

Day 1:

Blast off for Brussels was at 8:15 on Monday morning.

After almost 7 long hours of playing games, chatting, napping, and studying for our upcoming European Law exam, we finally pulled up to our hostel, weary but excited. After checking in we met Stefaan, our tour guide, in front of the hostel for a tour of the city. Among the castles, parks, important buildings, and famous bars, a highlight of the tour was seeing the monument in the National Park where Peter the Great vomited after a party at the Royal Palace in 1717. We gawked and snapped selfies for over 2 and a half hours before Stefaan left us to explore the bustling, vibrant, and historic city on our own.



We split up for dinners ranging from mussels to fries, then retiring to the hostel to settle in for the night.

Day 2:

After feasting on free breakfast at the hostel, we took off for our first European Institution visit: the European Council. After a long and rigorous security check, we met an ICEUS alumnus working in the press and communications department. He gave us a presentation on the inner-workings of the Council, its role in the G7, and some of its recent accomplishments. The presentation was funny and included a few polls conducted through our mobile phones.



ICEUS-19 class with Ignacio Molina at the European Council

We split up again for lunch, and later reunited at the Charlemagne building of the European Commission for our next appointments. First, we met with Kevin Flowers, an EU environmental policy officer, who told us about his job as well as the necessary patience for trying to turn the results of important scientific research into policy changes. Afterward, we heard from Klaus Körner on European youth and education policy. In contrast with the hard, scientific facts of the first lecture, this presentation focused on a much more theoretical and fluid topic. We had many questions about how to convince member states to adopt recommended youth strategies, but ultimately the Commission can only make suggestions.



ICEUS-19 at the European Commission

Later in the evening, we met up with another ICEUS alum and an occasional ICEUS lecturer at a traditional Belgian restaurant called “A la Mort Subite”. The interior was stunning with high-ceilings and small mirrors covering the walls. We sipped our beer and discussed the future of European education, what brought us to ICEUS, what life after ICEUS is like, and what it’s like to live in Brussels. While in a much more relaxed atmosphere, this encounter was almost as educational as the earlier presentations of the day. Afterwards, a few of us took a small detour to the Delirium bar before returning home.

Day 3:

We left for the European and Economic Social Committee early Wednesday morning. Yet another ICEUS alumna spoke to us about the role and functioning of the EESC, and showed us videos of ways the EESC is engaging bright, young European school students to help plan youth programs for the future. She explained to us the rigorous way in which EESC experts conduct research and vote, before bringing their recommendations to the EU institutions.

In the afternoon, we headed to the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung to meet with members of two different private interest groups. First, we spoke to Dr. Baur of Daimler Benz and learned about what kind of power Daimler has in negotiating with the EU and how they respond to the rigorous environmental regulations constantly restricting them. In contrast, Mr. Vandermaesen of the World Wildlife Fund later explained the struggle of getting politicians’ attention on issues related to climate change and wildlife conservation. He told us about the various other NGOs that the WWF partners with, and how little political support they receive outside of the European Parliament.

We drove back to our hostel for a night off to let all of the various meetings and new information learned over the past two days sink in and, of course, to experience the Brussels nightlife and celebrate the birthday of one of our classmates.

Day 4:

Most of us woke up a little later, groggy from the night before, but determined to make the most of our last few hours in Brussels. We split up, many of us going to internship interviews, house visits of potential apartments, art gallery or museum visits, or simply taking advantage of the big city to do some chocolate/beer/clothes shopping.

We hopped back on the bus in the early afternoon for the long ride back to Fulda after a most exciting, educational, and eye-opening adventure in Brussels.