

**„AG fuer den Frieden“ - „Work Group for Peace“ -
an extra-curricular course at KGS Rastede, Rastede, Germany**

To understand the structure of KGS Rastede a short **outline of** the German school system may be of use.

Germany's federal structure regulates the distribution of responsibilities between the Federal Government and the states (Länder) - including in the area of education. The Länder are in charge of general education, and therefore also of schools.

KGS Rastede is a **cooperative comprehensive school** in Rastede, Lower Saxony, providing education within each of the three types of schools which **exist in** the German **secondary** school system:

"Grammar school" (**Gymnasium**) covers both lower and upper secondary level (years 5-12) and provides an in-depth general education aimed at the general higher education entrance qualification, **by way of a final exam called the** Abitur.

"Intermediate school" (**Realschule**) comprises years 5-10 at a lower secondary level. **This track** provides pupils with a more extensive general education and the opportunity to go on to courses at upper secondary level that lead to vocational or higher education entrance qualifications.

"Secondary general school" (**Hauptschule**) provides a basic general education at the lowest secondary level, comprising years 5-9. **It is a** compulsory school, unless the pupil is attending a different type of secondary school. Most students attend an optional year 10 in order to obtain a better "diploma".

At KGS Rastede pupils are taught in classes grouped according to the different qualifications necessary to attend the above **tracks**. In subjects like PE, Art, Music, and extra-curricular courses, the students are taught together **with peer** groups.

The "**AG fuer den Frieden**" is an extra-curricular course, open to students at all levels, years 9-12. The group mostly recruits its members from students of the grammar school branch of KGS Rastede. The teacher provides continuity within the group, as there naturally is a fluctuation of the student body. The teacher, as well as students, have full responsibility for the **curriculum and projects** of the group work.

The "work group" was founded in 1998 by teacher Dr. Michael Luttmer and four girls, rising from the Political **Science** course in grade 12 "International Politics and Global Responsibility". The Kosovo War, and the persecution of the Roma (gypsies) after the conflict was ended, played a significant role in the process.

In 1999, the group organized their first symposium under the title "Serbia, **NATO** and Peace". They had invited a well known politician. Ever since the group has been gaining local and national **attention**.

The main aim has been to inform students about local, national and global issues in order to raise awareness **about** facism, racism, neo-nazism, persecution of different groups of people, injustice

and inequality.

Politicians, **survivors**, experts, and scientists have been invited to give speeches, to hold workshops or to attend round tables. Students who are invited to attend the sessions are encouraged to take part in the discussions.



"Lord, let some brain rain onto these heads", title of one of the workshops about neo-nazism organized by the group.

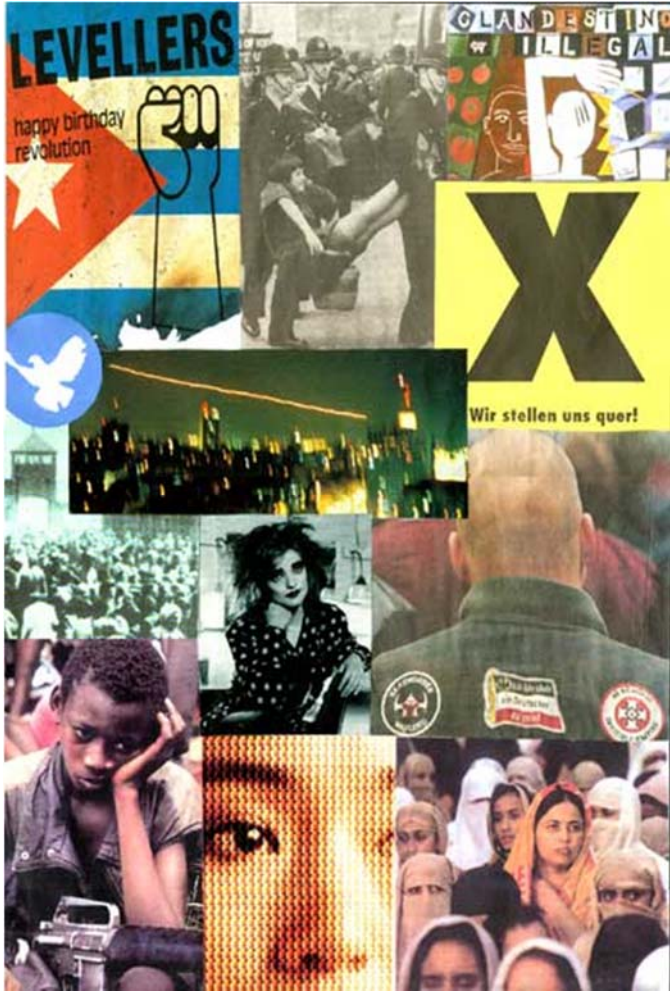
Cooperation between the University of Oldenburg has been fruitful. The group can also be proud of having established a deep relationship between **themselves and** the Jewish Community in Oldenburg. The members initiated the process of becoming a school recognized nationally as "A School without Racism – A School with Courage" and Rabbi Ruth Schumann acts as "godmother" of the project. The members are frequently invited to attend festivities and actions of the Jewish community. Ever since the founding of the group, attending the "Walk of Remembering", organized by the city of Oldenburg, is obligatory. In **November 1938** the male Jewish citizens of Oldenburg were led to the railroad station to be **transported** to concentration camps where most of them were murdered.

Thus two central subjects emphasize the work of the group: commemoration and engagement towards building a peaceful human society.

From the beginning, the group has been seeking visibility of their actions not only within the school premises but also by raising interest publicly, by inviting local newspapers and by initiating and attending symposiums on different issues. The members take part in activities at other schools in Lower Saxony and beyond. They visited Auschwitz, attended the annual Wreath Laying Ceremony, and the opening ceremony of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin to name only a few.

With the beginning of the new school year 2014/2015 the group has started working on „War and IS(IS)“ and planning actions is under way.





group.

An example of a poster created by the



Dr. Michael Luttmer with some of his students

Extra-curricular activities initiated by a group like „AG fuer den Frieden“ should exist at every secondary school around the world. Such groups incorporate history into the personal experience of the students, so that the lessons become an integral part of their lives here and now. Only then will they have a true understanding and appreciation of the events that have shaped their own societies, and that contribute to the political climate of our times.

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Maria Katharina Heimbach

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