



UNIVERSITY
OF COLOGNE



PROTEUS 2025
Excursion Report

*“Green or Global? Legal and Political Challenges
in Harmonizing EU Trade with Climate Goals”*

23.06. – 26.06.2025

Rapporteur:
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Introduction

PROTEUS (*Programm für einen Orientierungskurs in Recht und Politik des EU-Systems*) is a multinational and interdisciplinary seminar at the University of Cologne. Focusing on the law and politics of the European Union (EU), PROTEUS provides students with a comprehensive understanding of current European affairs. The seminar culminated in an exhilarating excursion to Brussels, which offers students an immersive experience within key EU institutions.

The seminar's objective is, on the one hand, to enable students to acquire an additional qualification in European Law and Politics. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity to experience new teaching methods and to develop students' ability to work and communicate in multinational teams. For this year, students participated in a moot court simulation which addressed a fictional legal conflict between the right to freedom of assembly and the free movement of goods within the EU.

PROTEUS runs over one semester. The students have to attend certain lectures in European Law and European Politics before participating in the key part of the programme: an excursion to Brussels with students from the Turkish-German University. Each participant will assume a specific role. Thus, students will be able to simulate real-life political/legal issues in English while working in a mixed Team.

Successful completion of the necessary exams and seminar papers will result in the issuance of a graded Certificate of European Studies by two Jean Monnet Chair holders, Prof. Dr. Stephan Hobe (ILWR - Institute of Aviation Law, Space Law, and Cyberlaw) and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels (CETEUS - Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies). This certificate is intended to enhance participants' prospects for future EU-related applications or careers within European or international organisations.

The excursion was funded by the Kölner Gymnasial- und Stiftungsfonds and the University of Cologne as part of the Cologne Summer Schools program. The excursion was co-organised by the Jean Monnet Chairs of Prof. Dr. Stephan Hobe (ILWR) and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels (CETEUS).

Seminar Timetable

	Topic	Lecturers and Experts	Date
1	Introductory Lecture	Prof. Dr. Stephan Hobe, ILWR Maike Wirtz, ILWR Harun Suratlı, CETEUS	08.04.2025
2	Legal perspectives on the EU and its Law	Dr. Martin Schwamborn, ILWR Maike Wirtz, ILWR	23.04.2025
3	The institutional architecture of the EU	Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS Harun Suratlı, CETEUS	06.05.2025
4	How to Moot?	Franca Stauth and Lucia Kowol, ILWR	14.05.2025
5	European Defence Architecture	PD Dr. Rossa, Visiting Professor at the University of Salzburg	18.06.2025
6	Mooting school and rhetoric seminar	Peggy Forell, Director of Advocacy in the UK	20.06.2025
7	The role of Germany in Brussels	Katharina Schmidt, Assistant at the Department "Employment and Social Policy", Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU	23.06.2025
8	Cultural Activity: Parliamentarium	Self-guided tour	23.06.2025
9	EU-Turkey-Relations	Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, Permanent Delegate of Türkiye to the EU	23.06.2025
10	Multilateral Trade and Sustainable Development Policy	Vanda Suha and Sophie Marie Rathmes, DG Trade, Unit C.4, European Commission	24.06.2025
11	The European Parliament as a key institution of the EU	Dr. Peter Liese, Member of the European Parliament (European People's Party)	24.06.2025
12	Cultural Activity: House of European History	Self-guided tour	24.06.2025
13	Moot Court Simulation: Green or Global? Legal and Political Challenges in Harmonising EU Trade with Climate Goals	Prof. Dr. Hobe, ILWR Prof. Dr. Enes Bayraklı, TGU	25.06. - 26.06.2025
14	Cultural Activity: Exploring the capital of the EU	Guided city tour in Brussels	26.06.2025

Excursion Report

The excursion consisted of overall 18 students, 15 from the University of Cologne (UoC) and 3 from the Turkish-German University (TGU). The excursion commenced with a visit to the **Permanent Delegation of Germany to the EU**. During the visit, **Ms Katharina Schmidt** provided an insightful overview of the role and structure of Germany's Permanent Representation to the EU. The Representation plays a key role in shaping and communicating Germany's positions in EU decision-making processes. A central task is participating in Council working groups where Germany negotiates and helps shape legislative documents before they are submitted to the next institutional level. The Representation closely cooperates with the Council of the EU and is involved in about 160 committees and working groups. Main responsibilities include informing the German government about EU developments, advising on European policy positions, representing national interests in Brussels, promoting German staffing in EU institutions, and conducting public relations work. Key stakeholders include the German federal states (with offices and observers in Brussels), EU bodies like the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, as well as industry representatives, NGOs, and the media. Overall, the Representation acts as a bridge between Berlin and Brussels, focused on coordination, negotiation, and communication within the EU framework. The visit closed with questions from the students about the structure of the institution, career options as well as the role of one's own study subject for working in such institution.



Our students inside the Permanent Delegation of Germany to the EU with Ms Katharina Schmidt.

After visiting the Permanent Delegation of Germany to the EU, students visited the **Parlamentarium**. An interactive tour through the exhibition is offered with self-direction and audio-guides. Being the largest parliamentary visitors centre of Europe, insights on how the European Parliament and European cooperation work, the history of Europe and the European Parliament as well as the challenges of today are provided.

In the afternoon, our students visited the **Permanent Delegation of Türkiye to the EU** and was welcomed by **His Excellency, Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı**. The visit began with an interactive *Mentimeter* quiz that led into a lively and open discussion on current questions and challenges in EU-Türkiye relations. Topics included Türkiye's long-standing EU candidacy, the unresolved Cyprus conflict, Türkiye's strategic role in energy supply and regional security, cooperation on defence and migration, as well as demographic dynamics and public opinion in Türkiye regarding EU membership. The Permanent Delegation represents Türkiye's interests to the EU institutions, similar to an embassy, but with a special focus on the EU's legislative and diplomatic environment. It monitors policy developments, communicates Türkiye's positions, and works to advance dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The Delegation also engages in political dialogue, participates in negotiations, and promotes Türkiye's visibility in Brussels. The visit concluded with a critical discussion of contemporary issues, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of EU-Türkiye relations.



Our students with Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı inside the Permanent Delegation of Türkiye to the EU.

On the following day, the group visited the **European Commission** and met with **Vanda Suha** and **Sophie Marie Rathmes** from **DG Trade (Unit C.4 – Multilateral Trade and Sustainable Development Policy)**. The session provided insights into the EU's *Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD)* strategy, focusing on environmental goals, responsible supply chains and the European Green Deal. Vanda Suha and Sophie Marie Rathmes explained the EU's three levels of TSD engagement: bilateral agreements, multilateral cooperation, and autonomous trade tools. A key focus was the EU's leadership in promoting sustainability in global trade, especially within the WTO framework. This includes strengthening discussions in the Committee on Trade and Environment and co-leading the first ministerial-level global forum on trade and climate alongside Ecuador, New Zealand, and Kenya. Another priority is building bridges between trade, climate, and finance communities. Additionally, the students were introduced to career opportunities within the EU institutions. The session covered different roles and contract types, including *Contract Agents (CAST)*, and offered practical tips for those interested in working for the EU.



Our students with Vanda Suha and Sophie Marie Rathmes from DG Trade (left) and inside the European Parliament with Dr. Peter Liese, Member of the European Parliament (right).

After visiting the European Commission, our students met with **Dr. Peter Liese, Member of the European Parliament** and **representative of the European People's Party (EPP)**. He currently serves on the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and is a long-standing member of the CDU in Germany. Dr. Liese highlighted how the powers of the European Parliament have grown significantly since 1979 – in some areas even surpassing those of national parliaments.

This includes the right to approve the European Commission through a two-step process involving hearings and a final vote. The Parliament also plays a key role in shaping EU legislation, influencing international trade agreements, and budgetary decisions. He pointed to successful EU initiatives such as the abolition of roaming charges and the ERASMUS programme as examples of concrete benefits for EU citizens. The group also discussed the efficiency of the European Parliament, challenges in economic governance, the role of far-right actors within the EU, and the importance of unity in approaching shared challenges across the continent.

As part of the excursion, the group visited the **House of European History**. The museum offers a comprehensive and critical perspective on the shared and contested histories of Europe, from the 19th century to the present. Through multimedia exhibitions and original artifacts, the museum explores key moments of European integration, wars and peace processes, ideological conflicts, and the development of a European identity. Special attention is given to the two World Wars, the foundation of the European Union, and contemporary challenges such as migration, climate change, and democratic backsliding: Key themes include colonialism, communism, fascism, nationalism, as well as the long road to parliamentary democracy in Europe. The visit provided valuable historical context for understanding the political, cultural, and social foundations of today's European Union. It also encouraged reflection on the diverse narratives that shape Europe's past and future.



In front of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Moot Court – European Court of Justice: Commission v. F.R. Germany – C -136/25

On the last two days of the excursion, the students participated in a two-day Moot Court simulation hosted at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Stephan Hobe and Prof. Dr. Enes Bayraklı, students stepped into the roles of judges, advocates general, and representatives of the European Commission, Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands. The case – *Commission v. Germany (C-136/25)* – addressed a fictional legal conflict between two fundamental rights: the right to freedom of assembly and the free movement of goods within the EU. Inspired by real events, the case centred on protests by farmers in Germany near the Polish border, which disrupted road traffic. A transport company subsequently filed a claim for compensation. The Commission accused Germany of violating EU law by not adequately safeguarding the free movement of goods and for allowing unlawful protests. Germany, in turn, argued that it had acted within its rights, and that the climate-related protest and the "green sticker" system were legitimate and non-discriminatory.

The court proceedings were structured over two days:

- **Day 1** included opening remarks, the presentation of the case by the student judges, and pleadings by the European Commission, Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands. Each session was followed by questions from the judicial panel. The day concluded with rebuttals and surrebuttals by the parties.
- **Day 2** began with a final Q&A session, followed by the opinions of the Advocates General and the judges' deliberation and verdict.

Throughout the simulation, students applied their legal knowledge in EU constitutional, trade, and environmental law. They also tackled broader political questions, such as climate protection, the limits of protest, and cross-border cooperation. The judges ultimately ruled that while Germany's environmental sticker system was lawful and not discriminatory, the country failed to take appropriate measures during the protests to safeguard the free movement of goods. In particular, the lack of mitigating actions – such as relocating the protest – was seen as a violation of the balance between fundamental rights and market freedoms. Additionally, related border control measures were found to be unlawful. The exercise highlighted the complexity of EU law in practice and encouraged critical thinking, legal argumentation, and cross-cultural collaboration. In addition to legal insight, students gained valuable experience in negotiation, teamwork, and public speaking. The simulation concluded with the awarding of small gifts and a shared sense of achievement among our students.



Inside the moot court simulation.

Conclusion

Following the final moot court session and the announcement of the verdict, the excursion came to a close. Before their departure, students had some free time to explore Brussels at their own pace – some joined a city tour, others enjoyed the opportunity to relax or discover the city's cultural and political landmarks on their own. The excursion offered a unique combination of academic depth, institutional insights, and international exchange. It strengthened not only legal and political understanding of the European Union, but also fostered cross-cultural dialogue, teamwork, and new connections between students from the University of Cologne and the Turkish-German University. With new experiences and perspectives, the students returned home with a deeper appreciation of European cooperation and its challenges.

Impressions



In front of the European Parliament.



The European Parliament from above.



In front of the European Commission.



Farewell Dinner with Prof. Dr. Enes Bayraklı (TGU) and Prof. Dr. Stephan Hobe (UoC).

Testimonials

“As a political science student, I didn’t have many experiences regarding legal procedures and texts. PROTEUS gave me the chance to explore and awaken my interest in this field, while also letting me improve my political knowledge. Meeting so many ambitious, talented students and visiting Brussels together was an amazing experience, but the moot court is my best memory - being proud of your work after having worked on it so long and being able to present it felt rewarding. I would definitely do it again.” – Leah Grohs, Political Science student at the University of Cologne.

“I really enjoyed the PROTEUS project because it pushed me out of my comfort zone. As a law student, I am usually focused on theory and written exams, but here I had the chance to practice oral pleadings and presentations, which helped me learn a lot. I also appreciated the excursions, such as the museum visit, where I could refresh my knowledge about the history and politics of the EU. Another highlight was connecting with students from different countries and disciplines – it was inspiring to step out of the law bubble and broaden my horizon.” – Pauline Reutter, Law student at the University of Cologne.

“The excursion, we undertook in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Brussels, gave us a unique opportunity to put into practice the knowledge we had developed throughout the year on the German constitutional order, the foundations and theory of the EU, and its legal system. Experiencing these concepts firsthand and engaging directly with the actors in their real context ensured that our learning extended far beyond books. The combination of this exceptional experience and the moot court broadened our perspective and opened up a new world of understanding. I am deeply grateful to the organisers and to my cohort—each of them was truly outstanding.” – Hüseyin Emre Sezgin, European and International Affairs student at the Turkish-German University.

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