



# Excursion to Brussels 13th–18th April 2015

from Jessica Schmidt, Kamila Adamowicz and Lisa Neumann

## • Exploring the institutions and cultures of the European Union•

In spring 2015, 19 students of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Applied Sciences in Stralsund, from different cultures and terms left for the capital of the European Union: Brussels. The trip was prepared by weekly meetings, called “Company Roundtable” during which we discussed the most important issues concerning the European Union Institutions, their characteristics and importance. We also prepared ourselves for the delegates, with whom we were going to meet.

### **13.04.2015 Day of arrival**

Each participant had to find their own way to the capital of Belgium. Some came by bus, train or some of us arrived by plane. The journey to Brussels took us almost all day. Those who arrived at midday were able to admire the beauty of Brussels and enjoyed the beautiful weather. On the other side, few of us got lost in the city. Finally each of us found its way to the “Meininger” Hotel in the evening, which is located just a 20 minutes’ walk from the city center. We were divided into groups for the rooms and had time to rest after the journey.

### **14.04.2015 Information Office of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and sightseeing Brussels**

The next morning we’ve took the Metro to the former embassy of the GDR - which today houses the information office of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. We were greeted by Dr. Merten Barnert, who introduced us to the tasks, events and responsibilities of the working unit of the European Union Department. The students actively followed the presentation, asked questions and made suggestions for further conversation and projects.

Afterwards we walked to the “Arc de Triumph” in “Cinquantenaire” Park, where we enjoyed the sun, created snap-shots and tried a bite from the Belgian cuisine. In the afternoon we went for a city tour through Brussels, which was organized by the students Timmy Bannas and Hauke Selig. We visited so many exciting points in Brussels that our feet throbbed a bit afterwards. We saw the building of Brussels Stock Exchange, the central square Grand Palace, Cathedral Saint-Michel, Royal Palace and many more spots. Highlight of the afternoon was the trip to the Palace of Justice, where a number of students were observing a Belgian consultation and its platform has an impressive view over the town. Later on, we all met at the hotel and prepared a dinner together to celebrate the birthday of two students, where we surprised them with delicious cakes. As typical students, we didn’t stay at the hotel, but we went to the most famous street of pubs – the “Delirium”.

#### **15.04.2015 Meeting with a Member of the European Parliament: Werner Kuhn**

On Wednesday morning we went to the European Parliament. Together with a group of students from the University of Applied Sciences Güstrow we met the MEP, Werner Kuhn. After a very friendly introduction about his career, he began to talk about his job in Brussels. He enthusiastically told us of his successes as a deputy and ended his presentation with the conclusion: "Europe is like a bicycle, if you don't move it, it's falling over."

Later on we walked to the plenary assembly room and got more interesting information about the structure, the sequence of meetings, etc. The EU comprises 24 different national languages and each deputy gives a lecture in his own language. In the afternoon a group of us had a closer look at Brussels landmark - the "Atomium" - which was built as a symbol of the atomic age.

#### **16.04.2015 Lectures at the historic table and visit to the Parlamentarium**

The next morning Mr. Martin Saeckl from the speaker team of the European Commission greeted us politely with welcome bags in the European Commission and delivered an exciting lecture on the EU Commission's role in the European Union. We were able to sit at the historic round table - where already the Maastricht Treaty was negotiated - and followed the presentation on the "European Competition Policy" by Mr. Tobias Maass.

After the meeting we've finally made our way to the famous French fries in Belgium, the Maison Antoine, which lives up to its name. Later on we entered the Parlamentarium for about two hours to get information about the history of European integration, and we went on a virtual journey through Europe. What we could not miss that evening was the meeting with all staff working in Brussels. Young people meet every Thursday evening at the Place du Luxembourg. This meeting has become a tradition, so we stayed there for a few hours.

#### **17.04.2015 Presentation in the EU Council and dinner in the Belgian restaurant**

On Friday morning we drove to the EU Council, where we listened to the presentation of Mr. Paul Bunsell. We've got to know that the presidency of the Council is determined by the 28 member states of the Union for six months and that by now the presidency is by Latvia. As a symbol to bring cultures closer, the chairmanship is allowed to create the lobby by themselves and so the Letts decided to put down a big carpet with dancing instruction for their folk dance, which is even part of the World Cultural Heritage. After that we've had free time and everyone bought last Postcards, souvenirs - such as delicious Belgian chocolate.

In the evening we met in the Belgian restaurant "Les gens". A few of us ate a last Belgian waffle while others walked directly back to the hotel, because their departure was planned very early.

#### **18.04.2015 Departure on Saturday**

Many students set out for their way back to Stralsund during the day. A few stayed even longer in Brussels. It was a wonderful time for us we won't forget and probably some of us will visit Brussels again. All this we would not have experienced without the commitment and the contacts of Prof. Dr. Danker. We would like to thank her on behalf of all participants once again.