



Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales
Clybiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru

Charity Number: 1009142



July – August 2023

Welsh German Exchange Final Report



Foreword



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GRANT POINER

Firstly, we would like to officially thank our amazing partners from Sportkreisjugend Rems Murr for hosting us this year in Germany. Your continued support is greatly appreciated by all of us at BGC Wales.

Our 12 days were jam packed with activities and workshops. The group took part in a variety of activities ranging from team games, water skiing, high ropes, city visits, and cultural workshops. It's safe to say that there was never a dull moment.

This year was also particularly poignant as we recognised the sacrifices and actions of those who are no longer with us both in Germany and in France.

Our Partners

Sportkreisjugend Rems Murr are delighted to work in partnership with the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales to provide opportunities for young people to undertake youth exchanges.



A whole lot of history

Youth exchanges allow groups of young people from different countries to meet and participate in shared projects during a short period of time, from one to three weeks. Our regular German-Welsh youth exchange has been running since 2004 with Sportkreisjugend Rems-Murr from Leonberg, near Stuttgart. In alternating years, young people from Germany travel to Wales or young people from Wales travel to Germany.

Participating in a youth exchange involves taking part in a non-formal learning experience, as young people will find themselves in a learning environment different from school. They will be in contact with people from different cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages and have a chance to participate in activities such as workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, outdoor activities and more.



Youth Exchange can be an important part of a young persons development. Having taken part in the Welsh German Youth Exchange as a young person, young leader and a practitioner I am confident in the value the experience has instilled upon myself and others.

Kari Morgan
International Youth Worker at BGC Wales

High Ropes

We had a fantastic time on the high ropes course in Kletterwald Laichingen. The courses were up to 16ft high and the young people had a great time at various heights.

It is a great opportunity for young people to grow in confidence, challenge themselves and work on their teamwork skills.



Wales to Germany

We drove to Germany for the first time, which was a really positive experience for the group.

"I think it was a brilliant way for all the welshies to get to know each other! I felt like driving and the stops were really nice and I feel like everybody clicked instantly over the idea of spending a lot of time travelling together. I would love to travel to Germany the same way again" - Lara, young person 2023

Water Skiing



Another fun and fantastic opportunity that we got to take part in.

For many of our group this was a brand new experience for them. It was great to see the young people's resilience on this activity. After a lot of falling in, a lot of the young people persevered and made it up onto the skis and around the course.

Tent Camp



The German Exchange offers a wider range of activities where young people can express themselves and build confidence through performances. These include the Dice Theatre, Mini Playback show and the Welsh Culture day. These are great for teamwork, socialising and building connections between Welsh and German Young People.

Exchange 2023

Overall it was a really fantastic year. From our Welsh group, all participants gave the Exchange 5 out of 5 for how much they enjoyed the experience. Young people have been able to make friends from Wales and Germany. Kaitlin's, young person 2023, favourite memory has been, **"meeting new people that i can be friends with forever"**.



Historical Walking Tour

We took a poignant walking tour around Stuttgart this year. Members of the exchange were able to discuss the impact of false information, and the dehumanisation of people prior and during WWII. The walk ended at the train station many Jewish people left Stuttgart to concentration camps, where many were sent to die. On the wall are the names of those who lost their lives at these camps.



What young people said



Lara

Young person 2023

Absolutely magic, sparks flew as we learnt about other people, which in return made us learn about ourselves.”

Corey, Young Person, 2023



“One of the best trips of my life”

Abby, Young Person, 2023



Fantastic... I will never forget these funny moments we had.

Lloyd, Young Person, 2023



“Best experience I've ever had”

Elliot, Young Person, 2023



The exchange was incredible and a memory I will treasure for the rest of my life.

The Albrecht Niessner Award



Nika & Sophia

Participants and winners of the 2023 Albrecht Niessner award

This award celebrates personal development and the ethos of the exchange, in honour of Albi.

Winning the Albrecht Niessner award was such an incredible honour. I joined the exchange not knowing anyone and being so scared and I managed to come out of my shell and become a new person, I was so surprised when it was revealed for me to have the award and it meant the world to me. To know that not only did I improve in many ways but for people to see that improvement and award me for it was such an incredible gift.

She came back a changed person. The smile is back on her face... we will forever be grateful for her time with you guys and I'm certain of the fact that this time shaped a bit of her character and left a mark on her mind and heart for the rest of her life. Such beautiful memories to cherish

Beata, Parent

Thank you to all of you for looking after my son & giving him this amazing experience, he was so happy... and he enjoyed every minute, he said he loved all you guys and will be forever grateful to have had the opportunity to go to Germany so thank you so much.

Gemma, Parent



Lily
Participant 2023

"I, amongst my peers, thoroughly enjoyed the German-Welsh Youth Exchange experience. Although the early mornings were a pain for some, it's the friendships we made that truly perfected the experience. We partook in activities that we wouldn't have done if not for the exchange; water-skiing, clambering on for dear life in the High Ropes course, and even performing in Dice Theatre as icons such as Barbie, Gordon Ramsay, and Paz! I'm certain that I've made memories I won't forget. At least, the mud stains left on my shirt from army-crawling through mud as part of the sports challenge are stubborn enough to remind me!

It's true that you make immovable friendships during the Youth Exchange, as members of the social media-generation, Instagram handles and SnapChat usernames have been swapped amongst the Germans and the Welsh all throughout the 12 days, ensuring that we stay in touch when returned to our home towns. It was certainly a strange experience waking up in my bed the morning after we departed Betws and bid our goodbyes, with no chorus of phone alarms or friends waking up with you. No speakers shouting the lyrics to the Macarena either- I hadn't anticipated just how much I'd miss those crazy ways of being woken up.

One major thing I learnt from the Youth Exchange is that I really, really, would love to go again! But as well as that, I've learnt much about my abilities, developed my teamwork skills, and discovered much about people. You're never fully alone- there's always someone to confide in, someone to make friends with. I was able to have lengthy conversations with every single person at the Youth Exchange thanks to the leaders putting us in different groups when we had a group activity. I can say with full confidence that this has helped me work on my people skills and gain friendships that I know will be long-term.

However, we did much more than just have fun experiences, we also gained knowledge and understanding of World War 2 and the deportation of Jewish people during that period when on a study trip to Stuttgart. I feel that it's crucial that we, as Welsh people, learn about that important side of history from a different country's perspective and have those discussions about history with our German peers. In addition to this, on the drive home we stopped in France to see a World War 1 memorial, the Mametz Wood Memorial. We all took some time to reflect and share our gratitude with each other for the soldiers who gave their lives for us. I'm very thankful we had the chance to do that. In the Youth Exchange, I, for one, gained a further understanding of German history when in discussion with a German friend and I then shared my own knowledge of history I've been taught in school in return. It's also interesting to compare our cultures, whether that may be school uniforms, classes, or even favourite musicians. It's nice to hear that Taylor Swift is just as popular in Germany as she is in Wales!

Not only did we learn about German culture, but we shared our Welsh culture also. On German-Welsh Festive Day the Welsh leaders made us a cosy, traditional Welsh breakfast of sausages, baked beans, tomatoes, hash browns, and more. We also made Welsh cakes, of which were all demolished in a matter of minutes. They were so popular we made more on the last day as a parting treat. On Festive Day we made up our own Welsh myths and presented them to the group. I especially loved how creative we were encouraged to be, everybody took part in the silly activities so there was no judgement- just joy. We then planted the memorial tree for the past leader and the man who initiated the German-Welsh Youth Exchange, Albi. For many this was an emotional moment. We wrote on pieces of coloured paper our memories of Albi or what we have loved about the Youth Exchange.

Overall, I'm so glad I shushed my fears and decided to send my application off for the Youth Exchange, I know I'll be doing the same next year. "



