

Group reflection IUW Bremen

We as a group liked the IUW in Bremen.

Hotel

The hotel was very nice. It was a nice accommodation. For breakfast, there was a little bakery in the lobby where a lot of people from the area got their sandwiches and bread. It was very nice to have something in the morning, before we went off to school. The lobby was very big and pretty, with a lot of places to sit in and converse with friends and the other internationals we met in the week.

The hotel was situated in the industrial area of Bremen, so there was a lot of traffic on the streets. Around the hotel were quite a of options to go eat. Just around the corner, there were multiple restaurants and bars. There were also some shops in the area within walking distance, so if we weren't in the city centre, there were a lot of options to get food at night.

Some of us went to university by car, so we needed to leave very early in the morning to get there on time. Mainly because of the works on the big streets, but coming early to school was also very nice. That way, we could explore the school building before they served us breakfast.

Workshop

The workshops were very nice, and we learned a lot. The theme of the IUW in Bremen was sustainability. The workshop on Tuesday was about how sustainable the UCLL in Belgium. Céline and Nel attended this workshop. It was very thought-provoking, thinking about how our school is trying to be sustainable. There were a lot of opportunities in this workshop to explore different viewpoints through discussion.

Adele and Juuso attended 'intersectionality, privilege and accessibility as part of sustainability'. The point of this workshop was to teach how building a sustainable future also means building a just and inclusive one. Social work has a vital role to play not only in helping individuals adapt and cope but in pushing for broader societal changes that address the root causes of vulnerability and inequality. It was very informative to hear the perspectives of the other internationals who also attended this.

On Wednesday, Adele and Céline went to a workshop, 'The Role of Social Work in Climate-Induced Migration and Crisis Recovery'. It was very nice, and we learned a lot about other countries, how they looked at crisis recovery. We talked a lot about what needs to happen and discussed the impact of climate change has already had on migration. It was very nice to hear the input of the other international students and teachers. It was very eye-opening to know how the situation was in their countries in comparison to our own country.

Also on Wednesday, Nel and Juuso went to the workshop of a professor from Groningen. The workshop title was 'Homo Ludens – the Playing Human as a Concept and Approach

to Meet New Challenges.' It was a very interesting workshop about how we as humans do not need to forget how to play and how to accept our childhood and experiences in the work field. We also got an insight into how the social system in the Netherlands works.

Thursday, Nel and Céline went to the workshop about life events. It was very nice and creative. They started by explaining what a life event is. After that, we went outside to work with products of nature, grass, wooden sticks, flowers, leaves, etc. After we saw an example, we got a chance to go look around the park to gather everything we needed, while having time to think about our lifeline. It was very nice to have the opportunity to lay it out and talk about it to people whom you don't know. It was clear that the story we told was with everyone a little different.

On Thursday, Adele went to an enlarged perspective on climate change workshop. The workshop explored how climate change deepens societal inequalities and how social justice can tackle those issues. Eila Prats Brugat, who led this workshop, had quite a few slides prepared, but due to breakfast running over, we didn't have time to get through them all. But she still explained the main points, making it easy to understand the point of the workshop. Most of the lesson was her talking through the topic, but we had a short task where we had to pick between two photos, a forest or a mountain, and explain to our partner where and why we would pick that one to live in and the class if we wanted to. It linked back to the class well to what she was teaching us. Although we ran out of time, Adele still came out of the workshop with a good understanding of the topic, and it would be nice to hear about the other slides.

Excursions

Adele and Nel went to the Residential Facility for Offenders. They found it very interesting and knowledgeable. It was very nice to see more in the world about what happens to people straight out of prison and how the system here in Germany works.

The excursion itself was split into 2 parts. In the first part, we actually went inside the house, where the residents live, and we got to see what their room is like and the common areas. Before we could see that we got a lot of information about the place and about its residents. They told us they could use drugs inside the house, but it was restricted to their rooms only and also that they preferred this then on the streets, so they could have a little control over it. You could also really smell it once we went inside the house.

We asked a lot of questions, and everyone was very interested in the topic. So, we asked if the workers felt unsafe, but they never did. Between the residents there could break out a fight or a conflict. This was especially at night when there were no workers in the building.

Each Sunday, the social workers make the residents a big Sunday morning breakfast. This was to reassure that the residents got at least one good meal a week.

The second part of the visit was 2 more organisations that also worked with prisoners and ex-offenders. They both talked for 10 minutes or so, and then we got to ask questions. We found the whole excursion very interesting and useful. Especially Adele, because she studies criminology, so this was right in her playing field and gave her a lot of new insights.

Céline and Juuso went to the youth farm and learned about the community life at the Bremen Youth Farm (Kinder- und Jugendfarm Bremen). This unique space offers children and teenagers a rare opportunity to engage with nature, animals, and sustainable living practices in an environment built on inclusion, cooperation, and learning through experience. Until this year, it was also a place where people could come for rehabilitation (people who experienced mental health problems, people who can't work in a normal economic circuit ...), but the government cut the payments they got from the government. Because of that, they needed to fire those people.

The Bremen Youth Farm is designed to empower young people by giving them real responsibilities. Unlike a petting zoo or a simple playground, this farm encourages kids to take part in daily chores like feeding the animals, cleaning stalls, gardening, and helping with construction or repair projects. They are getting training to learn how to handle the animals. Because of that, there aren't a lot of children with the animals. They also work very closely with the kindergarten in the area. They can come to the place and learn. They also organise on specific days camps where the children playfully learn different tasks. They can use their imagination to the full; nothing is too far-fetched during these camps.

In general, those excursions were very pleasant, because that way we got to know more about social work in Germany. Until now, we learned in the courses the more theoretical part, so to see it with our own eyes during these visits was very eye-opening. The only downside of the excursion was that some of the guides did not always know where to go. This was especially problematic on the excursion to the youth farm, as the guide had pointed the group in the wrong direction, and as a result, they were an hour and a half late.

Extra Activities

These were not mandatory activities, so not all of us participated in them. First, we had the city storming. This was mostly to explore the city and get to know some of the other people who were also participating in the IUW. We were divided into groups of 10, and it was a competition between all the groups. The group that Nel was in did finish last. It was a very nice introduction to the city of Bremen and a good way to get to know some of the other people there.

That same evening, there was a pub crawl. This was mostly to get to know the city in a different light and at night. We went to a couple of bars, and we saw some very nice ones, and we saw more of the city, and of course, we got to know each other a little more.

The last night we had the opportunity to go to a party, and the special thing was that it was on a boat. This was the ideal way to end the week and finish with everybody. We found it great that it was on a boat, it brought the week together because we got to experience Bremen from on a boat, and we thought this was very typical of the city.

In conclusion, we all really enjoyed our week there, and we would be happy to do this all again. We are very pleased with the opportunity to do this in our Erasmus semester and found it very useful and educational.



