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Europe/International

Review: International family festival at LWL-Textilwerk was once again a crowd-puller

Organisers draw a positive balance

The International Family Festival at the Textile Museum in Bocholt was once again a huge crowd-puller: According to estimates by the organisers, up to 7,000 people attended the event on 1 May in summery weather throughout the day, which focused on cultural diversity and encounters. In the year of the European elections, the topic of Europe was given a special focus this time.

"What an extraordinary day", said Martin Schmidt, acting director of the LWL (Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe) Museum Textilwerk, who organised the 12th edition together with Bruno Wansing, head of the integration office of the city of Bocholt, the Förderkreis des Textilmuseums and the integration council of the city of Bocholt.

The initiators did this together with 25 cultural associations in the city of Bocholt, who took the opportunity to present themselves, their culture and their culinary and artistic specialities to a large audience.

An artistically designed caterpillar, a larger-than-life specimen that walked across the site twice as a walking act, caused quite a stir. "This action symbolises the threat to our biodiversity", commented Sonja Wießmeier from the city's Europe Direct office.

Engaging in dialogue with each other

Mayor Thomas Kerkhoff hoped that many Bocholt residents and visitors to the city would stop by the Textile Museum on the traditional May Tour: "We can see here how diverse our society is, here we have the opportunity to talk to each other." There are currently far too many people who are looking for things that divide them. "Here and now it is important that we show that we are in dialogue and that we have a plural and multicultural society. This is also what this family festival stands for and I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make it possible for it to take place in this form", said the mayor.

The following organisations presented themselves:

- Afghan Community Bocholt
- Afghan Cultural Association Bocholt
- German-Syrian Association Bocholt
- Italian Cultural Association Bocholt
- Akdeniz-Alevi Cultural Association Bocholt
- German-Turkish Society Bocholt
- Turkish Parents' Association Bocholt
- Croatian Cultural Community Bocholt
- Centuro Cultural Espanol
- International Mesopotamian Cultural Association Bocholt and Surroundings
- German-Chinese Society Bocholt
- German-French Society Bocholt
- German-British Society Bocholt
- German-Albanian Society Bocholt
- Coptic Association Bocholt
- Eritrean Cultural Association Bocholt and surroundings

The following organisations and associations took part:

- City of Bocholt - ESB, fire brigade, personnel department
- Alliance for Family
- German Red Cross
- Europe Direct Bocholt

- European Union Bocholt
- EWIBO
- Bocholt Integration Council

"I would like to thank the cultural associations, my colleagues at the LWL and especially Martin Schmidt for their efforts", said Bruno Wansing. "With this festival, we have set another example for the community in the city of Bocholt and managed to show the many visitors how colourful Bocholt is culturally and how colourful Bocholt also eats in culinary terms."

Focus on European values

This time, the organisers placed particular emphasis on the topic of Europe. Sonja Wießmeier from the Europe Direct office, Juan Lopez Casanova, Chairman of the Integration Council, Gudrun Koppers, Deputy Mayor and member of the Integration Council, and Peter W. Wahl from the Europa-Union discussed European values. Wahl emphasised that he also sees freedom as a top priority, but that the rule of law is also indispensable. "It is the basis of all other rights, because it secures everything." Of course, there are different views in different countries. "While Germans tend to focus more on security, the opposite is true for the Dutch, who tend to prioritise freedom."

Gudrun Koppers emphasised that democracy is most important to her. "This refers not only to the election, but also to the way we live together. Democracy also means going to the polls, taking part and casting your vote." Sonja Wießmeier is particularly passionate about freedom: "Freedom is such a big concept. I can say what I want, I can have my say, I can choose where I live, I can work where I want and much more - Europe gives me all that."

"We are all human beings", Juan Lopez Casanova emphasised the principle of equality. "It is also important to me that all languages are spoken in the European Parliament, everyone is equal."

In keeping with the theme of Europe, the band "Million" from the Belgian twin town of Bocholt then came to perform. Although there is no Belgian cultural association in Bocholt, there is a partnership with the city of the same name. The band with Marco Nochese, Dries Boonen Kevin Martens and Sil Van Aken created a great atmosphere. They were joined by "Ben Sun and Friends", Yong Mei Xu, the DRK senior dance group, the children's choir of the Mesopotamian Cultural Association under the direction of Selda Koldamca, Edlira and Elton Harapi as well as Teuta Dervishi with the Albanian dance group, the Turkish children's dance group with Gül Balci from the Turkish Parents' Association and, at the very beginning and as a walking act, Suonatoni di Taonmina, two Sicilian street musicians, who performed throughout the grounds.

Museum tours in 10 languages

The museum tours were offered in several languages with the help of the cultural association. Each tour was accompanied by a member of a cultural association who translated the German explanations into French, English, Arabic, Albanian, Afghan, Turkish, Croatian, Hindi, Urdu and Spanish.

In addition to the steam tractor rides, there were also storytellers and a magician for the children, who cast a spell over more than just the little ones. In the Arbeiterhaus, the German-Chinese Society offered a calligraphy workshop, the German-French Society invited visitors to play bouldering, and the German-British Society not only had delicious sandwiches and tea at its stand, but also a lot of face painting.

City administration presents itself as an employer

The city of Bocholt had its own stand and took the opportunity to talk to visitors. The vehicles of the waste disposal and service company and the fire brigade, which were quickly surrounded, helped with this.

"It was a great event and we would like to thank the many helpers who made sure that it was an unforgettable day for everyone", Bruno Wansing from the city of Bocholt summarised positively.

The family festival was supported by the "Europe cheque" campaign of the NRW state ministry, among others.

A review with photos can be found on the city's website at www.bocholt.de/familienfest.