

Erasmus Project

Europe: making metal design training and continuing education transparent

Between the dual system and unregulated self-help

There is no uniform basic education for blacksmiths and metal designers in Europe. While the dual system is stipulated in German-speaking regions, there is no education at all in some countries. The mission of the Erasmus+ project “European Iron Academy” is to establish an overview and, in a second step, link existing offers and establish common levels.

Would-be blacksmiths and metal designers find very different conditions when they seek basic education in their countries. This finding has been solidified through months of research with the six partners of the “European Iron Academy” (Raseko-Akademy/Finland, Mondra Opleidingen bv/Netherlands, Museum Komenskeho/Czechia, Tannhäuser-Schmiede/Austria, Associazione Autonoma per la Biennale d’Arte Fabbri/Italy and Europäisches Zentrum für Zeitgemäße Metallgestaltung in Kolbermoor/Germany).

With the jointly developed questionnaires, data have been collected for months in all European countries – starting with the contact information of the responsible ministries, to operations and companies providing qualitative training. It very quickly became clear that there are differences between German-speaking countries that qualify apprentices to journeymen under the dual system (report on the next double-page spread), and countries such as Iceland, Spain and Denmark where prospects have to acquire the required knowledge through self-study or work placements.

Research in all European countries

Each of the six partners was assigned the task of listing the major schools, academies and educational institutions in that country and preparing them for the website. Each team also had to search up to four other European countries for such organisations, which of course was not always all that simple. Sometimes the language barriers were insurmountable. The applicable authorities and associations were not always cooperative either. Nevertheless the website has gone online with the results so far. It is going to be updated as progress is made.

The goal for phase 1 of the project (2015 – 2017) is to record the addresses and determine what levels of education are offered. Here the partners are using the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), a performance point system for vocational training and continuing education. The system has eight qualification levels. Level 1 for example includes fundamental skills. Level 2 approximately corresponds to the course contents in the dual system. By the end of the apprenticeship in Germany, the apprentice should be ready to jump to level 3. The master is approximately equal to level 5. Levels 6, 7 and 8 are reached only through multiple courses of study.

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Focus on basic education

The partners in the “European Iron Academy” are investigating the basic education of metal designers and blacksmiths in project phase 1. Networking concrete institutions is the objective for a subsequent two-year phase. The goal is to offer a comparable training and continuing education system for young people across Europe. Information is to be provided on the website for them to plan and coordinate the steps to becoming a master. The homepage is intended to become an important tool, especially for prospects in countries with no formal education. Since there are far fewer education offers in the creative metal trade compared to metalwork in general, better European networking is absolutely essential.

Additional partners wanted

During their research, the partners noted that some countries have outstanding schools and academies, with some of them already participating in Erasmus+ offerings, but that many of these offerings have not yet been harmonised according to ECVET criteria. Often the language barriers represent major obstacles as well.

Phase 2 of the Erasmus+ project intends to get involved here as well. Additional partners in countries that are not yet participating are to be recruited for this purpose. Traditional wanderings are to be promoted, and additional operations that have qualified themselves as training institutions and accept apprentices are to be documented. Interested parties can get in touch using the contact information on the homepage. Phase 1 of the Erasmus+ is scheduled to be concluded by November. The results will be presented to a larger audience during a “multi-player event” in the Netherlands. The starting shot was fired in the Netherlands. Conferences over several days will then have taken place in all six partner countries by November of 2017. The fourth was held recently in Stia, Tuscany. Practical excursions are always part of the conferences. In Finland the partners visited the Raseko-Akademy in Raisio, in Rosenheim the Berufsförderungszentrum (bfz), and in Stia the participants informed themselves about the new local blacksmith academy.

<http://europeanironacademy.eu>

The “European Iron Academy” collects vocational training offers across Europe and makes them accessible to everyone. Lists are being prepared in the first phase (2015 - 2017) with the course contents and levels in Europe on the one hand and, on the other hand, with learning outcomes of the various European education programmes. The results of these research efforts are found on a website since April.

Here the project and the project partners are introduced in several languages. There is also an overview of training institutions for metal designers along with a search function. A listing that continues to be updated shows the common or responsible institutions for vocational training, requirements, and rules and regulations. A press review with reports since the start of the project is found under “Blog”. The modern layout of the website focuses on the aspect of networking between the educational institutions. (si)