

REPORT

TEPSA TRAINING "Inside the European Parliament"

11-13 October 2023

INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the Horizon Europe project [ActEU - Activating European Citizen's Trust in Times of Crisis and Polarisation](#), the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) organised an online training seminar entitled "Inside the European Parliament", which took place on [11-13 October 2023](#). The training offered [19 Master's and Bachelor's students](#) the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge about the functioning of the European Parliament, gain first-hand insights from practitioners and ActEU researchers, and debate the challenges posed by the upcoming 2024 elections.

The seminar included [presentations and interactive discussions](#) with professionals working at the European Parliament, with the aim of instilling in the participants a comprehensive understanding of the institution's functions, its importance in the democratic process, and its impact on European societies. In learning from insiders on the workings of the European Parliament and enabling conversation and debate amongst policy experts and university students, the online training seminar focused on finding [new ways to encourage youth electoral participation in the upcoming 2024 European elections](#).

Coordinated by TEPSA Project Manager Lorenzo Mariani, the online training brought together students selected from over 80 outstanding applications from across Europe and elsewhere to actively participate in the policy conversations of the European Parliament.

Day 1 (11 October 2023)

Introduction and Overview

At the commencement of the 3-day online seminar, participants were welcomed to the training and introduced to its content and functioning by Lorenzo Mariani. This included, inter alia, an overview of the ActEU project and introducing the topics to be discussed as part of the seminar, such as the [roles and functions of the European Parliament, its decision-making process, the intersection of politics and policy at play, and the important role of citizen participation in European elections](#). Participants were asked to reflect on the importance of youth participation in the June 2024 elections and reflect on areas to expand youth engagement and where possible, improve the strategy of the European Parliament.

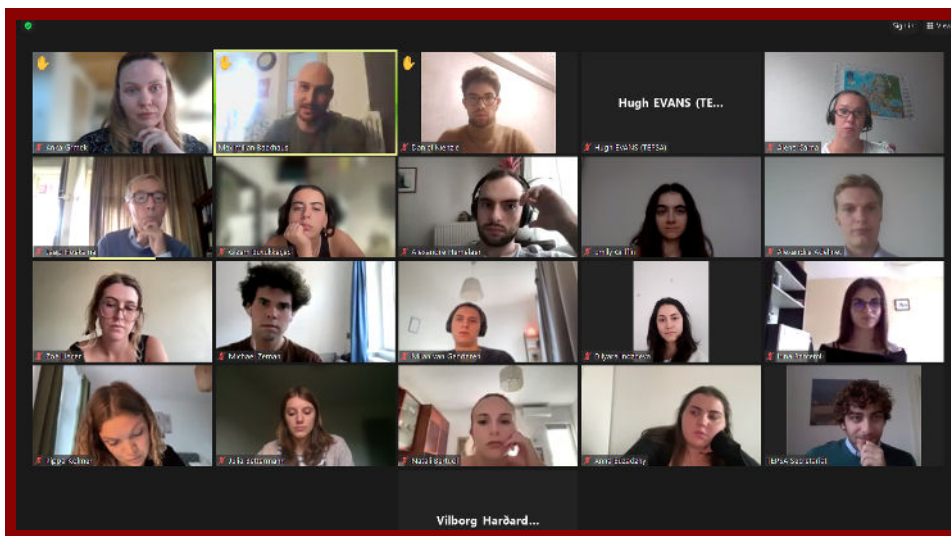


Lecture: Understanding the European Parliament

In the first lecture of the seminar, participants had the opportunity to learn from [Manuel Müller, a Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and member of the ActEU Advisory Board](#). As Mr. Müller is a leading researcher on the institutional reform of the EU and on the topic of supranational democracy, participants learned the history of the foundation and evolution of the European Parliament, its modern composition and structures, its role within the EU system, its many functions and responsibilities, as well as its decision-making processes and legislative procedures. The lecture from Mr Müller combined a [comprehensive historical introduction and overview with the current workings of the Parliament](#) to contextualise the current politics and policies which will be explored in the seminar.

Debate: European Parliament and EU Governance

After hearing the necessary background and current context, students participated in a debate about the Parliament and EU governance. This allowed for a deeper reflection on the intricacies of the role of the Parliament at a wider level. Participating in the discussion was [Ilke Toygür, Director of the IE Center for Innovation in Global Politics and Economics and TEPSA Board Member](#), and [Alena Carna, Administrator at the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication](#). The debate was moderated by [Jaap Hoeksma, a constitutional law philosopher from Euroknow](#). The discussion was framed within the external relations of the Parliament, encompassing the Parliament's working relations with other EU institutions, private interest groups, as well as the role of liaison offices. The debate not only expanded on the topics provided and covered the role of the EU in shaping policies and legislation, but also took an overview of available oversight and accountability mechanisms.



Day 2 (12 October 2023)

Debate: The European Parliament and Citizens

[Daniela Braun, Professor of Political Science at Saarland University and ActEU Scientific Coordinator](#), and [Louisa Parks, Associate Professor at the University of Trento](#), engaged in a debate moderated by [Ophélie Omnes, a Board Member of the European Movement France](#). The main topic of discussion in this session was the electoral procedures and key challenges facing the 2024 elections. Other topics included voter turnout, awareness-raising of the importance of European Parliament elections, and research data on citizen interest and engagement in European politics. Participants were able to discuss the importance of the European Parliament for citizens and its role in promoting democracy and safeguarding citizens' rights.

Lecture: A Day at Work in the European Parliament

In this session, [Ilaria Giustacchini, an Accredited Parliamentary Assistant at the European Parliament](#), spoke with participants about the day-to-day of working in the Parliament. Students benefited from this first-hand account into the intricacies of Committee work and policy-making, how Members of the European Parliament represent their constituents' interests at the European level, the benefits and challenges of working in such a fast-paced political and policy environment, and the balance and management skills required to best inform and represent the Member. Participants were also eager to learn from Ms Giustacchini about her experience in the think tank space, to learn how her past professional experience differs from the public sector, and what skills are demanded in the different sectors.



Group Activity: Engaging Youth in European Politics (Part 1)

Led by Lorenzo Mariani, in the final session of day two, participants applied what they had learned over the past few days through practical exercises. They were split into four working groups, each of which was assigned with one of the following tasks:

- developing a [social media communication campaign](#) that aims to inspire young people to participate in elections;
- composing a one-page [Europeday speech](#) for European Parliament President Metsola, focusing on encouraging youth electoral participation;
- creating an [electoral campaign strategy](#) for a political group competing in the elections and brainstorming ways to persuade young individuals to vote for your party;
- identifying and outlining [five challenges and priorities](#) for the upcoming Parliament.

Day 3 (13 October 2023)

Optional autonomous Group Work

In this autonomous working session during the morning of the third day, participants were given the opportunity to meet again in their assigned subgroups in order to [develop the presentations](#) they were to deliver later in the day, and [draft recommendations](#) addressing the importance of youth voter turnout. The groups produced tangible and insightful recommendations based on their analysis and the previous sessions of the seminar, with a view to preparing for the final session.

Interactive Discussion

The interactive discussion was led by Michael Kaeding, ActEU Coordinator and Professor of European Integration and European Union Politics at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on the lessons they learned throughout the 3-day seminar and most of all hear the thoughts from the moderator on how to encourage youth voter turnout in the upcoming 2024 European elections. Mr Kaeding presented how the ActEU project is mapping the decline of citizens' trust and ActEU's plans for grassroots-level projects to counteract this trend. Mr Kaeding also discussed a series of ideas including the impacts of climate change conversation among young voters, voter behavior more generally, the impact of populist movements, and how crises and various European challenges impact election turnout.

Group Activity: Engaging Youth in European Politics (Part 2)

In the final session of the seminar, the participants within their working groups had the chance to present the outcome of their teamwork. This included the presentation of a wide range of innovative ideas. These included the targeted marketing of EU elections to youth as derived from statical research, narratives for success such as mobility and employment (referencing Erasmus+ and the shared labour market), youth interest in technology regulation, plans for developing a strategy to expand the conversation on EU enlargement, insights into internship regulations as an important youth policy conversation starter, and a debate around European security. Each presentation led to fruitful debate and feedback on how the proposed recommendations could be refined to best deliver the intended results. At the conclusion of the seminar, the participants were awarded a certificate.

