JMU European Union Policy Studies Newsletter

Fall 2013 Issue
Message from the Director

Dear EUPS Friends and Alumni,

One characteristic that distinguishes the EUPS program from most other master’s programs is that it is organized on a cohort-based, three-consecutive-semester model. EUPS students come in, together, at the end of August. They work hard, together, for ten months. Assuming they make satisfactory progress, they finish their degree work, together, in June.

One result of this structure, at least for me, is that certain cohorts come to be associated with certain big historical developments. All students leave the program with terrific analytic and communication skills. They move to the next phase of their lives with deep expertise in European policy dynamics, cosmopolitan outlooks, and friendships that stand the test of time. Each year’s students reach these ends through slightly different paths, though, as they engage with the big questions of the day.

When I think of our first graduating class (2008), for example, I think of the Lisbon Treaty and the debates and discussions our students had about that important treaty milestone. The second class (2009), for me, is associated with the 2009 European Parliament elections: what would the elections mean for the future of Europe? How would MEPs in the new session approach the other institutions (given Lisbon Treaty changes), and how might all institutions approach the US and other partner countries and regions beyond 2009? I associate the 2010 cohort with attempts to get a handle on with the global financial crisis and its implications for individual EU states and the EU more broadly. Will the euro survive? Will the crisis drive Europeans further apart or promote closer integration? How will Europe’s fiscal woes affect transatlantic trade, investment, and political cooperation? I associate the class of 2011 with the Arab Spring—how should Europe and its partners respond to developments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and other countries in the neighborhood? What, if anything, could Europeans (acting nationally or in concert with each other) do to get ahead of developments on the Mediterranean’s southern shores? When I think of 2012 and 2013, I recall our students’ continued engage-
ganizations in the coming months. Even at this point, though, the revelations have been eye-opening—bugs in the Berlaymont building, metadata on millions of calls originating in Europe, transcripts of Chancellor Merkel’s cell phone calls, etc. The revelations open so many questions at so many different levels—Did Snowden do the right thing? What do reactions to the dumped information reveal about differences in American and European approaches to privacy and security? How might the new information affect the fate of the recently opened talks on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership? How might evidence suggesting that US-based firms (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Microsoft) shared information with the NSA affect the EU’s longstanding efforts to replace its outdated, decentralized Data Protection Directive with an EU-wide Data Protection Regulation? Are there any European tech alternatives for European citizens who have lost trust in the aforementioned American companies? These are just a few of the questions with which our students—along with dozens of knowledgeable interlocutors from universities, public agencies, businesses, NGOs, political parties, and beyond—are engaging this academic year.

Of course, the Snowden story is a global one. Snowden initially fled to Hong Kong, and he’s currently living, after receiving a year’s asylum, in Russia. The documents he leaked show that the NSA’s surveillance net reaches all over the globe. But the story’s transatlantic angle has been prominent from the very beginning— the European press (e.g., The Guardian, Der Spiegel, Le Monde) has played a critical role in breaking the big stories, and there is evidence of significant cooperation between the NSA and intelligence services in many European countries. Our students will play an important role in making sense of all of this—in contextualizing stories as they break, determining the short-, medium-, and long-term implications of the recent revelations, and working on new templates for security and intelligence cooperation.

Of course, they’ll be doing this in lovely and inimitable Florence. I hope, as always, that this issue gives all readers a sense of the interesting and important work that our students and alums are doing. I also hope that it reveals and/or reminds you of the uniqueness and richness of life in our bella città. You can read about Umbrian chocolate, the former EP president’s most recent seminar series on the crisis, the EU’s movements vis-à-vis Syria, and the work of 2009 alum Andrew Medley in the US federal bureaucracy.

Forza, JMU!

John Scherpereel
Perugia, a sweet, dark (or milky) jewel

Leaves are changing colors, the Tuscan heat is easing, menus are filling with heavier dishes . . . fall is upon us in Italy! This past weekend, a few of our graduate students and a handful of JMU undergraduates embarked on a short journey south to the beautiful region of Umbria, which was hosting its own fall tradition – the famous EuroChocolate Festival. Each year, nearly a million people make the journey to Perugia to taste Italy’s finest chocolates. It isn’t easy to get up the steep hill on which Perugia – the capital of Umbria – lies. Once up the hill, though, one can see for miles around, and enchantment is guaranteed. The festival was a whirl of activity, enlivened by a constant buzz of hyped up children and adults scurrying behind them, trying to make sure that their sugar filled children don’t fly away from sugar overload.

We students couldn’t contain our excitement and soon joined in the merriment. The Festival allowed for a steady flow of people to casually stroll – as all Italians do – from tent to tent and sample chocolates of all sorts. We encountered so many unique chocolates in every imaginable shape: chocolate utensils, chocolate pasta, chocolate beers, puddings, foods dipped in chocolate, etc., etc. What the Texas State Fair offers in terms of fried food variety, the chocolate festival offers in terms of chocolate variety.

If there was ever a blissful scene of fall in Italy, this was it. The journey back through the high trees with their yellow and orange leaves falling all around was glorious. I encourage all to go to Perugia during this time of year, in the future, and to take everything in— the chocolate, the natural autumnal beauty, everything. It will surely give you a sweet, sweet memory!
People in the Palazzo

Dr. Josep Borrell Fontelles has been a friend of the EUPS program for some years now. He visits the Palazzo regularly to deliver lectures and speak with EUPS students about major developments. During his most recent visit, this past September, Borrell delivered four lectures on the creation of the European Union and the current (and likely future) financial climate within the EU. Professor Borrell has an extremely impressive resume. After graduating from Universidad Politecnica of Madrid with a degree in aeronautical engineering, he completed a masters in operations research at Stanford, a masters in economics from the French Petroleum Institute, and a Ph.D. in economics at Madrid’s Universidad Complutense.

Mr. Borrell has also had a prestigious career. He served as President of the European Parliament from July 2004 to January 2007 and President of Fiesole’s European University Institute between 2010 to 2012.

During his Fall 2014 soggiorno in Palazzo Capponi, Professor Borrell delivered a four-part lecture series. The first two lectures focused on how history played into the creation of the European Union and the common currency. We discussed how World War II created a will and need in Europe to unite in order to avoid another disastrous war. This led into discussion of the Treaty of Paris, The European Economic Community, and the European Free Trade Association.

A topic of discussion that was first highlighted in the first lectures but is still relevant today is the issue of intergovernmentalism versus federalism and supranationalism. Mr. Borrell stressed the pendulum-like nature of European integration – the zeitgeist has gone back and forth between increasing intergovernmentalism and increasing federalism over the course of the Union’s nearly 60-year history. The second set of lectures looked at the creation of the common currency, the issue of getting the Lisbon Treaty ratified, Eastern enlargement, and the Eurozone crisis.

It was particularly interesting to hear Mr. Borrell’s thoughts on the Eurozone crisis and how it could possibly be remedied. He spoke a lot about Germany’s handling of the crisis and was adamant that austerity was not being the only answer. He noted, however, that he does not see the German attitude changing any time soon (an insight that seems, at least initially, to have been corroborated by Chancellor Merkel’s successes in the September 2013 German elections).

Looking forward, even Mr. Borrell cannot predict exactly what will occur in terms of fixing the eurozone’s problems. He stressed that abandoning the euro would be too expensive but that going forward will require a greater level of integration than some member states would prefer.

We ended our series with a particularly important question: has the euro actually failed? Mr Borrell astutely pointed out that in order to answer this question, one has to be specific about what failure actually means. The euro did stabilize exchange rates and facilitated the unifying of European economies, but this integration has not been completed. Also, the euro has not brought Europe any closer to a cohesive political union. It will be interesting to see where Europe is six months from now and how people’s attitudes toward the euro shift in the wake of the crisis. EUPS students are looking forward to hearing more from Professor Borrell about these issues.
EUPS Alumni: Views from a Federal Employee

Andrew Medley (EUPS 2009)

As I write, I am currently a furloughed federal employee, desperately wishing that Congress would come to an agreement so that I can get back to work. For the past three years, I’ve worked as an analyst for the International Trade Administration (ITA), part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, to administer antidumping and countervailing duty laws in an effort to help U.S. businesses compete with cheap imports. Before I joined ITA, I worked for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), part of the White House, to manage the President’s health care policies and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (during the passage of health care reform).

I was in the second EUPS class (2008-2009). Within two months of graduating from the masters program, I found full-time employment at OMB. Part of the reason I was hired at both OMB and ITA was due to my masters degree in E.U. Policy Studies, though neither job used, or has used, to date, any of my knowledge of the E.U. institutions. Rather, it is transferrable skills such as an advanced understanding of political and regulatory systems, economics, and the ability to read, analyze, research, and write that has helped me in both jobs.

Before I did the EUPS program, I spent two years in the Peace Corps in West Africa, and then a year and a half working for a U.S. Agency for International Development contractor in Arlington, VA. I had opportunities to travel and mature. I got to experience a regular Monday to Friday work week and the responsibilities that go along with being an independent adult. All of these experiences better prepared me for graduate school. I was used to regular hours of work, meeting deadlines, and paying bills without parental. For me, graduate school was about delving into my studies and taking advantage of all available academic opportunities. I loved spending hours in the EUI library reading, researching, and writing---with in-between trips to the coffee shop and cafeteria. While I was too cheap to spend much time drinking away my savings at the bars in Florence, I did enjoy the few chances I had to go out in town. I also ‘splurged’ on the Uffizi student pass and spent many long hours visiting, over and over, all the museums covered by the pass. Florence, though often overrun by tourists and foreign exchange students, is still an extraordinary place with an abundance of history, art, architecture, food, wine, and culture. My time in Italy will always be special to me.

One of the highlights of my year in the Florence program was winter break. My then-fiancée (now my wife) met me in Athens, Greece, and we trekked together from there, overland, back to Florence, visiting Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia over the course of nearly a month. The Balkans in December and January is virtually empty of tourists, and we had all the sites to ourselves. Similarly, Florence in December, January, and February is also nearly devoid of tourists—-which makes, it, in my opinion, the best time of year to be there. The other highlights of the Florence program were the two trips we took to Brussels. In the spring, we visited the U.S. mission to the E.U. It was there that, for the first time, I heard of the ITA---from a JMU Alum who was a foreign service officer for ITA and was posted in Brussels. From then on, ITA was on my radar as a place of interest for future employment.

Getting a federal job took lots of perseverance; it meant applying for, literally, hundreds of jobs. The reward, however, has been interesting work where my graduate education has been fully put to use; I read, analyze, research, and write every day that I am on the job. Indeed, everywhere I’ve worked in the Washington, D.C. area has prized a graduate-level education, and most of my colleagues have at least one masters degree. Working in such an environment has been a privilege and a pleasure.

While at OMB, I experienced a very high-level view of the Federal government with work that often felt so far removed from the end results that I sometimes had difficulty connecting. At ITA, I engage in work that has immediate and real effects, and I interact directly with the public. I would encourage anyone seeking a job with the federal government to have the patience and persistence to obtain a position that they find interesting. In general, I’ve found patience and persistence to be necessary in reaching a job that is interesting yet affords an appropriate balance of personal and work time.
CFSP? The Syrian Issue

As EUPS friends and alumni will certainly recall, the Maastricht Treaty laid out the idea of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Ever since Maastricht’s ratification, however, the existence of truly common European foreign and security policy has been in question.

One clear indication that member states still had control over their own foreign policies was the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The idea of a coherent foreign policy was largely forgotten, as the United Kingdom, under the leadership of Tony Blair, decided to invade with the United States. France, on the other hand, did not want to participate in the invasion and was part of the group of countries who vetoed United Nations Security Council approval. We have seen this lack of cohesion again in recent months, even though the Lisbon Treaty took steps to push forward the CFSP.

Unlike in 2003, France was an adamant backer of intervention in Syria with the United States. The French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, met in Vilnius, Lithuania with his EU counterparts to try to obtain EU backing for intervention in Syria. Had he succeeded, this arguably would have been the biggest success to date of the CFSP. Alas, Mr. Fabius failed; other member states, including Germany, wanted no part in an intervention.

On 30 August, David Cameron asked the British Parliament to vote on intervention in Syria with the United States. The motion to invade was defeated by a vote of 285-272. Cameron acknowledged the outcome of the vote and vowed to respect it.

The British vote did not sway French opinion on any intervention in Syria. The French government came out with a statement saying that it is still ready and willing to intervene with the United States against al-Assad and the Syrian regime.

This issue is another example of how the European Union still does not have cohesion in the area of foreign policy Foreign policy is one of the last issues that EU members still effectively control. It is hard to imagine that they will give this up any time soon in order to establish a robust CFSP. It will be interesting to see what kind of event or change in EU policy could change this. For now, it is safe to say that EU member countries will continue to act on their own interests.
Welcome…

…to the Fall 2013 issue of the European Union Policy Studies Newsletter

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