

Meet our Alumni

1. Which career steps have you taken since graduating from EUS?

During my EUS studies, I completed internships at the [Institute of the Regions of Europe](#)—which I highly recommend to future students, especially since it's based in Salzburg—and at USAID, both of which confirmed my interest in working in the public and non-profit sectors. After graduation, I returned to Ukraine and joined East Europe Foundation (EEF), formerly the Ukrainian office of the U.S.-based Eurasia Foundation, which has long supported democratic development and institutional reform in the region.

Since then, I have been involved in projects focused on strengthening democratic governance, the rule of law, and Ukraine's integration with the European Union. A key area of my work has been contributing to the *Ukraine in Europe* project—an initiative that bridges Ukrainian parliamentary processes with the EU acquis and promotes dialogue between policymakers, experts, and civil society actors in Ukraine and the EU. This work addresses the socio-political dimensions of reform, such as legislative alignment with the *acquis communautaire*, institutional transparency, and the broader role of EU integration as a pathway to stability, accountability, and democratic resilience.

Currently, I lead a separate programme within EEF, supported by Switzerland, focused on building a strong and resilient civil society in Ukraine by empowering local NGOs. Civil society plays a vital role in the EU integration process—it helps hold institutions accountable, ensures inclusive policymaking, and supports the implementation of reforms at the community level. Strengthening local actors is therefore not only essential for democratic resilience, but also for advancing Ukraine's alignment with EU values and standards.

2. How has the EUS master's programme influenced your professional journey?

The EUS programme profoundly shaped how I understand EU governance and integration—topics that are especially relevant given Ukraine's path toward EU membership. Through the core curriculum, I gained a solid understanding of the history of EU integration, institutional development, and the different trajectories that individual member states followed to join the Union. This academic background has been essential in my current work, particularly in explaining and navigating the complexity and length of reform processes—something that is often underestimated in public discussions.

The double degree with LUISS University in Rome added a comparative dimension, deepening my knowledge of international relations, public law, and political systems, and giving me a broader view of how EU integration functions in different national contexts. Studying in two countries also strengthened my intercultural communication skills, adaptability, and language competencies—all of which are vital when working in international and policy-focused environments.

Beyond theory, the EUS programme offered valuable practical components, such as moot court simulations, policy case studies, and hands-on analysis exercises. Unfortunately, our year was unable to participate in the traditional excursion to EU institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but I had earlier opportunities to visit these institutions during my bachelor studies in Kyiv. That combination of strong academic foundation and practical exposure has been instrumental in preparing me for work focused on EU integration processes and stakeholder engagement in Ukraine.

3. What aspects of our interdisciplinary study programme did you enjoy the most?

What I appreciated most about the EUS programme was its strong interdisciplinary structure, combining European law, political science, economics, and history—all essential for a comprehensive understanding of EU integration. I especially valued the focus on European law, which was taught not only in theory but also applied through practical exercises that brought EU institutional processes to life. One of the most engaging parts of the programme was the opportunity to participate in simulations of Foreign Affairs Council meetings, where we negotiated real-time political topics such as EU-Ukraine relations and developments in Belarus. I also took part in moot court sessions, including a case based on *Carles Puigdemont v. European Parliament*, which helped me explore the intersection of legal and political issues in the EU context. These practical elements significantly deepened my understanding of how EU decision-making works in practice—both legally and politically.

4. What advice would you give to future EUS graduates?

Make the most of the programme's interdisciplinary nature—it's one of its greatest strengths. Whether you pursue a career in EU institutions, national policy, civil society, or international organizations, the combination of European law, political science, economics, and history gives you a versatile foundation for navigating complex challenges.

Take full advantage of the practical components, like simulations, moot courts, and policy analysis exercises, as they not only build confidence but also help you understand how theory translates into real-world decision-making. If you have the chance to study through the double degree programme, embrace the experience of studying in another country—it will challenge you, expand your perspective, and sharpen both your communication and intercultural skills.

And finally, keep in mind that EU integration is a long-term, multifaceted process. For countries like Ukraine, it involves not just legal and institutional reforms, but also a shift in political culture and public expectations. Your understanding of this complexity—rooted in your EUS studies—can be a valuable asset wherever your path takes you.

5. Would you like to share your contact details with students? If so, please let us know how they can reach you with questions.

Absolutely, I would be glad to connect with EUS students or graduates. Please feel free to reach out to me on [LinkedIn](#). Additionally, you can contact (and follow ☺) me via [Instagram](#) or by email (shovkovaolesya@gmail.com). I'm always happy to share insights and experiences from my journey.