

## Exploring Education and Transatlantic Relations: U.S. Educators' Visit to Brussels



*Photo 1: Group photo*

From October 1-4, 2023, a group of educators from the United States and Canada traveled to Brussels, Belgium, for the first-ever [U.S. Educators EU study visit](#), funded by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States. The educators included four nominated by the US National Council for the Social Studies:

- Tina Ellsworth: *Vice President of National Council for the Social Studies, Assistant Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, Missouri*
- Kimberly Huffman: *Adjunct College Professor of Undergraduates, National Council for the Social Studies Teacher of the Year 2022, Ohio*
- Matthew Missias: *School support specialist for Charter Schools at Grand Valley State University, Michigan*
- Shannon Pugh: *Former President of the National Council for the Social Studies, Director of Community and School Programming for Anne Arundel County Public Schools in Annapolis, Maryland*

The experience taught participants all about the European Union, its institutions, and the role of educators in enhancing transatlantic relations.

### Breaking into the “Brussels Bubble”

Participants enjoyed an introductory presentation on EU history, purpose, and institutions by **Michele Chang**, Director of the Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs at the College of Europe.

A visit to the European Parliament offered a closer look at EU decision-making procedures and a chance to explore one of the buildings where EU policies and legislation are crafted.

At the European Commission, they were welcomed by **Daniela Dzurakova**, Legal Officer at the Directorate-General for Budget. From her presentation, participants delved deeper into the role of the European Commission and enjoyed an extensive Q-and-A. One participant, Kimberly Huffman stated: *“As I study government types and systems with my students in the United States, I think I’m going to have a lot more confidence to discuss what exists elsewhere and be able to share that knowledge with my students in the classroom”*.



*Photo 2: Kimberly Huffman*

### **One classroom, many languages**

A highlight for the U.S. educators was a visit to the headquarters of the European Schools, an intergovernmental organization responsible for managing the multilingualism of the children of EU staff. Discussions with Executive Coordinator **Karoly Pala** and European School history teacher **Vincent Arimondo** covered curriculum design, preparing students for future pathways, and teaching sensitive historical events in an international setting.

### **Meeting the Gilman Scholars**

Parallel to the U.S. Educators EU study visit was the fourth Gilman Scholars EU study visit (read about the third visit [here](#)). This gave the American educators the opportunity to connect with U.S. students who had chosen to study in EU Member States, and hear about their experience. They also learned about the opportunities and programs available for U.S. students to study in the EU under the Fulbright Schuman scholarship program, one of several U.S. Cultural Education Programmes.

## A Visit to the U.S. Mission to the EU

The study visit concluded with a visit to the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Participants engaged with **Deb Lynn**, Minister Counselor for Public Affairs, who answered questions about EU-U.S. relations and her career path. Matthew Missias, said: *“The biggest thing that I’m probably taking back is just a better knowledge of what the EU is and how it functions, and what we can do as Americans to increase the cooperation and communication between the EU and the United States, so that we can continue to operate as the best partners that we possibly can be.”*



*Photo 3: Matthew Missias*

This particular EU study visit emphasized the important role educators play in fostering transatlantic understanding. The U.S. Educators EU study visit is one of the activities under the EU Education Outreach project funded by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States. Participants are selected based on their involvement in social studies in the United States and because they support the annual Euro Challenge competition for high-school students, also funded by the Delegation (for more information, see [here](#)).