

Trainees of the EU #4 (find versions in UA, FR and DE below)

“Ukraine is a European nation. We are situated in Europe. Our culture is European and our mentality is European. The Maidan* revolution 4 years ago changed everything. The people believe that their country and the European Union should have a common future. I am ready for this. And so many other young Ukrainians are ready to become Europeans as well.”

[Paul Cherkashyn](#) was born in Boryspil, a town near Kiev, Ukraine. He graduated in international law from the National Aviation University in Kiev and moved to Bruges, Belgium in 2016 to study international relations at the College of Europe.

“I was 22 years old when the protests of the Euromaidan started in Kyiv. I was in the final stage of my studies and had to defend my Master thesis, titled ‘Conflict of principles in international law: territorial integrity of states versus the right of people for self-determination’. At that time, nobody would have assumed that Russia would annex Crimea only a month later, which triggered the war in Donbass. Not me, not my friends, not even my professors.

It was unbelievable that people could be shot in Ukrainian streets, killed for political reasons and for their peaceful protest, with EU-flags in their hands. After all, it was the principle of the ‘right of people for self-determination’, which I had included in my thesis, that was later exploited by the Russian government to justify the illegal annexation of Crimea.”

During his studies in Kyiv, Pavlo, together with two friends, founded the student organisation “Youth Diplomatic Initiative”, which aims to develop the skills and networks of young Ukrainians who are interested in foreign affairs. As a Robert Schuman trainee at the European Parliament, Pavlo works at the DG EXPO** in the Unit for Eastern Partnership and Russia, where he contributes to organising the work of parliamentary delegations focusing on these countries, and to providing policy advice on the region to members of the parliament.

“If you ask me where I see my country in ten years, I see Ukraine ideally as a member of the European Union, or at least at the last stage of the negotiations to join the EU. I know that we will have to accomplish many changes and reforms until then. At the moment, also the EU is not ready to accept Ukraine as a member state. I believe that we have to give it some time. And if we all do our homework, I am sure that we will achieve this goal in the future.”

* The term “Euromaidan” describes the wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine, which began in November 2013 with protests at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (“Independence Square”) in Kyiv. The protests were sparked by the Ukrainian government’s decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union and instead choosing closer ties to Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union.

** The Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Parliament is responsible for organising the work of Parliament’s committees and delegations in the field of external – beyond the EU – policies.

Schuman Trainees Committee, May 2018

(interview with [Paul Cherkashyn](#), alumnus, at the [European Parliament](#))