

Youlead – The Youth Conference in Brussels

Travel report by Marie-Louise Fuchs, Austria

Day 1

The trip started in the evening of 15 February and we travelled 13 hours by night jet to Brussels. As some groups were delayed, we students from Austria were able to take a walk through the centre of Brussels. We visited the Grande Place in bright sunshine. At around 13.30 we met the young people from the other countries Hungary, Italy, Greece and Slovenia and we ate Indian curry together. After lunch, we started the workshop.

The WORKSHOP

Once the organisational matters had been discussed, Paola from Greece began the workshop. The Greek woman, who currently lives in Brussels, told us about her job, her goals and the "Youlead" project. We were then divided into groups. We all got to know each other better through a question and answer session. We talked about our reasons for travelling to Brussels, but also about our free time and hobbies. Paola explained the EU Council, the function of the Parliament and the schedule for the following day. The Greek lady divided us into groups. In the group, we put together the presentation step by step. We had tasks on storytelling, presentation design, the Parliament and we were told how to talk to Georgios PAPANIKOLAOU. At the end of the day we were all very tired, had dinner at the hotel and fell into bed.



Day 2

After breakfast, the second part of the workshop started at 9.00 am. Paola explained to us how best to talk to EU parliamentarians and she assured us that we didn't need to be nervous. We split into groups and started writing our speeches together. There were four groups

- Introduction - Who we are
- Understanding the Problem
- Our Visions for the future
- Commitment and actions

After we had all delivered our speeches, Paola asked us questions. Although we were all very well prepared, the excitement was great! Equipped with a snack, we set off towards Parliament at around 1.00 pm.

Parliamentarium

After going through security and stowing our jackets, we explored the Parliamentarium in the exhibition open to tourists. We were given audio guides and went through the exhibition on our own. On the one hand, the exhibition dealt with the problems the EU has to deal with, but also how the EU came into being, important events in the history of the EU, how the Parliament, the Commission and the EU Council function and also how the EU works.



EU-Commission

After the tour, we went to the EU Commission. After passport control and the security check, we all gathered in a room with the Greek MEP Georgios PAPANIKOLAOU. Cleopatra spoke first and told us about our project. Georgios PAPANIKOLAOU then gave a speech and told us about his work. He is particularly committed to the Erasmus project and youth emancipation. We then gave our prepared presentation. He was very pleased with our

commitment and the topics we had prepared and gave us good feedback. The MEP wants to pass on our manifesto and stay in contact with us. However, he also said that the EU already has many projects for climate protection and that other countries, such as Russia or China, are much bigger polluters than the EU. Without co-operation with these countries, the problem cannot be solved. After a final group photo with PAPANIKOLAOU, we said goodbye. We made our way to the BALLEKES restaurant, where we all ate the best fries and discussed the special day. Full and satisfied, we all took a walk through the city together. We were very lucky, because the Festival of Lights was taking place in Brussels that very weekend and all over Brussels many buildings were lit up in all colours and works of art were projected onto the facades.

Day 3

On our last day, the groups from the different countries split up. The Italians left early in the morning, the Hungarians stayed a day longer and the others also left during the course of the day. We spent half our day buying chocolate, eating waffles and exploring the city.

This excursion was a very great and successful trip. Not only did Brussels become one of my new favourite cities, but we learned and experienced a lot. We got the feeling of being part of an important project that can bring about change.

