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Europe/EDI

Educational Leave: Deeply Rooted - History - Present - Future

**Event from 16 to 20 November 2026 // Supported by the
"Promoting Democracy" Action Fund in the Borken district
// In partnership with EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt**

The five-day educational holiday organised by VHS Bocholt from 16 to 20 November combines remembrance culture, cross-border history and practical democracy education. Through the 'Stolpersteine' memorial stones in Aalten, workshops on populism and intercultural sensitivity, and insights into local community involvement, the programme focuses on attitudes, dialogue and moral courage.

Democracy does not begin in parliaments or at elections, but in everyday life - in one's own town, in the neighbourhood, at work, in clubs and in personal interactions. The new five-day educational holiday course "Deeply Rooted - History - Present - Future" at the VHS Bocholt-Rhede-Isselburg combines local remembrance culture with cross-border experiences and practical workshops. The aim is to empower people to uphold democratic values in their daily lives, to take responsibility and to actively champion human dignity and respectful coexistence.

"The beech tree in Bocholt's coat of arms serves as a symbol. It symbolises steadfastness, deep roots and vibrant growth", explains Sonja Wießmeier from EUROPE DIRECT in the town of Bocholt, "democracy, too, needs strong roots - people who get involved, take responsibility and work together to ensure a stable social environment. Every contribution counts and strengthens democratic coexistence."

The educational leave programme focuses on experience-based learning, specialised methods and direct exchange. "By the people of Bocholt, for the people of Bocholt" is the motto, and it is also an invitation to everyone who wishes to strengthen the roots of democracy and help shape its future. The events will take place from 16 to 20 November 2026, from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm each day.

Local culture of remembrance: Bocholt remembers

The first day is dedicated to Bocholt's culture of remembrance. During a guided tour of selected Stolpersteine, participants will explore the life stories of people who were persecuted, deprived of their rights or murdered. The Stolpersteine make history visible in public spaces and provide direct access to individual life stories. Together, the group will explore the question of what significance remembrance holds today for democratic action in Europe. In doing so, history is viewed not merely as the past, but as a mandate for the present.

Overcoming borders: history and responsibility in the Euregio

On the second day, the educational holiday, in collaboration with EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt, takes participants across the border into the neighbouring Netherlands. During a "Smokkeltocht" in Dinxperlo, participants will learn more about the unique border situation between Dinxperlo and Suderwick, the origins of the border, the history of smuggling, and the impact of the two world wars on the region. The tour then continues to the National Hiding Museum in Aalten. There, visitors are given a powerful insight into how many people were able to go into hiding during the German occupation and were protected by the civil courage of the local population. The excursion makes it clear that democracy, solidarity and moral courage know no boundaries. At the same time, it highlights the close historical ties between Bocholt and Aalten.

Taking a stand: rhetoric against pub-talk

How should one react when populist or xenophobic remarks are made amongst friends, at work, in a club or on social media? The third day is devoted to this question. The workshop "Staying in the conversation and taking a stand - rhetoric against pub-talk clichés" explores the fundamentals and mechanisms of populism. Participants learn to recognise populist patterns of argumentation and narratives, and examine various strategies. The focus is on the practical question: How can you disagree confidently and constructively without a conversation escalating? The aim is to boost your confidence in taking action and to discover ways of taking a stand that are both respectful and clear.

Shaping diversity and discovering civic engagement

The fourth day combines intercultural sensitivity, cultural education and civic engagement. A practical workshop focuses on strengthening cultural sensitivity in everyday life and shaping interactions in a diverse society in a thoughtful and respectful manner. Specific situations are analysed together and possible courses of action are developed. Interactive exercises promote a change of perspective, confidence in one's own actions and an attitude sensitive to discrimination. Afterwards, during a guided tour of the exhibition "Deutschland.Israel.Einblicke" at the LernWerk, participants gain an insight into an important venue for culture and education in Bocholt. The day concludes with a visit to the Volunteer Agency. There, participants learn about local structures for civic engagement and discover the opportunities available for getting involved themselves. The exchange demonstrates how democratic engagement can be put into practice in a very concrete way at a local level.

Dialogue together: Connective communication

On the fifth and final day, the focus is on communication. The course leaders teach the basics of non-violent communication and empathetic interaction. Participants learn to articulate their own values and boundaries respectfully, to address conflicts constructively and to remain open to dialogue even in emotionally charged situations. In this way, the educational leave programme equips participants with a skill that is important both for social coexistence and for numerous professional situations.

The educational leave programme is recognised as political further education. The VHS provides the necessary documentation for submitting an application to your employer. The programme is aimed in particular at residents of the city of Bocholt who work with people in a professional context, members of works councils, association boards and those with an interest in politics. The educational leave programme is supported by the "Promoting Democracy" Action Fund in the district of Borken and takes place in cooperation with EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt and the Integration Office.

Further information on dates, course content and registration is available at vhs.bocholt.de.

About EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt

EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt is part of the Office of the Mayor of Bocholt and serves as the local point of contact for questions relating to the European Union. Its role is to provide local residents with information, advice, assistance and answers to questions about Europe. Furthermore, EUROPE DIRECT Bocholt aims to promote engagement with Europe and to keep people informed about current developments in European politics.



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The LernWerk in Bocholt