



Basic Module Seminar V “European and Multilevel Politics” (PO 2015) or
Specialization Module “Special Topics Political Science II” (PO 2021), Summer Term 2024

**„The EU’s Strategic Agenda –
Setting the path for the legislative term 2024 - 2029”**

Title: „The EU’s Strategic Agenda – Setting the path for the legislative term 2024 - 2029”

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Stephan Hobe; Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels, Darius Ribbe M.A.

Dates:

- **15.04., 10:00 - 11:30:** Introductory Session and Lecture on the institutional architecture of the EU
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. S. Hobe, Prof. Dr. W. Wessels and Darius Ribbe M.A.
- April/ May (tba) Lecture: The European Council
Prof. Dr. W. Wessels
- May (tba) Lecture: The EU’s Strategic Agenda
Darius Ribbe M.A.
- May (tba) Consultation Meeting by the simulation advisors
- **27.05. - 31.05.:** Excursion and Simulation Game in Brussels

Consultation hours by arrangement

Examination Performance:

(Registration for exams via KLIPS)

- 1) Position Paper and Participation in the Simulation Game (40%)
- 2) Seminar Paper (60%)

Content

The interdisciplinary seminar consists of two modules, starting with an **introductory session** and **lectures** by highly renowned academics and practitioners on diverse topics concerning the European Council, followed by an **excursion and simulation exercise from 27.05. to 31.05.2024 in Brussels**. In addition to the lectures there will also be a preparation on how to simulate the European Council.

The travel costs from Cologne to Brussels and accommodation expenses in Brussels will be paid by PROTEUS, which is funded by the Kölner Gymnasial- und Stiftungsfonds.

APPLICATION

Please note that interested students (enrolled in the M.A. programme Political Science) will need to apply for this course by submitting a separate application (PDF) to Anuschka Windisch (anuschka.windisch@uni-koeln.de) comprising a short letter of motivation touching upon the EU’s strategic agenda and/or the European Council as a political actors, a transcript of records and a CV by **20.02.2024**.

Applicants will be informed about the result of the selection process in due time.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Accompanying each legislative cycle of the European Parliament and the European Commission, the Heads of State or Government in the European Council agree on a set of priorities that the EU should address within its policy-making capabilities. The discussion process is led by the President of the European Council, who also facilitates debates and compromise. The process of forging the next strategic agenda is complex and requires several discussions at informal meetings, leaders' exchanges, and European Council summits. As the European Council decisions are made under unanimity, the words in the final document can be seen as carefully crafted compromises or the largest common denominator under heterogeneous national policy preferences. Therefore, some formulations may seem fuzzy and vague. However, the document symbolizes a common virtue of the European Union formulated by the masters of the treaties. Thereby, the European leaders fulfil their task given to them by the treaties (Art. 15 (1) TEU) by providing guidance and direction to the integration process and political initiatives. The policy preferences and directions then need to be brought to life by the institutions of the legislative procedures: Commission, Parliament, and Council. Yet, the strategic agenda is a document in the context of the challenges and crises of its making, and is often supplemented by clarifications, additions, and corrections formulated in the European Council conclusions.

The strategic agenda of the European Union is a guiding framework, that defines the goals of the European Union over 5 years and outlines the direction in which the EU shall develop in the eyes of the Heads of State or Government in the European Council. These European leaders thereby act as principals in the EU system, setting the Union to address these priorities within its policy making capabilities. The strategic agenda further sets the frame in which the EU responds to crises and challenges, taking its development out of ad-hoc decision-making, or influences by rotating Council presidencies (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013). The path is set by the European Council members and continuously contextualised and specified by European Council conclusions, which can closer react to crises, challenges, and developments. Thus, with the strategic agenda, the Heads of State or Government use their guiding competences given to them by Article 15 (1) TEU:

“The European Council shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political directions and priorities thereof. It shall not exercise legislative functions.”

The Strategic Agenda evolves typically around a set of main priorities, from which more detailed – yet often still vague – priorities and paths are derived. For instance, the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 prioritised protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong and vibrant economic base, building a climate-neutral, green, fair, and social Europe, and promoting European interests and values on the global stage (European Council, 2019). The European leaders in the European Council take on current challenges and topics from the public debate in the EU and forge them into the strategic agenda of the legislative term (2019-2024; 2024-2029).

With the priorities of the Heads of State or Government set, the other EU institutions – mainly the Council and the Commission – take the guidance to develop their own working programmes for their legislative term, or the rotating Council presidency. The European Parliament takes the Strategic Agenda also into account as a measure for consensus among the European leaders. The strategic agenda constitutes a master-narrative of the EU('s future), shared by all masters of the treaties, it is – in a sense – the lowest common denominator of those European leaders, that mainly set the path the EU will be taking in the upcoming legislative cycle (Thieme and Galariotis, 2020).

Which also brings us to the core of this year's seminar:

The seminar is embedded into an interdisciplinary and international event bringing together advanced students from Political Sciences and Law Departments. It combines the application of political and legal knowledge with elements of a simulation exercise. Every participant has the opportunity to practice real-life negotiating situations in English by performing a specific role in our simulation of proceedings of the European Council. The seminar will start with an introductory session and will be followed by several lectures by highly renowned academics and practitioners on diverse topics concerning the European Union. The seminar will culminate in a simulation exercise on the EU's strategic agenda.

The objective of the seminar is to bring first-hand understanding of both academic and everyday practice of EU decision-making by offering students insights in 'real life' political processes and the possibility to experience the EU as a vivid political system as well as to meet politicians, practitioners and stakeholders. The participants will have the possibility to bring in their own academic and professional contributions and to discuss them with the group and the experts. They will get a better understanding of the working mechanisms and decision-making procedures of the European Union. They will also be able to improve their intercultural and communicative skills, as they immerse themselves in the art of negotiation and re-live political processes first hand.

Participating students will be provided with more information (literature, schedule etc.) during the first meeting in April. The seminar is jointly conducted by the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels and the Chair for European Law, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. S. Hobe. For more information, please visit: www.proteus.uni-koeln.de.