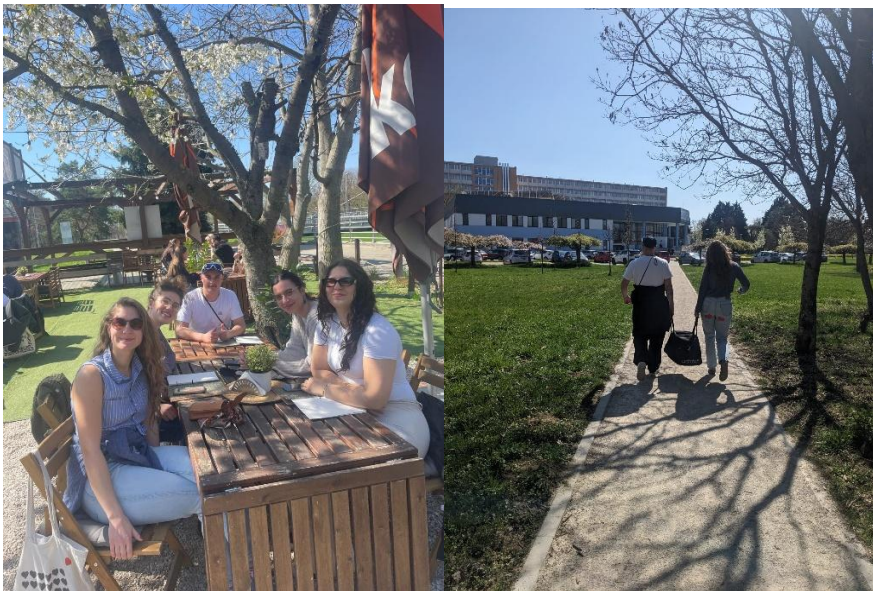


International University Week 2025 – Nitra Slovakia

In the summer semester of 2025, we had the opportunity to take part in the International University Week (IUW) in Nitra, Slovakia - and we didn't miss it! The IUW took place simultaneously at four European universities and offered students the opportunity to make international experiences, get to know new perspectives and develop professionally and personally. The whole thing was organized by our university HS Emden/Leer, more precisely by the International Office.

We were a mixed group: three social work students from different semesters and two of us from the Social- and Health Management. Originally, the IUW was intended more for social work - topic: "clinical social work" - but for the SoGeMas, the whole thing was quickly adapted as the module "Social Management in a European Context" and rewarded with 3 credit points in module 25. Thank you for that!


Our motivation? Meeting new people, getting a taste of international life and, of course, a bit of adventure. The anticipation was great - not least thanks to the good preparatory meetings and the open exchange with our course coordinator. So we set off to Nitra with a lot of curiosity and even more wanderlust.



Our journey to the International University Week started with Deutsche Bahn: We spent around 15 to 16 hours on the train - some of us organized a three-day trip in advance to Vienna, where we got into the mood before continuing to Bratislava. The entire Emden group finally met in Bratislava before we drove together on a small train to Nitra.

When we arrived in Nitra, we were warmly welcomed by a group of Slovakian students. They gave us the most important information and our keys for the rooms. We were all accommodated in the student residence, which pleasantly surprised us: modern double rooms, some with a balcony and fridge - it's a great place to live! The atmosphere was relaxed right from the start. The shared bathroom, which was shared by two double rooms, caused some skepticism for a short time, but quickly became a habit.

The kitchen was a bit of a downer: microwave, camping stove, but no cutlery, no pots and pans - so culinary feats were out of the question. We made the best of it and provided ourselves with a snack and salad in the evening. This quickly turned into a cozy group ritual where we ended the day together.



IUW 2025 Nitra Programme		Sunday, 30 March	Monday, 31 March	Tuesday, 1 April	Wednesday, 2 April	Thursday, 3 April	Friday, 4 April
Topic: Clinical Social work	Individual Arrivals	09.00-10.00 • Welcome to CPU in Nitra, Slovakia • The IUW 2025 Coordinator group • Students from CPU	09.00-9.15 Energizers Info of the day	9.00-9.15 Energizers Info of the day	9.00-9.15 Energizers Info of the day	9.00-9.15 Energizers Info of the day	9.00-12.30 Wrap-up International week 2025
	Check in at student dormitory and hosts	10.15-11.00 Keynote: Julien S. Bourelle - stream from Porsgrunn 11.15-11.45 Keynote: Prof. PhDr. Martina Mallová, PhD. Topic: Clinical Social Work	9.15-10.45 Clinical social work at international context (mixed groups) 11.00-12.30 Workshops - part 1			10.30-12.00 Workshops - part 1	10.00 Welcome by International coordinator 10.15 Stream from Porsgrunn - a mentimeter evaluation from all four places 11.00 Look back at the week in Nitra Awarding of Certificates and Farewell
	Informal Welcome	12.00-13.00 Lunch	12.30-13.30 Lunch	12.00-13.00 Lunch	12.00-13.00 Lunch	12.00-13.00 Lunch	Individual Departures
		13.15-15.30 Presentation of universities + International Buffet	13.30-15.00 Workshops - part 2	13.00-15.00 Field Visits in parallel sessions II	13.00-15.00 Workshops - part 2	13.00-15.00 Workshops - part 2	
			16.00-18.00 Guided City Tour (Nitra Castle)			18.00-23.00 Farewell Party	
		Free evening	Dining and socializing with CPU students Teachers Dinner Castellum	Dining and socializing with CPU students Costs not covered		Included: Buffet and 2 soft drinks	

A highlight in the area of “cultural differences” was definitely the attempt to get a receipt for the stay in the residence - we have rarely felt so “cliché-German”.

The week in Nitra was packed with exciting program points, cultural impressions and lots of international flair - we certainly didn't get bored!

We were warmly welcomed at the university - traditionally with sweet and savory pastries, which gave us our first impression of Slovakian hospitality. The students and lecturers from Slovakia, who accompanied us throughout the week introduced themselves.

A real highlight was Julien Bourelle's introductory lecture on cultural differences - not only informative, but also really entertaining. Afterwards, the various groups presented their home universities. We from Emden represented Emden/Leer University of Applied Sciences together with our lecturer Sören Schmidt - in proper style with East Frisian tea and New Year's Cake (Neujahrskuchen)

Things got a little more relaxed at the international food tasting, where we were able to talk directly to participants from other countries.



The discussion on the topic of “Clinical Social Work in an International Context” became more technical. Every country had to prepare a paper in advance, which led to an exciting exchange about approaches, challenges and perspectives of clinical social work in different countries.

There was also plenty to do outside the university: During a guided tour in the old town and a visit to Nitra Castle, we not only learned about the history of the city, but also got to know a city guide who made everyone feel like grandchildren with her charm and wit - including our lecturers.



The program was also filled with field visits and workshops. We had the opportunity to visit two different facilities and chose from several workshops - all practical, sometimes moving and often thought-provoking.

We particularly remember the workshop on ADHD, led by our Emden lecturer Mr. Schmidt. The main focus was on a positive view on the strengths of people with ADHD. Personal experience reports and a critical examination of complex diagnostic procedures made it clear how important it is to focus on individual abilities.

The workshop on stress reduction with singing bowls was very relaxing (for most of us at least). We were able to feel the vibrations of the singing bowl on our own bodies - for some it was almost soporifically pleasant, for others it took some time to get used to. Especially these experienced differences made the reflection afterwards very special and interesting.

The visits to social institutions in Nitra also left lasting impressions. We were able to choose two out of four facilities which we decided to visit.

The visit to the ID Club was particularly impressive. The organization offers support for people in crises at all time- whether digitally or in person. To reach young people at eye level, we find particularly their use of streaming platforms innovative. To use hedgehogs in animal-assisted therapy was unusual for us. They are rarely associated with negative experiences. Hedgehogs can reflect the clients' emotions very well and being in contact with an animal interrupts the negative thoughts.



In addition to the official program items, there were also social activities that strengthened the exchange among the international students. We had lunch all together on three days, which was cooked for us. We sat at large group tables, quickly got into conversations and were able to deepen our contacts. There were also opportunities to get to know each other outside the canteen: going out to eat, once in a traditional Slovakian restaurant, pub evenings or longer nights in front of the student hall of residence, visits to the billiard café and club visits caused many fun moments and strengthened the bond between us.



The week ended with a farewell party - with a buffet, lots of music and fun games. A colorful, cheerful end to a week that not only impressed us professionally, but also personally and culturally - but was also quite exhausting.

What we also take with us: Language barriers are not as insurmountable as you might think. With a little patience, a smile and creative gestures, communication often works better than expected - and sometimes a thumbs-up is worth a thousand words.

So every single one of us can definitely imagine being part of another IUW.

Arne, Emma, Anna, Sophie and Amke

