

Law students visit Brussels and Luxembourg on Urios trip

– by Mathias Quickert, 22 November 2017

A group of almost thirty law students from Utrecht University spent three days in Brussels and Luxembourg, visiting the EU institutions and other public and private potential employers.

The three-day long study trip started in the morning of 24 October. Even though the hour was early, the group was looking forward to an equally exhausting and exciting journey. But at least the Dutch students must have felt just like at home in our first meeting at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands at the EU. Over coffee and cookies, John Morijn, the head of the section Fundamental rights, outlined the tasks and life of a Dutch diplomat in Europe's capital and answered questions about the workings of the representation, EU diplomacy and EU politics together with his colleagues Sander Hulshof and Jip Mennen.

After exploring the inner city over lunch, Houthoff Buruma – a large Dutch law firm – had invited the group for a presentation. The event quickly developed into a lively discussion ranging across the legal fields in which the firm is active, from state-aid to cartels. This very substantive discussion was followed by network drinks together with the lawyers from Houthoff Buruma in the very heart of the city at Grand Place. We used this opportunity to ask more detailed questions about the career options and other aspects of work at such a large private sector law firm.

The second day started out at the core institution of European democracy, the European Parliament. We received a presentation by George Stylianou and learned that the EP, just like the Commission, is organised in Directorate Generals responsible for certain policy fields or other tasks. The afternoon, however, consisted of far more substantial debate. We were invited to the European Commission to follow three presentations from experts on the Digital Single Market, the European External Action Service, and EU enlargement.

The evening of day two of course was obligatorily spent at Delirium Café, known for having a long list of beers and a place on the bucket list of every young Brussels visitor. But we had to move on and so after a short night the group arrived in Luxembourg for our early morning appointment at the Court of Justice of the EU. Together with a group of senior US lawmakers the students received a briefing on an ongoing case and shortly thereafter attended the hearing. The case involved one producer of vacuum cleaners accusing another of cheating on the energy efficiency labelling.

The last, but arguably one of the most interesting meetings of the trip took place in the afternoon of day three, right across the road from the Court, at the European Investment Bank. The investment bankers explained how the EIB has the ability to leverage vast sums of investment with relatively little funds and how it follows a list of non-economic goals such as the protection of the environment when deciding about its investments.

This event concluded the substantive part of the trip and over a drink in the centre of Luxembourg the group reflected on the experience, drawing a very positive conclusion. Especially the openness and elaborateness of many important experts in explaining the inner workings of a particular institution or project served to impress us. We will remember this trip fondly and use what we learned from it for our future. On behalf of the whole group, I would also like to thank Urios and Career Services for the organisation and facilitation of the three days.