

Nov 04, 2016 by **APDS Bloggers**

A visit at the EU delegation in Washington D.C. ^[1]

APDS Blogger: Riccardo Ruffolo

On the last day of the Masters of Public Diplomacy delegation's visit to Washington D.C., some of us had the opportunity to visit the Delegation of the European Union to the United States. The delegation included University of Southern California alumna and Senior Communications Advisor, Stacy Hope; Assistant Press Officer, Ren Althouse; and three Press & Public Diplomacy (PPD) interns.

From our visit, we learned that the PPD's program is wide-reaching. The initiatives which target audiences of different age groups from all over the U.S., range from cultural programming to information outreach, and from academia to media relations.

The main areas which the EU Delegation's public diplomacy targets are: programs targeting American youth, collaboration with EU member states' embassies and consulates, and social media outreach.

One of the main objectives of the public diplomacy strategy of the Delegation is to foster a long-term relationship with young professionals and future leaders. This is conducted through programs such as the EU Visitors Program (EUVP), which invites young professionals from countries outside the EU to visit Europe and learn about its goals and policies, and through annual press visits to Brussels.

Even younger age groups are targeted. The Euro Challenge (modeled after the Fed Challenge) engages high school students in simulations about the European economy. Moreover, the delegation organizes a yearly Kids Euro Fest, one of the largest children's festivals in the U.S., held in Washington D.C. in collaboration with EU member states embassies.

The coordination between the EU member states embassies and consulates was another major theme in our discussion. The EU Delegation hosts meetings with embassy representation regarding policies and joint events, and with member states' ambassadors on a monthly basis. The best example of this collaboration in public diplomacy is the preparation for the Europe Day on May 9. On this occasion, ambassadors and consuls travel to different cities around the U.S. to visit schools to raise awareness about the EU, its structures and policies. Additionally, all of the embassies in Washington D.C. organize an open house event with a specific theme for Europe Day. The theme of this year will be 'Europe and our country,' in line with the European motto 'unity in diversity.'

The EU Delegation to the U.S. is on the forefront of using web technologies to conduct outreach. Even though the website is undergoing construction, the delegation's [Facebook page](#)

and Twitter feed are extremely active and looked at as a model for other delegations around the world. Moreover, affirming this shift and attention towards social media, the head of the delegation, Ambassador João Vale de Almeida, has recently joined Twitter.

In a Q&A session, which concluded our meeting, we had the opportunity to ask what had become a leitmotif for our visit to Washington D.C.: how does the delegation evaluate its PD outreach strategies? Ms. Hope's answer highlighted a crucial challenge in the evaluation of PD campaigns. While quantitative evaluation matters, diversifying and getting the public involved in different activities is even more crucial.

The visit to the EU delegation clearly marked a highlight of our D.C. trip. Considering the PPD unit's diverse initiatives which engage with American audiences of different ages and social groups through various communication outlets, the EU delegation to the U.S. has one of the most impressive and innovative public diplomacy programs I have encountered.

Riccardo Ruffolo is a first-year candidate for a Master of Public Diplomacy at USC. Originally from Italy, Riccardo completed his B.A. in International Studies at the University of Florence in 2011. As an undergraduate, he spent three semesters studying abroad in Paris, France as an exchange student at Sciences Po (IEP). While in Paris, Riccardo interned with the UNESCO communication and information sector. His main interests are human rights, transnational organizations, and the role of innovation in international relations, while his regional focus is on Europe (emphasis on the European Union).
