Erasmus+ in Spain: Professional Exchange and International Encounters in Martos

Berufsschule Steyr 1 visits IES Fernando III in Andalusia

From 18 to 24 October 2026, an Erasmus+ group mobility took us to our partner school, IES Fernando III, in Martos, Andalusia. Beate van Duyvenbode participated in the mobility together with five students from Berufsschule Steyr 1: Michéle Feichtinger, Manuel Biberhofer, Laurin Prantner, Max Kimeswenger and Georg Hörndl. School Director Harald Ebenhofer and Peter Baumgartner took part in job shadowing activities to gain insights into vocational education and training in Spain and further strengthen cooperation between the two schools.

Welcome to Andalusia

After our flight from Vienna to Málaga, we began our Spanish adventure with a joint lunch at the well-known restaurant “El Tintero” in El Palo. There, we also met Rita and Frank Böhler, the Austrian Federal Guild Master for the plastics industry. Afterwards, we continued to Martos, where we checked into our accommodation and rounded off our first day with a relaxed pizza dinner.

On Monday, we received a warm welcome from the Spanish students and teachers at IES Fernando III. During a guided tour of the school, we learned about our partner school and its vocational training programmes. Afterwards, Ana Cabello, the cultural affairs officer of the town of Martos, guided us through the town and shared interesting insights into its history and unique features.

In the evening, we enjoyed a barbecue together in La Teja. Despite thunderstorms and heavy rain, the good atmosphere remained unaffected. Manuel Biberhofer took charge of the barbecue and provided everyone with a delicious meal.

Plastics Technology and Dual Vocational Training: An International Dialogue

One of the highlights of our mobility was Tuesday’s visit to Andaltec, the technology centre for plastics engineering. There, we gained insights into the centre’s work and current developments in the plastics industry.

Following the visit, Andaltec hosted an event entitled “Industry and Vocational Education in the Plastics Sector”. Representatives from industry, education and research in Austria and Spain discussed the importance of the plastics industry and the challenges facing vocational education and training.

Frank Böhler presented the Austrian plastics industry. Representatives of the Andalusian Plastics Cluster, the University of Jaén and regional companies provided insights into the current situation and development of the plastics sector in the province of Jaén. School Director Harald Ebenhofer presented Austria’s dual vocational

education and training system and introduced the training programmes offered at Berufsschule Steyr 1.

The networking reception that followed provided an excellent opportunity to establish new contacts, exchange experiences and develop ideas for future cooperation between schools and companies.

The event clearly demonstrated the importance of connecting vocational education, research and industry. It also highlighted the value of international partnerships in advancing plastics technology and vocational training.

Discovering Culture: A Day in Córdoba

On Wednesday, we went on a joint excursion to Córdoba. Accompanied by teachers from IES Fernando III – Fuensanta Quero, Rubén Pulido and Javier Barales – we explored one of Andalusia's most historic cities.

A particular highlight was our visit to the famous Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba, whose unique architecture reflects the city's fascinating and diverse history. In the evening, we enjoyed dinner together at the Patio de la Judería restaurant and experienced a taste of Andalusian culture during a traditional flamenco performance.

Creativity Meets Technology: Our "A Special Gift" Project

On Thursday, it was time to put theory into practice in the workshops. Under the motto "A Special Gift", our students worked together with their Spanish partners to design and manufacture a special gift.

Various manufacturing technologies were used, ranging from creative design to milling, thermoforming and laser cutting. The students were able to apply their technical knowledge, discover new manufacturing methods and collaborate on a practical task. Alongside technical skills, teamwork, creativity and communication across language barriers played a central role. The project demonstrated how hands-on collaboration can bring young people together and promote exchange between different vocational education systems.

After having lunch together at Casino Primitivo, we headed to Peña de Martos. The hike rewarded us with impressive views of the town and the surrounding countryside. We rounded off our stay in Martos with a farewell tapas evening at El Manyar de Bellavista, where we looked back on an eventful week together.

Málaga: A Final Taste of Andalusia

On Friday, it was time to say goodbye to Martos. On our way to Málaga, we took the opportunity to explore the city. We visited the Plaza de Toros, the traditional bullring, and then spent some time at La Malagueta beach. A walk through the city and a dinner together gave us the opportunity to reflect on the many impressions and experiences of our trip.

The following morning, we enjoyed breakfast at a traditional churrería and visited Mercado de Atarazanas, Málaga's famous market hall. Afterwards, we began our journey back to Austria, taking home many new impressions and wonderful memories.

Erasmus+ Brings People Together – Professionally and Personally

The group mobility to Martos was a valuable experience for both our students and teachers. It allowed us to gain new insights into Spanish vocational education and the plastics industry, develop our professional skills and further strengthen cooperation with our partner school, IES Fernando III.

The joint technical project, the exchange with companies and educational institutions, and the many personal encounters made this week particularly special. Our students were able not only to develop their vocational skills but also to improve their language abilities, independence and intercultural competences.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to IES Fernando III, Andaltec and all our partners for their warm hospitality, excellent organisation and the many memorable experiences.

We look forward to continuing our Erasmus+ partnership and to many more exciting encounters across Europe. We are also very grateful for the financial support provided by the Erasmus+ programme, which makes these valuable international mobility opportunities possible.