

Erasmus+

Back to nature – the open air is our classroom

## Project: Der Pfälzer Wald / The Palatine Forest

The Ecology is the main subject in our Biology course of the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. While teaching the basic level in the school year 2017 to 2018, students came up in January with the idea of doing some project work accompanied by a field trip.

We discussed several key subjects to do research on and various targets to visit. As we are participating in the Erasmus+-project “Back to nature – the open air is our classroom”, I suggested the Palatine Forest as key subject, because it starts right behind our school. The students agreed and we decided to visit the wildlife park “Wild- und Wanderpark” in Silz in the Palatine Forest. Before the Easter holidays, groups of three students were formed and the following themes were issued:

1. The Forest – an ecosystem
2. The biosphere reserve Palatine Forest – Northern Vosges
3. The Forest in Central Europe
4. Resettlement of the Lynx
5. Return of the Wolves

The different themes contained aspects, which should lead to critical considerations on the subjects such as: Is the German forest really a forest or is it more like a plantation? Is forest the only dominating vegetation in our landscape or do herbivores like deer create a more open landscape? Which lines of conflict exist between forestry and protection of nature? Two project works focused on current events concerning the Palatine Forest: Twenty Eurasian Lynx are to be resettled from Swiss, Slovakia or Romania to the Palatine Forest. The Wolves are returning to Germany from Poland. They might reach the Palatine Forest in the future.

Besides the students defined several forms of protection of nature for example:

- “Naturschutzgebiet”: A smaller nature sanctuary like a lake or an area with protected plants or animals.
- “UNESCO-Biosphärenreservat”: A greater region containing different graduated protection areas. The label of a biosphere reserve is given by the UNESCO.
- “Nationalparks”: Similar to biosphere reserves but the protection status is provided by a nation’s government.

The field trip was scheduled on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. A week later was the submission date. Due to the fact that the field trip involved more affective learning targets and increased the motivation of the students, the project work targeted the cognitive aspects as well as the expertise in handling writing software. The project work was graded regarding content, structure and formal aspects of the project papers. After grading, the different text files were proof-read and put together in a uniform appearance.