us that we also embody European values before we become an EU member state." In her opinion, these values include democracy, education, and the prevention of corruption.

Verheugen reassures them all. After a rough start, he has seen the Balkan countries make great progress in the last two

years. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country still worrying him. Daniel Radić, a 24-year-old engineering student from Serbia, finds it interesting to hear outside perspectives on the Balkan countries. "Our countries are aiming for the EU and have already achieved a great deal, but there's still a lot of work to be done," he says, and launches into a discussion with Erdita Gashi, a 21-year-old business student from Kosovo. Gashi thinks Verheugen is realistic and sensible. Then the two of them quickly change the subject. Who will travel where with whom? Have they already exchanged contact information? That evening, they're headed to the Kalkscheune club in Berlin's Mitte district to party, then it's time. They're off to experience Europe.



More pictures of the kick-off online: bosch-stiftung.de/europaerfahren



School directors Laurence Nodder, Christof Bosch, and Ingrid Hamm Photo: Martin Geier

Brick by brick

New phase for UWC Robert Bosch College

The cafeteria and auditorium building represents a new phase in the construction of the UWC Robert Bosch College. With the laying of the ceremonial first stone, each person placed an item into a time capsule: local and foreign coins, blueprints, and a speech by Honorary UWC President Nelson Mandela. Christof Bosch, grandson of the company's founder, contributed a biography of Robert Bosch. The first United World College (UWC) in Germany, located in Freiburg, is a specialized high school for students from around the world. It concentrates on intercultural understanding, quality education, and social responsibility. "In Freiburg, the program has a special focus on the environment and sustainability," says Ingrid Hamm, member of the board of management at the Robert Bosch Stiftung. The foundation and the company are investing €40 million in the project. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in 2011 to mark the 150th birthday of Robert Bosch.

Social sculpture

Integrating refugees into city life

In the southern German city of Augsburg, a new model for integrating refugees has arisen in the form of the Grandhotel Cosmopolis. In a multi-story building in the city center, asylum-seekers live alongside artists, creative types, and hotel guests. The idea is to promote interaction and dialogue across social, cultural, and religious lines. The artists who have their studios in the hotel also design the rooms. The refugees help out running the hotel and gallery. The café, restaurant, and garden (including its playground) are also open to neighbors and visitors. The concept originated from a local initiative. The Robert Bosch Stiftung supports the hotel with workshops, such as a "peace academy" for the refugee children, and a 24-hour reception desk as a central point of contact.

www.grandhotelcosmopolis.wordpress.com