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Europe/International

Bocholt and Winterswijk strengthen local cooperation

First joint meeting since 2016 // Preliminary company visit to Benning // Specialist workshops on mobility, safety and culture

Co-operation across the German-Dutch border was the focus of a joint council meeting between the town of Bocholt and the municipality of Winterswijk on Thursday 17 September 2026. In the canteen of Bocholt Comprehensive School, councillors from both local authorities came together to establish personal contacts, gain a better understanding of the local government structures in the neighbouring municipality and discuss opportunities for closer cooperation.

Bocholt's First Deputy Mayor, Gudrun Koppers, and the new Mayor of Winterswijk, Baukje Dijkstra, welcomed the participants. The last joint council meeting with Winterswijk had taken place around ten years earlier: on 16 November 2016, the local council representatives had met in Bocholt, at that time also with the neighbouring Dutch municipality of Aalten.

Koppers emphasised the importance of face-to-face meetings: "Cross-border cooperation does not thrive solely on agreements, funding programmes or administrative structures - it thrives above all on people getting to know one another, talking to one another and knowing who they can call on the other side of the border." For the newly elected councillors in particular, the meeting provided an opportunity to establish contacts with the neighbouring town.

"Winterswijk and Bocholt are not only good neighbours, but together form an important part of our border region. Our residents, entrepreneurs and businesses have long been looking beyond the border", emphasised Winterswijk's Mayor Baukje Dijkstra, "which is why it is important that we, too, do not just focus on our own municipality, but increasingly view our border region as a single economic, cultural and social area."

In the run-up to the event, a number of representatives from both municipalities had visited the Bocholt-based company Benning. The reason for the tour of the company was its existing ties with the Netherlands and its interest in strengthening links with Winterswijk.

The programme at the comprehensive school included a presentation on the differences between Germany and the Netherlands in terms of administration and local government, as well as a joint get-to-know-you session. Another item on the agenda focused on cross-border cooperation with Ukraine. In four themed workshops, the councillors addressed mobility and accessibility, joint representation of interests vis-à-vis higher authorities, culture and leisure, as well as security, public order and crisis communication. The discussions also centred on how political cooperation between Bocholt and Winterswijk can be established on a long-term basis.



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Baukje Dijkstra, Mayor of Winterswijk, at the German-Dutch Council meeting.



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Baukje Dijkstra, Mayor of Winterswijk (left), and Gudrun Koppers, First Deputy Mayor of Bocholt.



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