This issue of the newsletter represents a lot of firsts for our Center: it is my first issue as Interim Director; it is the first to be overseen by our new Editor and Graduate Student Assistant, Avery Keatley; and next month it will be newly formatted for better readability. This academic year, 2016-17, is a year of transition for the ESC, but also of growth and exciting possibilities. I am honored and excited to be the one who oversees the transition, who works with our incoming Director, and who initiates the programming and strategic priorities that will set us on a path to explore an expanding set of new territories and partnerships in the next five years. This year we can now offer a certificate in Transatlantic Studies and a related concentration in European and Eurasian Studies to undergraduate students, thereby allowing more students than ever to internationalize their studies while here at Pitt. And this is only the beginning. We will be exploring course development opportunities, visitors and events, and new study abroad experiences to complement these new credentials.

If the last few weeks are anything to judge by, interest in Europe is higher than ever. The stunning news items coming out of Europe this summer – the Brexit vote, the on-going migration crisis, the tragic and violent attacks in cities and towns throughout Europe, and the “burkini” controversy, to name but a few – have brought curious and engaged students and community members to our Center. And our staff has responded with quality programming to help
Europe Day Festival

Last May, the European Studies Center hosted its inaugural Europe Day Festival on Saturday, May 7. More than 1,400 people came out to enjoy the celebration of European culture, cuisine, and heritage.

Festival activities included something for everyone. Local restaurants and artisans created a dynamic marketplace while cultural performances of regional song and dance were presented on the main stage. In the Children’s Tent, kids were invited to create handmade crafts with materials provided by local cultural institutions: The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, The Frick Art and Historical Center, Mattress Factory Museum, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the EQT Children’s Theatre Festival.

The Festival was made possible through generous support from the European Union as well as Green Mountain Energy, Centre Francophone de Pittsburgh, Consulate of France in Pittsburgh, Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, Cohen & Grigsby, European Wax Center, and Lamar Advertising. University of Pittsburgh sponsors included the University Center for International Studies, Center for International Legal Education, Department of French and Italian Languages and Literatures, Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, Department of History, Department of History of Art and Architecture, and the Nationality Rooms.

The Europe Day Festival was such a success thanks to our sponsors, students, alumni, and community. We’ve already got Europe Day on our calendars for next spring: save the date for Saturday, April 8, 2017. We hope to see you there again!

Gaby et Jules provided colorful macrons from their bakery in Squirrel Hill.

Dancers pose in traditional German attire, Lederhosen for men and Dirndl for women.
How the Refugee Crisis Influences Transatlantic Political Climate
by Franziska Huennemeyer-Weber

Franziska is a senior studying social work at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences in Aachen, Germany. Through contacts at Pitt, she was able to obtain an internship with the Collegiate YMCA at Pitt. Pitt signed an agreement with the Catholic Universities in Aachen and Dresden this past summer to explore opportunities for students on both sides to engage in experimental learning trips.

I am going to draw a comparison in the refugee crisis between Germany and the U.S. Because I’m from Germany, there will be more insight into European politics than politics in the U.S. You could probably write a whole book about the influence of the refugee crisis on the political climate and media awareness in the EU, alone.

The biggest different between the refugee crisis in the EU and the U.S. is that Europe has the refugees directly at their front door, so to speak. So far this year, 293,299 refugees have arrived in Europe from overseas, while 3,205 people are either dead or missing. And that only accounts for the last 8 months.

In 2015, 1,015,078 refugees fled to Europe. Most of them went to Greece or Italy, both countries with huge economic problems that do not have enough money to properly support refugees. Other European countries try their best to stay out of it, and even push refugees to other countries: Hungary, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia have built fences to keep refugees out. Austria shut down the border to Germany in the summer of 2015, because of an onslaught of refugees pouring in from Hungary.

That means a collective of states, which prided themselves on open borders and human rights, didn’t know how to deal with the crisis, and resorted to closing borders and violating human rights. Most of the time we get the feeling that there is no plan to deal with this crisis in a manner consistent with human rights. And, because of this recent wave of immigrants, right-wing parties are winning over large numbers of voters, while the other parties are forced to either undercut each other, or try to win back voters through right-wing ideas.

In the U.S., I feel that there is a lack of general interest and empathy for the refugees. However, I believe that lack of empathy can be found in Europe as well. Often, there is little to no acknowledgment of the hardships the refugees have to go through to get into the EU, or the situations they had to flee from. Many people seem to fear that refugees are either terrorists or out for their jobs. They are forgetting that most of them are fleeing terrorism, and that they often must take jobs nobody else wants. While I think that the U.S. is not as heavily influenced as the EU by the refugee crisis in the areas of politics and media coverage, I believe that the right-wing parties use the same discourse about illegal immigration in the U.S. to create fear and get voters. It doesn’t matter if the AFD (Alternative For Germany, a right-wing party) talks about Syrian refugees or if Donald Trump talks about illegal Mexican immigrants. The arguments are nearly always the same.

While a fence or a wall may work short-term to keep people out, at one point the fence will come down and then we will have a bigger problem than before. In my opinion the best thing we could do is to acknowledge the resources the refugees (or other immigrants) are bringing with them and put them to good use while we work on a good and sustainable integration.
PITT IN GERMANY

by Mina Hogsett

Mina was part of a small group from Pitt that traveled to Germany last summer to learn about Germany’s refugee crisis.

A group of eight participated in Pitt’s 2016 summer study abroad program, Education in Germany: Diversity, Mobility, and Well-Being, led by Dr. Maureen Porter. During the two-week trip, we traveled to western Germany—mostly Cologne and Aachen—and visited parts of Belgium and the Netherlands. The primary purpose of the trip was to learn from the innovations, strengths, history, and culture of Germany. It additionally facilitated a space for the comparative analysis of social issues, both among European nations and between Europe and the United States.

Historical tours of the now vibrant Cologne, a city almost entirely destroyed during World War II, framed our understanding of Germany’s resilience and pragmatic approach to current issues. We visited innovative social service centers and educational sites, where we learned from teachers, principals, volunteers, and social workers. We visited several educational settings where we learned about school systems, pioneering projects and programs, and current transformations that Germany and Belgium are navigating as their student population becomes increasingly diverse.

A central focus of the trip was to learn about the refugee crisis in Germany and throughout the EU. In addition to cultural and historical sites, we also visited refugee organizations, met with social workers, and shared discussions with members of the academic community. We also had the opportunity to visit group homes for unaccompanied minors who fled violence in places such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guinea to seek refuge, education, and a future in Germany. Through these experiences, we gained insights into the development of the refugee crisis, the services and resources available to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as systemic challenges that refugees, social workers, and educators currently confront in Europe as a whole. All we learned helped to clarify the nuances and complexities of the crisis in its historical, political, economic, and social contexts.

Members of our team brought back with us new understandings to merge with ideas for projects back in Pittsburgh.

COMING UP

CONVERSTATIONS ON EUROPE

Join us this fall as we continue our series, Conversations on Europe. This fall, we’ll be talking about elections, Black Lives Matter movement in Europe, and the migrant experience in Germany. Conversations take place from noon to 1:30 on the following dates: Thursday, Oct. 20, Tuesday, Nov. 15, and Tuesday, Dec. 6. Check our website for more details.

Health Inequalities in Europe

Join us on Thursday, Oct. 13 at noon as we host Dr. Julia Lynch from the University of Pennsylvania for a special discussion on health inequalities in Europe. This lecture is made possible by the Center’s Jean Monet Center of Excellence Grant.

Making Climate Policy: A Historical Simulation

As part of Pitt’s International Week, the ESC will co-host a simulation negotiation between European nations regarding acid rain. This is a half-day event in which students will immerse themselves in various roles to negotiate and international climate deal—if possible. The simulation will take place from 11 to 3:30 on Friday, Oct. 8.
Nick Bersin (left) is a junior at Pitt majoring in German and pursuing certificates in West European Studies and Russian and East European Studies. Last year, the ESC began a crowdsourcing campaign to raise funds for study abroad trips. Nick was one of two recipients of the funds, which were used to cover his airfare to Germany over the summer.

**Q:** What can you tell us about your time in Germany?

**A:** I was in Dresden for seven weeks, so that’s in Eastern Germany, the former GDR. There’s definitely still traces that you can see. Sometimes you still see people driving Trabis. There’s much more xenophobia than there is in the west…they talk about the refugee crisis as this invasion. But then you have people who try to be welcoming. So, I was at a small school for social work and nursing. They’re very active in refugee issues. They were doing an observation of a refugee clinic to provide medical care to people [there].

**Q:** What was your role there?

**A:** I was a guest student. I came sort of in the middle of the semester, so I was also doing an internship at Arbeiterwohlfahrt, and I was doing immigration advising. Most of our clients didn’t speak German, because most of them were refugees who had come fairly recently from Arabic-speaking countries. But some of them spoke English, so I acted as the effectively bilingual person between those two. It was actually hard for a lot of our clients from Eritrea, who couldn’t read or write their own language. A lot of the time we relied on kids that had learned German a lot faster [than their parents] and could translate for us.

**Q:** How do you think Germans are responding to the refugee crisis?

**A:** Well, Angela Merkel’s party, the CDU, lost very badly in her home state [in an election on Sept. 4.] And the AFD—it’s like UKIP—won a lot of seats. And the ironic thing is that, that state has the lowest number of refugees in any state. So in places where there aren’t actually a lot of refugees, a lot of foreigners, is where you see that kind of reaction. But some people are doing really well. A lot of people have become active and engaged in tutoring people or distributing supplies. I would say Germany as a whole has risen to the task and done something really remarkable, something that really no other European country, except maybe Sweden, is doing.

But that’s also a problem, because they have taken a lot of people. And at a certain point the system, well, it is well past its capacity. We had three times as many clients on our list as we were supposed to.

**Q:** What would you suggest for anyone who might be interested in getting involved?

**A:** I think if you’re over there for any reason, they need people. Look around, look at different organizations. Or even, if you live in an apartment complex, reach out and find someone who just needs a connection. €
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people make sense of it all. The ESC is fortunate to be affiliated with faculty experts from across Pitt's campus who readily offer their expertise and time – both here and abroad – to help students learn more about these topics and ready them to tackle these issues themselves.

This has never been more evident than in this issue of the Newsletter, which showcases a handful of the myriad ways that members of the Pitt and ESC community have engaged with Europe’s refugee crisis over the past year: from hands-on projects during study abroad trips, to independent volunteerism; from professional development to academic research. I know I speak on behalf of the entire ESC staff when I thank everyone featured in this issue for their contributions. They are fantastic examples of the breadth and depth of European studies here at Pitt. And to everyone reading this, we welcome your involvement – at any level – in studying Europe and engaging with the issues impacting both Europe and the U.S. To learn about our certificate options, events and visitors, check out our website and weekly email updates. €

-Allyson Delnore, Interim Director, ESC

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Editor’s Corner

Greetings! My name is Avery Keatley, and I was very fortunate to become the editor of the ESC’s monthly newsletter. I am an MFA student in nonfiction writing, with a background in History and Writing. I look forward to contributing to the ESC as a writer, editor, and social media manager...which brings me to my shameless call to action: follow us! We’re on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Not only is this a great way for us to let you know what’s going on at the center, but it’s a great way for you to connect with us! Reach out, and let us know what you’ve been doing, we’d love to hear from you.

Cheers!
-Avery