



---

## EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

### ALESSANDRO BRUGIOLO

---

Alessandro is a 24 years old graduate from Italy. He moved to Brussels last March, and after a traineeship at the European Business Summits, he's currently working for Kantar as a Market Research Analyst, while at the same time trying to be engaged academically with a Master in Management (VUB).

Before coming to Belgium, he completed his master in International Cooperation at the University of Turin and while working as Operations Officer Trainee at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in Milan.

He started his academic life with a Bachelor in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Padua, time during which he went for an Erasmus in Latvia (studying geopolitics and law at Riga Graduate School of Law) and for a curricular internship in Uganda with a local NGO (AVSI-Uganda). With a strong interest in political science and international relations, he decided back then to enrol in Area and Global Studies for International Cooperation at the University of Turin, degree obtained in November 2023 with a specialization in Africa.

He has always tried to improve and implement his practical skills, for this since the very beginning he has combined the academic sphere with the practical one: home-painter in Padua, international steward and bartender in Turin; as well as getting into corporate roles as Project Manager Intern at OCCAM, within the Horizon EU framework, and lately as Operation Officer Trainee at The Boston Consulting Group in Milan for 7 months.

He considers himself a creative and empathetic person, with a strong interest in literature and poetry in particular, two elements that eventually characterize his personality and lifestyle deeply. He sees problems and challenges as opportunities to grow, poems as lifeblood, curiosity as the main lens of analysis and relativism as basic perspective for understanding the world.

### BLANKA CSITE

---

Blanka is a 27-year-old professional from Budapest, currently working as a Policy Officer at The Guild of Research-Intensive Universities in Brussels, focusing on research, innovation, and higher education policies. She previously completed a Blue Book traineeship at the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, where she was involved in the planning and implementation of the European Research Area.



Blanka holds a Bachelor's in International Public Administration and a Master's degree in International Public Service Relations. She enriched her academic journey with Erasmus+ semesters in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Tampere, Finland, specializing in EU affairs, sectoral policies, international political economy, and security studies.

During her university years, Blanka was an active volunteer at the Erasmus Student Network, serving as a mentor and event manager. In this role, she supported incoming exchange students, represented their interests, and collaborated with the university's International Office.

With three years of professional experience at a Budapest-based research institute, Blanka has contributed to large-scale EU and internationally-funded research projects, including those under Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, EEA and Norway Grants, and the International Visegrad Fund. She has also developed expertise in science communication and event management.

In her free time, Blanka enjoys reading, practicing yoga, visiting museums, and exploring new places.

## BORBALA SZELES

---

Borbála is a 23-year-old recent graduate of political science. Currently, she is a Blue Book trainee at the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy.

Her thesis was based on a feminist political theory through which she showed the current state of reproductive rights for women in Hungary by analysing the political discourse around bodily autonomy, abortion, as well as obstetric violence in the labor room. At her most recent workplace at a trade union, she participated in communicating and protecting workers' rights, moving along processes for better and safer work conditions. Besides that, as a volunteer, she teaches children undergoing long-term medical treatment, during home recovery, as well as after their return to school.

For her, all of these above root in the same belief of social justice, equality and advocacy. These values are what motivate her, and she aims to embody them in her work on cohesion policy, a vital element of European integration.

## DIANA SZIVÁKOVÁ

---

Diana is a recent graduate in Health & Social Management, eager to professionally develop in her chosen field by embarking on the Blue Book Traineeship at DG SANTE. Originally from Košice, Slovakia, her academic journey has taken her to four diverse corners of Europe, allowing her to appreciate the common denominators that define the European way of life. After graduating in Business and Economics from the University of Bologna, she spent a period working for multinational corporations, which led her to recognize that she would find greater fulfillment in a career with a deeper social meaning. Her passion for addressing multifaceted issues— the solutions to which require considering various aspects, from economic to ethical—perfectly aligned with the mission of the newly-founded Health Technology Assessment (HTA) institute in Slovakia, where she worked during her Master studies. Enhanced collaboration among EU members in the field of HTA also forms the main focus of her current role at DG SANTE.



In her free time, she enjoys investing in personal development and her wide array of interests. A language enthusiast with a particular fondness for Romance languages, she is continuously improving her proficiency in the languages she already speaks fluently (English, Italian, Spanish), while also studying new ones (French, Greek). Additionally, she takes pleasure in expanding her artistic horizons, discovering new music, visiting galleries, composing perfumes, and trying exotic recipes. Furthermore, as a member of the Ladislav Hanus Fellowship, an intellectual Christian association active in Slovakia, she enjoys deep discussions with fellow members, though she will not hesitate to participate in any social gathering.

## FRANCESCA DI MATTEO

---

Francesca Di Matteo is a 28-year-old professional with a solid science, technology, and business consulting background. Born in Pescara, Italy, she graduated cum laude in Industrial and Molecular Biotechnology from the University of Bologna in 2022, where she collaborated with the CINECA supercomputing center, which ignited her passion for computing and data-driven solutions.

Currently, Francesca works as a consultant specializing in data strategy and software development. Her role involves bridging the gap between technical and business teams, ensuring that projects are both technically sound and aligned with strategic business goals. In 2023, she made the significant decision to relocate to Dubai, seeking to broaden her professional and cultural horizons in a dynamic and challenging environment. This experience has not only enhanced her technical skills but also deepened her understanding of cross-cultural collaboration and adaptation in diverse work environments.

Outside of her professional life, Francesca is a passionate traveller who enjoys exploring new cultures and landscapes. She finds balance and self-reflection through hiking and practicing yoga. Additionally, she has a keen interest in sports, particularly golf and racquet sports.

Francesca's deep-rooted interest in science and politics has been a guiding force since her childhood, driving her to continually seek out new knowledge and opportunities. Now, she is looking to establish a foundation for a future career in Europe. She views Brussels as the epicenter of European decision-making and innovation, a place where she can further her professional ambitions and contribute meaningfully to the intersection of science, technology, and policy.

## HANNE-LISE FRATEUR

---

At 26, Hanne-Lise is a Belgian enthusiast for ethics in politics, driven by a strong intellectual curiosity. Her academic journey led her to earn master's degrees in modern history and applied ethics, and to complete a transdisciplinary honours programme focused on international and intercultural cooperation. These studies took her across Europe, to the Czech Republic and Sweden, where she thrived in a multicultural environment.

Her keen interest in understanding human motivations—both individually and collectively—fuels her exploration of identity politics, group dynamics, and the intersection of differing perspectives. This inspired her early professional experience as a teacher in a low-SES school, where she discovered her passion for promoting active citizenship and the transformative power of information.



Now, she works at the King Baudouin Foundation, where she helps connect philanthropists with meaningful causes, guiding impactful partnerships for social good.

In her personal life, she is a lover of nature, writing, and the arts. She has a special affection for music and dance - particularly her cello and salsa steps - which bring her great joy and creative expression.

## HENRIQUE GOMES

---

Henrique, 29, comes from the state of Minas Gerais in the countryside of Brazil. He holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations and a master's degree in Political Science, focusing his research on the intersection between religion and foreign policy. He is now embarking on his international career as a trainee with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE).

His passion for international affairs began with his first Model UN experience in high school. This enthusiasm grew as he advanced from a junior delegate to the Secretary-General of his university's Model UN in 2017. He then was part of the Brazilian delegation at the Youth Assembly at the UN Headquarters in 2018. His interest in international topics deepened into a strong fascination with EU politics following an exchange semester in The Hague in 2019, where he learned about European institutions and decision-making and visited the Parliament and the Commission in Brussels.

What motivates him most about this career path is the opportunity to align his professional work with a deeper sense of purpose. He believes this alignment ensures high-quality and lasting results. Henrique is also a strong advocate for social justice grounded in integral humanism.

He is passionate about art and everything related to The Lord of the Rings. In his free time, he enjoys running, reading literature - both classic and contemporary authors - listening to the band Jungle, watching videos about history, and meeting up with friends.

## JUDITH BENK

---

Judith, 25, recently moved to Brussels to begin a Bluebook Traineeship at DG NEAR in the European Commission. She holds a double Master's degree in International Affairs from Sciences Po and the London School of Economics. Her primary interests include international cooperation on human rights, migration and sustainable development – fields which she has explored through various internships and volunteer work, notably with NGOs, an embassy, and the United Nations system.

A particularly formative experience for Judith was working at the Sciences Po Law School Clinic, where she took in-depth classes on European and French migration law while accompanying asylum seekers through the Refugee Status Determination process. In the past year, she worked as a Carlo Schmid Fellow with UNESCO in Ecuador, focusing on education, climate change and migration. Before moving to Brussels, she honed her barista skills while waitressing in a café in her hometown in Southern Germany. In her free-time, Judith enjoys dancing, the outdoors and picnics!

## LEILA MESKELINDI

---



Leila is a dynamic and innovative leader with a passion for driving positive change and fostering collaboration. With a robust academic background that includes an MA in Peace and Security, an MA in European Law on Migration and Asylum, and an MA in Conflict Prevention Operations, Crisis Management, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, Leila has consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence and a keen ability to navigate complex challenges.

Throughout her career, she has held various roles that have honed her skills in international humanitarian law, migration studies, and diplomatic relations. Her research thesis on “Ukraine-Russia: From Military Escalation to Humanitarian Crisis” showcases her deep understanding of contemporary global issues. She has also completed advanced courses such as the “European Intercultural Mediator” and participated in prestigious programs like the “School of Modern Diplomacy 2022” and the “OSCE-UNODA Scholarship for Peace and Security.”

As a Fellow of the European Leadership Programme, Leila is eager to contribute her insights and learn from the diverse perspectives of other Fellows, mentors, coaches, and speakers. She believes in the power of collaboration and is dedicated to building a supportive and inclusive community within the programme.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Leila is passionate about languages, having earned a BA in Languages, Foreign Literature, and Linguistic Mediation Techniques (EN-FR). She is also actively involved in various organizations, including the Italian Red Cross, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

Leila looks forward to connecting with fellow participants and contributing to the collective success of the European Leadership Programme. Her enthusiasm, expertise, and collaborative spirit make her a valuable addition to this esteemed community.

## LISE BRUMENT

---

Lise is a 25 year old young professional from the countryside of Normandy, France. She completed a master’s degree in human Rights and Humanitarian Action at Sciences Po in Paris, France and a Master’s degree in EU International Relations and Diplomacy at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. She has worked for a year for the Child Friendly Justice European Network before studying in Bruges and will be an intern for Pax Christi International during her fellowship in the ELP. There, she will support the communications of the organisation and participate in the coordination of its activities in Asia and the Pacific region. In her free time, Lise enjoys singing, dancing and running. She enjoys reading and is passionate about languages. She speaks French, English and German, but also has some notions of Arabic, Chinese, Thai and Spanish, and is currently learning Italian. Last but not least, she is interested in child protection and would like to pursue a career advocating for children’s rights.

## MARCELL OLÁH

---

Marcell is a 26-year-old young professional from Hungary with an academic background in International Relations and work experience in the field of public relations. Marcell holds a BA in International Relations degree from the University of Exeter and a Master of International Politics from KU Leuven. He has a distinct interest in political communication, diplomacy and public affairs.

During his time at university, Marcell was active in community building, by being elected to be the President of the Hungarian Society of the University of Exeter in the academic year of 2019/20. In Belgium, he became the founder



of the Belgian branch of the Hungarian Youth Association, an organisation that seeks to connect, represent and build the community of Hungarian students studying abroad.

His work experience includes internships at high-profile organisations such as Amnesty International Hungary – where he gained insights into human rights advocacy and education – or Political Capital, where he worked on research-related projects. During the last four years, Marcell has been working as a mentor at Engame Academy, an educational program that helps high school students going abroad for university education.

After graduation, he started a career in the field of public relations at FleishmanHillard Café reaching the position of Account Executive. His expertise spans project management, consulting, media relations, copywriting, creative campaign development and media monitoring.

Since the beginning of October 2024, Marcell has been pursuing his BlueBook Traineeship at the Strategic Communication and Foresight unit of the European External Action Service.

Marcell is passionate about hiking, cycling, exploring new places and concerts. He likes to play the percussion and go to cultural events. He is also a fan of aviation and its history.

## MARIA VILLALONGA

---

Maria is a young Spanish professional, currently undertaking the Blue Book traineeship at the DG ENER in the European Commission. She holds a degree in Economics and a BBA from UPF, and a Master's in Environmental and Energy Economics from AgroParisTech.

With a year of technical experience working on green hydrogen projects at EDF R&D, Maria has also been actively involved in the Economy of Francesco initiative since 2020. Her recent participation in a summer school at IBERO University in Mexico on "Economías del Buen Vivir" reinforced her belief that effective change requires listening to indigenous voices and local wisdom.

Maria dedicated a year to traveling and volunteering across Asia and Latin America, focusing on climate change education and integral ecology. Her experiences in the Philippines, Brazil, Peru, and India have enriched her understanding of local cultures and environmental issues, fueling her commitment to contribute to the common good.

In her spare time, Maria enjoys ballet dancing, running, swimming, reading, and learning new languages. She loves connecting with and learning from people from all the world and believes that addressing socio-ecological challenges requires a holistic perspective. With a strong commitment to social and environmental justice, Maria aspires to build a career in international public policy that promotes a fair ecological transition.

## MATTHIAS KÖRNER

---

Matthias earned his Master's degree in International Business and Economic Diplomacy, specialising in International Economic Relations. Growing up in a rural area adjacent to the Czech border in Lower Austria, Matthias studied in Krems, Vienna, Athens and Jerusalem. Moreover, he lived in Paris, where he completed an internship in a startup company in the field of digitalisation. His academic background spans Business Administration, Economics and



International Relations. Before coming to Brussels, the 25-year-old worked in the railway sector for two years. In that role, he was primarily involved in business intelligence and market analysis as part of the strategy department.

Keenly interested in international politics and economics, he aspires to engage in European policymaking. As Matthias aims to gain a deeper understanding of the EU's industrial transformation, and, more broadly, the intersection of economic and environmental policies, he applied for a Blue Book Traineeship at the Directorate-General for Competition. During his traineeship, the young professional is based in Unit H.2, focusing on state aid in Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI), Environment and Innovation.

In his free time, Matthias practises a wide range of sports – preferably tennis, cycling, running or various workouts. Moreover, he enjoys exploring new music and attending cultural events. His motivation to join the European Leadership Programme is to reflect on Europe's future with individuals of diverse professions and experiences, challenge his own beliefs and create lasting connections.

## PEDRO AOUN

---

Despite a Spanish name and a French passport, Pedro was born and raised in Lebanon. Graduated from the Jesuit university of Saint Joseph as a civil and environmental engineer, he continued his studies in Paris with a degree in Transportation and Sustainable Development at ParisTech. Since then, he has been working at a multinational French company specialized in testing, inspection and certification across all sectors. Debuting on the field in industrial air emissions control, he later joined the energy saving certificates team as a project manager.

His world is mostly shaped by two of his traits: belief and eclecticism. His actions need to be driven by higher core values while constantly changing environments draw him excitement. This slowly turned him into a keen traveler avid for multiculturalism and meaning.

By joining the ELP, he would like to push his professional discernment a bit further to find his place in society and in the professional world while enjoying an international community with shared values.

## PIETRO SIGNO

---

Pietro is a graduate of the College of Europe in EU international relations and diplomacy studies and comes from a small French-Italian bilingual region in the Italian Alps. He is currently a Blue Book trainee at the EEAS. After studying in Geneva, he moved to Belgium to continue his studies and career, wishing to become a European diplomat one day. In particular, his interests focus on EU-Asia relations, peace-making and conflict resolution.

Furthermore, because he believes that international and local dimensions are connected, he has been engaged in his home region youth parliament, where he cultivated his passion for politics.

He has also been passionate about history, philosophy, art, and literature since his classical high school education. He cultivates a passion for singing in choirs (and sometimes solo as well).

## SARA ZONTA

---



Sara is an Italian young professional with Ugandan roots. From a young age, she has felt a deep calling to help others, a value instilled by her family through their involvement in volunteering activities both in Italy and Uganda. Being exposed to marginalized and fragile communities shaped her outlook and inspired her to pursue university studies in Political Science and Human Rights at the University of Padua. During her studies, she participated in an Erasmus+ Programme in Latvia, attending a full semester at Riga's Graduate School of Law. After successfully completing the Erasmus program, she continued her academic journey by pursuing a Master's Degree in Political Science and Government in Milan, with the goal of applying her knowledge to protect vulnerable communities.

Sara has a strong commitment to EU policy development, leveraging her legal expertise across various policy domains. Through extracurricular activities and voluntary commitments within pro-European associations, she has deepened her understanding of European affairs and contributed to its policy execution.

Professionally, Sara has gained significant experience through her internships. She interned at OCCAM, the Observatory on Digital Communication in consultative status with UN-ECOSOC in Milan, where she contributed to organizing and drafting the annual Infopoverty World Conference in New York. Additionally, she completed an internship with Caritas Europa, further strengthening her understanding of humanitarian work and social justice. Currently, Sara works at The ONE Campaign, an international NGO, where she continues to advocate for global poverty eradication and health initiatives.

Driven by her curiosity and openness to other cultures, Sara has developed a strong linguistic repertoire, speaking Italian, English, and conversational French. She is a highly energetic individual who enjoys a wide range of activities, including running, swimming, training, cooking, reading, dancing, and singing. Passionate about maintaining a balanced lifestyle, she embraces both physical and artistic endeavors. Traveling and visiting museums are also among her favorite pastimes, reflecting her diverse interests and commitment to personal growth.

## SILVIA LOPES

---

My name is Silvia Seixas Lopes, and I am deeply committed to addressing environmental inefficiencies and social inequalities. As a multidisciplinary sustainability professional, my expertise spans societal transformation, environmental management, innovation, governance, and international relations. I hold a BSc in Global Sustainability Science and an MSc in Sustainable Development, both obtained cum laude from Utrecht University.

Living in Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, and Brazil has given me a global perspective, and my knowledge of seven languages allows me to collaborate effectively across cultures. My proactive approach was evident during my leadership as chair of the Geosciences Faculty Council at Utrecht University, where I successfully advocated for greener institutional policies. I further honed my project management skills through research assistantships, contributing to projects like "Conceptualising Justice in Sustainability Transitions" and "Monitoring and Evaluating Certification Schemes for the EU Bioeconomy." Beyond academia, my internship with a Brazilian NGO allowed me to advocate for justice in tropical bioeconomy systems and examine power dynamics in agribusiness, deepening my understanding of the socio-environmental challenges tied to global development.





Currently based in Brussels, I am an Environmental Management Trainee at the European Parliament's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and Sustainability Unit. My journey across multiple countries and sectors has shaped my holistic approach to sustainability, and I remain dedicated to advancing equitable and resilient solutions at both European and global levels.

## ZVONIMIR OBRADOVIĆ

---

Zvonimir is a 28-year-old Croatian national residing in Brussels since 2020, where he moved because of his second master's degree but stayed to pursue a career at European institutions. He holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and English language and literature, and a master's degree in philosophy teaching and English language teaching from the University of Osijek, as well as a master's degree in English linguistics and literary studies from the Free University of Brussels (VUB). During his studies in Croatia, Zvonimir was the vice president and the president of the local committee of AIESEC Osijek and has worked on executing a dozen projects aiming to better the lives of local communities in Eastern Croatia. His time in AIESEC incentivized him to participate in a Merit 360 programme revolving around Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations in New York City and he ultimately spent one summer volunteering in Iran to help increase the engagement of youth with the Sustainable Development Goals. Zvonimir has done two Erasmus exchanges, one in Katowice, Poland and the second one in Seville, Spain, and is an avid traveller, having visited around forty countries around the world. He has completed both a Blue Book traineeship as well as a traineeship with a Member of the European Parliament and currently works on strategic planning and programming at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission.

