Suitable Frameworks for European Council (EUCO) Simulations: High-School and University Level Courses & Conferences

EUCO simulations 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, conflict analysis and resolution, negotiation, mediation, and international law. Model EU role-play simulations provide a game-like environment for students to learn about the European Union. Outside of course frameworks, they can be organized as competitions or as one day to three-day conferences, bringing together participants from a range of backgrounds or countries.

Choosing Topics for European Council Simulations[1]

The EUCO deliberates and decides the most essential EU policies at the highest level across a wide range of topics, including economic growth, competitiveness, poverty and social exclusion, energy and climate policies, migration, organized crime, security and terrorism, and the EU's role on the global stage. As one main purpose of simulating the proceedings of the EUCO is allowing participants to experience and understand the EUCO's proceedings, *any* issue requiring policy determination, however mundane, falling within the responsibilities of the EUCO 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

There are 29 'natural' players in an EUCO simulation: the heads of state or government (Prime Minister, Chancellor, or President) of each of the EU member countries, the European Council President, and the President of the European Commission.

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 EUCO members conduct themselves in the real world. Begin by providing some background information on the topic, the events leading up to the EUCO's focus on this particular topic, and the scope of the conclusion (i.e., the negotiated agreement) the EUCO seeks to achieve. 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

---

[1] If you do not want to use the ones provided by the authors, and want to create your own.

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 EUCO 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 in the simulation. These might include the following categories of sources:

- Sources on the structure of the EU, beyond what has been provided in this toolkit[2];
- Sources on the role of the EUCO, in particular[3];
- Sources on EUCO procedure[4]; and
- Sources on Euro-jargon (e.g.: Schengen, Lisbon, Euro, subsidiarity etc.)[5].

In addition, you might also provide sources on the particular subject-matter or topic to be decided by the EUCO. For sources on the particular subject-matter of *EU Agenda on Migration*, we have provided some selected sources in the material to be shared with the participants.

Time requirements

To conduct a full simulation of the proceedings of the EUCO on a substantial topic, in the framework of an academic course, about 2 to 4 hours are required. These can be broken up over the course of two weekly sessions, as required. At the very least, this simulation requires 1 ½ hours of run-time. It can be expanded to comprise 1-2 days (10-14 hours of actual negotiation), such as in the event of a simulation conducted in the framework of a Model European Union conference. In addition to the aforementioned time requirements, calculate in time ahead of the simulation for participant preparation, and time after the simulation for the process' debrief.

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 European Council President to begin the proceedings. The European Council President is the chair of this simulation; Council meetings should be opened by the participant(s) playing the role of this role. At the beginning of the meetings the European Council President should introduce themselves and their roles in the Council meeting. Next, they should introduce the President of the European Commission, who will then introduce the agenda item to be deliberated. Throughout the sessions, the participants playing the role of the European Commission will promote the interests of the European Union as a whole. It is best if the participants playing

---

[2] For example, https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

[3] For example, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/;

[4] For example, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/conclusions/;

[5] For example, http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/tips/words-style/jargon-alternatives_en.htm and http://en.euabc.com

these roles (Presidency and Commission) have a private conversation before the sessions begin to set a plan for facilitating the discussions. The individual playing the role of the President of the European Commission can assist with the facilitation of the session(s), only if asked to do so by the president of the European Council. The Presidency team then opens the floor for a first round of speeches from all participating Member States. These initial speeches should not be longer than 2 minutes and they should take place in alphabetical order (of Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, etc.). Afterwards, more comments can be entertained and the actual negotiations begin.

The simulation ends with the EUCO announcing an impasse or adopting a conclusion. It can also end with the instructor announcing that time has run out.

Simulation Debrief

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

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.