

## Belgium Acquires its First French-Language US Study Abroad Program

In January 2012 IFE inaugurates the Brussels Field Study and Internship Program, a first in Belgium and in study abroad



IFE went to Brussels and took along its innovative use of the professional workplace as a space for cultural, linguistic and comparative learning, creating the Brussels Field Study and Internship Program along similar lines to its Paris and Strasbourg programs of the same name. And in doing so set up the only French- language study abroad program in Belgium. Some things are different of course, given IFE's commitment to local context. Brussels is not Paris, and Belgium is not at all the same «exception» in Europe or the world as France is. All of which makes acquiring knowledge not only of the EU but also of European identities on several levels much more immediate in Brussels than in Paris. The program is themed as «European Identity(ies) through Culture, Politics, Society», and the preparatory curriculum lays strong cross-course emphasis on not only getting to know the local context but also what being in Brussels and Belgium can teach about what it means to be European.

The first semester attracted four students from varied backgrounds: a molecular biologist, a IR and security studies specialist, a French and international studies major focused on micro-finance, and a bio- informatician. As a result, right off the bat IFE became implicated in the world of scientific research, that of think tanks / policy institutes, and that of NGOs. Three very representative spheres of Brusselian activity. Two aspects of study abroad in Brussels with IFE emerged in particular from student comments in a de- briefing session at the end of the semester: Brussels is a big city but with a much more relaxed and friendly atmosphere (one student became good friends with a woman she met on a public bus), and the crazy-quilt of languages and cultures encountered in Brussels is very enriching. They also appreciated the beginner conversational Dutch taught in the program, as an great help in their cultural insertion!

## New French President Follows IFE Student's Advice

**With regime change comes reversal of restrictive policy on students' right to work**

A common complaint among electorates is absence of real choice. There was little grounds for this lament during the recent French presidential elections, which opposed the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy, with his increasingly right-wing policies, frenetic style and reputation for being pals with the wealthy and glamorous, to the Socialist challenger Daniel Hollande, with his promises of policy reversals, egalitarian discourse and poised, reflective manner. In the wake of Hollande's victory IFE was particularly interested in what changes would be announced in the area of education, not only due to its many contacts within the French university system but also because an IFE Paris Field Study student this Spring was focusing his internship-based field research on one particularly controversial measure by the Sarkozy government affecting universities and students.



In May of 2011, as the President sought to regain lost ground in the polls with further hardlining on issues like immigration and employment, Interior Minister Claude Guéant (and one of Sarkozy's closest advisors) issued the instantly infamous «circulaire Guéant». This directive ordered prefectures in France to adopt a more restrictive approach to foreign students graduating with degrees from French universities and requesting the right to stay to work. University of Illinois and IFE student Daniel Amador, whose internship was with the Human Rights League, was intrigued by the number of calls being received by the League from non-French students and decided to focus his field research paper on the directive: the reasoning behind it, its application, effects, and the groundswell of opposition to it from many quarters. Daniel's well-researched conclusions urged repeal of this polemical measure as being not in the nation's interest. Although it is not sure that the other Daniel had a chance to read the thoroughgoing report as he was taking office, he clearly agreed. One of his earliest acts was to abrogate the Guéant circular.

The new French president would do well to consult the research of another IFE student this past term on education, that of Asne Oyehaug who performed an in-depth policy analysis of reforms of the French university system and, using comparative analysis, how and how not to ensure that higher education and research systems have a positive economic impact. In any event her paper will have less far to travel to get to the Elysée; Asne worked as a research associate at the CAS, the think-tank attached to the Prime Minister's office.

## IFE Grows Greener and Learns to Say «GCE»

### Ecology increasingly attracts student interns while global civic engagement has a long if un-named history at IFE



Like Molière's bourgeois gentilhomme, Monsieur Jourdain, IFE has discovered that it has been long involved in a type of activity which it more recently has learned to call «global civic engagement». In response to requests from US institutional partners, IFE has assembled a list of such involvement by student-interns / researchers over the last several years (available on the IFE website), and to its surprise the list ran to dozens of student projects, ranging from an interethnic association to save the Peruvian Amazon to innovative internet tools to track human trafficking, or teaching middle school in a Paris area «educational priority» (disadvantaged) zone while analyzing public policy for these zones.

Taking a look at the past Spring student groups in Paris and Brussels, several internship-based research projects seem to qualify for this label. But please correct where wrong since IFE is –sort of – new at this! One finds: sustainability in development and a three-country project of recycling in developing areas; two projects around social activist theatre troupes; an investigation of islamic radicalization in French prisons; a case study of work and activism in the context of a feminist bookstore which serves also as a community center for the women's movement; observing first-hand racism in European soccer stadiums and working on actions to counter the phenomenon; counseling adolescents on sexual health; analyzing the need or not for interest rate ceilings in South African micro-finance projects; or surveying public health issues among lycée populations in Paris.

In an oft-related field, IFE has also been growing greener, as students seeking to continue their ecologically- themed undergraduate education while studying abroad. In the last year or so students have worked on: a cost-benefit analysis of fiscal incentives to improve housing stock energy performance; government programs to use new forms of agriculture to stop sprawl in peri-urban zones; developing viable economic models for sustainable energy production; how to eat «ecologically» when living in the center of Paris (a study of food sources and markets); comparing public policies in favor of bio-diversity; and studying the needed conditions for a renewable energy market in the EU. In the Fall students will be working with the bio-diversity NGO Vigie Nature, the Ministry for Environment and Sustainable Development and Slow Food Paris.