

First-ever International Staff Week held at the HWR Berlin

34 representatives from 25 different countries and 20 international partner institutions gathered at the HWR Berlin to exchange ideas, gain new inspiration and develop international connections.

20.11.2023 — Erica Callery

The event's aim was to foster awareness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) or Virtual Exchange projects and plant the seeds for future international online collaboration.

The five-day event (October 16th to 20th) was the first ever of its kind to be held at the HWR Berlin – a so-called International Staff Week which featured workshops, presentations and cultural activities with teaching and administrative staff from the HWR Berlin and external speakers from the HWR Berlin's international partner institutions. Participants travelled from as far away as Australia and Tunisia to join the event.

Highlights included Eva Haug, a leading voice in the field of COIL from international partner university Amsterdam School of Applied Science, who held a hybrid workshop to set out a vision for "Developing a COIL Mindset – Intentional, Inclusive and Intercultural". Eva also dialled in at the end of the week to provide feedback on the participants' groupwork – visualising a perfect COIL journey from idea to implementation.

Other topics addressed included a workshop on "The Pedagogy behind International Collaboration" run by Julia Kröcher from the Berlin Centre for Higher Education (BZHL) and "Developing Intercultural Competencies through COIL" headed by Katharina Mark-Castro and Martín Castro from the HWR Berlin.

HWR Berlin lecturers were also invited to attend workshops and networking events on day two of the event which included a joint workshop on COIL implementation with Prof. Michael Faustino Bauer. Several lecturers presented their COIL projects and experiences, such as Johanna Heisgen and Prof. Birgit Felden from the HWR Berlin, plus Severina Cartwright from the University of Liverpool who has collaborated with the HWR Berlin on several occasions.

The participants left feeling inspired and ready for the next steps in their COIL journey. Bojana Ivanović Bovan from the University of Belgrade said:

"I gained valuable insights into implementing COIL methods, fostering global partnerships, and enhancing cross-cultural communication in virtual exchange. The experience was particularly positive as it equipped me with practical and administrative knowledge to create engaging online collaborations, enriching both teaching practices and students' learning experiences. The interaction between the participants and the new acquaintances and friendships that resulted from the event were also incredibly important. "

An online follow-up meeting with all participants is planned for the Spring to explore what concrete outcomes the week led to.

To find out more about the COIL concept and how to embark upon a collaborative online international learning project with an international partner, please contact: [erica.callery\(at\)hwr-berlin.de](mailto:erica.callery@hwr-berlin.de)

Did you know that HWR Berlin teaching and administrative staff can also take advantage of Erasmus financing to join Staff Weeks or individual teaching mobilities at our international partners?

You can find out more information about this here:

<https://www.hwr-berlin.de/studium/international-studieren/studieren-im-ausland/foerderung-und-stipendien/erasmus/erasmus-fuer-lehrende-und-personal/>