After their Bundeshaus visit, the students split up into their “flash mob” groups. Half an hour later, the Bundesplatz was flooded with white lab coats as the students came together for the main event: “Biology around the World: Meet our Guests”. “I think the flash mob was a great idea, it got people thinking about the IBO” says Khadicha (Uzbekistan).

Everyone was glad to take shelter from the burning sun under their personalised parasols, and set to drawing “their countries”. The delegation from China was hard at work: “Our panda looked like a dog at first!” laughs Shihong. The Slovenians were also drawing animals: “Our country has a special white horse called the Lipiza horse, they’re really good for competitions” explains Blaž. They hadn’t forgotten to include “Proteus anguinus” either: “We call it the human fish”, says Aleksander.

Not everyone was concentrating on zoology, though; flags, national monuments and plants were everywhere you looked. When the students had finished drawing, there was the fountain to play in and ice-cream to eat. Of course, their artwork had to be put away safely as the rain started to fall, but the weather didn’t stop anyone’s fun…quite the opposite.
Switzerland is known for its high quality education system. Since the country has no natural resources, well-educated people are very important. The education system has four main parts: Kindergarten, Primary School, Secondary School I and Secondary School II. The education system is slightly different in every canton.

Normally a child goes to school as follows: they attend two years of Kindergarten, then has six years of primary school and three years of secondary school I. These years are all part of obligatory schooling. At the end of secondary school I, youngsters are usually about 15 or 16 years old. After obligatory school, teenagers have two choices: they can either attend high school, or they can start an apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship system is one of the strengths of Swiss education: People work three or four days a week in a company, and the other days they go to school. In school, they learn specific theory concerning their work. There are about 250 different professions people can learn, e.g. carpenter, bank clerk or hairdresser. Apprenticeships last two to four years, depending on the profession. The advantage of this system is that people get practical and theoretical knowledge at the same time. Nowadays, after an apprenticeship, people are still able to continue their studies and get a bachelor’s degree, for example.

If people go to high school, which lasts three or four years, they usually go on to University. There they can get a bachelor’s after three years, and a master’s after two more years.

Languages play an important part in Swiss schooling: a second (national) language is taught from year 5 (11-12 years old), or even year 4 in some cases; a second language (mostly English) is taught from year 7 (13-14 years old). It is also possible to move to another part of Switzerland during a high school year and attend school taught in another language (resulting in a bilingual high school diploma). This multilingual system is a particular trait of Swiss schooling that makes it stand out worldwide.
**Politics in the “Haus”!**

“You are newly elected members of the National Council… but only for the next ten minutes”, a guide told the students when they entered the chamber of the National Council in the Bundeshaus, the Federal Palace. Then the young National Council Christian Wasserfallen (Liberal Party), talked to the students. “You all have the gifts and the potential to be leaders”, Wasserfallen said, reminding the students that this also means a lot of responsibility. “You have to give other people perspective.” And he begged the students to take three words back to their country: “Democracy, education and science.”

Before the speech the students were guided through the Federal Palace, that they found “nice”, “cool” and “amazing”. If students want to check what they remember of the tour, here is a little quiz. Don’t worry; it’s much easier than the exams, and you can check your answers at the bottom of the page.

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**Quiz Answers:**

A) Which canton is not included in the coat of arms in the Hall of the Dome in the Federal Palace?
1) Bern 2) Jura 3) Zürich

T) Where were the first tourists to visit Switzerland from?
1) Germany 2) England 3) France

C) What percentage of seats in Parliament are held by women?
1) 50 % 2) 10 % 3) 25 %

G) Why do the National Council members have to press two buttons when they vote?
1) So they cannot cheat and press their neighbour’s button.
2) Because the electronic system is old-fashioned.
3) With one finger they press the answer button, the other confirms the identity of each Council Member.

T') What happens when a Council Member’s speech is too long?
1) He/she has to pay a fee.
2) He/she is not allowed to give a speech in the next session.
3) The president of the council switches off the microphone.

A') How long does the President of the National Council hold office for?
1) 2 years 2) 1 year 3) 4 years

G') When was the Federal Palace built?
1) 1848 – 1894 2) 1894 – 1902 3) 1918 – 1932

C') Who is the President of the National Council right now?
1) Christian Wasserfallen 2) Ruedi Lustenberger 3) Maya Graf

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**Sion**

Sion (German: Sitten) is the largest town and capital of the canton of Valais, a very mountainous part of Switzerland in the south (it shares some of the Alps with Italy & France). It has around 30’000 inhabitants, and lies on the banks of the Rhône, which flows into Lake Geneva and then down through France. Sion’s distinctive marks are its two hills with its two castles, Valère and Tourbillon, and its old town, all medieval (11th century) and very beautiful! Sion has wanted to host the Winter Olympic Games for many years now, but has come second 3 times, although it is close to lots of slopes and places great for mountain climbing. It’s in one of the coldest places in Switzerland, though, with 94 days of frost per year.

French is mostly spoken in Sion, although there is a small minority of “Haut-Valaisan” (a very particular kind of Swiss-German) speakers in the villages.
Alpine Marmot
(Marmota Marmota)

Size: 30 - 60 cm
Weight: 1.5-7 kg
Diet: leaves, shoots, herbs, grasses, seeds
Young: 2-7 per litter
Gestation: 25-34 days
Range: Northern hemisphere
Habitat: prairies, steppes, scree fields, alpine and subalpine meadows, some subspecies are also found in forests
Maximum life expectancy: 15-18 years in captivity

Maximilian Bircher-Benner (1867 - 1939)

The Swiss physician and pioneer in nutritional research is the inventor of one of Switzerland’s most famous export products: Müesli. After his studies in medicine in Vienna, Bircher-Benner went back to Zürich, where he opened a sanatorium. There, he developed his famous Bircher-Müesli – the mix of fresh fruit, milk and cereals – for the healing of his patients. His recipe soon went around the world.

Dahu
(Dahuacpra Rupidahu)

The mysterious dahu lurks in the heights of the Valais Alps (in the southern part of Switzerland). It seems similar to an ibex until one looks at its legs: one side’s legs are shorter than the other, which gives the dahu a great advantage when walking on mountain slopes. Catching a dahu requires great talent, and cannot be done alone. One person (good at making dahu noises) has to creep up behind the dahu, while a second stands lower down the slope with a sack. The person behind the dahu then imitates a dahu call, making the dahu turn around. It will then overbalance, roll down the hill and into the sack. For more information on this rare and awesome beast: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDtvzCgPlEc

What’s going on here?!

Nobody panic, the students haven’t gone mad; it’s all the Team Guides’ fault. They’ve spent this whole week thinking up pranks to play on their delegations, like “Let’s make the Brits believe that the royal baby has been born”, “Let’s start an argument between Argentina and Spain about whose country is more beautiful”, “Let’s tell the Canadians that Céline Dion is really Swiss”. Well done to the students who have all been good sports. The Korean delegation’s KOREA-graphy was particularly memorable...

Happy Birthday!

Tsisia Batsashvili, Georgia, Student
Pascal Bürgi, Switzerland, Film Crew

Today

It’ll be a lovely sunny day with only a few clouds here and there.

Tomorrow: warm and sunny
Provided by: www. Meteotest.ch