

HiTec retreat Enkhuizen 07-09.05.2025

Together with 21 students, we visited the Joint Research Center (JRC) in Petten for 3 h and afterwards travelled to Enkhuizen, where we sailed for one day.

The retreat started Wednesday morning @ 8 am in front of the FZJ library, 21 PhDs, all enrolled to the HITEC curriculum were excited to dive into a sailing adventure, full of scientific exchange. Soon, our bus arrived, together with our legendary bus driver, Toni. In time we reached the JRC in Petten. After everyone made it through the security check, we got a presentation of the research facility. It was interesting to see how an institution that works for the European Commission does science. As an example, a lot of work that is conducted has the aim to create standardized protocols, or to test whether certain technologies are applicable with EU rights. Even though smaller than the FZJ and with smaller budget and personnel, we had the opportunity to see many laboratories, equipped with the newest technologies. Test stands for batteries, a full house that works on the automatization and interaction of smart devices and as a final highlight a bunker-like laboratory for pressure tests of hydrogen tubes. This facility is one of a kind, since the lab is surrounded by meter-thick walls of steel and concrete, in case of the very unlikely case that a reaction of hydrogen and oxygen would occur under the inert atmosphere in the laboratory.

Unfortunately, we had to leave the facility after 3 h. We took the bus for another hour and arrived in the beautiful city of Enkhuizen at the IJsselmeer. Here we found our ship, a magnificent 2-masted ship with the name of Eenhoorn. Since many of us had no sailing experience, the ship came with its own crew, consisting of our skipper Jan Willem, his mate, the cook and of course his dog, Atze. We subdivided the cabins between the PhD students and soon we got our dinner. Since networking is a rather important part of a retreat, we organized a game night, where lots of different card games (especially "*Tempel des Schreckens*" shall be mentioned), but also board games like Settlers of Catan were played.

The next day, we took a tasty breakfast and left the harbour early. The crew needs our help to set the sails and so 21 PhDs did their best to help and not stand in the way. Once we reached the open water, the crew held all the power over our mighty ship, while we worked on our scientific exchange. Since scientific presentations can be rather dry, feel very forced and therefore hinder good discussions, we decided to make the interaction more playful. To make this work, all PhDs prepared an abstract of their topic on a DIN A4 piece of paper (before the retreat) and thought of one question over their topic. With help of a bingo generator, all PhDs got a random set of questions they had to answer, but they didn't know to which topic the questions corresponded. We divided the group in two parts and while one part was presenting their topics, the other half talked to the first one and tried to find out, which question corresponded to which topic. The roles of the two halves were changed after one hour and a break in the middle. In the evening the boat returned to the harbour, where we grilled together with the crew. The next day, we started again with a nice breakfast and afterwards conducted a workshop, where the PhDs had to work together, to find similarities of their projects (e.g. find a startup idea including the two topics of the PhDs), or try to reproduce the content of their partner's project in a creative way (e.g. plan a children's book about the topic of your partner). After the workshop it was time to pack and go home.

After an exciting trip by bus, we arrived around 5 pm, 9<sup>th</sup> May, back in Jülich.