Report on the Youth Exchange Between Oulu and Leverkusen
20.10.26 – 24.10.26

Dear Mayor Hebbel,

We had a wonderful stay in our Finnish Twin city, Oulu, and would like to share our experiences and impressions with you in the following report.
We wrote this report together with the members of the Youth City Council. Since we organized the exchange in collaboration with our Finnish partners, the report is written in English.

Tuesday

On Tuesday Morning, we set off from Leverkusen bus station at 6 a.m.
After an exciting flight via Helsinki, we landed in Oulu, where members of the Finnish Youth Council were waiting to pick us up at the airport.

After a short bus ride, during which we learned some interesting facts about Oulu, we arrived at our hotel.

Once we had checked into our rooms and unpacked our bags, the Finnish group picked us up, and we began our journey together.
At the youth club, we played some warm-up games to get to know each other better and break the ice.

Afterwards, we enjoyed a delicious meal of meatballs and potatoes. Simon, one of the youth workers, had the special opportunity to try a traditional Finnish dish: blood sausage soup. In Finland, school meals are provided free of charge, but this particular dish has disappeared from the school menu. Simon really enjoyed it, although none of the young people could understand why he liked it so much!

After this long day of Travel everyone was falling in their beds.





Wednesday

On Wednesday morning, we took part in a series of workshops where we reflected on our worries and hopes for the future. We also discussed what we could do to make a difference and help shape our future. As a result, we developed several statements that we will present and discuss with representatives of the Oulu City Council at the next day.

After the workshops, we had lunch in the lovely canteen at Oulu City Hall.

In the afternoon, we visited Oulu's newly built Science Centre, Tietomaa. There, we learned more about the Northern Lights, Finnish nature and animals, mechanical engineering, Electric and the history of Oulu.
Afterwards, we enjoyed a scenic walk along the river and through a beautiful park on our way back to the youth club.

For dinner, we were treated to another delicious Finnish meal: traditional salmon soup.

To round off the day, we visited the X-On Pop concert at Oulu Hall. This impressive music event is aimed at young people and features performances by various rap artists. The atmosphere was fantastic, with around 2,500 young people attending the event. It was an unforgettable experience for everyone!

Thursday

On Thursday morning, we presented facts about our cities, activities for young people, and the youth city councils in Leverkusen and Oulu.

Afterwards, we visited the Toripoliisi statue in the marketplace in Oulu and explored the city's sights in small groups. These included the market square, the Star Tower Café, the library, and the theatre.

After lunch, we had the opportunity to visit the mayor. We were able to ask the mayor questions and then discuss the results of our workshop with members of the Oulu City Council. We also added some more points to our presentation. For example, we discussed the question: What can older politicians do to better support young people?

After the meeting, we had some free time to explore the city on our own.
In the evening, we exchanged small gifts and enjoyed some free time at the youth club.







Friday

At Friday we said Goodbye to each other. Every one was really sad about the fact that we have to leave each other so fast. Everone found new friends and the bonds beetween Oulu and Leverkusen Youth Conucils are fastend.

Following two youth exchanges - one in Leverkusen in 2025 and the other in Oulu in 2026 - we would like to share our experiences, impressions, and thoughts on public life and youth participation in both cities.

Oulu offers a wide range of activities for young people, including sports centres, youth centers, and many different cultural events.

Education plays a very important role in the city of Oulu. All teachers and kindergarten staff work for the city.

Oulu has much more space available for building houses and offers many opportunities for investors to start businesses. the city also allows businesses to rent land instead of buying it, which can make it easier and more affordable to start a business.

The Youth City Council in Oulu meets more regularly than ours. We think this is a great idea, and it would be wonderful to have something similar in Leverkusen.

The Youth City Council is also involved in regular city council meetings and has the right to submit initiatives to the City Council. We think this would be a great opportunity for young people in Leverkusen, too.

From our perspective, the city of Oulu seems to invest more money in the education of children and young people and to place a stronger focus on their development.

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to gain these wonderful experiences in our twin city, Oulu.

Members of the Leverkusen Youth City Council Delegation

Emilia, Lukas, Nella, Chirin, Hooman, Inaki, Indra, Julian, Lilly, Moritz, Stefanie, Till, Zoe



