

Report from the January 2024 Bourg-en-Bresse kick-off meeting

This week, from 15 to 19 January, it was the turn of the Rotary Club of Bourg en Bresse to welcome the 18 young people taking part in the CORE programme, a European initiative aimed at improving understanding between peoples, which consists of successively bringing together in each country 6 young German high school students supported by the Bourg and Heilbronn Contact Clubs, 6 young Italian high school students supported by the Italian Club of Sarnico and Valle Cavallina (Bergamo), and 6 young French high school students (Lycée St Pierre de Bourg), supported by the Bourg Club.

This initiative, launched two years ago under the aegis of the 3 districts (1710, 1830 and 2042) and based on a project proposal from Heilbronn, consists of getting these 18 high school students to work together on a theme they choose from a list at the heart of the development of understanding between the peoples of Europe.

On Wednesday evening, the official reception was held for the members of the Club de Bourg and their teachers (2 from each country), in the presence of Governor Alain Bouvard, his ADG Françoise Morselli, the headmaster of the Lycée St Pierre, Christophe Clergeot, and an Italian delegation of 4 people: Lionello Locatelli, President of the Club de Sarnico et Valle Cavallina, Anno Ewald Kujper, Secretary, Paolo Rota, Project Manager, and Ricardo Rovelli. It was during this evening that the young students unveiled the theme chosen for this year: health and medical care.

The working language is English, and all the young people spoke briefly, introducing each other and explaining their motivation for taking part in the project.

The meeting produced a wonderful atmosphere, which was highlighted and praised by the various speakers, including Guillaume Echavidre, President of the Bourg en Bresse Club, Christophe Clergeot, Principal of St Pierre, Isabella Peimann Schaak, Project Manager of the Heilbronn Club, Lionello Locatelli, President of the Sarnico e Valle Cavallina Club, and Jean Philippe Bretin, Project Manager of the Bourg Club.

Alain Bouvard, Governor of District 1710, brought the speeches to a close by emphasising the importance of this international initiative, and pledging his firm support.

All the speeches were very encouraging, both in terms of the sustainability of this initiative and even its potential spread, from the point of view of the

districts and clubs, and above all they highlighted the wonderful dynamic created for these young people, learning to work together for 5 months (with these 'face-to-face' training courses and by means of videoconference meetings) and enriching themselves with their cultural differences. It was great to see them summon up the courage to speak in a foreign language in front of an audience that must have been a little impressed.

Congratulations to the project leaders from each Club who are leading this operation and who are overcoming all the obstacles one by one: Isabella Peimann Schaak, Jean Philippe Bretin, and Paolo Rota.

Congratulations also go to all the teachers who have rallied round this initiative (Frédérique Macon-Maria Gonnard, Angela Schwager-Martina Bauerle, Annalisa De Rosa-Paola Mazza), and who clearly see it as a great opportunity for their pupils to work hard and make progress.

The programme for the week included work at the lycée on Tuesday morning, a fun-filled escape game on Tuesday afternoon, followed by an official reception at Bourg en Bresse town hall with Gérard Lora-Tonet, the Mayor's representative in charge of international affairs at the town hall, and Michel Fontaine, vice-president of the urban area, at the end of the day on Tuesday. Wednesday morning was devoted to school work, and the afternoon was taken up with a visit to the Royal Monastery of Brou, followed by the official evening of the 17th (above).

Thursday was devoted to a visit to the UN and CERN in Geneva, thanks to the fantastic help of our Rotarian friends from Pays de Gex (Jean-Luc Perrin and Patrick Fassnacht).

And on Friday, it's back home.

No doubt there will be a few stars of Europe in the eyes of the youngsters when they return to their home countries.