

Suitable Frameworks for Council of the EU – European Parliament – European Commission Simulations

Simulations that involve the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, and the European Commission at the same time can be conducted in a wide variety of frameworks. They can be a beneficial learning activity for high-school students studying social studies or civics. They can be organized as class activities in undergraduate and graduate courses on such topics as European Union studies, international organizations, international relations, international security, conflict analysis and resolution, negotiation, mediation, and international law. A topic such as an EU legislative process about counter-terrorism could also be well suited for a class on security studies or a comparative politics class focused on legislative processes. Outside of course frameworks, they can be organized as competitions or as conferences, bringing together participants from a range of backgrounds or countries.

Choosing Topics for Council of the EU – European Parliament – European Commission Simulations

The ordinary legislative procedure (previously, co-decision)¹¹⁰ applies to most legislative areas of the European Union. As one main purpose of simulating the proceedings of the EU legislative process is allowing participants to experience and understand the proceedings of the Council of the EU, European Parliament, and European Commission, any issue requiring policy determination, however mundane, falling within the realm of the ordinary legislative procedure is suitable for designing a simulation. Of course, if an additional teaching goal is gaining in-depth understanding of a particular subject matter, that topic should be preferred. Designers can choose topics of special interest to them, or those they consider to be important to their intended participant group.

Another way to approach topic-choice is to select an issue that is currently ‘hot’ in terms of media attention and public interest. Such topics command participants’ attention and motivate them by giving them the sense that they are dealing with the most weighty and crucial topics of their time

Creating Material

Given that there are 705 MEPs² in the European Parliament and 27 Member States in the Council of the EU, this simulation could play well with large and very large groups. For the purposes of this exercise, we suggest engaging groups of up to 86 participants, if one instructor is conducting the game on their own, to allow for oversight and monitoring of the proceedings (with a more robust training team, more participants can be accommodated). This number incorporates the following roles (of which some can be dropped, or two students assigned to jointly play the same role together, to adjust for the precise number of participants):

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/decision-making/ordinary-legislative-procedure/>

² Check the latest EU negotiations about the projected increase of MEPs for the 2024-2029 period or the future period during which you would be running this simulation.

- 54 roles for the Council of the EU (27 Member States' ministers whose portfolio includes the topic under discussion + 27 Member States' Ambassadors to the EU). The Presidency of the Council of the EU is held by rotation; to preserve realism, designate the participating minister of the Member States holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU in the real world, at the time of the simulation's conduct, as the President of the Council of the EU in your simulation.³ A list of scheduled presidencies of the Council of the EU can be found here: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/26-council-rotating-presidencies-revised-order/>
- 28 roles for the European Parliament - 4 MEPs for each of the following seven European Parliament political groups: European People's Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Greens-European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Renew Europe (Renew), The Left in the European Parliament (The Left) and Identity and Democracy (ID)⁴.
- 4 representatives from the European Commission, who have the role of facilitating/mediating dialogue between the legislative institutions (Council of the EU & European Parliament) in the Conciliation Committee.

Each player will require information which they will use to understand the context and plan their actions. Generally, participants are encouraged to act as similarly as they can to how Council of the EU, European Parliament, and European Commission members conduct themselves in the real world. Begin by providing some background information on the topic, the events leading up to the legislative agenda focusing on this particular topic, and the scope of the legislative text negotiations. You might provide the same background information to all participants. Next, sketch out each party's main positions, interests and objectives, and provide it to that party as private information meant for their eyes only. You may hint at other countries aligned with their views or opposing them, or let participants map out their allies and opponents on their own. In addition, provide participants with any maps or documents that they will require in the simulation. With this information at hand, each representative must plan their objectives, strategy, and tactics.

Reference Sources for Participant Preparation

Provide participants with other sources of information they require in order to function well

³ Note, that on security and defense policy, the Council meetings are chaired by the EU's High Representative and not a minister from the rotating presidency. Thus, as instructor, always note that the topic determines the configuration of the Council, in terms of participants and chair.

⁴ These political groups reflect the major political groups of the European Parliament as of January 26, 2024. You can play this simulation as a historical simulation and keep these political groups. Otherwise we advise you to check the membership of the European Parliament at the moment you plan to play this simulation and update political group names, positions, and interests accordingly. In some cases these updates mean only minor tweaks, but in other cases, and especially if political group membership has changed significantly, it may require significant updates. Of course, one easy option for instructors is to ask the participants to conduct their research on the current positions and interests of the political groups.

in the simulation. These might include the following categories of resources:

- Sources on the structure of the EU, beyond what has been provided in this toolkit;⁵
- Sources on the role of the Council of the EU, in particular;⁶
- Sources on the Council of the EU's Justice and Home Affairs configuration;⁷
- Sources on the Council of the EU procedure⁸;
- Sources on the European Parliament⁹
- Sources on the Ordinary Legislative Procedure¹⁰
- Sources on the European Commission¹¹
- Sources on the Conciliation Committee¹²
- Sources on EU concepts/jargon (e.g.: Schengen, Lisbon, Euro, subsidiarity etc.).¹³

In addition, you might also include sources on the particular subject-matter or topic to be turned into law by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament with the help of the European Commission. We have provided some selected sources in the material related to the subject-matter of EU Counter-Terrorism to be shared with the participants.

2. Time requirements

To conduct a full simulation of the proceedings of the Council of the EU-European Parliament- European Commission on a substantial topic, in the framework of an academic course, about 4 to 6 hours are required. These can be broken up over the course of several weekly sessions, as required. At the very least, this negotiation requires 2½ hours of run-time. It can be extended to last for 1-2 days (10-14 hours of actual negotiation), such as when the simulation is conducted in the framework of a Model European Union conference. In addition to the aforementioned time requirements, calculate in additional time ahead of the simulation for participant preparation, and after the simulation for the process' debrief.

3. Simulation conduct

Provide participants with their roles, and allow them adequate time to prepare. Designate a time for them to meet, in a room you have prepared for them. Announce the beginning of the simulation, and hand the floor over to the representatives of the presidencies in both the Council of the EU and the EU Parliament (for the EU Parliament choose the president from

⁵ For example, https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

⁶ For example, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

⁷ For example, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/jha/>

⁸ For example, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/decision-making/#:~:text=Ordinary%20legislative%20procedure&text=The%20Council%20is%20an%20essential,also%20known%20as%20'codecision'>

⁹ For example, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00002/Home>

¹⁰ For example, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/decision-making/ordinary-legislative-procedure/>

¹¹ For example, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en

¹² For example, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/conciliation_committee.html

¹³ For example, http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/tips/words-style/jargon-alternatives_en.htm ; <http://en.euabc.com/>

the participants playing the MEPs of the party from which the actual President of the Parliament is from). This negotiation has two phases: 1) separate negotiations on the legislative text within the Council of the EU and the European Parliament; 2) an assisted negotiation (mediation) in the Conciliation Committee between representatives of the Council of the EU and of the European Parliament with the assistance of the representatives from the European Commission.

The simulation ends with the adoption of a commonly agreed text by both the European Parliament and the Council, which provides a clear mandate to the European Commission. The simulation can also end with the representatives of the European Commission announcing an impasse. It can also end with the instructor announcing that time has run out.

4. Simulation Debrief

After the simulation is over, conduct a debriefing session, based on your learning goals. See Debriefing Guide.

5. Post-Simulation Learning Activities

In addition to a post-process debrief, teachers can design other follow-on learning activities. These can include in-class activities, asking students to fill out reflection forms; or assigning them to write papers analyzing the simulation.