



Education and Culture  
Lifelong learning programme  
COMENIUS



# Comenius Project "Nutrition"

Max-von-Laue-Gymnasium, Koblenz

## *Carnival in Germany*

Fastnacht or Fasching



### What is it?

- "Fifth season of the year"
- public celebration or parade combining some elements of a circus / street party
- people masquerade & dress up
- begins Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:11 am  
ends on Ash Wednesday
- though usually celebrated in February
- important days:  
"Old Women Day" (Thursday before Ash Wednesday)  
Rose Monday  
Shrove Tuesday
- Clubs organize show events called "sessions" with dance, comedy & songs in costumes
- Cologne, Mainz & Düsseldorf are considered carnival strongholds

### History

- giant party involving the whole community to go over the top a last time before Lent
- celebrate winter being over
- idea of Carnival spread from Italy to France over to Germany
- in Rhineland:  
express subversive anti-Prussian & anti-French thoughts
- in 1824, the Thursday before Ash Wednesday:  
washer-women founded committee  
celebrated "work-less day"  
Wanted to strengthen presence in male-dominated carnival celebrations  
→ "Old Women's Day"

## The costumes:

- Everybody can dress up as they want
- Have to be worn while watching the parades, the sessions & sometimes the parties afterwards  
No one necessarily has to masquerade
- BUT: people who don't masquerade or aren't dressed up don't get sweets (especially the children)
- Groups taking parts in the parades are all dressed up the same way
- Main rule:  
*The more colourful and funnier the costumes are, the better it is.*



## The parades:

- Processions going through the main parts of a city
- huge ones in the cities and also smaller ones in towns & villages
- Groups of people (*min 5 / max unlimited number*)
- Each group has a theme
- Theme expressed in costumes, banners and floats
- Sweets are thrown to people who are watching the parade
- "special sort of greeting" is used; differs depending on the region
- "greetings" that are shouted by the crowd:  
  
HEL AU  
ALAAF  
OLA U etc.

