

EuroSim 2016 – Maastricht Delegation goes to Antwerp

by Anna Bruchhausen (BA ES year 2)

'If there is one word for describing EuroSim, it is definitely intense! Intense in the amount of work and activities, intense in meeting new people and networking, as well as intense in emotions and good memories!'

This year, the Maastricht delegation was made up of seven second-year students, chosen from the European Studies program, to represent our faculty at the EuroSim conference in Antwerp, Belgium. The group was assisted and supervised by Dr Heidi Maurer from the political science department, who furthermore is the European Associate Director of the conference organisation, the Transatlantic Consortium for European Union Studies and Simulations. Also, the FASoS faculty board had kindly agreed to support the FASoS participation financially. But first of all, for those who have not heard about EuroSim, what is this conference exactly about?

EuroSim is an annual international conference, which brings together students from more than 20 colleges and universities in the United States and Europe. The conference provides a framework for students to participate in European Union simulations on major political issues to get a deeper insight into the European decision-making process. The venue rotates every year between Europe and the US.

This year the topic of our negotiations focussed on the current European migrant crisis, which not only constituted a challenge to students due to its complexity, but also interplaying events had to be taken into account that significantly influenced the negotiations. Our host was the university of Antwerp in Belgium, and EuroSim took place from the 4th to the 7th of January. After a visit to the European Parliament in Brussels on the first day, 186 students came together in their Council and European Parliament Committee formations to start negotiations.

The legislative proposal discussed was a revision of the Dublin III regulation, concerning the determination of the EU Member State responsible to examine an application for asylum seekers who search protection under the Geneva Convention. Together with the EURODAC regulation it constitutes the Dublin system, which was recently harshly criticized as it allowed countries to send asylum applicants back to the country of first entry. This practically meant, that countries with external borders, such as Greece or Italy had to burden the increasing influx of refugees more than other EU countries not in this position. Therefore, this year's EuroSim participants tried to find an alternative solution to this failing system.

After 4 days of negotiating and hard bargaining, which included the drafting of again and again new legislative proposals and amendments, formal negotiations during the standard committee formations and informal discussions during lunch and coffee breaks, the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the European Parliament could finally agree on passing the revised new 'Dublin IV' regulation, even though only with a narrow majority in the Justice and Home Affairs Council as several countries opposed or abstained. However, a qualified majority could be reached to pass the new regulation.

In fact, the revised regulation, drafted and passed in the simulation is close to the new distribution key announced in January by EU commissioner for migration Dimitis Avramopoulos. The EuroSim solution includes the building of so-called registration key points in each Member State where the asylum seekers are registered by making use of EURODAC. Thereafter they are distributed among all EU Member States according to a quota system, which is binding for 70% of asylum applications among all Member States. Hence, 30% can be refused on non-economic grounds. This compromise was puzzled out between the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the European Parliament to find a middle ground that insured binding quotas under acceptable conditions for all Member States to prevent the formation of a blocking minority. Furthermore, all Member States are supported by the EU budget in their provision of food and shelter for asylum applicants in order to guarantee a similar standard of living conditions among all Member States.

The Foreign Affairs Council successfully passed four resolutions on the external aspects of the migration crisis. Those were aimed at implementing priority initiatives passed in the previous agreed upon Valetta Summit Action Plan between European and African countries. The Ministers therefore agreed on facilitating and encouraging legal migration, strengthening the EU agency Frontex, reinforcing partnerships with third countries to collaborate in the fight against human smugglers and finally establishing future cooperation with Turkey. Part of this year's conference were also various special roles, such as a Turkish delegation or NGOs like Human Rights Watch to provide different views and opinions on the crisis. Furthermore, a couple of Journalists and representatives of EU agencies like the European Asylum and Support office (EASO) were also part of the event and kept the participants up to date or provided them with significant expert knowledge.

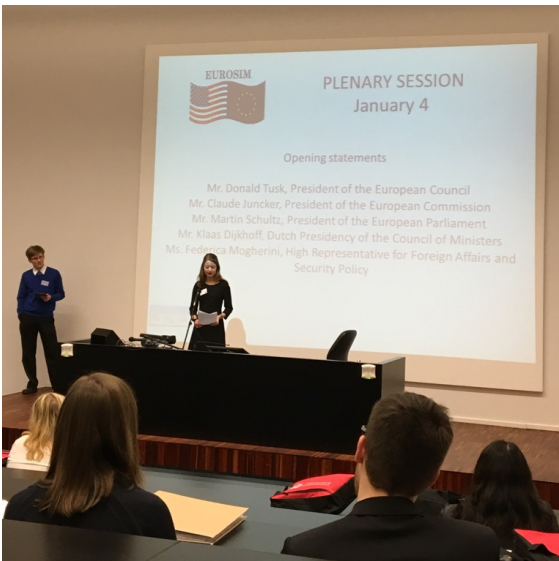
“We all were relieved when the regulation finally passed”, said one student after the final vote in the last plenary meeting. “It is much more difficult to reach agreement among 28 different opinions, with different backgrounds and motivations than one might think in the beginning”. Thus, students got significant insights of the complexity of the various steps that are part of the EU decision-making process. After the final vote, the best delegates of the conference were elected, and Nicole Pop from the Maastricht delegation received the best delegate award for her performance in the LIBE committee of the European Parliament.

After four exhausting days of experiencing European union negotiations, everyone could be satisfied with the final outcome and students could go back to their home countries or in the case of most American students continue their trips throughout Europe. In 2017 EuroSim will take place in Brockport, New York – so to all first year students, be prepared for your courses on negotiation skills, present a good performance in negotiations and probably start saving your money. The opportunity to be part of an experience like this is definitely worth it. As one student of the delegation states: ‘Eurosim 2016 has been one of the most enriching, challenging and enjoyable extracurricular activities that I did during my studies. To mention a few reasons: Firstly, the Maastricht delegation consisted of dedicated, intelligent, and unique personalities, and the group dynamics were always very fun! Secondly, it was great to interact with students from Europe and the States in such a competitive level, whilst tackling real problems. Thirdly, we all had to really delve into the topic of European asylum policy, which was a great learning experience. Last but not least, the best thing about EuroSim is the memory that will stay with me.’

EuroSim 2016 – BA ES year 2 students representing FASoS successfully in Antwerp



The FASoS delegation to EuroSim 2016 during the visit of the European Parliament in Brussels (from right to left): Eva Dürlinger, Audrey van Kan, Arnoud Sadzot, Anna Bruchhausen, Nicole Pop, Franca Feisel, Lukas Meier:



Klaas Dijkhoff (represented by Franca Feisel) as Dutch presidency reporting on the status of negotiations in JHA Council negotiations

Tough negotiations also in the European Council: Maastricht delegate Lukas Meier as Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte



Klaas Kijkhoof (represented by Franca Feisel, very right in picture) successfully chaired the Justice and Home Affairs Council and succeeded in reaching an agreement. Anna Bruchhausen (in middle of row close to window) represented Austria in JHA Council.

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The Foreign Affairs Council focused on cooperation with third countries in refugee crisis. Arnaud Sadzot (in right top corner) represented the Dutch foreign minister Bert Koenders

Strong Maastricht presence in the Human Rights Committee (DROI) of the European Parliament: Eva Dürlinger indispensably represented the EP Secretariat and ensured a smooth working mode of the committee, while Soraya Post (S&D,



Informal negotiations as key to success: the DROI committee (in the middle: Audrey van Kan) informally agreeing on the own initiative resolution of the EP for strengthening the human rights aspects in the EU naval mission.

Also the LIBE Committee reached agreement on the Dublin IV regulation through informal negotiations. In the middle of the informal group Rachida Dati (EPP; represented by Nicole Pop). Nicole Pop was elected “best delegate” by her peers due to her skilful way in suggesting compromising amendments and in presenting clear argument. Congratulations!



EuroSim 2016 constituted four busy days of negotiations. But there was also some time for relaxation: on day 2 the Antwerp city hall welcomed all EuroSim delegates for an official banquet.