

Wednesday, 23th of June

Yesterday evening, we had a lovely walk through the beautiful city Antwerp and drank some delicious Belgium beers. In the mean time, Jan Dirk van Elsas arrived at the hotel so he could join us the next day with our visit to the fourth company. After a shorter night compared with yesterday, we left Antwerp at 9 o'clock in the morning and travelled to Mol, a small town, located east to Antwerp. In Mol, the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO) is situated. After a visit to the neighborhood of Mol (due to some discussion with the tom-tom), we reached the large complex of VITO. We saw several departments of the nuclear reactor of VITO. When we reached the conference room (the Watson and Crick room) for the presentation, we had some nice refreshing and rehydrating drinks. Erwin Cornelis gave us a warm welcome and gave us a small introduction about VITO. Henk Moll continued with an introduction talk about the course and the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. This was the fourth time the students and the committee heard the talk and the same joke, which was still hilarious.

After Henk's presentation, Alexandra, Freek and Wouter gave their presentation of their case study. VITO provided a case study about the use of second generation biofuels. Second generation biofuels are waste streams (non-competitive with food), for example, grasses and wood. These waste streams are used to generate energy (gas and electricity) and are an alternative for the unsustainable fossil fuels.

The students investigated which method to generate energy was the most efficient. They came with an advice and handed over their report and a beautiful poster.

When the students were finished, Erwin continued with his informative talk about what kind of research is conducted by VITO. He told us that there are three different units in VITO, which are ecotoxicology, energy, and human toxicology (mixed with research focused on finding an alternative to animal testing).

After the intensive meeting in the morning with a lot of talks, we had a delicious lunch, outside in the sun on the grass. When this recharge moment passed by, we had a 15 minute drive with our own bus to the second location of VITO. First, we had a very short (due to lack of time) introduction about this part of the company. We were split up into three groups and saw three different kinds of research that is conducted by VITO. It gave a real good impression about working at VITO and it was really nice to see similarities between the university and this company. We saw some interesting ecological toxicology projects and had a quick walk through several labs (in Flemish labo).

After a seven hour driving trip with a lot of traffic jam, we were very excited to arrive in Paris, where we will visit our last company tomorrow.