

## IUW 2016 - Hasselt

The 12th of April 2016, the first day of the “International University Week 2016” at the PXL University College in Hasselt Belgium began with a welcome event at the PXL Congress Campus. The framework programme consists of a welcome speech of the professors and staff who were responsible for the planning and provisioning. The four-day event was about the theme: “Mental Health and Wellbeing – Making the most of ourselves in a postmodern society“. After a short speech and an unexpected dance performance of the responsible persons, we also talked about the recent terror attacks, which hit Brussels. We also talked about, what could be the task for us, the students of Social Work to prevent such attacks through our work.

The speeches were followed by the presentations of the guest university and the visiting universities. In total there were 67 students from 10 countries, All from countries within the European Union. After a short lunch break there was a guide over the extensive campus of the PXL University College.



Following the general director Mr. Ben Lambrechts we were welcomed with a harmonica serenade.

Behind him followed the head of the department for “Sociaal werk” for the university, Filip Giraldo, which officially opened the IUW 2016. Furthermore, there was a speech by the keynote speaker Wouter Goris, which works as an improvement coach at Ready2Improve. He spoke about the possibilities which we can create by ourselves to be healthier and happier individuals by changing our priorities and habits and adapting these to the requirements of the society.

As the end of the evening we had a Belgian buffet with a Belgian beer evening. This was accompanied by classic ice-breaker activities like the “Speed-dating”. Speed-Dating is basically to put 2 persons for 2 minutes on the opposites of a table while using the time to get to know each other. A second game followed – the human Bingo – where the task of everybody was to find a given number of persons with specific characteristics or personal qualities and to write the names down.

On Tuesday the 12th of April 2016 our second day at the university there were different workshops which were in connection with the main task. In the morning there was an offer for example a workshop with the theme “Self-leadership in working life” where were imparted some methods and theories about self-organisation and – motivation. An other workshop with the title „Millennial identities“ had multilingualism as a theme. The subject was about the context between language and culture as well as multilingualism and integration. After a lunch where we got sandwiches there were again workshops. “Ethical Consultation over Moral Dilemmas“ discussed aspects of mental illnesses. Specially depressions and ADHS and the statistical increase in diagnostics of these disorders were covered. And they presented a method to getting close to these problems from different perspectives. A other workshop “Making decisions for other people“ was arranged by the British students at the afternoon. First they introduced the conceptual proceeding. Social workers have to observe 5 aspects before they meet a decision for other people who’s capabilities are limited. With group works and exercises was the topic memorable mediated. In the last exercise the groups should make a decision with using a case example. It became more clear once we got the case through the British students who embody the case-related persons and went to every group for answering the questions.

At the late afternoon of this day there was the possibility to watch a movie. We could choose between “The Book of Life“ or “Hector and the Search for Happiness“. Both movies had the search for luck as a topic and were shown for all members in the lecture halls.

Conclusion of the day was an Italian buffet with different variations of pasta, sauces and salads.

On Wednesday the 13th of April 2016 some members of the IUW 2016 visited the accommodations of the organisation YAR VLAANDEREN. According to their own statement they offer a platform to young people between 15 and 21 years with various difficulties to get their life on the right track. Originally it was a program developed in the USA and began in 2010 as an experiment in Hasselt too. After one year the results were really positive and so YAR has currently 11 employees and 250 volunteers. These results caused the concept of the institution – the connection of volunteers and youngsters. The programme of YAE is shared in two fields: YAR Coaching and YAR Housing. The first take place three times yearly and has a capacity for 25 youngsters. The coaching-program happens in three phases: 1. Youth Enrolment, 2. Residential Training, 3. Follow Through. That’s the reason why it’s very important for YAR to build a network. The company works community based. The foundation of the work forms the care of the society among themselves.

The YAR-Housing-Program exist since 2012 and has supervised since this already over 100 youngsters. The goal is to empower the youngsters as independent, self-determined and acting objects in the society. YAR is working in contrast to the systemic approach exclusive with the affected youngsters to change their own view of life and not their circumstances. „You can not change the circumstances but the way you deal with it.“ so the employees.

Both programs are made possible because of a big network of partners (for example: Nike, Ikea, diverse supermarkets), volunteer trainers (coaching by an American trainer, one weekend), donations and through state financing.

So they give the youngsters a feeling, that there are no good or bad decisions. It is just only important to be clear of the consequences.

Introduced was also the organisation HORIZONT, where the members got a small insight in two areas. First there was the project "Rap op Stap" presented, which offers vacation, culture and sport cheaper for people with less income. The offered program was fully presented and through the presentation of evaluation results it was clear that the project reaches their target group. The project "The Bridge", which team offers people with less income to eat cheaper in community and other activities were presented after it. For example they have the offer for old ladies to share a coffee and knitting. Because there are a lot of people with less income who can not make vacation, there is an austerity programme, which collects regular small amounts from which once per year a vacation in Spain can be financed. Particularly there was a big interest from the students for the game, which should've given a view of the revenues and expenditures. So they help people playful with the monthly handling of money. Simple and refined! The members liked the projects a lot. Finally everybody should get the chance to broaden their minds, to form themselves in cultural manner and to join social activities. Travelling, music lessons and concerts should be no luxury goods, who can be just used by the rich population.

At the afternoon there was a special guided city tour. With the „Hasselt is the first City of Happiness“ theme the inhabitants of the town choose 25 „Places of Happiness“. In this context some of these places were shown to the students. Also there were games and exercises which trained the perception in which we should make attentive for the small things in the world. It created an awareness for the fast pace and the superficiality with which the humans forced their daily life. Also there were some interesting methods for the handling of worries and problems, which are certainly also feasible in the Social Work in Germany.

Following on the city tour there was no evening program through the PXL. The students found together with guitar and some drinks in the hostel and enjoyed a relaxed evening.

On Thursday the 14th of April 2016 they offered a workshop with the name "Happiness". In different exercises we searched of the own pursuit of luck and its importance. After a strengthening lunch all the members met up for the performing of a "World Café". Several subjects were Mental Health and Health Care. In exchange the chosen international groups worked out differences and similarities of the home countries in the named themes and presented individual projects and results of the group work. The presentation was followed by the evaluation of the whole week and the issue of the certificates. With a slide show of pictures and divers acknowledgments the "International University Week 2016" ended. The students and professors organised a BBQ at the university in the evening and nevertheless the week ended with karaoke singing in a local pub.

All workshops were presented by professors of the participating universities. They gave really interesting contents and showed us new aspects. Through interactive working, own experience reports from professors, students and active exchange from the workshops where really inspiring and instructive.