

INFORMATION

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PREFACE



In the GRL degree programme, we learn a lot about theoretical aspects of policy making and sustainability. But what was lacking for me, was an understanding of how policy is made in the real world, specifically in the European Union. I felt like there was a huge knowledge gap, and if I wanted to work in the area of EU policy after I graduate, I did not feel qualified to do so based on this degree programme. This is why I decided to look for an internship in EU policy. When researching paid internships for undergrad students the options were very limited. However the public affairs consultancy FleishmanHillard EU offered a 10-month internship specifically for undergrad students, who could get to know political communications in the context of EU institutions.

How I found the internship

I found a three year old advertisement of the internship on the Maastricht career portal. I used the specific keywords "policy", "European" "undergraduate" and "internship" the searching search engines and job sites. My goals was to find an internship in Brussels, specifically in the policy space so I could understand better how the policy process works. It was quite hard to find something specifically tailored for undergraduates that was paid at the same time. Most of the internships in Brussels are targeted at master students up or even postgrads. This specific internship was a 10-month position at a public affairs agency as a so called "research executive". The description appealed to me because the agency was quite big and popular. Moreover the description listed specific tasks and topics I was interested in.

The application process

The selection process for the internship consisted of three stages: Firstly, all applicants had to hand in a reference, CV and letter of motivation. Secondly, students were selected to participate in a written exam, testing writing, critical thinking and creativity. Lastly, there was an interview with two managers from the company, and am unannounced test after the interview.



INTRODUCTION

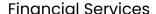


Overview

FleishmanHillard EU is the biggest public affairs consultancy in Brussels, with expertise, in government, relations, public affairs, and communications, the consultants help their clients, navigate, understand and shape the political and policy space of the European Union (FleishmanHillard, 2023). The FH Brussels office is one of 110 offices around the world with 2300 employees in total in 21 countries in the Brussels office alone. There are 130+ members of staff, 120 of which work on EU legislation (EU Transparency Register, 2023).

FH EU is divided into two big teams financial services and public affairs. Additionally, there is a small team solely responsible for communications and (social) media. The financial services team alone makes up about half of the staff and advises companies like Blackrock and Apple as well as banks like Santander, on EU policy. Financial services team also included a group of people specifically working on digital transformation. The public affairs team is divided into smaller teams dealing with specific sectors. The different teams are: "Environment and Chemicals" which also deals with agriculture, sustainability and circular economy, "Energy and Transport" and finally the "Healthcare" team (FleishmanHillard, 2023).

The Teams





Policy and Public Affairs



Media Relations







THE TEAM



Chemicals and Environment

After my application for the position as a research executive was accepted, I was assigned to the Environment and Chemicals team. I was quite excited because this team also deals with circular economy and sustainability policy. I was later told I was assigned to this team because I had the most convincing application, since this team had the highest workload and the most complex cases. It became evident that the high workload was also due to understaffing; in my second week a senior manager left the company, without being replaced for several months. There was no new staff hired, while we took on several new clients.



Marence Jurgens

Peter Holdorf



Screenshot of the Website (fleishmanhillrard.eu) and Photo of the Team at welcome drink (Weiß, 2023)



LEARNING GOALS



Before joining the company, these were the learning goals, I put down in my internship approval form.

- 1.Understand and being able to analyse the policy processes of the European Union
- 2. Being able to develop integrated solutions across traditional, online, experiential and mobile channels to drive successful public affairs and communication programmes
- 3. Being able to utilise digital research tools to identify key audiences, online influencers and issue trends
- 4. Being able to measure brand value and develop strategies for reputation management for brands, with a specific focus on policy making communities

Evaluation of Achieving the Goals

Goal 1

I think it is important to mention here, that in the entire time working Brussels, I have not met a person I would claim to completely understands the policy processes of the European Union. It is incredibly complex, especially when it comes to secondary legislation senior managers with decades of experience, regularly said they still had to ask around to understand what's actually going on. However, I do know now how the "Ordinary Legislative Procedure" works, which is the general way how a law comes to be in the EU. Moreover I learned about a process called secondary legislation, which is often neglected in analysis and advocacy strategies, even though it makes up about 99% of all law passed in the European Union (McLaughlin, 2022). This secondary legislation includes delegated and implementing acts which are adopted to harmonise legislation, for example for how specific products need to be designed or supplement legislation with details, such as what certain data reporting should look like.

The most important tool I learned is to navigate the websites of the EU institutions, which make it possible for me to monitor and work on any policy on the European level. An example is finding the schedules of the different committees in the parliament, which Member of Parliament is responsible for writing a report, or determining what the Commissioners have planned to publish in the upcoming months. Overall I would confidently say I achieved this learning goal to the degree I was aiming for.



Goal 2 and 4

While I would not say I am able to fully "develop integrated solutions across traditional, online, experiential and mobile channels to drive successful public affairs and communication programmes" on my own, I do think I got sufficient insights to contribute meaningfully to a team attempting to do just this. Particularly interesting here is the work I did for a company called TDMA or the Titanium Dioxide Mining Association. Titanium Dioxide (TiO2) is a chemical that is ubiquitous in our lives: We use in paint, coatings for solar panels, it is an essential ingredient in mineral sunscreen as well as medication. TiO2 is also used in food dye, since it makes food colours brighter and more colourful. It is used everywhere in the world except for the European Union. TiO2 as an ingredient in food has been banned since it cannot be said with enough confidence that it causes no harm whatsoever when ingested in large quantities (European Food Safety Agency, 2020). Based on this decision there was a lot of bad press about TiO2 and as a reaction, we set up a system to monitor what is reported in the press and on social media, compiling daily, weekly and monthly overviews and data. We also wrote rebuttals in case the information in the press was factually wrong. We also set up a website and organised events and meetings with policy makers present scientific evidence relevant for the policy process. Through this process I got a sufficient overview to evaluate and set up processes to successfully influence legislation and reputation of a company, which also is the aim of learning goal four.

Excursion: Titanium Dioxide, is it really toxic?

Since EFSA's decision to ban TiO2 as a food additive, people ask the valid question, if it is not safe to ingest in food, why would it be in medicine or why can we use it in cosmetics? To answer this question we need to consider three points. Firstly, it's about the quantity; in medicine, the amount you ingest is very small, especially compared to the food we eat every day. Secondly, TiO2 in medicine is a necessary party of the ingredients, as it influences in which part of our digestive system the medicine dissolves and therefore optimally is taken up by our bodies. Here we need to consider the costs and the benefits of including TiO2 vs not including it and in the case of medicine, the positives clearly outweigh the negatives (European Medicines Agency, 2021). Thirdly, when it comes to cosmetics, we do not ingest them, they are applied to our skin, and certain compounds, such as TiO2 is not able to penetrate our skin barrier. As well as with medication, TiO2 is an essential part of mineral sunscreen, as it is the particle that reflect the sun radiation (European Commission, 2014). This issue shows the intricacies of chemicals legislation, it is complicated, there are often no easy answers and we need to consider risks vs hazards in how the chemicals are used.



Goal 3

While a part of my job as to identify stakeholders and key audiences, I did not really use digital research tools for that, which I think is a pity, since it seems like a useful skill to know. We worked with many other digital tools, however, mostly to monitor legislative processes, media and opinions which enabled us to identify general trends, so this aspect of the learning goal I would see as fulfilled.

REFLECTION

Climate vs Environment

One of the most important things I learned is that sometimes environmental and climate protection are at odds, at least in the short term. A very good example are clean technologies such as wind turbines or electric vehicles. While we need to decarbonise our energy system and mobility, only technologically feasible solutions rely on wind energy for electricity and electric cars to get around. And the extraction of minerals needed to build these technologies have huge environmental repercussions (Haddaway et al., 2019). Another example that is less publicly discussed are

per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). They are also called "forever chemicals" because they are so durable and their chemical bonds we so strong, that they are basically indestructible. This is the reason they are used in so many products such as medical devices, fire fighting foams, or batteries. But at the same time the very same properties that make them so desirable, also are the reason they are so problematic: They accumulate in the environment and in our bodies without breaking down. Some PFAS have already proven to be toxic and disrupting our hormonal system (European Environmental Agency, 2019).

So the difficulty is to weigh the costs against the benefits; do we accept environmental and health risks to make more durable products, which is on the other hand also more sustainable?

These examples show, how complex sustainability policy is. I think that because our study programme teaches us to think in multilayered ways and embrace complexity, I was able to bring different perspectives to the table and thereby add value to the team in a unique way.

While I brought a lot of knowledge on sustainability to the table, I was still lacking many insights, especially where legislation and sustainability meet. However I am confident I was able to catch up very quickly and integrate to the team seamlessly.

TASKS



The interns at Fleishmanhillard EU are supporting the teams in their day to day work. Below is an overview of my main tasks.

Attending public deliberations of the EU institutions, press conferences and policy workshops

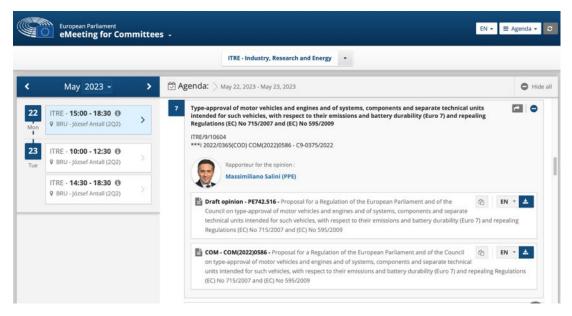
A very memorable event I attended was the EIT Food Event. EIT is the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and organises events for policy makers, civil society and industry around a number of topics. The EIT Food Event happened in the context of a specific legislative proposal, that was supposed to be published but was later scrapped: the Sustainable Food Systems Framework. The law was planned under the Green Deal, but according to a friend at the Commission's Directorate General (DG) for Agriculture, it was scrapped, because the DG for Health (DG SANTE) were not able to find common ground, on matters such as food safety, pesticide use and other requirements for farmers and agri-food businesses. At the event, many topics were discussed, the most memorable was measuring carbon uptake in agriculture and feasibility of certain technologies being used in farming. I wrote a summary, that was useful internally, but unfortunately, there was not much useful information for any clients. This event taught me how to collect necessary information for clients and which events have potential to offer insights into legislation.

Conducting desk and phone research with institutions and monitoring of policy developments

To stay up to date we consulted a number of websites, especially from the European institutions to see what is on the political agenda. One of the websites is the eMeeting platform of the European Parliament (see screenshot below). It offers an excellent overview of the committees time schedules, which files are discussed, who is responsible as well as providing the meeting documents. Another very useful website is the document register of the European Commission, where the policy proposals of the upcoming months are listed, including the relevant Commissioners (see screenshot below). The last website I want to mention in this context is the plenary website of the Parliament. It shows which debates are held and which proposals are voted on. It is essential to keep track of the dates and times to inform clients and communicate with policy makers ahead of time.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR MONITORING





Website 1: eMeeting for Committees at the EU Parliament

Website 2:
Overview of
upcoming
policy
proposals of
the European
Commission

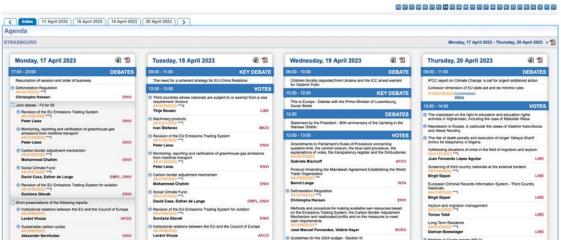
Possible items for College agendas 22 March – 28 June 2023

The planning is <u>indicative</u> and proposals are subject to Better Regulation principles, including the requirement to conduct an impact assessment.

Only key policy items are included in this indicative list.

The President may at any moment in time, decide to change the planning and/or to call for additional College meetings.

Date of Commissi on meeting (dates tbc)	Possible items for oral procedure	President/VP Responsible	Other relevant events
22/03/2023	Consumers package - Substantiating environmental claims - Sustainable consumption of goods – promoting repair and reuse (the right to repair)	TIMMERMANS/JOUROVÁ	23-24 March European Council
29/03/2023	Directive to further expand and upgrade the use of digital tools and processes in company law Pharmaceutical package Revision of the pharmaceutical legislation Revision of the EU legislation on medicines for children and rare diseases Council Recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a one health approach	JOUROVÁ SCHINAS	
5/04/2023	Communication in response to the European citizens' initiative Save Bees and Farmers! Initiative on transfer of criminal proceedings	TIMMERMANS / JOUROVÁ JOUROVÁ	
18/04/2023 (Str)	Cyber package - Cyber Solidarity Act - Cybersecurity Skills Academy	VESTAGER / SCHINAS	17-20 April EP Plenary



Website 3: European Parliament Plenary Agenda

TASKS



Drafting of briefing notes and analyses of EU policies

The services we provided as a consultancy are based on the need for companies to receive comprehensive information on what is happening in the policy arena. Many of the information is scattered or in legal jargon. Part of our offer is to break down all this information into presentations and emails that are easily understood. An example of the work I did in this area was to summarise the Critical Raw Materials Act, that was published in March 2023. I wrote down the key issues the law is addressing and highlighted the areas that are relevant to our clients. Together with a team member, we then analysed which areas are of concern that need to be communicated to the policy maker, and what the best narratives could be. Based on these types of briefings we then develop communication strategies and policy campaigns.

Participating in internal brainstorms and strategy sessions

Towards the very end of my internship, we conducted an internal brainstorming session on how the team functions and what could be improved, including how to deal with the high workload. This was very interesting, as the supervisors did take the matter very seriously, and tried to implement solutions, such as daily check-ins to prioritise what was important for the day, and what could be delegated or delayed. I would have wished for this to happen more often, or towards the beginning of my internship, since it was quite demanding and sometimes even overwhelming. But for the next job, I am better prepared to offer solutions also for the entire team, based on this workshop.

Abiding by the European Public Affairs Consultancies Association Code of Conduct

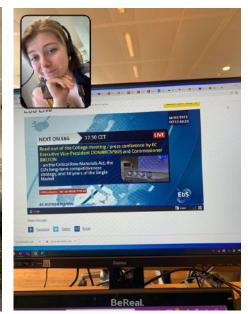
Throughout the entire internship, the ethical standards were held very high, it was expected of us to communicate whenever we spoke to policy-makers who we were working for and which clients have an interest in the legislation. We had several ethics workshops explaining to us the European Public Affairs Consultancies Association Code of Conduct and offering refreshers. This is especially relevant, since the company has been involved in some breaches of the code of conduct; In 2019 FleishmanHillard has been banned from working for Bayer as the company compiled a list of policy-makers who were advocating to regulate Glyphosate, a herbicide widely used in farming, including with details on personal addresses and hobbies, which is illegal, and highly unethical (CorporateEurope, 2019). It was interesting to see, which measures the company has implemented since, to prevent something like this from happening again.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS









The internship proved to be challenging in many way I did not anticipate; The repetitiveness of tasks, the ethical questions of which industry you represent and what their interests are, as well as navigating so much new information every day were a lot to get used to. Working at a consultancy has many downsides. But on the other hand I do think it is anexcellent way to be introduced into polcy-making. The repetitiveness offers structure and safety. And since I worked for so many different clients, I got an excellent glance at many different industry. I worked with companies like Nike, Ikea, producers of the foam for mattresses and whitener in paint. In the chaos I learned to see all the layers and aspects you need to consider when making policy.

I spent many evenings at the office, I sat in front of a computer, sometimes for more than eight hours in a day. But I also got to meet politicians, listened to commissioners and go to the European Parliament. I will probably never work at a consultancy again, but at the time it was an excellent choice to kick-start a career in politics.

I would like to express so much gratitude to all the people I met during my internship: My managers, who took time to explain everything, my colleagues for brightening my lunch break, and the other interns who always helped out.



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ASSESSMENT FORM MINOR'S INTERNSHIP

To be completed by EXTERNAL INTERNSHIP SUPERVISOR

Name of student:	Linnea Weiss							
Internship period:	1 February 2022 - 31 August 2023							
Name of external supervisor:	Rosanna Accettura							
Internship organization	FleishmanHillard Brussels	Unit within internship organization	Environment and Chemicals					

Interim evaluation The interim evaluation took place on
Explanatory note:
Linnea and I discussed personal and professional development goals.

We would like to ask you, after the end of the internship, to assess the aspects listed below for the entire internship period, and to subsequently discuss your evaluation and remarks with the student on internship. Your feedback, both positive and critical, is very much appreciated.

Assessment guidelines

The assessment should be based on a five-point scale as follows:

- ++ very good performance
- + good performance
- +/- poor performance on the edge between a pass and a fail
- unsatisfactory performance
- -- highly unsatisfactory performance

Performance within the organization Learning outcome: The student is capable of adequately functioning within the organization								
Precision and thoroughness in performing tasks		-	+/-	+	(1)			
Ability to cope with changing circumstances		-	+/-	(++			
Work tempo		-	+/-	\oplus	++			
Writing skills		-	+/-	+	(+)			
Oral communication skills		-	+/-	+	(+)			
Organizational skills		-	+/-	\oplus	++			
Understanding of business processes to the extent that they relate to the tasks to be completed		-	+/-	+	\oplus			
Handling feedback		-	+/-	+	\oplus			
Demonstrated interest in one's work		_	+/-	+	+			
Demonstrated interest and ability to engage in other company activities		_	+/-	$ \oplus $	++			



/ campus fryslân

university college fryslân

/ gronnigen /	/				
Functioning within a team/unit: professional attitude, communication and		-	+/-	+	\oplus
collaboration with other staff members					
Interaction with internship supervisor		-	+/-	+	(++)
Summary of evaluation of learning outcome Performance		-	+/-	+	(++)
Remarks: Linnea demonstrated strong motivation and genuine interest, contributed to her successful achievement of learning outcomes.			_	y, her	
The intended output of the internship					
Learning outcome: The student is able to generate the output (product(s) and/or serinternship plan.	vice(s))	desci	ribed in	the	
Quality of intended output		_]	+/-	+	T⊕
Link between presentation and setting, context and audience		-	+/-	\oplus	++
Reflection on the usefulness of internship for future career prospects]	_]	+/-	+	\bigoplus
Summary of evaluation of learning outcome Output		-	+/-	+	⊥⊕
Personal Learning Outcomes (optional - to be completed by the student on the bas The student proved capable of realizing the personal learning objectives listed in the	is of his	s/her hip co	interns ontract.	hip pla	n)
		-	+/-	+	++
		-	+/-	+	++
		-	+/-	+	++
Summary of Personal Learning Outcomes assessment Remarks:		<u>- 1</u>	+/-	+	++
Final avaluation					
Final evaluation		Evi	tornal c	ınervi	or
Final evaluation Summary of evaluations:		Ext	ternal si		
		Ext	ternal si		sor + (
Summary of evaluations: Learning outcome Performance - The student is capable of adequately functioning		-		/-	
Summary of evaluations: Learning outcome Performance - The student is capable of adequately functioning within the organization		-	- +,	/-	+ (

impressive learning ability and versatility. Her proactive approach and

innovative ideas added significant value to our projects, further

Indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 to what extent the student's contribution had added value for your organization:

8.5

				ommend	this stu	dent for	a vacano	y elsewh	ere?
∌	+	+/-	_						

