

Final Report from Stefan Hagn for all Austrian participants:

Vocational Skills Competition for Young Gardeners in Bielsko Biala, Poland 2026, from 30th of June to 4th of July 2026

‘We grow together’ was the motto for the 11th international vocational skills competition for young gardeners which took place at Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego in Bielsko-Biala in the South-East of Poland from June 30th to July 4th 2026.

22 teams from 13 European nations participated, each team formed of three young gardeners with their teamleaders. The age limit for participants was 25 years, no one is allowed to participate more than once.

The operational language was English.

Austria participated with two teams from three horticultural colleges from Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Styria.

Team 1 was formed from the winners of the Austrian national competition 2024 (Jürgen Piller from Lower Austria, Simon Reiter from Upper Austria and Florian Lenz from Vorarlberg with teamer Helmut Jäger, teacher at Horticultural college Langenlois in Lower Austria), Team 2 from the winners of 2025 (Alina Lichtenwallner from Upper Austria, Anika Hiermann from Lower Austria and Marie-Theres Schwaiger from Styria with teamer Rene Pollross, chairman of the Austrian young gardeners Association who organize the yearly nation competition).

So the participants had time to prepare and were trained at LFS Langenlois by a group of teachers the weekend before the competition, including teachers from LFS Ritzlhof and LFS Großwilfersdorf.



the Austrian teams at their training at LFS Langenlois

The first day, 30th of June, after registration the opening ceremony was held in the beautiful garden of Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego. Every nation had to give a short introduction and we had dinner together. Group-dynamic games completed the get together.



Get together at the opening ceremony

The next day, July 1st, the competition started at the school grounds with the national teams in the morning, in the afternoon international teams were formed. Various horticultural tasks from recognising and naming plants and seeds, tissue culture, grafting of vegetables, to using tools, also first aid and work-safety and many more had to be fulfilled. My job was judging as a member of the jury. Getting to know and talking to the polish colleagues and students was always a pleasure and interesting facts have been exchanged about our educational system and horticulture. Also of course, the exchange with other colleagues from various countries was an important part of the project.



... left side Gertraud Hermann from Berufsschule Ochsenfurth in Germany and one of our hosts, Kornelia Benasiewicz, Erasmus-Coordinator from Bielsko-Biala



various tasks had to be mastered, here Team 2



... and here Team 1

Day two, 2nd of July, was for landscaping and flower arrangement: the teams had to arrange flowers and design small gardens.



Jury members (including Helmut Jäger from LFS Langenlois) judging the result of Team Austria 2 at the landscaping task



... team 2 with the results of the flower arrangement tasks

Day three. 3rd of July, the excursion to places of interest and horticultural hotspots in the region took place. The visits included museums, a nature reserve, gardens and nurseries.



At plantpol nursery in Zaborze



A great ‘Thank you!’ to Erasmus, Europea Austria and the Association of young Gardeners Austria who made this possible and also to the Horti Teach Association with the chairwoman Andrea Schulz and the polish colleagues Kornelia Benasiewicz, Anna Hereda and Kasimierz Piela, who had the main responsibility for this great horticultural educational event and to the whole polish team for the preparation and the hospitality!



Erasmus+



The Austrian teams at the award ceremony



Gold for Team Austria 2 – congratulations!



The two Austrian teams with the certificates in their hands, Team 1 5th place, Team 2 1st place



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