

HITEC RETREAT TO BRUSSELS

(04.12.19-06.12.19)

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The trip to Brussels started on **December 4, 2019**. Meeting points were Jülich and Aachen train stations. The people who were picked up at Jülich directly went to Brussels. The second van did the trip over Aachen to pick up the remaining members.

Arrival at Hotel du Congrès in Brussels was before lunch time, and luggage was temporarily stored in the seminar room, since it was too early for check-in. The first session of presentations took place.

Lunch was taken in a restaurant close by, “De Bruxelles et d’ailleurs”.

A first group picture was taken in front of the “Colonne du Congrès”, the Congress Column, a historical monument commemorating the creation of the Constitution by the National Congress of 1830. At its bottom lies the Belgian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial to World Wars I and II victims.

Group picture in front of the Congress Column →



The second session of presentations started right after the hotel check-in, accompanied by short coffee breaks. Members then had time to take possession of their respective rooms, before the first trip to the city center.

Target: the Grand-Place, the central square of Brussels, listed as World Heritage by UNESCO. The place is surrounded by many imposing buildings: the city’s Town Hall, the Brussels City Museum in the King’s House, the House of the Dukes of Brabant and many others not in the least less impressive. Their architecture is characteristic of Gothic style. A massive Christmas tree was installed in the middle of the square and the Grand-place was crowded with tourists, snapping away at this symbol of festivities.

The members split in two small groups. The first group did a 2-hour private tour within the city center. The second group enjoyed a free promenade through the streets surrounding the Grand-Place, seeking for one of the most famous pubs in Belgium (probably also worldwide). Making its way across streets full of waffle shops, Belgian chocolatiers and frites hotspots, the second group finally reached the Delirium village. The members could enjoy an impressive variety of Belgian beers in the Delirium Café Brussels, currently holding the Guinness World Record for the most beers offered with a selection of 2004 different types.

At 20:30, the two groups merged and met in the restaurant “Le Roy d’Espagne”, located in one of the stunning buildings of the Grand-Place. The meals were delicious and mussels with French fries made a positive impression. The first day came to an end. The group headed towards Hotel du Congrès and reached it shortly before midnight.

On Thursday, **December 5, 2019** we continued our presentations. Lunch was taken in a restaurant close by, “*Chez Jaques*”. In the early afternoon we finished the presentations. As Brussels is considered the “Capital of the European Union”, we visited the European Parliament in Brussels in the afternoon.

We were able to listen to a talk about the functions and tasks of European institutions like European Parliament, European Commission, and European Council, as well about the advantages we have due to the Union. Afterwards, we visited the plenary hall (see group picture). Fascinating about the European Parliament is that everything is translated into every official language spoken in one the member states, which are currently 24.

We finished the afternoon program by visiting the Brussels Christmas market. The rest of the evening we spent at “*Au Stekerlapatte*”.



Group pictures in the EU Parliament →



The Retreat to Brussels came to an end on **December 6, 2019**. After breakfast and check-out at Hotel du Congrès, the group headed towards the closest metro station. Destination: The Atomium. This massive structure, 102 m tall, was designed by André Waterkeyn for the Expo 58 which took place in Brussels in 1958 and is considered as its emblem. The Atomium represents a unit cell of an iron crystal and is a symbol of the peaceful use of atomic energy for scientific purposes. It is a museum nowadays. The top “atom” could be reached with an elevator and included a restaurant. After the visit, lunch was taken at 12 o’clock. The group could enjoy the view on the city and the beautiful surroundings. Eventually, the members split in two groups. One headed towards Aachen train station, the second directly went back to Jülich, certainly with a lot of memories from this short but intense stay in Brussels.