

Debriefing Guide

Providing a comprehensive map for debriefing the simulation *Negotiation Mandate for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Tradeland* is virtually impossible, due to the varied training goals it is designed to serve and the infinite paths of unfolding it allows for. In this section, following suggestions for setting up and initiating the debrief session, some recommendations for conducting it are provided.¹ However, the topical questions – or the list of topics– provided here are not in any way meant as an exhaustive list of questions or discussion themes. Instructors using the simulation are encouraged to consider their own learning objectives, the context and framework in which the simulation is being conducted, participants’ learning habits and the instructor’s own style – and come up with questions and themes of their own.

Encourage Ventilation

The main challenge in debriefing a simulation such as this one, is that after investing so much time and energy in-role, it is difficult for participants to detach from the role they had been playing and adopt a learning stance towards themselves and their experience. Left to their own devices, they will continue to conduct some form of negotiation throughout the debriefing process. To avoid this, you might allow a few minutes for free ventilation. While this is going on, stress that the game is over, the negotiation is over, and that they can let things go rather than carry the in-game negotiation into the debrief session.

Define Debriefing Goals

Open the learning phase of the debrief by calling the group’s attention to yourself, and briefly explaining the goals of the debrief. Explain that debriefing is an opportunity to transform the participants' simulation experience into practical lessons to take away. State clearly what you hope to gain from this experience (e.g., ‘Let’s try to understand how the Council of the EU *really* functions, particularly with regards to highly charged topics;’ or ‘Let’s aim for a clear picture of how we have improved our negotiation / problem-solving skills.’)

From Outcome to Process

Begin the debrief by reviewing the negotiation mandate decided by vote within the Council of the EU, if such an outcome has been reached. If no vote passed by the required majority, review the issues that seemed to be under wide consensus, those that were backed by smaller coalitions, and finally, those that ultimately led to impasse. Use inclusive language, referring to the group as a whole (e.g., ‘We’ or ‘you all’) as you do so. Then, state that the debriefing will cast back in the process, in order to understand how the final outcome was reached. This is done mainly to allow participants still engrossed in the game in their minds to mentally join the group, and to stress in general the joint-but-separate experience of the group and of each individual participant, transforming them back into one large learning-group. For most of the remainder of the debrief, focus will be less on the outcome and more on the process; it is helpful

¹ For in-depth discussion of debriefing negotiation and dispute resolution simulation-games, see Deason, Efron, Howell, Kaufman, Lee & Press (2013). Debriefing the Debrief. In C. Honeyman, J. Coben & A. Wei-Min Lee (Eds.), *Educating Negotiators for a Connected World: Volume 4 in the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching Series*. St Paul, MN: DRI Press. Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2251940.

to touch on the outcome - and then set them aside - right at the start.

Focus on Learning Outcomes

Here are some suggestions for questions you may use in order to highlight the particular learning outcomes you set for the simulation:

Learning Outcome: Learning about the decision-making procedures and processes of the Council of the EU

- What is your opinion of the protocol for conducting Council of the EU meetings? Is it helpful? Constructive? Fair?
- In your experience, what seemed to be the most effective times and forums for developing agreement? (e.g., plenary sessions, informal caucuses, formal caucuses, break-out groups, negotiations during the breaks)?
- What role did the chair of the Council of the EU (the Minister of Trade of the Member-State holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU) play? The European Commissioner for Trade? Was their work coordinated? Was it effective?
- Council of the EU meetings are usually short meetings. Did time pressure play a role in your negotiation behavior? In reaching final agreement?
- Did coalitions try to apply any leverage in their communication with the chair?
- Did the chair try to promote their own agenda, in addition to facilitating the discussions?
- Did the upcoming voting process tend to facilitate reaching broad consensus on issues during the negotiation phase? Or did parties seem to assume that they could pass measures through by voting without securing agreement?
- What other topics would you like to see negotiated within future Council of the EU simulations?

Learning Outcome: Negotiation Skills

Consider asking some of these questions, focusing on the way the participants playing the country delegates handled their role. Choose questions and encourage discussion according to the level of competence and confidence of the parties, according to their performance and according to your pre-set targeted skill-set (e.g., analytical grasp of the situation, strategizing ability, trust- and relationship- building, creativity, interpersonal communication skills, ability to cope with ethical dilemmas, pie-expanding, etc.):

- How would the parties define their overall strategy, when they first walked into the joint discussion (help participants frame a short strategic definition of their strategic state of mind, such as “working cooperatively” or “asking for as much as I can, and then asking for more”).
- Did parties adhere to this strategy throughout the negotiation? If their strategy changed, was it done consciously, or as an intuitive / instinctive shift? What triggered such change?
- Did parties’ search for options (or the final agreement) focus on elements that were

very much on the table, or were attempts made to expand the pie?

- What communication tools did the parties use throughout the discussions? Was it difficult to utilize these techniques? Why?
- Did any communication problems arise over the course of the negotiations? What was their source? How did the parties address them?
- Was an atmosphere of trust created between the parties? What contributed to this, or challenged this?
- Did use of particular communication tools assist trust-building?
- Did parties share information openly, or did they play their cards close to their chests?
- What behavior or circumstances proved conducive to information sharing, and what behavior or circumstances were inhibitive?
- Do parties feel that their relationship shifted at different stages of the negotiation? How would they describe these shifts? What do they think triggered and enabled them?
- Ask participants to name particular negotiation tactics they saw other participants employ successfully.
- What warnings, ultimatums, or threats, did parties issue? What were their effects?
- If an early vote failed to pass, and parties resumed negotiations: Were these subsequent negotiations different, in any significant ways, than the initial discussions?

Learning Outcome: Team Negotiation and Multiparty Negotiation

Coalitions:

- Did coalitions form between parties, or between groups of parties, to attain leverage vis-à-vis others parties or groups of parties? How did this come to be? How did parties go about looking for allies?
- Following up on the previous question: Did coalitions form on specific issues between two of the parties, and on others between different partners? What effect (if any) did this have on the negotiations?
- Did any party feel they had to try and break up a coalition formed by the other two parties?
- Did members of any group of countries assume they were “all on the same team” going into the negotiation? Was this perception shaken up at a later stage of the negotiation process? What effect (if any) did this have on the negotiations?
- Can participants identify tacit or explicit coalitions formed between two or more of their opposing countries? How did this affect the negotiations?

Process Management:

- Were process-management rules entirely dictated by the chair, or did parties seek to affect or alter them? Such rules include:

1. Ground rules: What are the seating arrangements? Are interruptions permitted? Can parties consult with others?
2. Communication rules: What order do parties speak in? How long does everybody get to express him/herself? Can parties shout at each other?
3. Decision-making rules: How is the vote cast, and how are outcomes determined?

Leadership:

- What challenges did the chair face, in shepherding this multiparty process?
- Beyond the chair role - did any country representative take a conspicuously leading role in the negotiations? What gave him/her the legitimacy to do this, in the eyes of the other participants? What did this leader use this power for? Did other participants take the lead at different points during the process? If there had been a previously dominant player – did s/he relinquish control, or struggle to retain it?

Learning Outcome: Mediation / Conflict Resolution Skills:

Consider asking some of these questions, focusing on the way the participants playing the European Commissioner for Trade and the chair of the Council of the EU meeting, handled their roles. Choose questions and allow discussion according to the level of competence and confidence of those playing these facilitative roles, based on their performance and according to your pre-set desired skill-set (e.g., trust-building, relationship-building, grasp of the structure of the facilitating process, creativity, dealing with ethical dilemmas, confidence boosting, etc.). [Note that while the questions focus on the chair, they can include actions of the European Commissioner for Trade.]

- Did the chair of the meeting explain the process to the parties in a clear manner? How did this affect the process?
- What did the chair do in order to help parties get all the necessary information on the table?
- Was the chair successful in building an atmosphere of trust around the table? How did they do this (or what might they have done, but did not)?
- How did the chair react in challenging situations (such as: parties interrupting each other, parties attacking each other, parties attacking the chair, party walk-outs, etc.)?
- Do parties feel that the chair acted in a neutral and impartial manner? Did the chair deal explicitly with issues of neutrality and impartiality? Can the chair comment on ways in which they felt parties were trying to win them over to their side?
- What does the chair view as the largest obstacle they had to face during this simulation? What were some of the tools they used to overcome it?
- Does the chair feel they managed the process ‘by the book’ – moving from one stage of the model they learned to the next in a conscious and controlled manner? Do they feel that the structured process they tried to manage sometimes got

wrested away from them or ‘hijacked’ (by the parties or by circumstances)? How did they react?

- What did the chair do in order to help parties face their problems constructively?
- Does the chair feel their information and preparation challenged their ability to maintain neutrality? Did parties experience a sense of neutrality from the chair?
- How did the process of problem-solving and searching for options begin? Did the chair take an active role in generating or evaluating options for agreement? What effect did this have on the process? What might have been done differently?
- Did the search for options (or the final agreement) focus on the elements that were very much on the table, or were attempts made to expand the pie? What was the chair’s role in this?
- Did the chair decide when to bring issues to a vote? If so, how was this decision made? If not – which countries brought about the vote and how did they convince the chair to do so?
- In addition to the chair - did any of the country representatives find themselves mediating between other countries or country groups?

Learning Outcome: Understanding of Intra-European Union Conflict and Collaboration

- How did your preparation for your assigned role help you during the negotiation?
- What have participants learned regarding the complexity of trying to determine foreign policy by means of an internal negotiation and decision-making process?
- Did any participant enter the simulation with a predetermined solution to the anticipated conflict, or major elements thereof? Have they changed their minds, or reconsidered the applicability of their solution, as a result of participating in the simulation?
- What do participants have to say regarding the effectiveness, the desirability and the long- and short- term effects of unilateral moves by one side to a conflict?
- Do participants view the situation through a primary lens of power disparity? Did this view shift during the simulation?
- Did participation in the simulation enable participants to appreciate new ideas which might be transferable to real-life issues under debate in the real world of EU policy making? What ideas, in particular, piqued their interest?
- Have participants encountered a newfound appreciation for another party to the situation whom they might have felt (walking into the simulation) highly opposed to? Or, conversely, did they find that their preconceptions on this issue were strengthened by their experience? How would they portray and explain this transformation, or lack thereof?

Learning Outcome: Understanding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Issue

- What are the major benefits and costs of an FTA between the EU and a 3rd party?

- What trade issues are generally negotiated for a FTA?
- Discuss some of the processes that Member states go through as they implement an FTA between the EU and a 3rd party. What benefits do they reap, and what challenges do they encounter?
- What are some of the lessons you've learned about the complexity of negotiating the mandate for an FTA in the Council of the EU? What are some comparisons between the European Union and other countries (Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom) regarding mandate negotiations for an FTA?

Post-simulation learning activities

Learning does not necessarily end with the debriefing, especially if the simulation is conducted in the framework of an academic course; instructors can assign follow-on work for further learning. In particular, teachers concerned that their students are not sufficiently familiar with learning through the experiential learning model, owing to practices of their field or cultural considerations, might supplement the simulation with a more “traditional” learning and/or assessment project. Teachers might assign participants to write a paper before the simulation, in which they will develop a plan for their activities during the negotiation. In addition, after the simulation, a reflection paper, or some other assignment, could be assigned regarding their experience or particular elements thereof.