

HANDBOOK FOR PARTICIPANTS

January 2016

FOR
EUVP PARTICIPANTS

How to prepare your study-tour

The EUVP enables young leaders from non-member countries to visit the Institutions of the European Union on an individual study-tour, as guests of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

It is hoped that your participation in the EUVP will enable you to gain through first-hand experience a better understanding of the Union and that the experience will be of benefit to you, both professionally and personally, in future years.

This Handbook is designed to help you prepare for your study-tour to the European Union as a participant in the European Union Visitors Programme (EUVP). An EUVP Liaison Officer in the European Union's Delegation will assist you with these preparations.

1. VALIDITY, DURATION AND SCOPE OF STUDY-TOUR

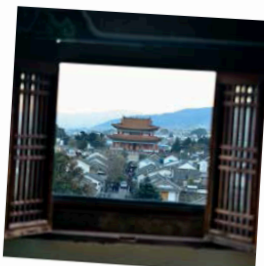
Your EUVP study-tour is **valid for one calendar year** and, for practical reasons, cannot be extended. You will be expected to spend **5 working days in Brussels**, where meetings will be arranged with staff of the EU Institutions, Belgian authorities, etc.

Only participants with a political profile are also invited to attend a **plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg** (France), in which case their study-tour will last **8 working days** (5 in Brussels and 3 in Strasbourg). Upon request of the participant, a study-tour including a visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg may be shortened to 5 working days (3 in Brussels and 2 in Strasbourg). **Annex 10** contains the **model itineraries**.

europarl.europa.eu/euvp and europa.eu/euvp



A window
to the world



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Where a study-tour does not include a Strasbourg session of Parliament, meetings with MEPs and European Parliament officials will be arranged in the **Brussels offices of the European Parliament**, where MEPs and EP staff reside the remaining weeks of the month.

If you would like to go to **Luxembourg**, please specify any particular EU Institution you wish to visit, e.g. Court of Justice, European Investment Bank, Court of Auditors, Statistical Office and the reason(s) for the visit.

See Annex 10

2. CHANGE OF OCCUPATION

**ALWAYS
INFORM YOUR
LIAISON OFFICER**

Please note that your EUVP invitation may be subject to reconsideration in the event of a significant change in the nature of your employment. You are asked to notify your EUVP Liaison Officer immediately of any change of employment.

3. TIMING OF STUDY-TOUR AND LOCAL WEATHER CONDITIONS

A list of possible starting dates for a given year as well as the dates of the European Parliament sessions in Strasbourg will be provided by the EUVP Secretariat to the Delegations during the year preceding your study-tour.

- Starting date**

Please let your EUVP Liaison Officer in the EU Delegation know, as soon as possible, the preferred dates for your visit and remember that **only participants who have been selected to attend a plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg may choose a starting date including a Strasbourg session.**
- “First-come, first-served” principle**

For obvious reasons, the number of visitors who can travel at the same time is limited. You will be “pencilled in” for any starting date you wish, if available, but that date will only be confirmed upon receipt of all the papers that are necessary to prepare your study-tour. Therefore, if too many participants wish to come on the same starting date, those providing all the necessary information (Curriculum Vitae, Statement of Purpose, photo, copy of passport and e-mail address) will be confirmed on a **“first-come, first-served”** basis. Attached to this Handbook are a **model Curriculum Vitae (Annex 8)** and a **model Statement of Purpose (Annex 9)**.

See Annex 8 and Annex 9

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- **Confirmation of starting date**



When the EUVP Secretariat confirms your requested starting date, this may well result in another EUVP participant being refused permission to travel at the same time. **It is therefore extremely important that any personal or professional considerations be taken into account before dates are finalised** (cf. 12. below). **Participants whose starting date has been confirmed and then postpone their study-tour may only identify another starting date after all other EUVP participants have had a chance to choose theirs.**

- **Holiday periods**

Study-tours can take place during most of the year. However, due to differing holiday seasons within the Union, it is not possible to begin visits between mid-July and the end of August, and during the week preceding or following Easter and Christmas.

- **Travel itinerary**

Once dates have been agreed, the EUVP Secretariat will start making arrangements for your study-tour. Approximately 4 weeks prior to departure, the EUVP Secretariat will send you a **travel itinerary**. The Secretariat must ask you to appreciate that **changes cannot be allowed.**

- **Local weather conditions**

EUVP participants ought to be aware that their meetings in Brussels will take place in different buildings and that they will mostly be required to walk or, occasionally, use public transport to arrive at their appointments. Since rain is no stranger to Belgium, it is recommended that you bring along thick-soled shoes and a raincoat on the study-tour. Belgium's weather forecast can be found at <http://www.meteo.be>

4. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER OF STUDY-TOUR



The EUVP is an individual visitors' programme. Therefore, the invitation to participate in the programme is **valid for one person only**. All other persons, such as assistants, deputies, superiors, spouses, interpreters arranged by organisations other than the EUVP Secretariat, etc. are excluded from participation.

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5. PREPARATION FOR STUDY-TOUR

Between the time of your written acceptance and the start of your EUVP study-tour, please keep in close contact with your EUVP Liaison Officer, who will assist you in preparing your visit.



Given the limited time available for meetings in Brussels (and Strasbourg or Luxembourg), you are strongly recommended to familiarise yourself (prior to your departure) with the various roles and functions of the EU Institutions and the interrelationships between them. This is important, since some interlocutors have sometimes complained about the poor knowledge of former EUVP participants regarding the workings of the main EU Institutions, thereby compromising the quality of the meetings.

If necessary, **guides** containing a general introduction to the EU Institutions and more detailed **leaflets** about your specific topics of interest will be supplied by your EUVP Liaison Officer. These can also be obtained from DG Communication of both the Commission and the Parliament. Where available, **organisation charts** may be a helpful tool in your search for the right interlocutors.

You are invited to make full use of EUROPA, the main **internet** server of the European Union, which provides general and more detailed information about the policies of the EU, the EU Institutions, daily press releases, etc. You will find the site at <http://europa.eu>

Finally, you are also encouraged to consult the website of the EUVP, where you will find more information about the programme and how to prepare yourself for your study-tour. The site can be found at europarl.europa.eu/euvp and europa.eu/euvp

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6. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

• **Content**

To ensure that an individually-tailored programme accurately reflects your professional interests, you are asked to supply a Statement of Purpose which must include:

- a brief description of your **current responsibilities**;
- **EU theme(s)** you wish to examine;
- **specific topics** you wish to discuss/**questions** you would like to ask;
- **list of names of individuals (or organisations)** who you would like to meet.



The information referred to above will influence significantly the nature of the meetings arranged for you during your study-tour to the European Union and should therefore be as detailed as possible prioritising your topics of interest (cf. 5. above). Furthermore, a realistic approach is required while drafting the list of individuals who you would like to meet: (Vice) Presidents of the EU Institutions, Commissioners, etc. are not available for meetings with EUVP participants.

• **Letterhead**

Where appropriate, the Statement of Purpose should be typed on the official letterhead of your employer.

• **Attachments**

As attachments please include the following:

- an up-to-date **Curriculum Vitae** (indicating EU language(s) in which you are able to conduct meetings without the aid of an interpreter);
- a recent **photograph** (passport size);
- a clear photocopy of the relevant page of your **passport** (indicating name, date of birth, passport number, etc.);
- an **e-mail address** where you may always be reached in case of emergency whilst undertaking your study-tour.

• **Deadline**

Please provide this material at least 12 weeks prior to departure.

If the Statement of Purpose is written in another EU language than English or French, a translation into these languages will be provided to the EUVP Secretariat by your Delegation. For your guidance, a **model Curriculum Vitae (Annex 8)** and a **model Statement of Purpose (Annex 9)** are attached to this Handbook.

See Annex 8 and Annex 9

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7. INSURANCE

The EUVP will provide **health and accident insurance cover**, both during your travel to and from the Union and while you are participating in the programme. Private travel will not be covered by this insurance and neither are loss or theft of personal effects. Details will be made available upon request.

8. VISA

You should check the validity of your passport and whether you must obtain a visa to travel to the European Union. The EUVP Secretariat will assist you to obtain your visa, if necessary.

Upon request, the EUVP Secretariat will draft a **visa request form** for the attention of the visa issuing authority. This form contains details about your health and accident insurance cover, travel dates as well as some personal data. Therefore, it is imperative that you send all the necessary documents to the Delegation before the 12-week deadline (cf. 6. above). If needed, a hotel confirmation and an e-ticket number will also be provided by the Secretariat.



The EUVP Secretariat cannot be held responsible in case you fail to obtain the necessary visa on time. You ought to be aware that **if you fail to obtain the necessary travel documents and have to cancel your study-tour as a result, you will not automatically be granted the opportunity to choose a new starting date.**

Finally, you will appreciate that the EUVP Secretariat cannot assist accompanying persons in obtaining the necessary travel documents and/or visa.

9. TRAVEL

The EUVP is a public service-run study-tour that has to account for every euro it spends. All expenditures must comply with certain rules to ensure that they are used in the most cost-effective way, which is why **the EUVP cannot offer the service of a travel agency.**

Approximately 4 weeks prior to departure the EUVP Secretariat will provide you with a prepaid round-trip air ticket from your place of work to Brussels. Where appropriate, travel to Strasbourg will be by plane, to Luxembourg by train. Train tickets will be issued on arrival in Brussels.

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- **Travel itinerary**

**ALL EXTREMELY
IMPORTANT**

- **Air company**

- **Air ticket**

- **No changes permitted!**

- **Strasbourg ticket**

- **8-hour journey or longer**

- **Special travel requests**

- **Unused tickets**

- **Baggage**

- **Travel documents**

- **Car rental**

The EUVP Secretariat is only allowed to issue tickets between your place of work and Brussels, and vice-versa. Departures from other cities and stopovers in between are not permitted!

Requests for travel on favoured airlines can unfortunately not be met.

The air ticket will be issued by the appropriate airline on a prepaid basis. You will travel in **Economy Class** and where available a **non-modifiable, non-reimbursable ticket** will be issued.

Since the ticket can neither be modified nor cancelled, **no changes can be made to the travel itinerary** (cf. 12. below).

In certain cases, only a portion of the overall air ticket is issued on a prepaid basis, the remainder being issued to the participant on arrival in Brussels. This is sometimes the case for participants travelling to Strasbourg.

If your journey from your place of work to Brussels lasts 8 hours or longer, you are offered the opportunity to arrive in Brussels on the Saturday instead of the Sunday, i.e. approximately 2 days before the beginning of your study-tour instead of 1, so you may recover from jetlag. The lump-sum allowance will be increased accordingly. This option, however, is only granted if you specifically request to leave one day earlier. You should be aware that this may involve leaving your home country in the course of the Friday.

Special travel requests such as vegetarian meals on board an aircraft, seating preference, mileage credits, etc. cannot be dealt with by the EUVP Secretariat but are your own responsibility.

Any unused tickets must always be returned to the EUVP Secretariat.

The maximum free baggage allowance on economy class flights within the Union is 20 kg (44 lbs), plus one piece of hand luggage. You should, however, check the maximum baggage allowance on your e-ticket.

You are advised to check passport validity, visa and other requirements well in advance of departure. In order to help you obtain the necessary visa, the EUVP Secretariat will provide you with a form containing details about your stay in the European Union and insurance cover upon request (cf. 8. above).

The EUVP Secretariat will only refund car rental costs where no alternative mode of transport is possible and prior authorisation has been given by the Secretariat.

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10. PRIVATE TRAVEL



Should you wish to travel privately within the European Union before or after your EUVP study-tour, please note that in all cases **you must seek permission from the EUVP Secretariat to do so at least 6 weeks prior to departure**. After this deadline, all requests will be turned down automatically.

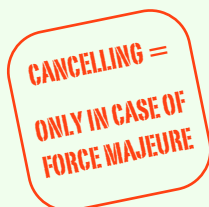
11. ACCOMPANYING PERSON AND SPARE TIME

Your attention is drawn to the fact that, due to the full programme of meetings arranged, an accompanying person or child will spend long periods alone.

Should you nevertheless wish to travel with an accompanying person, you will be required to make all travel arrangements for this person. Furthermore, you will appreciate that the EUVP is obliged to abide by certain rules from which it may not diverge under any circumstances that may well cause your travel itinerary to be different. However, the EUVP will be pleased to make hotel reservations for a **double occupancy** of the room where possible, provided the exact arrangements are clearly indicated to the EUVP Secretariat **6 weeks prior to departure**.

You are asked to bear in mind that EUVP Programme Organisers are not able to assist you with private arrangements (sightseeing, theatre, etc.). However, the hotels where you are staying will be able to give assistance on these matters.

12. POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF STUDY-TOUR



Please remember that **late postponement/cancellation not only causes embarrassment and compromises important contacts for future participants but also implies substantial financial consequences for the EUVP Secretariat, the reimbursement of some of which the EUVP Secretariat might be compelled to claim back from you. As a result, participants should only cancel in case of force majeure.**

In the event of postponement, Delegations must in all cases provide the EUVP Secretariat with a **declaration of good faith** signed by you to indicate the reason for the postponement, otherwise the study-tour will definitely be forfeited.

In the unfortunate event that you must postpone, you will only be invited to choose a new starting date after all other participants have had a chance to choose their starting date.

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13. ADVANCE COPY OF PROGRAMME



A draft copy of your programme will be sent to the Delegation approximately 1 week prior to your arrival in Brussels. **You will appreciate that this draft programme is most likely to change and that you should not start organising your own meetings, since these could interfere with the final schedule arranged by the EUVP Secretariat.** If you wish to add meetings to your programme, you should inform the EUVP Secretariat via the Delegation.

14. HOTELS

All hotel reservations will be made by the EUVP Secretariat.

You will be accommodated during your stay in Brussels at the **Hotel Silken Berlaymont Brussels**, a 4-star hotel close to Commission, Council and Parliament buildings, situated in Boulevard Charlemagne/Karel de Grotelaan 11-19, 1000 Brussels (☎ +32-(0)2-231 09 09). The Hotel Silken Berlaymont Brussels is also close to shops and restaurants. The nearest metro station is Schuman. The EUVP has negotiated a special rate of €160 per night, inclusive of breakfast and taxes. Guests accompanied by a spouse/partner will be charged €187 per night for double occupancy of the room.



Participants visiting the European Parliament in Strasbourg are normally accommodated in a hotel of comparable class.

You are invited to settle your hotel bills from the lump-sum allowance you will receive on the first morning of your meetings (cf. **16.** below).

Please bear in mind that hotels require at least 24 hours' notice of cancellation, and that late cancellation or non-appearance may entail a legal obligation to pay for a room you have not occupied, for which the EUVP is unable to accept responsibility. Check-out time should always be respected, unless prior arrangements are made with the hotel.

Since the use of telephone and internet at the hotels can be very expensive, you are advised to check prices on the spot.

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15. ARRIVAL IN BRUSSELS

You will not be met at arrival at Brussels National Airport (Zaventem) and should make your own way to the Hotel Silken Berlaymont Brussels either by taxi or by public transport.



We recommend the **STIB/MIVB** Bus Nr. 21 (weekends and public holidays, and weekdays after 8 p.m.) or the STIB/MIVB “Airport Line” Bus Nr. 12 (weekdays until 8 p.m.), which stop at Rond-Point Robert Schuman/Robert Schumanplein (just a few minutes' walk from the hotel). Signs leading to STIB/MIVB bus stops at level 0 (one floor down from the arrivals hall) are installed at the airport. Buying a ticket from the machine at the bus stop is cheaper than buying one from the bus driver.

The cost of a **taxi** to the hotel from the airport is approximately €45. If you decide to take a taxi, make sure to only use licensed taxis. They can be recognised by their blue and yellow sign at the front of the car and permanently stand in line just outside the arrivals hall. Do not under any circumstances accept a ride from anyone approaching you in the arrivals hall, even if they claim to be a licensed taxi driver, since you are most likely to get robbed! Please note that every legitimate taxi bears a sign with the personnel number and a photo of the driver in the back, and that the driver is obliged to give you a receipt upon arrival at your destination, so official complaints can be filed if necessary. Finally, you should be aware that not all taxis accept debit cards or credit cards, and that some will only accept cash.



More information about Brussels Airport can be found at the site <http://www.brusselsairport.be>

For your convenience, you are recommended to have sufficient **euros** on arrival in Brussels to cover initial expenses, since the total of your lump-sum allowance and special allowance will not be paid until the first working day.

A **welcome bag** with a letter containing the details of your Brussels meetings (including the initial programme discussion) and a Brussels map indicating the venues of your meetings will be left for you at the hotel reception. This version of the programme is likely to be different from the draft copy sent to your Delegation prior to your arrival.

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Should the receptionist at the hotel claim that no welcome bag has been left for you, be persistent and inform them that your bag has probably been stored in the room at the left behind the reception counter. Your EUVP bag will have a tag bearing your name.

16. PROGRAMME DISCUSSION

Your first official appointment will be a programme discussion with members of the EUVP Secretariat, during which all administrative and financial matters will be explained in detail (meetings, tickets, finances, etc.). You will have the opportunity to ask questions and/or to make suggestions regarding your programme during this meeting. At the conclusion of this meeting, you will be accompanied to the bank in order to collect the total of your lump-sum allowance.

17. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- **Lump-sum allowance**



During your stay in Brussels (or anywhere else in the European Union except Strasbourg), you will receive on your first working day a lump-sum allowance of €265 per night for the duration of your official study-tour. This allowance is designed to cover your subsistence and all hotel expenses. **You can only claim the total of the lump-sum allowance if you stay in the hotel reserved for you by the EUVP Secretariat and if you follow the programme that has been arranged for you by the EUVP Secretariat.**

Participants who travel to Strasbourg will receive a lump-sum allowance of €300 per night spent in Strasbourg. Once again, **you can only claim the total of the lump-sum allowance if you stay in the hotel reserved for you by the EUVP Secretariat and if you follow the programme that has been arranged for you by the EUVP Secretariat.**

- **Refund**

In the unfortunate event that you must shorten the length of your stay, the Secretariat will ask you to return the balance of the lump-sum allowance accordingly.

- **Income tax**

All payments made to you to cover travel or other costs, including the lump-sum allowance, are exempt from European Union, national or local income taxes.

18. FOLLOW-UP TO STUDY-TOUR

We sincerely hope that your participation in the European Union Visitors Programme will enable you to establish or strengthen personal and professional contacts and friendships in the European Union. Your name will be added to the **alumni network** and you are encouraged to keep in touch with the people you meet during your stay.

In its desire to keep under constant review the quality of programme, the EUVP Steering Committee has expressed the wish that all visitors share their overall impressions at the conclusion of their study-tour. You are therefore asked to send to the Head of the Union's Delegation a 2-page **Follow-Up Report** on your EUVP study-tour within 4 weeks of your return (see **Annex 11**).

Please include in your report your comments on:

- specific policy areas covered during your study-tour;
- quantity and level of appointments arranged;
- logistical arrangements.

You are also encouraged to send papers on, and newspaper articles as a result of your EUVP study-tour to the EUVP Secretariat, who will try to ensure that they are circulated to interested parties.

Finally, please remember also to keep your Delegation informed of any change of address or occupation.

See Annex 11

Attachments for the participant:

- **model Curriculum Vitae (Annex 8)**
- **model Statement of Purpose (Annex 9)**
- **model Itinerary/ies (Annex 10)**
- **model Follow-Up Report (Annex 11)**

THIS HANDBOOK
WILL BE
AMENDED FROM
TIME TO TIME