



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



**Trans European Policy Studies Association
TEPSA**

Handbook
**Best practices for conducting skills
trainings**

Author: Giulia Bonacquisti, TEPSA Project Manager



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The PONT Career Skills Trainings	2
<i>Skills addressed and their importance</i>	2
<i>Overview of the PONT Career Skills Trainings</i>	4
Concrete steps in the organisation of skills trainings	6
Challenges and best practices	9
Feedback and takeaways	12
Conclusion and acknowledgements	15
Annex: Agendas of PONT Career Skills Trainings	16



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the labour market for highly qualified jobs has been changing dramatically and so have the skills required to enter it. The labour market is today a fast-paced environment that demands the ability to quickly translate the theoretical knowledge gained during one's academic education into ready-to-use professional skills. But what are professional/career skills and how can they be derived from theoretical knowledge? Answering these questions was one of the purposes of the project '[PONT – Professional Training in EU Affairs](#)', carried out by the [Trans European Policy Studies Association](#) between September 2015 and August 2018 with the support of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme (Jean Monnet Activities).

This handbook is one of the outcomes of the PONT project, which has overall trained more than one hundred young graduates, has implemented three core kinds of activities (Working Europe Seminars, Career Skills Trainings and Pre-Presidency Conferences) and has given rise to a number of sustainable impacts – including the publication of a policy brief series to give visibility to the work of young researchers, the creation of a sustainable network of PONT alumni and the interaction of young graduates with leading academics and policy makers.

The purpose of this handbook is to shed light on the process behind the organisation of PONT's Career Skills Training, and thereby identify challenges, lessons learnt and best practices that can help other actors in the organisation of similar trainings. Our hope is that TEPSA's experience will be useful for the organisation and for enhancing the quality of future professional skills trainings, for which there is an increasing demand both from today's young graduates and today's fast-changing labour market.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



THE PONT CAREER SKILLS TRAININGS

The Career Skills Training, aimed at young researchers and professionals in EU affairs, were an integral part of the [PONT project](#) together with the Working Europe Seminars (mainly for postgraduate students and recent graduates) and the Pre-Presidency Conferences (bringing together young researchers and graduates with senior academics and policy makers).

The PONT project consisted of teaching and training activities in selected policy fields, with the overall objective to give young graduates the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of EU policy and develop their professional skills, thereby preparing them to take up a job in public administration, EU institutions, NGOs, academia or think tanks across Europe.

Skills addressed and their importance

For the purpose of the PONT trainings and of this handbook, we defined career skills broadly as **skills that are required on the job market and that usually fall out of the scope of traditional academic curricula**. One of the reflections behind the design of the PONT project was that the specificity of career skills is that on the one hand one needs to have them for a successful professional career – or even to enter the labour market – but on the other hand for the most part one only learns them ‘by doing’ during his or her professional career.

The fact that career skills are learnt ‘by doing’ does not mean however that they cannot be taught and practised, thus significantly reducing adaptation periods at the beginning of one’s professional career and allowing young professionals to build their professional experience on more solid foundations. With this in mind, TEPSA gathered leading trainers and professionals of the sector and eager young graduates in Brussels in order to create a laboratory where career skills could be developed, learnt, shared, transferred, exercised, discovered and sometimes even re-thought.

The first step in designing the PONT Career Skills Training was to identify a certain number of skills that are key in the sector of policy research and, among them, those that are not sufficiently covered in traditional academic curricula.

The skills we identified can be grouped in two broad categories: cross-cutting skills and sector-specific skills.

Cross-cutting skills are relevant for all professions and fields and usually relate to personal and interpersonal qualities. Cross-cutting skills that were covered within the PONT trainings include:

- Giving and receiving feedback
- Public relations and networking with peers or more senior colleagues
- Communicating one’s own work to different audiences
- Team building and team work



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- Public speaking
- Different ways of learning: together and from others, by oneself, by doing, by reading, by seeing, by listening, by teaching
- Workplace communication
- Seeking career advice
- Understanding and communicating other people's work

These skills were explored in different kinds of activities, ranging from lectures with experts to practical exercises, to informal situations where those skills could spontaneously be put in practice. Lectures covered topics such as how to constructively give and receive feedback to/from one's peers, superiors or team members; how to translate one's message according to your target audience; how to build a successful team and ensure good and effective teamwork; and how to deliver your message effectively to a (smaller or wider) public. All these skills, together with communicating the work of other people, were the object of targeted practical exercises carried out under the lead of expert trainers. Finally, informal activities such as get-togethers, networking drinks, visits and conferences gave participants the possibility to test themselves in 'soft' skills such as networking, workplace communication, public speaking, and 'pitching'. Finally, the whole training was about learning how to acquire skills in a hands-on, effective and sustainable manner, and also about discovering one's own skills.

Sector-specific skills are professional skills that are required in a particular area or sector, which in the case of the PONT project was research in the broad field of social sciences/political science/international relations/European studies/law/economics. These include:

- Policy-oriented research
- Drafting skills
- Research communication to academic audiences, media, policy makers and the wider public, including:
 - Written communication: drafting policy briefs, newspaper articles, op-eds, project proposals, using social media
 - Oral communication: presenting one's research to policy-makers and media, organising events and presenting one's research in conferences both to an academic audience and to the wider public
- Conducting interviews
- Fundraising and project management skills
- Project design and implementation skills

All the skills listed above were the object of lectures delivered by leading academics, journalists and professional trainers, as well as of hands-on activities that included building a project proposal from scratch, delivering a presentation in a European Parliament's committee, drafting a newspaper article, giving a TV interview, and more.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Overview of the PONT Career Skills Trainings

The three PONT Career Skills Trainings were organised in Brussels in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. They all had a core focus on policy research skills that was complemented by a specific emphasis on a different aspect in each edition.

The first edition (2016)¹ focused on the interface between research and policy making. The main objective was to apply a more policy-oriented approach to the participants' research skills, and to provide them with insights into the world of European policy making and the Brussels arena. To this end, the participants met with policy makers and researchers from the European Parliament and its Research Service, with civil servants from the European Commission and the Committee of Regions, with researchers and think-tankers from the EU Institute for Security Studies and the Global Governance Institute, as well as radio and press journalists.

The skills addressed in this training were also linked to the ability to communicate one's research to policy makers and understanding the differences between communicating as a researcher, as a politician or as a representative of an institution. In preparation for the training, the participants drafted a policy brief that then served as a basis for a number of practical exercises that included, among other things, presenting one's work in a nutshell to a policy maker, releasing a statement for the television and drafting a press release.

The focus was also on the specific set of writing and research skills needed for the kind of policy-oriented research typical of the think tank world.

Furthermore, the training was a networking opportunity, allowing participants to find out about actual career paths in the Brussels arena. In addition, participants practised and reflected on a series of mock entrance tests for EU institutions. A special emphasis was put on preparing the participants to both receive and give constructive feedback. Individual feedback from the trainers but also from other participants was key to the learning process, and this tailored the course to the specific needs of each participant.

The second edition (2017)² tackled the challenge of communicating policy research. With today's influx of information readily available to anybody with an internet connection, it is increasingly important for researchers to be able to navigate this abundance of information and to reach their audience, be it policy makers, the media or the broader general public, in an accessible and timely way. To be equipped with the communication skills to complement their research background is a vital tool for young researchers as they begin their careers.

Participants were introduced to think-tank research and the art of the policy brief, met with analysts from the European Commission and the European Parliament, tackled the issue of

¹ The agenda of the first PONT Career Training is annexed to this handbook, while the full report of the training week can be accessed at this link: <http://www.tepsa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PONT-Report-final.pdf>

² The agenda of the second PONT Career Training is annexed to this handbook, while the full report of the training week can be accessed at this link: http://www.tepsa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PONT-CST-II-Report_final.pdf



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



disinformation and fake news with practitioners and discussed how academics and researchers can make the best possible use of social media.

Ahead of the training, the participants prepared a policy brief that served as a basis for several practical exercises, including mock presentations at the European Parliament with officials from the EP Directorate General for External Relations and mock TV interviews. In between the practical sessions, there were also visits and discussions with think tankers and researchers at the EU institutions.

The third edition (2018)³ placed a special emphasis on research funding and project management, which are nowadays critical skills for researchers. Participants could thus get an overview of EU and non-EU funding schemes available for research, but also learn the basics of project cycle management. This was complemented by a series of practical group exercises that gradually led the participants to build a whole project proposal from scratch.

A special emphasis was put on teams, team building and working in a team. How to build a successful team is one of these essential skills where background theoretical knowledge, understanding of team dynamics and practical experience all matter, and all these aspects were present on the week's programme.

As in the previous editions, the importance of communication skills was highlighted. Research communication takes many forms and starts already before the project begins: a research proposal itself is a special way of communicating to a potential funder. Researchers then need to communicate not only their research results, but increasingly also their ongoing research, to a variety of audiences. Journalists, general public and decision-makers all require different ways of communicating. Our training week included writing a policy brief and presenting it orally to decision-makers, but we also looked at how research can be communicated through organising events of various types. And, as always, we offered the participants several chances to meet think-tankers in Brussels and build their personal networks through visits to think tanks and EU institutions, as well as through informal activities.

³ The agenda of the third PONT Career Training is annexed to this handbook, while the full report of the training week can be accessed at this link: <http://www.tepsa.eu/download/Report-CST3.pdf>



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



CONCRETE STEPS IN THE ORGANISATION OF SKILLS TRAININGS

Regardless of the specific focus of the lectures and activities, the organisation of skills trainings can follow a standard procedure that can be summarised as follows.

1. The first and most important step is to define the learning objectives of the course. This can build, as in the case of PONT, on an analysis of the gaps in current education curricula and the needs of employers and the labour market. The definition of the learning objectives includes a definition of the professional skills that should be the object of the course, of the formats and presentation techniques that can maximise the transfer of these skills (lecture, discussion, practical exercise, visit) and of possible indicators to measure the extent to which the notions have been successfully received by the participants.
2. The second step is to organise the subjects of the activities identified above in a systematic manner and in a way that draws a gradual and consistent learning path that the trainees will follow during the training week. For instance, activities may be grouped by thematic focus, or by cross-cutting skills. The outcome of this step is an agenda of the training week, in which each day has a coherent focus and the sequence of the different days is logical – the different activities should be supporting each other, and at the same time there should be enough variation every day. This step also entails allocating the right time to each activity. It is particularly important to allow sufficient time for each session, and a sufficient amount of time off as trainees need to have the chance to absorb the vast amount of information they are exposed to during the course.
3. The third step is to identify the trainers, i.e. experts and professionals who are in the best position to teach the skills identified in the previous step. In these kinds of professional skills courses, the trainers can be of two main kinds: professionals who have experience in *teaching* (usually cross-cutting) skills to others, and experts and practitioners who *use* (usually-sector specific) skills in their daily work. It is important to find the right balance between these two kinds of trainers (see following section). Once the trainers have been identified and contacted, the content and format of the session should be discussed with them thoroughly in order to ensure the quality, relevance and overall coherence of the training activities.
4. Once an agenda has been designed and the names of the trainers have been added to it, the agenda can be disseminated together with a call for applications (in case of an open call). The target of the dissemination should be chosen carefully according to the target audience of the training (universities, research institutes, NGOs, or others) and its desired geographical outreach (national, European, global...).

5. In parallel, the practical organisation of the training should start. This includes budgeting (which should start ideally in parallel with the first step), booking the venues, catering and technical equipment, defining a policy for payments and reimbursements, contacting speakers and arranging possible visits to other institutions and organisations.
6. The applications received should then be assessed carefully and selected on the basis of a number of criteria that can be defined according to the objectives of the training. Typical criteria include: excellence in their disciplines/sectors, motivation and readiness to take part in an intensive training programme, proficiency in the language of the training, gender diversity, geographical diversity, diversity of backgrounds and experience.
7. It is important to note that the training does not start at the beginning of the training week, but weeks earlier. For example, preparatory assignments can be designed to make sure that participants are committed and prepared for the training. Preparedness for the training also includes being prepared to immerse oneself in an intensive experience and to adapt to possible sudden changes. In addition, once the selection process has been completed, selected participants should be provided with constant guidance and useful documents (detailed information about the training activities and about what will be expected from them during the week, directions to the training locations, biographical notes about the speakers, general terms and conditions regulating the training, information about the other participants, guidelines for possible preparatory assignments).
8. During the training, next to the trainers who will come and go, the presence of two stable figures should be ensured: a course coordinator (who is ideally also involved in the earlier conceptualisation of the training) and a course manager who acts as a contact person for administrative and logistical matters. The course coordinator should be responsible for the overall coherence and quality of the training, for ensuring the presence of sufficient spaces for reflection together or in separate discussions, and for building and safeguarding the safe environment needed for the more demanding exercises. The course manager should be responsible for the smooth implementation of all activities and for contacts with the invited speakers, and should be available to answer questions and provide support on practical matters that the participants may need throughout the course. Both figures should be prepared to respond and adapt to sudden changes in the programme, speakers and timetables.
9. A key element of the training should be the evaluation of the course by the participants and, ideally, also by the trainers involved. This element is key especially in multi-annual projects such as PONT that envisage the repetition of training activities. To this end, evaluation forms with clear multiple-choice and open questions should be developed in a way to ensure full anonymity and should be provided in hard copies at the end of



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



the training. The evaluation forms should measure the impact of the project and help to improve the trainings. This is especially crucial in a fast-changing labour market where also the needs of employers change fast. Having experience with this, young graduates (the participants) as well as established professionals (the trainers) are the best people to give feedback on such changes. It is equally important to give participants the chance, if so desired, to discuss the feedback in a joint final session with the organisers of the trainings, where participants and organisers can discuss together the positive and negative takeaways from the training.

10. Finally, the administrative follow-up of the training (payments, reimbursements, reporting, etc.) should be properly ensured according to the rules of the framework within which the training activity has been held.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES

The benefits of intensive training courses such as the PONT Career Skills Training lie in the double value of an intensive, engaging programme and a constant accompaniment and supervision of the participants in the learning process. In this context, the presence of a coordinator who is able to follow and oversee the whole implementation and evolution of the trainings is key, and the absence of such stable figure can indeed represent a challenge for the coherence of the activities.

In the framework of PONT, the project team could rely on the guidance offered by the Academic Coordinator of the project Prof Johannes Pollak and on the involvement of the Seminar Leader Prof Hanna Ojanen in the conceptualisation of the agenda and in ensuring the coherence of the training programmes with the overall goals of the project. In addition to that, the Steering Group and the Board of Wise Persons offered a privileged forum for discussion and for exchange of ideas in a broader circle. Finally, it also proved particularly helpful to ensure the overall coherence of the programme when trainers could also attend sessions led by other trainers. This allowed the different sessions to follow a more logical path and to build on the knowledge gained by participants in each of them, and also gave the trainers a chance to see other ways of presenting the same or similar issues.

A second challenge may arise in the selection of trainers, namely in striking the right balance between having the best experts (be it researchers or practitioners) on a certain subject matter and having professional trainers who know how to *transfer* their knowledge to others in an effective and sustainable manner. The second characteristic is often difficult to verify without having worked with a person previously, and here comes a further challenge: finding a balance between on the one hand enriching the programme with new trainers and speakers every year so as to be able to tackle the issues at hand from many different angles, and the temptation to continue working with trainers you know and whose professionalism and quality you can rely on. In addressing these challenges, it was key for us to build every year on the feedback received on each trainer from the participants in the previous edition.

As to the selection of participants, it is of crucial importance to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the call for participation (in case of an open call). A call which is not sufficiently disseminated can in fact have a negative impact on the quality of applications, not to mention on the desirable diversity of participants in geographic and disciplinary terms. For this reason, it is key to identify possible hubs (e.g. universities, institutes, organisations working for the promotion of mobility, youth associations, etc.) that can relay the call to the target group identified. In the PONT experience, building synergies with other projects implemented by TEPSA and focusing on some specific regions allowed reaching out geographically further, even outside Europe.

A challenge arising with invited speakers, especially with policy makers and practitioners with a very busy agenda, is also that of last-minute drop-outs. In this situation, it is of crucial



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



importance to have a wide network of experts to be able to reach out to, as well as back-up activities that can be put in place in a short timeframe.

Finding the right location can also make a decisive contribution to the success of these training activities, both at macro and micro level. At macro level, Brussels obviously represents a privileged location for a training course focusing on EU affairs, offering the possibility to visit EU institutions and a very wide range of think tanks and research institutes, as well as to meet with the practitioners and policy makers that play a pivotal role in thinking, shaping and implementing the policies that young researchers are studying. At micro level, it is also important to choose a cosy setting that feels as a 'safe zone' for young professionals that will often find themselves out of their comfort zone in practising situations they have never experienced before (e.g. speaking in front of a camera, of a group of colleagues, or of a policy maker, etc.).

Given the immersive nature of these training activities and the importance of constant feedback, it is also advisable to have a small group of participants. In our experience, this was ideally 15 and no more than 20 people. This size allows best to ensure individual supervision of participants by the trainers and to maximise the benefits of cultural and disciplinary diversity. A small group also allows maximising the chances for interaction and for exchange of feedback, which therefore take place in a 'safe environment'.

Linked to that is also the importance of group-building activities. At the beginning of each PONT training, we welcomed a group of young people who did not know each other. During the training they learnt to get to know each other and to work together, and by the end of the week they walked away as colleagues with projects for future cooperation. This can of course be achieved through the training activities themselves (especially through group exercises and through activities involving mutual peer feedback), but informal activities also play a key role. For this reason, we organised a number of informal gatherings, as well as specific exercises with professional team-building trainers, aimed purely at allowing participants to get acquainted with each other.

Furthermore, a training is after all for the most part a series of lectures, so it is easy to fall into the trap of providing participants with simply a greater amount of theoretical knowledge that does not necessarily have a qualitative impact on their professionalism, skillset and, at the end of the day, employability. In order to avoid this risk, it is crucial to complement any lecture with hands-on activities, and to ensure that every piece of knowledge acquired on a certain topic by the participants is then tested by talking to practitioners that work in that area on a daily basis. Such hands-on activities also serve as an evaluation tool to measure whether or not (and to what extent) the learning objectives of each sessions have been achieved.

Also, in a project that aims at enhancing the employability of young graduates it is crucial to provide participants not only with the tools to start or advance their careers, but also with concrete opportunities to do so. In this light, informal situations where participants can network with colleagues working in the same field play a key role.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Finally, a key challenge is how to ensure that the training activities have a sustainable impact, not only in terms of sustainability of the learning effects, but also by providing follow-up opportunities where trainees can test the skills learnt and that can foster the development of an alumni network. In this respect, follow-up activities can be designed in which alumni of the training activities are invited to participate. In the case of the PONT skills trainings, this was done in two main ways. First, outstanding participants were invited to take an active role (including as speakers) in high-level conferences organised by TEPSA, where they had the chance to exchange ideas with renowned academics and network with researchers from all over Europe. Second, the best policy briefs – prepared by participants as a preparatory assignment and revised in light of the feedback received during the training – were published by TEPSA. These activities had a major impact in terms of fostering the development of a community of PONT alumni.

FEEDBACK AND TAKEAWAYS

At the end of each PONT Career Skills Training, participants were provided with an anonymised evaluation form containing both multiple-choice and open questions.

Multiple-choice questions included:

- An evaluation of the practical aspects of the trainings, including length, working atmosphere, level of fee, venues, catering, meal allowance, documentation provided before and during the course;
- An evaluation of each trainer/session;
- An evaluation of the impact of the training, including the relevance of topics, the usefulness of the training for the participants' day-to-day work, the expected impact of the training on the participants' future career, the quality of feedback received;
- An evaluation of the participants' own contribution to the trainings and of the impact of the training on their perception of themselves and of their own skills.

Open questions included possible aspects of the training that could be improved and the participants' assessment of the most interesting elements of the training.

Overall, the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. 83% of participants considered that the training was useful or very useful for their day-to-day work, and 96% considered it useful or very useful for their future career. The general assessment was that the training succeeded in its aim to supplement the participants' theoretical and topical knowledge gained in the classroom with the practical skills that are typically learnt by doing.

When asked about aspects to be improved, some participants raised the following issues:

- The programme could be more varied in order to fulfil the different expectations of participants coming from very diverse backgrounds.
- Some participants would have preferred the group to be more homogenous in terms of backgrounds (although the diversity of the group was regarded by others as a positive aspect).
- More practical activities could be included in the programme, especially group activities.
- Some participants would have welcomed a structured session on networking skills (learning how to network).
- Some participants would have appreciated specific sessions on career transition or job search.
- It was recommended to structure the programme in a way that days are less intense.
- Some participants would have welcomed more extra-curricular activities.
- It was suggested that participants could receive the trainers' presentation beforehand.

Next to the lectures, the most appreciated elements of the training were:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- The variety of the programme;
- The networking opportunities provided;
- The good working atmosphere;
- The opportunity to explore the job market in Brussels and to gain insights into the 'Brussels bubble';
- The practical nature of activities;
- The working visits and the possibility to meet EU practitioners;
- The confidence gained in one's own skills as a result of the training;
- The characteristics of the group, especially in terms of cohesiveness and diversity;
- The constant feedback and the overall academic guidance received throughout the training;
- The practical organisation;
- The exchange with other participants.

Selected trainers were asked to provide feedback on a number of aspects of the trainings, including:

- The relevance of the skills taught in their lectures for young researchers/professionals in early stages of their careers;
- The overall coherence of the training week;
- The relevance of this kind of activities in today's labour market;
- The level of interaction with and among students;
- Possible aspects that could be improved.

The trainers agreed on the great relevance of the skills covered by the training for young professionals in general, and researchers in particular, especially in light of the characteristics of today's labour market. They considered that the training course followed an articulated and structured learning path, going from a broader perspective to more specific contents and covering the spectrum of relevant skills for young professionals seeking to start or advance their careers. Trainers were particularly impressed by the level of preparation, motivation and interactivity shown by participants in the various training activities. Interaction amongst students was observed to be particularly high due to the extensive use of practical assignments. It was noted that in some cases the interaction between trainer and students was somehow limited by time constraints and the significant amount of content foreseen in the programme.

Overall, the Career Skills Training aimed to help the participants acquire and deepen professional skills but also to bring together new and future researchers, the think-tank community in Brussels, EU institutions, journalists and a variety of experts, trainers and coaches, as well as to enhance young graduates' employability. In this respect, a number of outcomes can be identified after the successful completion of the PONT series of three skills trainings.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



First, one of the most important and durable results of those training was the development of a sustainable network of alumni of the PONT trainings. Trainees started the week as strangers to each other and left with plans for future meetings and joint projects.

Second, the trainings served not only to learn skills, but also to discover one's own skills, and to learn about learning – thus contributing in a more sustainable way to the participants' thinking about themselves and encouraging openness towards continued learning. The trainings also had a learning effect on the trainers themselves, who by attending sessions led by other trainers were exposed to and interacted with different ideas and styles of teaching.

Third, thanks to their involvement in TEPSA's [Pre-Presidency Conferences](#) participants could build links to more senior academics and researchers and make their work and their potential visible to the European research community.

Fourth, within the lifetime of the PONT project we could witness concrete examples of participants in the trainings advancing in their career thanks to the skills learnt, the contacts gained, and the overall deeper knowledge acquired of the job market.

Finally, the main takeaway that has emerged particularly from the participants' feedback is that there is a huge demand among young graduates for these kinds of activities that bridge the existing gap between the theoretical education that one gets at university and the professional skills which are required on the job market, a demand which is not yet met by an appropriate supply.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the core of the PONT skills trainings was the idea that, although career skills are typically learnt by doing, this does not mean that they cannot be taught and practised. Moreover, the assumption was that learning together and from each other in a hands-on manner can amplify the learning effect of more traditional lectures, thereby contributing to a more sustainable learning.

With this in mind, a set of skills which is necessary for a young graduate wanting to work in the field of policy-oriented research were identified and a set of training activities were built around them by the Trans European Policy Studies Association in the framework of the PONT project.

The outcomes and lessons learnt from the implementation of these activities allowed TEPSA to identify some best practices and possible responses to common challenges, that were summarised in this handbook. This handbook was drafted by TEPSA Project Manager Giulia Bonacquisti, with the contribution of the Academic Leader of the PONT Career Skills Trainings Prof Hanna Ojanen. It builds on, among other things, the detailed reports of the PONT trainings that were produced by the TEPSA Team, as well as on the written feedback received from both participants and trainers throughout the project's lifetime.

The PONT project team would like to thank the Academic Leader of the PONT Skills Trainings, Prof Hanna Ojanen, who with her tireless engagement, long-standing experience and fresh ideas made an invaluable contribution to the success of the training activities. Special thanks for their continued support and guidance also go to the academic coordinator of the PONT project, Prof Johannes Pollak, and to Prof Jaap de Zwaan, member of the PONT Steering Group.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



ANNEX: AGENDAS OF PONT CAREER SKILLS TRAININGS

PONT Career Skills Training I 17-21 October 2016, Brussels

Monday 17 October 2016: Professional skills

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room n. 13

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 14:00-14:45 | Entry exercise by Katri Auvinen , Professional Trainer at Innotiimi |
| 14:45-15:15 | Welcome and introduction to the training by Prof Dr Hanna Ojanen (Academic Leader of the training) and the TEPSA Team |
| | Coffee break |
| 15:30-18:00 | The art of giving and receiving feedback by Katri Auvinen |

Tuesday 18 October 2016: Interacting with policymakers

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room n. 13

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 8:30 | Morning coffee |
| 08:45-10:15 | How to write a briefing paper, part I (introduction) by Dr Roderick Parkes , Senior Analyst at EU Institute for Security Studies |
| 10:30 -12:45 | Mock presentations to the European Parliament: practicing a 2-minute opening statement (on the basis of your policy brief) by Dr Andrej Stuchlik , Policy analyst at the DG for Parliamentary Research Services, European Parliament |
| 13:30 | Lunch with Michaela Sojdrova , MEP, EPP, Czech Republic |
- Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Hoover room*



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- 15:00-17:00 How to find out what you want to know: insights from interviewing decision-makers and civil servants *by **Prof Joachim Koops**, Vesalius College Dean, Research Professor IES-VUB*
- 17:00 Drinks and career talk *with **Prof Joachim Koops** on research-policy making nexus*

Wednesday 19 October 2016: Communicating to the public as an EU decision maker

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room Francqui

- 8:30 Morning coffee
- 09:00-10:00 Guidelines and practice of a TV statement *by **Kurt Gerhardt**, Public speaking trainer*
- 10:30 -11:45 Presenting a video statement
Venue: European Parliament (Spinelli Building)
- 12:00-13:00 Informal lunch *with **Oliver Poole**, executive editor at ESI media*
- 13:00-16:30 Writing a press release *by **Oliver Poole***
- Coffee break*
- 17:00-19:00 Feedback on the video statements *by **Kurt Gerhardt***

Thursday 20 October 2016: EU admission tests

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room Francqui

- 8:30 Morning coffee
- 09:00-12:30-
14:00-17:30 EPSO entrance test day *by **ORSEU Competitions***
- Introduction to EPSO admission tests
 - Mock EPSO tests and feedback
- 18:30 Informal career talk with:
- Prof Michael Kaeding, Chairman of TEPSA and Professor at the University of Duisburg-Essen



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- Julie Anne Fionda, Cabinet of Commissioner Marianne Thyssen for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, European Commission
- Johanna Kaprio, Communication Officer, Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU
- Carmen Schmidle, Press Officer, Committee of the Regions

Venue: Aloft Hotel, Place Jean Rey

Friday 21 October 2016: Conclusion

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room Francqui

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 09:00-11:00 | Communicating your colleague's work (based on your policy brief): presentation exercise and peer feedback <i>by Prof Dr Hanna Ojanen</i> |
| 11:30-13:00 | How to write a policy brief, part II (feedback) <i>by Dr Roderick Parkes</i> |
| 13:30-14:30 | Final evaluation and end of the training |



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



PONT Career Skills Training II

11-15 September 2017, Brussels

Monday 11 September: Introduction

- 13:00 – 14:15 Welcome and introduction to the training
*by the **TEPSA team** and **Prof Dr Hanna Ojanen**, Seminar leader and Jean-Monnet Professor at the University of Tampere (Finland)*
- 14:30 – 16:00 Workplace communication: giving and receiving constructive feedback
*with **Katri Auvinen**, Professional Trainer at Innotiimi*
- ~ Coffee break ~
- 16:30 – 18:00 Presenting research in a parliamentary hearing: introduction
*with **Fernando Garces de los Fayos**, Senior Parliamentary Policy Analyst at the Directorate General for External Policies of the European Parliament*

Tuesday 12 September: Reaching policymakers

- 09:00 – 10:30 How to write a policy brief
*with **Prof Dr Sven Biscop**, Director of the Europe in the World programme at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Affairs*
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Francqui Room
- 11:00 – 12:30 Visit to the European Policy Centre (EPC): an introduction to the Brussels think tank world
*with **Paul Ivan**, Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre*
Venue: European Policy Centre, Rue du Trône 14
- 13:00 – 14:30 Lunch discussion
*with **Aura Salla**, Adviser for Communication and Outreach at the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), European Commission*
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Hoover room
- 15:00 – 18:00 Presenting research in a parliamentary hearing: mock-presentation at the European Parliament
*with - **Pekka Hakala**, Head of Unit at the Policy Department for External relations, European Parliament*



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- **Dr Marika Lerch**, Parliamentary Research Administrator at the
Policy Department for External Relations, European Parliament
Venue: European Parliament, Rue Wiertz 60

19:00

Dinner with think-tankers

with - **Prof Dr Michael Kaeding**, TEPSA Chairman and Professor at the
Department of Political Science and the NRW School of Governance
of the University of Duisburg-Essen
- **Dr Roland Freudenstein**, Policy Director at the Wilfried Martens
Centre for European Studies
- **Dr Leonhard den Hertog**, Research Fellow at the Centre for
European Policy Studies (CEPS)
- **Vassilis Ntousas**, International Relations Policy Advisor at the
Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)

Venue: Aqua Hotel, Rue de Stassart 43

Wednesday 13 September: Reaching the public

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – J. Willems Room

09:00 – 10:00

Mastering media interviews: introduction

with **Luc Hanegreefs**, former journalist, TV reporter and presenter

10:00 – 12:00

Individual TV interviews

with **Luc Hanegreefs**

13:30 – 15:00

Feedback on the TV interviews

with **Luc Hanegreefs**

~ Coffee break ~

15:30 – 18:00

Writing a newspaper column

with **Luc Hanegreefs**

Thursday 14 September: Fighting disinformation & dealing with bias in the fake news era

09:00 – 10:30

Visit to the European House of History

Venue: European House of History, Rue Belliard 135

11:15 – 13:00

The EU in the fight against disinformation: introducing the East Stratcom
Task Force of the European External Action Service

Venue: European External Action Service, Rondpoint Robert Schuman



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



14:30 – 17:00

Blogging and social media: what's there for a researcher?

with **Dr Simon Usherwood**, Reader in Politics at University of Surrey

Venue: *Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – J. Willems Room*

18:00

Drinks with EU civil servants: the research-policy-making nexus in the setting of the EU's agenda

with - **Valérie Ramet**, Policy Analyst at the Policy Department for External Relations, European Parliament

- **Gonzalo Urbina Treviño**, Policy Analyst at the Policy Department for External Relations, European Parliament

- **Dr Gaby Umbach**, Policy Analyst for Research Methodologies and Strategic Liaison with Academia and Think Tanks at the Strategy and Coordination Unit of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)

- **Soledad Rodríguez Sánchez-Tabernero**, Analyst at the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), European Commission

Venue: *Aloft Hotel, Place Jean Rey*

Friday 15 September: Conclusion

Venue: *Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11 – Room D*

09:30 – 11:30

Feedback on your policy brief

with **Prof Dr Sven Biscop**, Director of the Europe in the World programme at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Affairs

11:30 – 12:30

Discussion on the seminar's takeaways



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



PONT Career Skills Training III

14-18 May 2018, Brussels

Monday 14 May 2018: Introduction

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room

13:00 – 14:30 Welcome and introduction to the training by **Prof Dr Hanna Ojanen** (*Academic Leader of the training*), **Kinga Illyés** and the **TEPSA**

Team

14:30 – 16:00 How to build a successful team by **Kinga Illyés** (*Consultant at ICG Integrated Consulting Group*)

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30 – 18:00 How to write a policy brief by **Sven Biscop** (*Director of the 'Europe in the World' programme at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations*)

18:30 Welcome drinks
Venue: Ginette, place du Luxembourg 5

Tuesday 15 May 2018: Fundraising skills in a research context part 1

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room

09:15 – 11:00 Introduction to PCM: setting the stage & the vertical logic (part 1) by **Rui Santos** (*Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management*)

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30 – 13:00 How to get funding for research: an overview of funding schemes by **Dr Funda Tekin** (*Vice Director of the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies at the University of Cologne and Research Adviser at Institut für Europäische Politik Berlin*)

13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00 – 16:00 Introduction to PCM: Exercise 1 - Design the Results Chain - Qualify the Change by **Rui Santos** (*Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management*)

16:30 – 18:00 Visit to the EU Research Executive Agency (REA): Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ funding with **Corinna Amting** (*Head of Unit Inclusive,*



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



*Innovative and Reflective Societies at REA) and **Luciano Di Fonzo** (Head of Sector – Erasmus+ Sport at EACEA – Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency)*

Venue: Research Executive Agency, Place Rogier 16

Wednesday 16 May 2018: Fundraising skills in a research context part 2

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room

09:15 – 11:30	Introduction to PCM: the vertical logic (part 2) & the diagonal logic by Rui Santos (Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management)
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 13:00	Introduction to PCM: Exercise 2 - Prepare the Risk Management Strategy – Connect with the Environment by Rui Santos (Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management)
13:00 – 14:30	Communicating your research to the public – part 1: lunch discussion with Ryan Heath (Political editor at POLITICO Europe)
14:30 – 15:30	Introduction to PCM: the horizontal logic (part 1) by Rui Santos (Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management)
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 18:00	Introduction to PCM: the horizontal logic (part 2) & Exercise 3 - Define the Indicators, Baselines & Targets - Quantify the Change by Rui Santos (Expert and Trainer in Project Cycle Management)
Evening	Time to revise your policy brief

Thursday 17 May 2018: Communicating research

09:30 – 10:15	The nexus between research and policy making: presentation of the EPRS with Alec Vuijlsteke (Strategy & Coordination Unit, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), European Parliament) <i>Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room</i>
10:15 – 13:30	Communicating your research to policy makers: mock presentations with Gaby Umbach (Strategy & Coordination Unit, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), European Parliament) <i>Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room</i>
13:30 – 14:45	Lunch break



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- 14:45 – 16:00 Visit to the European Policy Centre (EPC): working in the think tank environment with **Julian Rappold** (Project Leader of the joint EPC-Stiftung Mercator project 'Connecting Europe')
Venue: European Policy Centre, Rue du Trône 14-16
- 16:15 – 18:00 Communicating your research to the public – part 2: innovative ways to hold conferences by **Elizabeth Van Den Bergh** (Speaker coach - Montis Public Speaking)
Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room
- 18:30 Networking drinks with Brussels think tankers, with:
- **Aura Salla** (Adviser for Communication and Outreach, European Political Strategy Centre)
 - **Simone Tagliapietra** (Research Fellow, Bruegel)
 - **Heather Grabbe** (Director, Open Society European Policy Institute)
 - **Rosa Balfour** (Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States)
 - **Felice Simonelli** (Research Fellow and Head of Policy Evaluation, Centre for European Policy Studies)
- Venue: Aloft Brussels Schuman, Place Jean Rey*

Friday 18 May 2018: Conclusion

Venue: Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Francqui Room

- 9:30 – 12:00 Feedback on your policy brief by **Sven Biscop** (Director of the 'Europe in the World' programme at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations)
- 12:00 – 13:00 Discussion on the training's takeaways and written feedback from the participants with **Prof Dr Hanna Ojanen and the TEPSA Team**
- 13:00 Farewell sandwich buffet



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



www.tepsa.eu