

Report by Hella Heynmöller, founder of the European Youth Weeks (Honorary Chairman of the Working Group European Youth Weeks on Burg Ludwigstein e.V.) on the history of the European Youth Weeks at Burg Ludwigstein

Let Hella Heynmöller tell us how it all started (texts from 1984 and 1986):

"From the 12th to the 19th of January 1951 a meeting of European youth took place in Fritzlar, perhaps one of the first in the Federal Republic. It was preceded, shortly before, a big rally on the Loreley: "Youth is committed to Europe". At the meeting in Fritzlar wrote the Landshuter newspaper on 29.8.1953: "in Fritzlar began the European discussions".

What does all this have to do with our meeting at Burg Ludwigstein? I belonged to the preparatory committee of the European meeting in Fritzlar and came there with Dr. Walter Jantzen, castle attendant at Ludwigstein Castle, together. He spoke on the subject: "What does the youth of Europe expect from the older generation?"
Walter invited me to the castle, which I did not know yet. I experienced the castle at the end of the year in a year-end event of the association Jugendburg Ludwigstein. I was impressed by what I experienced here.

The Jugendburg Ludwigstein, close to the border to the other part of Germany. Memorial to the fallen in both wars migratory birds. A military cemetery at the foot of the mountain. Caring for the tradition of young people. Archive of the German Youth Movement.
This castle, symbolically situated in the middle of Europe, was the appropriate place to bring European youth into conversation. The board of the association accepted my proposal to hold meetings of European youth here at the castle.

The key question was: how should the meetings be organized? The conception of the meeting in Fritzlar we could not take over and transferred to the castle. The participants in Fritzlar consisted mainly of individuals who sought to make contact with young people in European countries.

A meeting of unorganized youth was excluded from the outset. A new way had to be found. After consultation with the board of the association we came to the decision to follow the tasks of the youthful youth: singing, making music, dancing. Once upon a time the topic was given: "Care of the people in European countries", but on the other hand the way was shown; he led the folk dance groups of European countries. In addition to the arts, we included a political theme in our program.

In 1953 the first meeting took place. Altogether there were 60 participants; a Folk dance group from Austria, individual participants from Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and the Federal Republic of Germany. The beginning was made, the meeting was successful and took place every year from now on.

From year to year the number of participants of the European groups increased; The interest increased more and more. It must also be pointed out that these encounters took place for 10 years in rooms that were very primitive: huge dormitories, a large room (Knights' Hall) that served as dining, dancing and function room. The heavy oak tables and chairs had to be transported to the yard several times a day.

The meeting was sponsored by the Vereinigung Jugendburg Ludwigstein; funding was provided by the Federal Youth Plan. "

"Looking back on the first ten years of the European Weeks, it emerged that the experience gained was fundamental to the continuation of the European Youth Weeks at Burg Ludwigstein.

What were the crucial criteria that have become crucial for the next 20 years and have so successfully determined the course of the European meetings?

1. We realized that musical work contributes significantly to the understanding of European youth. Interest and joy in making music, singing and dancing overcomes language barriers.
2. Although the focus of European youth encounters is on the folkloristic-cultural level, we felt it necessary to engage in a political working group on what the youth could do to advance the idea of Europe ... The European conversation has undergone many changes in the first 10 years. After careful consideration, we decided to invite speakers from the countries present to present the problems from their point of view. The topics to be dealt with were timely determined and sent to the participating groups. It soon turns out that the participation of the participants was increasingly activated ...

From 1975 our situation changed. The financing of the Euro weeks was from Harder each year. The meetings in 1975 and 1977 had to be canceled for financial reasons. Thanks to the financial support of Dr. Ing. Toepfer was able to mitigate the difficult financial situation and make new meetings to be envisaged ...

In August 1980, the Hessian Ministry of Social Affairs announced that the meetings could only be financed every three years. This period seemed too big for us, and we saw it as endangering our meetings ... Moreover, I would like to mention that the collaboration with the current board of the association has become increasingly difficult ...

In 1981 we broke away from the association and founded the "Working Group European Youth Weeks Burg Ludwigstein e.V" ... The meeting was held in 1982, but ended in a minus. The board of the foundation, which recognized our work, granted us easier terms of payment.

The year 1983 brought a decisive step forward in the realization of our objective. Fritz Lenz made the proposal to include the Easter tradition in our program. With this we took up the Easter egg painting in the district of Marburg-Biedenkopf and already twice (since 1983) carried out an Easter egg market at Burg Ludwigstein with great success. The net profit was used to finance our European Weeks.

Finally, with regard to the past three years, I can say:

1. In every year, 1982, 1983 and 1984, were despite many problems and difficulties the European meetings carried out ...
2. All employees, the German and the French participants, were prepared to pay their participation fee every year. Speakers waived fees and travel expenses. They all helped finance the meetings ...

The participation of the population was crucial, and it must be clearly stated that in the past three years, contact with the population, far beyond the borders of the Werra Meissner circle, could be established. "

So far Hella Heynmöller at the end of her active time as chair of the working group. In 1984 she became honorary chairman