



## Budgeting Europe's Future - The European Council and the Politics of the EU's Financial System

Summer Semester 2026

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**Course Number:** 14335.0206 (Hauptseminar)

Basic Module Seminar V "European and Multilevel Politics" (PO 2015) or

Specialization Module "Special Topics Political Science II" (PO 2021)

**Language:** English

### **Teaching and Learning Methods:**

The seminar features a combination of lectures, seminar group work, a four-day study trip to Brussels (18.-21.5.2026), and an international simulation exercise with students from political science and law from the University of Cologne and the Turkish German University (Istanbul). The travel costs to Brussels and accommodation expenses will be covered by the PROTEUS project, financially supported by the Kölner Gymnasial- und Stiftungsfonds.

### **Course description:**

The European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is the Union's long-term budgetary plan, setting policy priorities and expenditure ceilings over a seven-year period (2028-2034). More than a financial instrument, the MFF operationalises the EU's strategic agenda by aligning funding with shared political objectives such as cohesion, climate transition, digital transformation, migration management, and external action. Through negotiations among EU Member States and EU institutions, the framework reflects intergovernmental bargaining and supranational priorities, translating broad strategic goals into concrete spending commitments. Studying the MFF therefore provides insight into how the EU sets policy direction, balances competing interests, and links financial governance to long-term political strategy. In 2026, this discussion is particularly timely as negotiations intensify over the future EU budget, offering a live case through which to examine competing priorities, reform proposals, and the future direction of EU integration.

The seminar is embedded into an interdisciplinary and international event bringing together advanced students from Political Sciences and Law Departments of the University of Cologne and the Turkish German University (Istanbul). It combines the application of political and legal knowledge with elements of a simulation exercise. Every participant has the opportunity to practice real-life negotiating situations in English by performing a specific role in a simulation of proceedings of the European Council. The seminar includes introductory and preparatory sessions, academic and practitioner expert input on diverse topics concerning the EU's future priorities. In parallel, students work in transnational teams to develop position papers in preparation of the summit of the European Council. The seminar culminates in a simulation exercise focusing on the negotiation dynamics of the EU's budgetary framework and the pivotal role of the European Council in shaping its outcome. Finally, students consolidate their academic learning by writing a seminar paper, reflecting on their simulation experience to connect real-world insights back to theories and methodological analysis.

## Learning Objectives:

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

- Understand the EU budget and policy-making processes, linking theoretical knowledge to real-world decision-making.
- Apply academic knowledge to practice through a simulation of European Council negotiations, preparing and analysing role-based position papers.
- Independently research, synthesise literature, and apply relevant methods and theories to concrete policy questions in political economy, international relations, and EU integration.
- Collaborate in interdisciplinary and international teams, negotiating differing objectives, resolving conflicts, and communicate about complex issues with specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Reflect critically on their own decision-making processes, learning from structured consultations with lecturers, the simulation exercises and its evaluation, and a study trip to key institutions in Brussels.
- Produce a seminar paper connecting practical experience with academic theory and rigorous methodological analysis.

## Course dates:

<b>16.4.2026</b> (14h30-16h00)	Introductory Session <i>Dr. Wulf Reiners &amp; Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels</i>
<b>27.4.2026</b> (09h00-15h00)	Mooting School / Public Speaking Training <i>Peggy Forell</i>
<b>29.4.2026</b> (12h00-13h30)	Introduction to European Law <i>Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Stephan Hobe</i>
<b>30.4.2026</b> (10h00-11h30)	Introductory Lecture: the European Council and its Power of the Purse <i>Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels</i>
<b>3.5.2026</b>	Submission of the Position Papers (draft version) by all teams and a draft Agenda by the Presidency-Team
<b>5.5.2026</b> (19h30-21h)	Optional: Panel Discussion "Was ist uns Europa wert? Der EU-Haushalt 2028-2034 (in German), Domforum Cologne
<b>6.5.2026</b> (14h30-16h00)	Preparation for the Simulation Game <i>Dr. Wulf Reiners</i>
<b>8.5.2026</b>	Submission of the final Position Papers by all team, final Agenda and the Rules of Procedures by the Presidency-Team
<b>18.-21.05.2026</b>	Excursion and Simulation Game in Brussels (see separate programme)
<b>15.8.2026</b>	Submission of Seminar Papers

## Examination: (Registration for exams via KLIPS)

- 1) Position Paper and Participation in the Simulation Game (45%)
- 2) Seminar Paper (55%)

**Reading Assignments:**

A dossier of resources for the preparation for the simulation game will be provided for the students during the first meeting in April.

**Registration (via KLIPS):**

<https://klips2.uni-koeln.de/co/ee/ui/ca2/app/desktop/#/slc.tm.cp/student/courses/546584>

The seminar is jointly conducted by the Centre for Türkiye and European Union Studies of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels and the Chair for European Law, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. S. Hobe. For more information, please visit: [www.proteus.uni-koeln.de](http://www.proteus.uni-koeln.de).

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