

BRUSSELS STUDY TRIP (June 2010)

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Participating in the EUCE study trip to Belgium was an experience that I found to be enriching both professionally and personally. The majority of the trip was spent in the European quarter of Brussels. Staying in this area allowed me to see the heart of European politics and culture.

I was able to gain a real understanding of the European Union by participating in many behind the scenes activities. I learned just how dedicated the EU is to developing and maintaining shared goals and understandings among EU members. The mission, and challenge, of having such common goals is to preserve and respect the individual cultures and traditions of EU member states. This was evident in the use of all official languages of the members, rather than seeking a conformation to English. Being able to visit the European Commission, European Council, European Parliament, European Mission to the EU, and the NATO headquarters has allowed me to learn the ins and outs of European and international relations from many different perspectives. Sitting in the actual chairs of EU decision makers is just one of many memorable experiences I had while in Brussels. The city of Brussels is an eclectic mix of business, politics, and European traditions. My nights were spent sampling the diversity of the local cuisine and experiencing the excitement of the World Cup games.

The trip also included a wonderful day spent in Bruges. After a brief tour of the College of Europe, I was able to explore the rich culture of Northern Belgium. The

beauty of the canal surrounded by outside diners partaking in local meals, chocolates, and the national brewed beverage was unforgettable.

Throughout my travels, I was able to acquire many educational materials, stories, and photos that will enhance my teaching. I am so excited to share my educational and cultural experiences with my students this fall!