

---

## ***Transnational Teaching Curriculum on EU Studies***

---

*By Aline Bartenstein, M.A., and Alina Thieme, M.A., EUCOPAS Project Managers, CETEUS, University of Cologne*

**EUCOPAS** – “Debating the **EU**ropean Union in **CO**logne in **PA**ris” was created in order to foster joint teaching between the University of Cologne and Sciences Po Paris. The idea was to not only include French and German students, but also international students who have not yet been in regular touch with EU studies or who want to deepen their knowledge beyond a simple introductory lecture. This aim was accomplished by two different transnational teaching modules: (1) an international and multidisciplinary Master course including three summer schools in Brussels as well as (2) three international and multidisciplinary PhD Workshops in Paris.

### **14 lessons Learnt for developing and mastering a Transnational Teaching Curriculum**

#### *Organizational matters in advance:*

- 1) Universities have to **agree on fundamental aims and procedures** for a teaching curriculum, taking into account that they have to deal with different rules and conditions (see also point 4).
- 2) In order to **guarantee the same level of knowledge**, it has been proven to be helpful if the partner universities provide sufficient information to their students and if the students from the international universities take part virtually in introductory lectures which were held in Cologne.
- 3) It is important to **provide a platform for communication**. Thus, the University of Cologne supported the team work by providing an e-learning platform with different assets, such as group chats, an academic lexicon, the possibility to upload documents etc.
  - Remaining question: How to set incentives to make students use the platform independently?
- 4) It is often a **structural difficulty** that each university in Europe has its own **requirements for students to gain ECTS**. Sometimes it has been unclear if the students can obtain credits for the seminar. The staff of the University of Cologne prepared draft certificates which have been discussed with each of the participating universities in order to guarantee ECTS for the work. This process has to be started as early as possible in order to guarantee the possibility to gain credits.
- 5) In order to **improve the turn-out of applications** for international seminars, it is necessary to widen the topic, though it is more difficult to handle a larger range of topics. The subjects of the international seminars should be of a political relevance to attract the attention of students.

- 6) Additionally, **face-to-face steering group meetings** enabled a smooth preparation and implementation of the seminar schedules.

Structure and input of the seminar:

- 7) It has been proven to be helpful to **provide students with more literature for non-specialists** in advance as for some of them it was often problematic to **overcome the disciplinary frontier**. Thus, it is helpful to provide them with more information on EU law/ EU politics before the summer school. It would also be advisable that all students had to participate in a law/political science introductory course in advance where they can gain basic knowledge.
- 8) In order to **guarantee the sustainability of negotiations and to improve free talk**, it is helpful to take videos of debates and speeches so that students can reflect their rhetoric in groups afterwards. Especially, in light of the students' native language, the videos enable the students to reflect their language skills.
- 9) It is important to **practice Q&A** in advance of the visits in order to **decrease inhibitions** when talking to important stakeholder. Thus, it has been proven to be helpful to show videos of politicians or political debates and bringing the students to formulate questions in groups (think, pair, share). Some additional practical exercise at the home university might be useful – especially as most of the students have to talk in a foreign language.
- 10) It is important to **set incentives** guaranteeing that students actively participate in the debate. Therefore, **awards for outstanding performance** were given to selected students who have performed best and argued in the most convincing and profound way. Additionally, students were expected to stay in their role and to perform professionally. In general, the awards stimulated the students' interest and motivation, make them more self-confident in dealing with challenging and practical issues and in working within a transnational framework. Further, the awards promoted competition among students while at the same time they have to rely on each other to reach goals.

Improving group work:

- 11) In order to **improve students' ability to work in international groups**, it is advisable to jointly reflect the group work aiming to involve all team members and to clarify task management within the groups.
- 12) To **involve all team members under supervision**, it is important to intensify the time for team work preparation during the excursion in Brussels. In particular, structuring the first day with group work to kick-off negotiations has been proven very helpful so that the teams can interchange face-to-face preparing their roles and starting informal negotiations with other groups. In addition, social activities in the evening gave the students the possibility to make themselves familiar with each other and strengthen the group cohesion.
- 13) Group members should write down the amount of time they invested in the joint project in order to **reflect on the inter- and intra- group time management** afterwards. This helps to see how much time the different teams invested for the preparation of their roles in total and if the time is balanced between team members.

- 14) The **post event evaluation** by students showed that they enjoyed being part of the seminars and that they observed crucial learning effects. Nevertheless, some students suggest that they would appreciate to have more time to prepare themselves and to debate.

In the following, the development and organization of the MA summer school and the PhD workshop will be described in detail.

### **MA Summer School Course: Towards a transnational mixing of academic and professional skills**

**Content of the MA Course:** The MA summer schools in Brussels offer a 5-day seminar including a simulation exercise on either the European Council or the European Court of Justice (Moot Court). Discussions with practitioners and experts provide students insights into the dynamics of international negotiations. The structure of the MA summer schools is as follows: three days of discussions and workshops held by experts and practitioners on the selected topic are followed by a two-day simulation exercise on either the European Council or the Court of Justice. The simulation exercise equips the students with a comprehensive set of professional skills, such as negotiating, team-building, oral presentations and bargaining. This leads to better career chances by offering training beyond traditional academic education.

Topic 2016: “European Refugee Crisis and the EU-Turkey relations”

Topic 2017: “Attached, detached, unmatched? Alternative partnerships beyond EU membership”

Topic 2018: “The post-2020 EU budget and democratic norm violation – a European Council simulation game”

**Transnational organization:** The MA Summer School Course is organized and implemented by the staff of the University of Cologne. Organizational and content matters were discussed during meetings in Paris. Depending on the topic, the key staff of Sciences Po Paris supported the team in Cologne by inviting academics, or by providing literature or organizational support. Due to the different semester schedules of both universities, it was important to send out the call for applications sufficiently in advance of the summer term in order to guarantee the students a smooth planning of their semester. The calls for application were also sent around by Sciences Po staff to interested MA students. Moreover, the staff in Cologne recruited interested MA students from the Department of Political Science and the Faculty of Law and sent the call for application to other European Universities (Paris Sorbonne, Charles University Prague). The applications of the students were pre-selected by certain criteria, such as an interesting letter of motivation and language skills. Students from the Turkish-German University in Istanbul also joined the seminar in Brussels. Each year, 25-30 international students got the chance to participate in the summer school. Working together with students from different countries fostered the intercultural exchange and enabled students to exchange experiences on different learning techniques. It further enabled the teaching staff to learn from teaching method and skills of other universities.

**Transnational teaching:** Since other international students, e.g. from Charles University Prague and the Turkish-German University Istanbul took part in the summer school, as well, the course was

organized by email. The students received the instructions and teaching materials simultaneously in order to guarantee fair conditions. The didactical concepts of the course are *research-based teaching and learning* as well as *international and interdisciplinary group work*.

The students received a list of literature in order to start their independent research on the assigned role in the simulation game and topic. The aim was to hand in either a written pleading for the Moot Court, which is an argumentative text based on European law, or two position papers for a simulation of the European Council, which are documents reflecting the position of the Member States' governments. They were supported by a lawyer/political scientist from the University of Cologne who prepared information on how to write such a pleading/position paper in advance. This information was made available partly to the students by a manuscript, the so called Moot Court Handbook, which informs the students about the Moot Court proceedings. A respective document on European Council proceedings has been distributed to the students in case of a simulation of the European Council. As part of the group work, the Cologne students had to communicate the additional information they received to the other international students during the introductory session. The Turkish-German students took also part in an introductory session, which was based upon the information from Cologne. At the end of the course, the students who met all the requirements were awarded with 9 ECTS.

*Research-based teaching and learning:*

- Providing teaching material online (e.g. by email or ILIAS (e-learning platform of the University of Cologne))
- Research topic which has to be prepared in advance of the summer school
- Support by lecturers: feedback on writing, support by research difficulties and technical legal questions
- Imparting of other disciplines (in particular legal knowledge for Moot Court and political science knowledge for European Council simulation)
- Preparing a student for a role: depending on the format of the simulation, students need to be prepared to give up their usual convictions in order to represent a different actor (from an institution or a different country). Preparation goes hand in hand with work assignment -> the students prepare their role by arguing not in an objective academic way but by taking someone else's perspective on a certain topic
- Students develop a real understanding of political and legal decision-making, leadership and citizenship

*International and interdisciplinary group work:*

- Organization of communication by establishing a working language (mostly English), communication tools (email, skype, Whatsapp)
- Organization of work: assign tasks (e.g. gathering of research material, fact-finding, writing etc.); students learn to organize their own work and learning processes independently
- Openness towards other disciplines (law, political science, economics, history, international relations, journalism, social anthropology) and thinking outside of the usual academic box

- Openness towards different international research approaches and knowledge: students have different approaches to law or political science depending on their national education

#### *Development of skills:*

The students developed within the course a wide range of soft skills which resulted from the two didactical concepts:

- Organization and implementation of team work -> intercultural competences (team-building), language skills, communicative skills, professional experience by working in an international and intercultural team, ability to structure the work efficiently and independently of lecturers but at the same time cooperative within team
- Acquaintance of knowledge of a different discipline -> ability to think in different structures, and to know a different debating culture
- Slipping into a role and taking part in the simulation -> ability to take over a different perspective on a specific topic, to develop an understanding of how and why perspectives are different, ability to argue and convince others (negotiating and bargaining), ability to speak freely and to express in a good manner (oral presentations)

The analysis demonstrated that students benefit from the simulation exercise by developing a comprehensive set of professional skills, such as negotiating, team-building, oral presentations and bargaining which improve their career chances.

### **PhD Workshop: Towards a transnational academic profile and network**

**Content of the PhD Workshop:** Three PhD workshops in Paris at Sciences Po Paris, Institut des Études Européennes, gave early stage researchers the opportunity to present and discuss their research projects on different EU-related topics with experienced researchers and to create networks with an international peer group. Candidates were selected by the steering group on the basis of abstracts of their research design.

PhD students received interdisciplinary feedback and could build a professional and academic network. The best papers were awarded and published in the journal *Politique Européenne*. Since PhD students strive for scientific careers, the workshop was not only helping them to critically reflect their research. By gaining academic experience at a highly renowned university, they also enhanced their future employability.

**Transnational organization:** The PhD Workshop was mainly organized by Sciences Po Paris with support from the University of Cologne. The topic of each workshop was discussed beforehand at steering group meetings and further finalized via emails. Thus, the preparation for each workshop started at least 6 months prior to the workshop. Due to the academic calendar, the workshop took place in January. In September/October of each year the call for applications was sent out by the staff of both universities to the respective networks. The PhD students were selected on the basis of their abstract and research interest. The group consisted of both early and more experienced PhD students.

**Transnational teaching:** The students received information on the formal outline of their abstracts and papers. The senior researchers included Ass. Prof. Rozenberg, Sciences Po, Prof. Wessels (and in 2018 also Prof. Proksch) from the University of Cologne and varying senior researchers from Sciences Po Paris and other universities. The research papers were spread to the different senior researchers for assessment. Also the students had the task to comment one paper of their peers. This method guaranteed exchange between the students with different academic backgrounds and research foci (*international and transdisciplinary learning*).

*International and transdisciplinary learning:*

- Thinking outside of usual academic box: Students were confronted with different academic backgrounds and research approaches, which led to deeper reflection of research outline
- Extensive exchange on theoretical and methodological approaches
- Feedback by senior supervisors: the senior researchers could provide the PhD students with valuable input on their research, the structure of the paper, theoretical implications and practicability.
- Feedback by peer group: The students received feedback by peers outside of their usual learning environment, additionally, students with different academic backgrounds (political science, law, history) could raise interesting points of view and stretch the academic discussion

*Development of soft skills:*

- Presentation skills: Students had to present their paper in front of the peer group and senior researchers which led to an enhancement of their oral presentation skills.
- Academic (English) writing: For several students this has been the first international workshop, therefore they could develop their academic writing by preparing a research paper for an international audience.

The analysis of the learning experiences showed that students were encouraged to think outside of the usual academic box. The feedback by the senior supervisors and peer group enables students to reflect their skills and to improve them. Additionally, the teaching staff benefits from the experiences and challenges posed by the transnational orientation of the workshops.