Welver - For 20 years, Dieter Schulze is involved in European projects. Now he has organized a meeting for International Rural Women in Dinker. In an interview with Laura Schwabbauer he talks about international contacts, what European thoughts they create and Westphalian stubbornness.

Recently women from all over Europe were guests in Dinker. What nations were there?

Dieter Schulze: There were rural women from Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Spain and Turkey to host and exchanged views with the rural women from Nateln-Dinker and Lohne. 75% of the guests were rural women, 25% project coordinators and organizers who have taken over the translation, for example.

What was the objective of the event?

Schulze: The international exchange should be encouraged. Rural women are is not only in Germany. There must be an opportunity that rural women can exchange even better internationally. I believe that they can move more than they know. It is also about the preservation of cultural heritage, which have the rural women, such as dances or dialects.

The meeting of rural women was organized by ENWRA (European Network for Women of Rural Areas). What happens after the meeting for the network, how is the post-processing?

Schulze: In the short term, i.e. within the next three years, a new social networking site shall be created, for example like “Facebook for rural women”. In the long term, so in seven or eight years, records of rural women from all over Europe, their experiences and ideas shall be translated for other rural women – exchange in long-term. The next step is also a meeting of European rural women in Cyprus.

What are the differences between the German and European rural women you saw at the meeting?

Schulze: A formal organization in rural women's clubs exists only in Germany. In other countries the networks are much more informal without legal form. This formal organization was very well recognized by the guests. Some of the guests were also interested in “Soester Platt”, after all, many also have their own local dialects. And they all have similar recruitment problems that came out of the talks. Young women today have other interests than the older rural women.

The conclusion was an international evening programme at the Witteborg-Inn of Ange. What is it like when the different cultures meet in such a rustic circumstance?

Schulze: We have performed very lively discussion about the differences between cultures, for example, Turkish rural women were there, and who told us about their rights. Because I think some of our prejudices have been broken up. As a final song we sang together "Silent Night" - a Christmas song with a Christian background. That was no problem at all. The Turkish guests, for example, said: "While we cannot sing because we do not know the song, but we will like to hear."

Also, the Men's Choir Friedrich Wilhelm Dinker whose conductor you are, has contributed to the program that evening. How did that come across with the guests and how did the actors feel?
Schulze: We sang songs together in all languages. The ladies loved the men's choir. And the MGV had a lot of fun, lots of singers then chatted with the ladies. Everyone was very helpful and open-minded. That was pure international understanding, no trace of Westphalian stubbornness.

How much preparatory work you need for such an event?

Schulze: It needs some organization. I take care of hotel rooms, train tickets, I picked up a group at the airport. Before and after it's a hard work to do because the results of the project are indeed passed on to the EU. And I survey the work of the organizers of the other countries. I am trained in social management, this helps me a lot about such things.

The meeting of rural women in Dinker was the fourth international conference you've got here. Why do you do that always in Welver-Dinker?

Schulze: I am organizing such meetings once a year here in Dinker, Often such international conferences take place even in large cities, but the guests are always impressed by the quaint, rural ambience that reigns here.

For 20 years you engage in such European projects - so much input and outlay is indeed necessary. Where do you get the drive for it?

Schulze: Meetings like in Dinker reverberate even after several days and weeks. These meetings and experiences change people and their perspectives. Due to the international work, I am a completely different person than even 20 years ago. Such meetings show that people are just different. Every nation has its own characteristics, but all have great ideas. Get to know other points of view is very moving.

What do you take personally from the international work?

Schulze: I speak and understand by now several languages and in many languages at least polite phrases like "please", "good day" or "How are you?" These phrases should incidentally also tourists acquire when they travel to another country. But by contact with many different cultures I've also learned to empathize in other people and their ways of thinking. Those who see how it goes somewhere else, can also develop new ideas for their own region. The view outside the box is always worthwhile, that solves small-minded thinking.