

Destination Brussels

On Wednesday 26 February we left to Brussels with a group of Aerius members for a three-day study-trip that included visits to Brussels International Airport Zaventem, the European Commission DG Transport & Energy, the Association of European Airlines (AEA), the IATA (International Air Transport Association) as well as the ACI (Airport Council International).

By Sabrina Hulkenberg

It was a long journey to Brussels. From Amsterdam it took us almost four hours to get to Brussels Zaventem Airport there by train. Before our official program commenced, we had the opportunity to have a lunch in a restaurant with a magnifi-

cent view of the apron and runways. Hereafter, we were welcomed by an employee of the airport who gave us a guided tour around the Zaventem Airport. The guide showed us the Aprier, which was specially build for the now defunct Sabena. As a result of Sabena's collapse last year, it is now almost empty and somehow gave the impression of a ghost pier.

We continued with a bus tour across the ramp of the airport and saw virtually everything, including the military area, the cargo area as well as a small 'satellite' control tower. Next on schedule was the baggage sorting centre. It was very noisy and regretfully we could not understand very well what was being explained to us, but nevertheless to see such an operation working 'in full swing'. Finally, we had a meeting with Mr. Herman Neukermans, vice-president strategy of Brussels International Airport Corporation (BIAC). We had the opportunity to discuss with him the strategic difficulties BIAC is currently facing as a result of the mentioned collapse of Sabena..

After all, it was an interesting first excursion of the trip. As a result of the sometimes large distances we had to walk during the guided tour, for some

people it was a quite heavy load for their feet!. At around 7.15pm we arrived at the Ibis-hotel near the Gare du Midi, where we all freshed up and went out for supper. Of course, we searched for Manneke Pis and we found the small man!

We decided that we could not leave Brussels without eating something typically Belgian and initiated a hunt for the genuine Belgian waffle.

Thursday

The next day was a day full of speeches. First we visited the European Commission DG Transport & Energy (DG TREN), where we were warmly welcomed by Mr. Roderick van Voorst who spoke

with us on the role of the Commission and Airport Policy. Also Mrs. Marion Knobens told us about her work on the field of aviation security followed by Mr. Marc Skreikes who spoke about the revision of the 3rd package of aviation liberalization in the European Union.

After the speeches at the EC we were invited for lunch in the canteen of the EC! We prepared ourselves for the afternoon speeches and went by cab to the AEA-building. The taxi-drivers in Brussels are wild drivers and like cursing on other drivers. As he took us to our destination very fast, we did not complain. The speeches at the AEA and the IATA were very interesting as well.



Mrs Le Thi Mai, General Manager Infrastructure & Environment of the AEA talked about the negative effects of airports and aircraft on the environment and the restrictions in air operations and also elaborated on the Second and Third Chapter in aircraft noise classification. On his turn, Mr. Cees Gresnigt, Director Operations & Infrastructure of the IATA, spoke on Safety Operations & Infrastructure as well as the challenges the 280 Member Airlines are facing. After a long day of merely listening, we thought it was about time to explore the city. So we took a tram for some sightseeing around Brussels. Some buildings in Brussels, like the at the *Grote Markt*, are breathtaking. We decided that we could not leave Brussels without eating something typically Belgian and initiated a hunt for the genuine Belgian waffle. Finally



we found what we were looking for: very sweet but delicious! After that we wanted to see Jeanekke Pis - the female Manneke Pis - and we found her as well!



That night was already our last night in Brussels - time flies when you are having fun. We found a typical Belgium restaurant and afterwards we went to a Cuban café with a large picture of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara in the back near the Grand Place, where we tried a fairly strong, but tasteful mojito.

Friday

Friday morning, at breakfast, everybody looked quite tired of the many

impressions and of course because we did not have much sleep. Our last official excursion was a meeting at the ACI. Mr. Gérard Borel, General Council of ACI, gave us a very interesting and clear speech about Airport Economics and Law Affairs and we forgot how tired we were. Also, Mr. Philippe Joppert, elaborated on the relationship between ACI and Eurocontrol, the differences in interpretation of the term "slots" as well as possibilities to enhance capacity by possibly introduction of gate-to-gate clearance. After the speech, we were surprised

with an invitation for a marvellous sandwich lunch, with a beautiful *pain-surprise* on the buffet. We left to the hotel and from there everybody went their own way. We took the train back to Amsterdam and before leaving Brussels, we had a quick view of the Atonium, knowing we could go back home with a satisfied feeling and a lot of food for thought. Meanwhile, some other participants stayed behind in Brussels, continuing their exploration of this wonderful city! Someone even decided to stay the weekend...

