

Teaching Notes & Game Variations

Game Variations

This section will cover several areas where instructors might depart from the basic simulation format.

Group Size

The optimal group size for conducting the simulation is 28: 27 participants represent the EU Member states, and one represents the EU Commissioner of Trade.

If you have additional participants, you can:

- a) add a role for the representative of the European Parliament¹, and/or
- b) add up to one more participant to each role, designating one as an aide, or both as co-representatives of that role (this last possibility is somewhat artificial, of course; on the other hand, it allows both participants to feel, think, and act as a primary player in the simulation, enhancing their learning process). This results in a maximum participant number of 58.

In extended simulations (conducted over more than one day), you can accommodate up to four more participants by creating a press corps and assigning participants the role of journalists covering the meetings. Their function during the simulation is to report on the activities of the meetings through the production of a newspaper, blogs, and/or videos. To gather this information, they attend meetings, interview participants, and participate in press conferences.

Members of the press corps are expected to act in a professional manner and adhere to professional standards of journalism. Information obtained through covering meetings or interviews or press conferences should be reported as accurately as possible. All of the public meetings of the MEU simulation are open to the press corps; their access to private hallway conversations between representatives or other forms of small-group caucusing is at the discretion of the meeting's participants. When present in meetings, the journalists' role is to cover the meetings; they should not participate substantively in debates or interfere with the meeting's process. If you wish this to be a more significant part of the meeting, include activities giving participants experience of working with the press. For example, the Commissioner for Trade can conduct press conferences in which they make statements and then field questions from the press. Individual journalists can seek in-depth interviews with dominant leaders and country representatives or ask them questions at "on the doorstep" moments entering and exiting the meetings. Participants representing member states should be instructed to consider how representatives in the real world would strategically engage and cooperate with members of the press and to do so themselves in the simulation.

If you have fewer than 28 participants, the most balanced way to construct the roles is to remove

¹ This participant would play the role of the representative of the European Parliament in a way that simulates whoever is in this role in the real world at the moment when the simulation takes place. The participant in this role should conduct their own independent research about who is representing the Parliament on trade issues, and the views of the Parliament about trade. They should examine research documents from the European Parliament regarding trade relations between the EU and other countries or groups of countries. At the meeting, this participant should promote the views of the European Parliament as a whole, informing the Council when the details of an agreement could get support and when it would most likely not get support in the Parliament. They do not have voting rights in the meeting.

one role from each of the five major groups to maintain the simulation's inherent balance of party positions on the topic of migration. If you are still missing participants, remove an additional role from each of the groups, and so on. At the very least, the simulation requires 8 participants to function: If you have only 8 participants, conduct the simulation with the following roles: 2 roles each from the groups "*Reluctant to the FTA*", and "*In favor of the FTA*", one role each from the remaining three groups, and the European Commissioner for Trade. Make sure that the country holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU is included and assign the participant playing that role to chair the meeting.

Timeframe

Instructors can set aside a substantial period of time for running the simulation in a single session. To this end, it is recommended to dedicate at least 2-4 hours to the actual playing of the simulation itself, aside from time for preparation and debriefing. However, instructors might decide to conduct it in a shorter timeframe – providing some situational reason for why the Council of the EU must reach a decision within **1.25** hours. Alternatively, they can decide to run the simulation in multiple sessions, each of short duration; for example, dedicating an hour of class time to the simulation in each of 2 consecutive class meetings, and running a debrief session in a 3rd class meeting.

Given the amount of time required for in-the-room setup, logistics, and lead-in, any shorter period of consecutive time than 1.25 hours will simply not provide participants with sufficient time to commence the simulation and become deeply involved in it, to say nothing of navigating it all the way to completion. If you can only dedicate the minimum amount of a single 1.25 hour session, assign participants their roles and the simulation scenario in advance, tasking them to compose position papers for their countries and to send these papers in advance to all other participants. This way, once in the classroom, actual negotiations can begin immediately rather than participants devoting nearly an hour to sharing their member-states' positions.

Of course, the larger the number of students in a simulation group, the longer the minimal time required for the simulation is. Put simply, while the number of country roles remains the same, there are more students representing each country, all of whom will take time speaking. In addition, inter-player interaction increases with every added person at the table, further affecting time.

Accordingly, the initial minimum suggestion of 1.25 hours relates to a simulation group of up to 30 students. If you have 30-60 students in class, and assign 2 students for each member-state, you might still be able to squeeze a simulation into this timeframe but would do well to reduce the number of issues you intend the class to negotiate. If you have more than 60 students in the class, the 1.25 hours timeframe will simply not suffice, and the simulation should be scheduled for at least 2.5 hours.

Once again, these are *minimal* timeframes. Students will benefit far more by dedicating more expansive timeframes to the simulation. All of the simulations in this toolkit could easily be used over a 2-3 days Model EU conference setting with approximately 12-16 hours of negotiation time for the participants.

Instructor interventions

The simulation is designed to be self-sustaining; once set in motion, it can be fully carried out without instructor intervention. However, instructors can intervene in the simulation, adding new

events or facts and thereby changing the simulation's course. One reason to do so would be to slow down a group that is rapidly or artificially headed towards agreement without full engagement with the issues or with their differences. Conversely, instructors might wish to incentivize or aid a group that is not progressing and seems to lack the motivation or skill to do so. Such interventions essentially manipulate the timeline and pace of the simulation.

Another reason for intervening would be in order to introduce real-world or seemingly real-world occurrences into the simulation, giving participants a taste of what it feels like to deliberate policy while real-world influences seep into the meeting room. While externally introduced events might be initially categorized as 'positive' or 'negative' regarding their anticipated effect on parties' capacity to collaborate, any event might be utilized by different parties to achieve different ends.²

Instructors can, of course, come up with their own intervention methods. Below are four examples - two 'positive' interventions and two 'negative' interventions, for use in *Negotiation Mandate for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Tradeland*. Instructors should stop the simulation for a moment, and announce that they have 'breaking news' for participants:

Positive Interventions

- A very large EU-based conglomerate (interested in the EU having a Free Trade Agreement with Tradeland) has announced that it would open a factory employing at least 5,000 workers in each Member-State of the EU that can prove that its rate of unemployment has risen because of the FTA with Tradeland. Such a move offsets the risk of workers finding themselves unemployed due to the FTA with Tradeland.
- A group of the 10 most generous EU-based philanthropists have announced that they will jointly invest five billion Euros to develop the competitiveness of companies from EU Member states with less developed economies.

Negative Interventions

- A poll conducted recently shows that most EU citizens currently tend towards "economic nationalism"; they prefer to consume products and services produced by European companies, rather than those produced outside of the EU. This information may make some participants reconsider their interests, with elections coming up in a few of the EU Member states later this year.
- A research center has published a report showing that in most FTA agreements signed by Tradeland with 3rd parties, standards and regulations regarding labor rights, environmental policies, safety and health standards, and consumer rights, usually decrease to match those of the lowest common denominator, Tradeland's. The effects of the EU's higher and more stringent standards on these issues would likely diminish if an FTA agreement is signed with Tradeland.

Opening and Self-Updating the Simulation

Negotiation Mandate for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Tradeland captures, loosely, the real-world approaches held by European countries towards FTAs with major economic powers such as

² For more on the introduction of such twists in simulations, see Ebner, N. & Efron, Y. (2005). Using tomorrow's headlines for today's training: Creating pseudo-reality in conflict resolution simulation-games. *Negotiation Journal* 21(3), 377. Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1292594

Canada, or the United States of America, *circa* late 2016- early 2017. As such, it is most easily played as a historical and fictional simulation rather than one teaching this substantive issue with complete accuracy, using only the roles provided in this package, with no external material affecting parties' interests, positions or alliances. Played this way, the game will run more or less as described in this package, given the internal balances incorporated in the roles creating the five major groups and positioning their information and interests vis-à-vis one another. If the primary goals of the exercise are to learn about how the Council of the EU functions, or to practice negotiation and conflict resolution skills in the context of an international policy-setting organization - as opposed to providing participants up-to-date information on the substance of the FTAs - it is recommended to play the simulation in this way.

Another way to play the situation is through participant updates. As you assign roles, task participants to conduct research on their own with regards to current events, policy changes, and public opinion in their role- country regarding the substantive topic. This method poses several advantages: participant investment in the simulation at an early stage, enhancing participants' identification with their roles, and engaging in a simulation more accurately aligned with contemporary reality. On the other hand, the method presents challenges to the simulation. Significant shifts in countries' positions might undermine the simulation's internal balance. Additionally, quite simply, participants might wind up operating off of information that they have misunderstood or under-researched. If one of the exercise's main goals is providing participants with an up-to-date understanding of the challenges of negotiating an FTA with a 3rd party, you might consider running the game in this way, while following some of these recommendations for preempting the aforementioned challenges:

Advance preparation: After assigning participants their roles, give them a week or two in which to prepare. Ask them to learn from both media and governmental sources of their assigned countries about their assigned government's interests, in order to have an enriched experience. Remind them that they are to conduct their own research and not to discuss the simulation with other parties. This is necessary in order to avoid participants engaging in pre-simulation negotiation. Assign them to write up a one-page summary of the information they have gathered that they see as affecting their role; particularly, they are to note any divergences from the information provided in the original role information. Ask them to submit this report to you at a point several days before the simulation.

Instructor review: Review the notes participants have provided you with. Focus on three elements: First, based on your own knowledge of current affairs, address factual inaccuracies. Second, consider whether the additional reports seem to significantly undermine the balance of conflict and cooperation between the five major groups. If so – find a way to keep it balanced, either by telling one participant to ignore a particular fact or set aside a particular interest they have reported on, or by providing additional information or interests to a *different* party. Finally, keep an eye open for parties who have submitted a list of new information or positions that indicate that they might 'go rogue,' engaging in the simulation through an extreme departure from the original role, current reality, or the norms of Council of the EU -member behavior, in such a way that could derail the simulation as a learning exercise. In this event, respond to the participants' report with information or instructions aimed at bringing them into line.

Final preparation: Return participants' reports, together with your comments, allowing them

enough time to review and consider these before the simulation's initiation.

Conducting the simulation online:

The simulation can be conducted online in a variety of ways. One variation would be to conduct it in a text-based environment. This can be created within any one of the learning management systems (LMS) most universities employ. Instructors can create a discussion forum for asynchronous participation by all parties, as well as provide private forums for groups or teams requesting to caucus amongst themselves. Some LMS allow students to create forums on their own, in which case participants can create a forum and grant access to particular others. Parties can also caucus along the sidelines through other methods commonly embedded within LMS – email, videoconferencing or instant messaging applications.

Another variation is to conduct the main part of the simulation via live, synchronous, videoconferencing. For this purpose, instructors will require access and an appropriate license to a videoconferencing platform with the capacity for supporting a large number of participants at the same time. The instructor might facilitate who has the floor (and the microphone and camera) for speaking at any given point, or hand this capacity over to the chair of the Council of the EU meeting. While the forum convenes on camera, parties can converse with one another through text-based synchronous means – either those usually included in videoconferencing software, or other, separate, applications.³

³ For a full discussion of conducting negotiation and conflict resolution simulations online, see Matz, D. & Ebner, N. (2010). [Using role-play in online negotiation teaching](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1916792). In C. Honeyman, J. Coben & G. DiPalo (Eds.) *Venturing Beyond the Classroom: Vol. 2 in the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching Series*. St Paul: DRI Press. Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1916792