

## Bush School Students Take a Trip to the EU

*Written by student intern reporter, Julia Paslavska, February 10, 2009*

In May 2008, a group of nine Bush School students took a course titled *European Foreign and Security Policy in a Transatlantic Context*. The course syllabus was a two-week trip itinerary to Europe, with the first week in Brussels, Belgium, and the second week in Berlin, Germany. Bush School professors Dr. Gabriella Thornton, Dr. Joseph Cerami and Dr. Chris Layne, led the trip, which was an assortment of meetings, roundtable discussions, lectures, tours, and on-site visits with a variety of notable European organizations. The European Union Commission, NATO, and top European government officials were all on the agenda for the program.



According to Dr. Cerami, the purpose of the trip was to expose students to the structure, functions, and processes of the transatlantic partnership between the United States and the European Union. It gave students the opportunity to see how the principal government actors that frame the transnational partnership work with one another.

The first destination in Brussels was a meeting at the European Union Commission with Commissioner Leonard Orban, who gave a lecture on the topic of “Multilingualism Policy as the Most Authentic Expression of the EU motto ‘Unity and Diversity’”. Commissioner Orban is responsible for the multilingualism policy in the EU, which includes 23 different languages. “The mix of cultures, languages, values, and ideals that exist in the EU was put in much sharper context in light of the struggle to communicate through language” said JR Starch, one of the students on the trip.

While in Brussels, the group also spent a day at the NATO Headquarters where they engaged in discussions with the NATO Parliament members about NATO’s current political issues, the alliance’s operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and the recently popular topic of NATO’s relations with Russia. The first week of the program was concluded with several trips to historic sites and popular cultural attractions.

During the second week in Berlin, students spent some time visiting the German Federal Chancellery, or the Bundeskanzleramt. There, they met with Mr. Guido Mueller, assistant to the Chancellor for Security Issues and the head of Division 623 of German Intelligence Services. Bobby Janecka, second year Masters student in International Affairs found the meeting with Mr. Mueller the most beneficial and memorable. “I study National Security at the Bush School so meeting the assistant to the Chancellor for German Security Issues gave me the opportunity to see how intelligence translates into realistic occurrences”, said Janecka.

A visit to Deutsche Welle – Germany’s Public International Broadcaster was yet another outstanding experience. Christopher Lanz, the director of Deutsche Welle spoke on how to promote intercultural dialogue and further international understanding in difficult times. The group ended the program by sightseeing around Berlin.

In addition to the trip, the course required all students to write a research paper on a related topic of interest. Some of the topics explored were the transformational change of NATO, the structure of the EU Parliament, President Sarkozy’s grand strategy as EU President, the role of NGOs within the EU, and the possible Ukrainian accession into NATO. Throughout the trip students had the rare opportunity to gathered information from the people who make daily decisions in the organizations which they chose to research.

However, the Bush School students weren’t the only ones eager to learn about the policies and economic issues concerning the EU, those whom they visited also expressed interest in the domestic affairs of the United States. Sarah Dempsey, a Masters student in Public Service and Administration remembers how concerned everyone in Europe was about the United States and its future. “Everywhere we visited, someone asked about the 2009 Presidential elections, which shows the EU members’ interest in the United States.”

Overall, the trip was a “fascinating fusion of perspectives on the theory of international relations”, said Janecka. The students all agree that seeing the interactions between the different organizations in Europe as they relate to foreign policies greatly contributed to their own studies of International Affairs at the Bush School.

