

## **A Report: Transatlantic Summer School on Sustainability**

My time at the Transatlantic Summer School on Sustainability at Hochschule Ruhr West (HRW) from August 2nd to 15th was a valuable and productive two weeks. It proved to be a solid blend of practical project work, interesting field trips, and networking with international students.

### **The Online Phase: Laying the Groundwork**

Before the on-site phase in Mülheim an der Ruhr, we had a comprehensive online phase. This preparatory period covered the basics of sustainability, intercultural teamwork, leadership, and project management, complete with interesting activities. During this time, we were allocated to our project teams and met our teammates, mentors, and the project partner online. Our team used this virtual phase to design our vision, mission, tasks, and roles. Each team also had to present its roadmap and end goal to the other groups, which helped get everyone aligned before we even arrived.

### **The Project: Practical Sustainability**

The on-site program was centered on executing the sustainability projects we had started. A major strength was the faculty; the professors and industry mentors were approachable, friendly, and genuinely helpful. I was assigned to the **TOMRA** project. My team was smart and cooperative, which made tackling the challenge effective and productive.

I'm not usually a fan of typical assignments, but the tasks here were different. They were reflective and practical, like one where we had to go out and shoot a practical example of sustainability in practice. This, combined with practical workshops like the Lego-Serious Play session, where we shared our opinions, and an introduction to the HRW FabLab, where we got to 3D print, made the work engaging. The program culminated in final presentations, where each team presented the work and results from their project by the end of the on-site phase.



## Excursions and Field Trips

The schedule was well-balanced, mixing project work with relevant field trips. These excursions provided solid, real-world context to our studies. Key visits included:

- Exploring the massive **Thyssenkrupp** steel plant and learning about its "Steel in Transformation."
- The "Historic Coal Miners' Tour" at the **Zeche Zollverein** in Essen, a major UNESCO World Heritage site.
- A behind-the-scenes tour of the **BayArena Stadium** (home of Bayer 04 Leverkusen).
- Visiting the impressive **Cologne Cathedral** and exploring the city centers of Cologne and **Düsseldorf**.
- Trekking to the **Tetraeder** in Bottrop for a clear view of the region.



The weekend trip to Dortmund for the Borussia Dortmund vs. Juventus match was a major highlight. We got to be part of the crazy famous "Yellow Wall," which was an incredible experience. In our free time, many students also organized their own activities, attending local festivals, joining pub crawls, or even taking a weekend day trip to Amsterdam.

On a practical note, the schedule was intense. Some days we were overwhelmed, with an excursion in the morning, project work in the evening, and then a group dinner—but the hustle was totally worth it. The food and accommodations were extremely well-organized. Small details like morning breakfasts, restaurant reservations, and even food preferences were meticulously taken care of. The housing was comfortable, and we had the chance to try a variety of international cuisines, which was a good way to unwind.



### **The International Team**

A key component of the experience was the international cohort, with students from different universities in Germany and the USA. What stood out was how quickly national backgrounds became irrelevant. It was also interesting to see the small cultural exchanges in action. For example, while some of the American students weren't used to walking so much at first, they definitely became used to the German public transportation system by the end of the two weeks. Overall, it was a valuable and memorable experience.