

China goes for the green in green



Student briefs Geneva bodies on world markets for renewable energy and WTO regulation.



Working as a research associate with the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDDRI) at Sciences Po, IFE student-intern Joseph S. of Vassar College was given responsibility for a pressing (and delicate ?) question : are Chinese policies subsidizing exports in renewable energy technologies ? If so, such policies run afoul of WTO regulations and may be absorbing benefits created by European policies encouraging the development of wind and solar energy capacity.

In a paper reporting his findings, “China, the WTO, and the Race for Renewable Energy”, Joseph laid out evidence of a “vacuum effect” created indeed by Chinese policy, and discussed the international economic repercussions of export subsidy measures. Joseph’s supervisors at IDDDRI, including one of France’s rising young experts in the area of climate studies, were impressed enough by his work to send him to Geneva to represent IDDDRI and present his findings. He did so not only to scholars at the Center for Trade and Sustainable Development but also to the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the WTO.

In Joseph’s words : “I presented the findings and methodology of the paper to collect feedback as part of the peer review process. The paper was very well received, and the comments I got were very valuable in improving the final draft. The entire experience was very exciting. Overall, the experience of writing this paper for IDDDRI allowed me to experience the work of a PhD student as an undergrad, which was a tremendous opportunity.”

And to experience the work of a diplomat also, one would guess !

IFE now in the land of Tintin



New Field Study and Internship program in Brussels puts IFE at the center of the European identity debate.

The question has been asked for awhile : what does it mean to be European ? For almost as long, others have been asking in return : “who’s asking ?”. Answers to the first vary widely, those to the second highlight the possibilities for instrumentalization — on various sides — of this important debate.



Before IFE leadership first went to Brussels to discuss with locals what a Brussels-based French language program of study should look like, it was supposed that the point of such a program should be exposure to “institutional Europe”. While by no means discouraged by Belgian interlocutors from pursuing this theme, it quickly became clear (as the pull of French singularity weakened with distance ?) that both the city of Brussels and the country of Belgium are rich, well-footnoted texts displaying the wonderful complexity of possible responses to our first question, and justifying attentiveness to the suspicions expressed by the latter. If Jean Monnet’s reputed deathbed musings are true (that culture might have been a better tack), it seems not all members of the Euro-technocracy have gotten the point.





It is hard to dismiss as illegitimate fears that “feeling European” is being touted and even manufactured in some quarters as an ersatz consensus for the imposition of the Union on all parties (lastest technique : “sports”).

Lessons from Belgium teach the historical, cultural and intellectual basis for a “Europeanitude” that extends far below and beyond shallow identity constructs. At the same time the Belgian case illustrates the intense particularity that gives the lie to easy commonality. But the lesson does not end there. France’s northern neighbor is a useful laboratory for the study of the long European quest for ways to live together beyond corporate constraints. If a pan-European demos is not for tomorrow, or ever, there is evidence that civilizational Europe — the Europe of minority languages, trans-boundary groupings, underground humanist springs, the shared memory of tragic forgetfulness — can transcend less useful divisions without sacrificing the “eachness” so vital to culture and identity. Does European identity follow from the strength of European institutions or is the other way round ? Or both ?

IFE’s Field Study and Internship program “European Identity(ies) through Culture, Politics and Society” takes as its mission to help students — from any field — take their place in this laboratory of Europe.

Profs and study abroad pros trust IFE...

... With their sons and daughters !

France is well-known for a strong and deliberate set of policies in favor of families and childrearing. While not at all the result of deliberate policy, enrollment at IFE increasingly features family ties, as IFE develops through time in heartwarming if unexpected ways. Paul C, budding cinéaste enrolled in IFE’s Paris program for Fall 2011, will be the fifth son or daughter of a professor of French at one of IFE’s partner institutions to take part in an IFE Field Study and Internship program (including currently Daniel S, similarly a filmmaker, producing documentaries for two well known NGOs). A tendency IFE finds both flattering and humbling. Current IFE student Jamie S (research associate in renewable energies) is the daughter of a Study Abroad professional who has seen many a student pass through IFE’s Paris program.

“Please look out for an application from my little sister Ashley, who now is in her second year studying journalism at Northwestern” wrote former IFE student Kevin (new product development for an online payment company and now a Chicago-based consultant). “IFE was one of the most valuable experiences of my entire academic career and I really encouraged her to apply to come learn with you in Paris”. In Ashley’s telling, ‘encouraged’ was a euphemism ; it had been made clear to her since high school what study abroad program she would be attending !

Colin G., similarly “encouraged” by his big sister Caroline, an art historian from Swarthmore College who cataloged a medieval ring collection for a Paris gallery, had to wait until after graduation since his undergraduate institution had no ties with IFE. With a BA in International Relations under his belt, Colin proved a useful addition to the research staff of a pro-Europe think tank.

At least two pairs of older cousin / younger cousin have enrolled in an IFE program, and IFE staff are scouring the time horizon for the ultimate consecration of the organization as a family affair : a son or daughter of an alum to enroll in an IFE program !