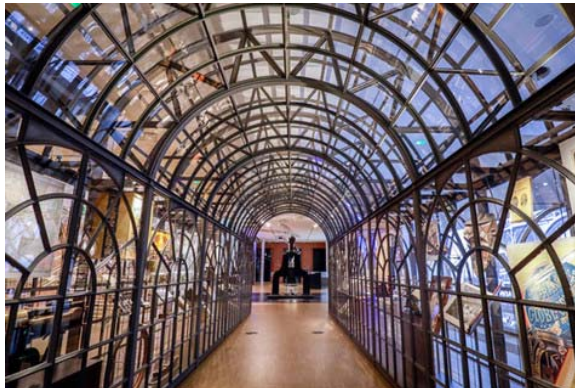


## Master of European Studies goes to Brussels 2022

With the study trip of the Master of European Studies to Brussels from 9th to 11th May, the students gained valuable insights into the functioning of the European Union and its institutions. At the same time, they received important information about career and entry opportunities with the EU as an employer and were also able to benefit from the testimonials of our many alumni who are based and work in Brussels.



By visiting the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Parliament and the European House of History, our students had the chance to visit many significant places where EU policy is actively shaped during our time in Brussels.



Our trip started with a visit to the House of European History, where we experienced a virtual tour through the different stages of European integration. The questions of whether there is a common European past and what holds the continent together were explored in a visually appealing way, with numerous exhibits and exciting video material. From the ancient origins to the phase of nation-state formation, industrialisation, democratisation, the two world wars, reconstruction and unification efforts, we were able to experience European history structured according to six thematic floors.

We continued with more topical and practical relevance in the European Commission, where we first attended a lecture by Katarzyna Nowicka, one of our 2018 graduates. She told us about her work in the field of Erasmus coordination and, above all, about her very personal entry into a job in one of the EU institutions, which she had managed through the Blue Book Trainee. This personal report was complemented by the presentation of Koen Hendrix, Team Leader for Information and Communication at the European Personnel Selection Office, who informed us in detail about the various career opportunities in the EU. For example, there are several EU traineeships where the best candidates are

selected in advance through an elaborate and lengthy selection process. As this selection process is extremely complicated, it is currently being revised to make it shorter and more efficient, so that next year an improved system can be presented that will facilitate access for applicants and possibly also benefit our graduates. However, the biggest hurdle for some of our international students, although not for all, proved to be the need for European citizenship. However, the institutions are aware of this problem and are working on it, especially as this restriction does not apply to all job opportunities within the EU.



Particularly interesting insights into the work of the European Commission were also provided during this visit by Katharina von Schnurbein, ZEI alumni from 1999, who, as coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism and the promotion of Jewish life in the EU, spoke about the ongoing problem of anti-Semitism and raised awareness in this very emotional and complex area. In the context of the current war in Ukraine, which is justified among other things by the alleged Nazi orientation of the Ukrainian President and his government, anti-Semitism and its misuse for propaganda purposes is more present than it has been for a long time.

Furthermore, Barbara Herbolzheimer, as a member of the cabinet of Johannes Hahn the Commissioner for Budget and Administration, reported on her tasks and experiences. Budget, financing and financial commitments serve as a central motor of European integration, as policy-making and competences in all areas are always primarily a question of money. As an important example, she mentioned the Post-Pandemic Recovery and Resilience Facility, in which the Member States of the European Union took on debt together for the first time. Furthermore, very concrete, binding plans for the use of the funds have been drawn up in the meantime, to which the disbursement is also linked.

The next institution we visited was the European Committee of the Regions, where Klaus Hullmann enlightened us about the numerous regional representations in Brussels and how they influence the political process in Brussels. In all this, the multilingual functioning of the EU plays a very present role. Multilingualism is firmly anchored in the



European treaties and is the reflection of European cultural and linguistic diversity. It is also intended to make the European institutions more accessible and transparent for all citizens of the Union and shapes daily life in the EU institutions.

On our last day of the excursion, we visited the European External Action Service. There, Christian Manahl, who works in the area of policy planning and strategic foresight, informed us about the possibilities of the European Union in the area of foreign policy. He, but also the following speaker Agnieszka Bazanska-Madej, who spoke specifically about the EU's defence and security strategy, reported very impressively about the current attempts to take an active role in the Ukraine war in



order to support Ukraine and end the war. However, they also admitted that the EU's options are limited as long as no serious negotiations are conducted. It was particularly striking that the integration process, especially in the area of foreign and security policy, was greatly accelerated by the current war in Ukraine.

After years of little progress in this area, the current conditions are forcing EU member states to rethink. In addition, we were able to attend the lecture by Ms. Sabrina Spieleder at the EEAS, who spoke about the highly topical issue of hate crime and disinformation on the internet. In this regard, the EU has passed a major legislative package with the Digital Service Act, which should help to ensure legal certainty and law enforcement on the internet and thus protect the democracies of the European Member States.

At the end of our trip, we were in the European Parliament and had the opportunity to talk to MEP Daniel Freund, who gave us exciting insights into the work of a parliamentarian and his fight against corruption in the EU. In addition, Mr. Freund told us about his ideas and hopes for the further development of the EU. In the context of the recently concluded Conference on the Future



of Europe, in which ZEI and the students had also participated, precisely these topics were the focus of the debate.



Our programme in Brussels was framed by an evening meeting with some of our alumni in a bar, where they once again had the opportunity to receive first-hand information on various careers within the EU and to make contacts in a relaxed atmosphere. Of course, our students also used their free time between and after the visits to the different institutions to experience and visit Brussels on their own.

We hope that this excursion has helped our students this year to become part of our extensive network after successfully completing their studies at ZEI and possibly start their career in a European institution. Our special thanks go to our alumni in Brussels, Tristan Suffys, Robert Velikonja, Nikolas Kockelmann, Jette Knapp, Katharina von Schnurbein, Hana Bartakova, Velyana Topalova and Katarzyna Nowicka, who took the time to meet our students and share their experiences with us.