

## **Testimonial – Emilie Puylaert**

From 1 March 2006 till 1 June 2006 I worked for the National Office of the Australian Institute of International Affairs as an intern. I am not an Australian; I'm from the Netherlands and decided to do an internship abroad, as a way to gain practical experience. Enschede is the city where I study Applied Communication Studies.

When I started looking for a place where I could do an internship, I started searching the Web and sending e-mails and applications to all sorts of organizations. Finally, I received a positive response from Melissa Conley Tyler, who was going to be the National Executive Director of the National Office. It clicked and it turned out that there were lots of communication projects that I could do for the Australian Institute of International Affairs.

To give you an example: I wrote minutes for several meetings, I created the biographies for the Research Committee and the National Presidents, I helped setting up the Media Working Group and the Website Working Group, updated contact details, helped creating an advertisement to be published in The Diplomat, got quotes for CD-Rom printing and much more!

The largest project that I was involved with was the creation of the Annual Report. When I left the institute after three months, it wasn't completely finished, but most of its contents was created by me. It was the first time I did such a thing and I learned how hard it could be to collect information that is not in the open, but in peoples mind. Therefore I think I can say that a large part of my projects involved knowledge management or knowledge capturing. Very important of course, since there are so many people working for the AIIA and it would be a shame if that knowledge is lost.

Another nice aspect of my internship was that I was allowed to accept invitations that the institute received. That meant that I could attend two embassy receptions, an event hosted by the Swiss embassy, several lectures and seminars and a public parliamentary discussion. Very interesting of course and quite an experience! I certainly learned how to chitchat and network, in the nicest sense of the word!

Now, after three months of working for Melissa and for the Institute I can certainly say that I am glad that I have taken this big step and that I indeed gained a lot of practical experience. I also very much enjoyed the Australians and the Australian way of life. It was a wonderful time and I am certain that I am going to miss it!