

A large, vibrant community of volunteers: The 2026 Voluntary Organisations Fair

Bocholt - On 27 September 2026, during the Bokeltsen Treff shopping event, the large clubs and societies fair took place in the Bocholt Shopping Arcades and the neighbouring Neutorplatz - for the second time overall. Joachim Freund from the editorial team at the Bocholt Volunteer Agency looks back on the event.

The 2024 premiere continued to make an impact for a long time. Given the overwhelmingly positive response, many had called for a repeat of the clubs' fair in the Arkaden. Now, following intensive preparations, we at the Volunteer Agency have responded to this widespread request and invited around 70 clubs to take part in the second fair. And once again, many, many people - young and old, big and small - turned out to experience the shopping arcades in a way that was more colourful and varied than on almost any other occasion.

When and where else can one experience the diversity of voluntary work undertaken by the people of Bocholt in such a concentrated way - practically within arm's reach - to talk to people, find out more and exchange ideas? "An incredibly good atmosphere" was noted by Bocholt's Deputy Mayor, Gudrun Koppers. The importance of community can be experienced here. "The sense of togetherness is strengthened amongst the clubs."

Discover as you stroll



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The 1. FC Bocholt mascot, "Friedel"

People often knew one another, bumped into each other and were delighted to catch up. As a side event to the Bokeltsen Treff, many visitors particularly enjoyed the experience of simply strolling past the stalls run by the many and varied clubs.

Suddenly, the Kolping Judo Club's giant mascot was standing right in front of you, whilst one of his club colleagues was explaining to very young prospective members that judo is a sport where you learn to treat one another fairly and politely.

Many were already familiar with another live-action mascot: Friedel from 1. FC Bocholt. He posed by the wheel of fortune and, from time to time, introduced players from the regional league football club, who were signing autographs. Jette and Emily, who were handing out lots of small prizes there, were among the young people at the fair who are actively involved in their club and its members - and we, as organisers, were particularly delighted to have them there.



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The Bocholt Air Sports Group's simulator

Among others, they also spoke about Fabian, Noel and Jan from the air sports club. They said that flying gives you a sense of freedom and tranquillity - even when you're below the clouds. They value the camaraderie within the club, which offers a "great team sport".

Young and enthusiastic



Laura and Marina are also among the young volunteers. They demonstrated the motto of their association, "Bocholt stays colourful", quite literally and with great skill whilst making bracelets from tiny beads.

It is a small association with 15 members, but a dedicated one, as their fellow campaigner David explained; you can get to know them through their newsletter, but best of all at their open meetings. Their aim: a liveable town where diversity and tolerance prevail.



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The "Ruch" association, which means "Movement" in Ukrainian.

The Ruch (German for 'movement') association, a German-Ukrainian community in Bocholt, is also young and enthusiastic. More than 20 active members are committed to preserving the Ukrainian language and upholding their traditions, as well as fostering cultural exchange.

Although only founded this year, it has already established many links with other associations and local organisations. The association's in-house board games club, with 120 participants, is proving very popular. Further projects, such as a dance group, are in the pipeline.

Humour and a touch of nostalgia



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The "Spätzünder" on stage in front of the arcades

The special atmosphere and the "spirit" of the former trendy pub Dochdu have remained as vibrant as ever. You could tell that straight away from Tom, Steve and Britta at their stall. The "Dochdu Kult & Ko" association, with around 450 members, makes "small, alternative events at reasonable prices" possible, as Steve put it, and in doing so fills an important niche within the city's overall cultural offering in a non-commercial way.

As you get older, you take things in your stride with a sense of humour and pass that on to others. The "Spätzünder" do just that with their L-i-A senior citizens' theatre and proved it on stage in the courtyard (photo above), where other clubs also contributed to a varied programme of performances. They all attracted a large audience, partly thanks to the many guests at the ice cream parlour. "This sort of thing should always be on here," said one of them.

Exhausted, happy and grateful



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The volunteer agency itself also presented itself at the fair.

Of course, we from the Volunteer Agency were there too, together with the 'Engagierte Stadt' network. We were delighted to discover that many people are familiar with us and our commitment to volunteering. And that sometimes familiar things experience a renaissance - in this case, our display board featuring volunteering opportunities and small strips of information to tear off and take away. "Good idea - the charm of tradition", praised one visitor.

Exhausted but thoroughly satisfied: Francis Heitkötter, volunteering co-ordinator for the town of Bocholt, who has been planning and preparing this major event since the spring and organised it together with our team. Thanks to the team at the Shopping-Arkaden, led by Heiko Wagner, the red carpet was once again literally rolled out for Bocholt's volunteers.

During the set-up and dismantling, the fantastic THW team ensured everything ran smoothly. There were also some very young helpers on hand. The best thanks for all their hard work is the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the participating organisations. For example, from the lively shanty choir, which

attracted no fewer than six new members, four of whom want to come to the next rehearsal straight away.

Editorial team

Joachim Freund, Volunteer Agency

Contact



Francis Heitkötter

Ehrenamtskoordinatorin



[Send e-mail](#)



[+49 2871 953-2346](#)

Volunteering Agency

18 Langenberg Street
46397 Bocholt

Tel.: 02871 3425762

Opening hours

Tuesday 9.30 am - 12.00 pm

Wednesday 9.30 am - 12.00 pm

Thursday 9.30 am - 12.00 pm and 2.00 pm - 6.30 pm

Friday 9.30 am - 12.00 pm

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