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Europe/International

110 guests from Huelva visit the roots of their brotherhood

Visit from 2 to 5 October // The brotherhood traces its origins to Spanish migrant workers from Bocholt // The state is supporting the exchange with a 'Europe Cheque'

Around 110 members and friends of a brotherhood from Huelva in Spain visited Bocholt together for the first time from 2 to 5 October. The trip took them back to the roots of their community: to the Spanish migrant workers who lived in Bocholt in the 1960s. Receptions, church services and personal encounters linked memories of that time with new ties between the two towns.

Under the guiding principle "Tradition - Encounter - Friendship", guests from the Real Hermandad de Emigrantes de Nuestra Señora del Rocío visited key sites in their history. The town of Bocholt supported the visit.

Mayor Christian Mangen welcomed the group in Spanish on Saturday at the LernWerk. "A history of migration has now become a history of encounters. I hope that in a few years' time we will be able to look back on this visit and say: 'Something has been created here that has endured'", said Mangen. In the evening, German and Spanish guests gathered to enjoy music at "Dat Bokeltse Hus%\$. Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers emphasised the importance of such exchanges for young people: "With this visit, a Europe of the younger generation is taking shape today. In this way, shared memories give rise to a vibrant European future."" Eight young people from Huelva, accompanied by a chaperone, had already taken part in the European Youth Camp 2026 for the first time.

The programme included a prayer service at Gemen Youth Castle, a Mass at St George's Church and a subsequent procession to the former St Lawrence's Church. The guests carried the standard "Virgen de Rocío" and numerous flags of their brotherhood. The places visited serve as a reminder of the beginnings of the Spanish community and the subsequent brotherhood in Bocholt. A guided tour of the town rounded off the programme.

The trip was largely organised and accompanied by Juan Lopez Casanova, Chair of the Committee for Integration and Equal Opportunities and of the Centro Cultural Español de Bocholt. He had already announced a return visit to Bocholt during a visit to Huelva in 2025. ""This visit shows what can come of personal contacts. We have rediscovered our shared history and, at the same time, laid the foundations for new friendships between Bocholt and Huelva. Europe thrives precisely on such encounters", said Lopez Casanova.

The visit was supported by the 'Europa-Scheck' grant from the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The funding programme supports projects that bring the European ideal to life at a local level and bring people together across borders.



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