

## **International University Week- Thinking outside the box!**

### **Monday and Tuesday**

Having arrived already on Monday / As our arrival was already on Monday, we started with our programme on Tuesday. We arrived in the country of chocolate, chips and beer- Belgium! The whole week was themed as (<https://www.ozdic.com/collocation-dictionary/themed>) “thinking outside the box”. On Tuesday morning Griet t’Servranckx, Cathia Coekaerts and the Belgian students introduced us to the topic, Leuven and Belgium.

Afterwards we gained some impressions about social projects and institutions of Leuven. The leaders of these institutions are thinking “outside the box” as they have visions for the citizens and the city Leuven itself and they wanted to reach as many people as possible with their ideas.

In the afternoon, we could go on field visits to see the institutions that are dealing with child and youth care, adult care and media work. The co workers there talked about their work, worries and visions.

Later the alderman of the city Leuven, Mohamed Ridouani, gave an exclusive welcome to us in the city's town hall. This was a special honor for us! In his speech, he highlighted that international exchange and social work as a profession are of great importance for any city.

With a nice dinner we ended up this day and were already curious for the next.

### **Wednesday**

On Wednesday we had the opportunity to attend different workshops that were hosted by the professors from the participating universities and a regional company in the field of social work. The topics varied from art therapy techniques in social work, social justice as a possibility to answer the right-wing movements in European countries to the “third perspective” in dialogue with children, social emotions, “words and pictures” in working with families etc. This great variation made it almost impossible for us to choose, but in the end we gained insights in the diverse ways of working in the social area in different European countries.

In between the workshops we could join an International Market where all European study groups presented the programs of their universities and offered some special international appetizers.

Besides presenting their educational backgrounds, the teams of the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Austria and Norway also presented themselves and the city or region they came from.

Together we had an awesome night at the party that was kindly organized for us.

### **Thursday**

Maybe in order to prove how very reliable students of Social Sciences are, even after a short night's sleep, the next morning started early, since we had to fetch the train to the city Haacht, leaving at 9.20 am. Once arrived, we had to walk a short distance, only to be greeted warmly by the staff of the second biggest brewery of Belgium.

After being divided in smaller groups, they showed us around the property. We were hence able to fathom the main production stages of beer, starting with the single ingredients and a bottled liquid as final good. Additionally, we were allowed to taste some of the beers produced, including a award-winning *World's Best Beer*:

Stuffed with food and drink, we drove back to Leuven. There, our Belgian hosts awaited us eagerly, since they prepared a puzzlehunt throughout the city. Usually, something like this would be prepared for the first day in a new city, but how would we *Think outside The Box* if we expected it to be like that?

Feeling adventurous and confident to finish the quests with ease, since we saw quite a bit of the city already, we chimed in. In the end, it took us roughly two hours to pass all eight checkpoints, none the less.

We are quite sure that getting lost wasn't the cause for being so late, but (instead) all the distractions we encountered. The sweet scent of freshly made waffles filling the shopping streets, endless chocolateries presenting their seductive goods and above all, the stunning architecture of the city center.

## Friday

The last day had arrived and we had the chance to dive into interesting discussions for one last time. We gathered in small groups of six to eight students and debated about various topics like *social security*, *educational systems* or *gender equality*. Afterwards we reflected and evaluated the International University Week 2017 in Leuven. This way, our hosts were able to receive a very positive feedback. In addition, some students even offered ideas of improvement for this lovely week.

To bring it all to an appropriate end, the students and professors from Leuven ordered a typical Frietkot, a trailer offering traditional Belgian fries. The friendly woman in the trailer managed to leave us all with satisfied stomachs and a smile on our faces. After lunch, sadly, it was time to bid farewell.

At this point, we would like to emphasize the **outstanding hospitality of the students and professors** from Leuven explicitly. They welcomed us with open arms and hearts, accompanied us during the whole week and established a marvelous atmosphere.

Dankjewel!!!

Best wishes,  
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Photograph by Steve NACHN