

## The Veggie-Experiment: a Life without Meat?!

On 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2013 a group of 16 students from BrSTU, PPU and School No. 7 in Brest participated in the **German project** “The Veggie-Experiment: a Life without Meat?!”. The project was sponsored by the German Embassy in Minsk and the Robert Bosch Foundation and carried out by their German lecturer at the BrSTU.

The two-day project was aimed at advanced students of German in order to explore the unknown territory of vegetarianism; a topic which is largely discussed and practised in Germany but rather unpopular in Belarus.

On the first day the group met in the afternoon and focused on the **theoretical aspects of vegetarianism**: What does being a vegetarian actually mean? Are there any different forms of vegetarianism and what do these forms comprise? Why do people actually decide to live a life without any products originated from animals? Isn't that an unhealthy lifestyle? Are human beings able to survive without any meat at all?



*Theoretical Input*

(source: [www.vebu.de](http://www.vebu.de))

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manipulated species, unbearable living conditions for animals and even the extinction of some species (e.g. fish).



***“Lukas was devastated when he saw how minced meat is actually produced.”***

(source: Hannes Mercker)

2. **Health and Physical Well-being:** Studies have shown that the consumption of animal products causes e.g. cardiovascular diseases and obesity. Furthermore, vegetarians and vegans who usually pay more attention to a healthy lifestyle have a much higher life expectancy than meat eaters. Additionally, doctors recommend eating less meat and more vegetables and fruits to prevent deficiency symptoms and severe diseases.

What many people seem to be unaware of is that the consumption of meat risks transmitting animal diseases such as BSE or bird flu, just to mention two of them. Moreover, medicine that is fed to animals in order to optimize their breeding, e.g. certain antibiotics is transported via food directly to the human body and can affect it.

3. **Environmental Effects:** The production of meat and animal products consumes tons of natural resources that could be used in different ways. To illustrate this statement note the following example: The production of one 1 kg of meat needs up to 15.500 litres of water whereas 1 kg of wheat only consumes 50 litres.

Furthermore, large forest areas, which are necessary to preserve the diversity of nature and regulate the climate, are destroyed and people are evicted from their lands to make way for the cultivation of animal feedstuffs.

In addition, animals meant for consumption produce a much higher percentage of global warming gases than the transport of the entire world.

Moreover, the groundwater that we drink and rely on is polluted by the extensive production of animal products.



***“Do you understand? In the 3<sup>rd</sup> world rain forests are destroyed, so that we can eat hamburgers here” – “Ah, I see. That’s why they taste like sawdust”***

(source: [http://de.toonpool.com/cartoons/S%C3%A4gemehl\\_121096](http://de.toonpool.com/cartoons/S%C3%A4gemehl_121096))

4. **Economic Expenses:** The consumption of meat does not only affect the expenses of a country’s health system, it also causes high expenses when new food scandals are revealed and animals products are taken from the market and people need medical treatment. Furthermore, the export of cheap Western meat to foreign markets destroys the local economies of 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries that are not able to provide meat/animal products at cheaper rates.

Additionally, large meat firms also contribute to the extinction of small agricultural businesses in Western countries. Another factor leading to the rise of costs is the state’s intervention by granting subventions to small business to keep up their meat production.



5. **Ethical Concerns:** Apart from all ethical concerns already mentioned in one of the other categories, it is also questionable how can we justify the extensive use of resources to feed our food meanwhile millions of people all over the world are risking to die from starvation.



*“Are we allowed to eat animals?” (source: PETA)*

As one can see the reasons for vegetarianism intertwine and cannot be seen separately from each other since one thing causes or affects another. The group had **lively discussions** about the pros and cons of a vegetarian lifestyle and in the end they could not agree upon a common strategy on how to handle or solve the consequences of the consumption of animal products.



*Lively Discussions*

At the end of the day the group watched a **documentary (“The new Vegetarians”)** and had vegetarian pizza, which tasted surprisingly fine according to the participants. In the documentary the students got to know the various faces of vegetarian life in Germany and learnt how people adjust to a vegetarian lifestyle in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



**Degustation of Vegetarian Pizza**

On Saturday morning the group gathered again and paid attention to the practical part of a vegetarian diet: **cooking!** The goal was to set up a vegetarian four-course meal. Therefore, the students were divided into different groups, each group responsible for a specific dish. First, they went grocery shopping and got the ingredients for the menu.



**Grocery Shopping at Karona's – Ready to Cook!**



For some of the students it was their first all-vegetarian meal ever, so they were excited and sceptical at the same time. Afterwards, the students went to School No. 7 in the centre of Brest and began to **prepare the dinner** at the school's kitchen.



### ***Cooking Process***

Supported by German teacher Karin Kraus the students were introduced to the secrets of vegetarian cooking: they peeled, cut, cooked, fried and baked and in the end they created a tasty **four-course meal**:

*Appetizer: **carrot-ginger-coconut-crème soup** (vegan)*  
*Intermediate course: **leek pie with peanuts** (vegetarian)*  
*Main course: **celery schnitzel with beet root salad served with herbal curd** (vegetarian)*  
*Dessert: **fruit salad and muesli bars** (vegan)*

Not all dishes met the students' expectations, but they were all brave enough to taste the flavours of a vegetarian/vegan cuisine. The group's **favourite dishes** were the vegan fruit salad and the muesli bars; everybody enjoyed them with pleasure.



***Fruit Salad and Muesli Bars***

For some of the chefs the carrot-ginger-coconut -crème soup was too exotic and too spicy, whereas others embraced the new flavours.



***Carrot-Ginger-Coconut-Crème Soup***

The least loved dish among the students was the celery schnitzel. Apparently, the appearance and the texture of the schnitzel lured the participants' palate, but failed to live up to their expectations and led to pure culinary disappointment.





***Celery Schnitzel with Beet Root Salad Served with Herbal Curd***

But the schnitzel did not ruin the overall impression and in the end of the day all participants decided unanimously to repeat the cooking experiment with all-Belarusian vegetarian recipes.

After the seminar some students decided to eat less meat in the future and pay more attention to the way they feed themselves. One of the girls even wanted to try a meatless month to check if she could survive without it– I wonder how her personal experiment went.



***Happy and Satisfied Vegetarian Gourmets***

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