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Introduction

On this website you will find the resources you will need to participate in an in-class European Union simulation. This page will give you an idea of what a simulation is, why learning about the EU is a good idea, and how you should proceed.

What is a simulation?

A simulation is a unique and effective way to learn about a topic. In place of lectures, readings and quizzes, you will learn about your subject through independent research, debate and negotiation. You'll be exposed to how the topic plays out in the real world and discover how culture and politics can impact one's point of view. As a representative of your assigned country, you will debate, defend your country's position, hear alternative arguments and negotiate an agreement with the rest of your class. Along the way, you'll hone your research, writing, speaking and teamwork skills.

Why the EU?

The European Union is an increasingly important player on the international scene. EU policy often has a significant impact on the United States and the world. Its twenty-five member nations represent a wide range of cultures, interests and perspectives. For that reason, a simulation of the EU provides an excellent opportunity to learn about a topic in depth.

Don't know much about the EU? That's OK. You don't need to become an EU expert to get a lot out of this simulation. The primary goal is for you to gain a greater understanding of the subject at hand. This simulation simply provides an innovative, challenging and fun way to do just that. Garnering some basic knowledge of an important player on the world scene is the bonus. Everything you'll need to know about the European Union for the simulation can be found on this web site.

What to expect...

Your class will be simulating a part of the EU legislative process by acting out a meeting of the Council of the European Union. The goal is to negotiate policy that is at the same time acceptable to the country you represent and good for the European Union. In a way, this is similar to a U.S. Senate debate on a bill, where as Senator you look out for the interests of both your state and the country.

Depending on your class size you will either work alone or as a team. If you haven't already been, you will be assigned a member country. You and your teammates are expected to learn about your country and where it stands on the issue. You will need to develop an argument to defend your position, negotiate and make deals with other 'countries', and perhaps compromise so that the end result is legislation you can live with.

How much time you will have to do this depends on your instructor. Expect to work outside of class. Whether in person, through the course website, via email, or by phone you will need to communicate often with your teammates as well as other teams.

The more you know about the position of the other countries and potential points of compromise, the better you will fair at the culmination of the simulation – a mock meeting of the Council. In fact, behind the scenes deal making and coalition building will serve you well.

Assignments and grading will be decided by your instructor. Participation will likely be a large part of your grade, as will preparation and demonstrated knowledge of the topic your class is debating.

Getting started...

1. Begin by reading the information on the [Team](#) page (even if you're working alone)
2. Become familiar with the EU. [Read the documents](#), explore EU websites, and learn about your role as a member of the [Council of the European Union](#).
3. [Learn about the country](#) you are representing
4. [Learn about the topic](#)
5. [Find out where your country stands](#) on the issue
6. Negotiate with other countries outside of class
7. Enjoy as all your hard work pays off at the simulated meeting of the Council!

Learning about the European Union

Where to begin?

While you don't need to become an EU expert to do well and have fun in the simulation, some basic knowledge is essential. Begin by becoming more familiar with the **Council of the European Union**, since this is the EU institution you will be simulating. Check out some of the other resources below:

- The "[EU at a Glance](http://europa.eu/)" section of the official EU website (<http://europa.eu/>) provides a general overview of the political structure of the European Union and how it works.
- A more detailed description of the Council of the European Union can be found [here](#).
- The [Wikipedia](#) entry for the Council of the European Union is also helpful.
- Still more details are provided in "[Europe in 12 Lessons](#)" and in the "[Internet Guide to the EU Decision-Making Process](#)"
- The EU publishes a "[Guide for Americans](#)" that is available as a brochure and in pdf format.

Other useful tools contained in the [Europa](#) website:

- [EUabc.com](#) - allows you to search by letter through a dictionary of words related to the EU
- [European Union glossary](#):

People within the EU institutions and in the media dealing with EU affairs often use '**eurojargon**' words and expressions that they alone understand. Eurojargon can be very confusing to the general public, which is why we have written this "plain language guide" to help you....

- [Acronyms list](#)

Other helpful online resources:

- The website of the EU's "embassy" in the U.S.: [Delegation of the EU Commission to the U.S.A.](#)
- [EU Observer](#) offers current news about the EU
- The UW-Madison's [European Studies](#), with funding by the EU Commission, sponsors EU-related events on the UW-Madison campus

Negotiations

Once you have determined your county's position on the topic, you should begin considering how you will negotiate in your country's interest. Determine the minimum you will settle for on the key areas of the proposed legislation, as well as what would be ideal. It's up to you to ensure that the end falls between the two. Now is the time for diplomacy and interaction.

Before the simulation

Your instructor may have set aside time before the simulation for countries to present their position. If so, listen carefully to what the other ministers have to say. Try to discover potential allies and enemies. What points are most important to each and on which might they be willing to compromise? Which countries are likely to be obstructive? Are there any countries with whom you could build a coalition or strike a deal? Which less-committed countries might you influence?

It is in your county's interest that you approach other countries early. Meet outside of class, or take advantage of your course web page's discussion lists and/or chat rooms. Keep in mind as you negotiate that if you will be using a system of "qualified majority voting" (see Simulation page), some nations will have more voting weight than others. This may well impact whom you choose to negotiate and/or make deals with. If your country has more votes than the others, you might use this to your advantage to persuade others to see things your way. Be careful though, since others may combine their votes in retaliation!

As the date approaches, you should decide what type of approach you will take at the simulation. Will your country be conciliatory, obstructive, aggressive, neutral or leading? How will you play out this approach?

During the simulation

You will have 15 minutes of time to mingle before the meeting officially begins. Make good use of this time to chat with other delegates in order to get a feel for how things might proceed. Coalitions might approach other teams to persuade them to join. Last minute deals are encouraged.

After the meeting has commenced, the chair has made the opening statement, and each country will in turn have an opportunity to present its current position during the 'tour de table'. If your country is part of a coalition, you will want to mention that during your opening statement (as a 'show of force'). After the tour, the debate begins.

While getting your way *is* important, remember that the goal of the meeting is to negotiate a *consensus* on the issue. The result, in all likelihood, will not be your ideal, but ought to be something your country can live with (afford, enforce, comply with, etc.). As minister, you will have to answer to your country's Parliament concerning the resulting legislation.

Researching your country

Your instructor may have assigned a "position paper" in which your team will summarize relative information about your country and its position on the topic you will be debating. If so, proceed to "[Writing a position paper for your country](#)" where you'll find the information below along with guidelines for writing your paper.

What do you need to know?

The more you know about your country, the better you will be able to formulate an argument for its position and negotiate for an outcome that is best for it at the simulation. There's no need to become an expert on your country. Indeed, you'll want to avoid getting into an information 'arms race' with other teams, as this can quickly take up all of your study time!

General country information:

- Statistics relative to the topic (population, GDP, major industries, etc.)
- The history of your country's membership in the EU (how long, under what circumstances did it join, does it use the EURO as currency, etc.)
- Any relative facts that might impact its position on this topic (predominant religions, customs, industrial relations, ties or conflicts with non-European nations, immigration, social forces, popular sentiments)

Topic-related:

- The issue as seen from your country's perspective.
- Does the country have a stake in this issue or not?
- On which points and under what conditions your country might be willing to negotiate. When and where will it draw the line?
- To what extent can your country make compromises without compromising its position?

Research resources

General information on your country can be found at the following web sites:

- [EU Open Data Portal](#) - A comprehensive database of European information.
- [Country Watch](#) - Basic country information is available to anyone, more detailed information can be accessed from campus computers or through the [UW libraries](#) web page. Choose "E-Resources/Article Databases: Find by Name" and then search for Country Watch.

For topic-related information, see the topic web page for news articles or other documents (if available) that refer to your country. The official documents often mention which countries are for or against policy and why. Doing a Google search of the topic with the name of your country might provide more current resources, especially recent news

articles. The web sites of interest groups may also provide country-specific information. For environmentally related topics, [Greenpeace](#) maintains web pages for countries worldwide, for example. You can also [Ask a Librarian](#) at the UW-Libraries for help with your research.

Resources

The following articles and websites will provide you with a background of parental leave policy, both EU-wide and within specific member countries. This is not a comprehensive list of available material, but will provide you with a solid base of information. You should, as time and interest permits, do further research on the topic using the online resources available to you as a student.

Overview of parental leave policy in the EU

All countries should read the following four papers:

- [Reconciliation policies from a comparative perspective](#), Monica Threlfall, "Gendered Policies in Europe"
- [Taking stock and looking ahead](#), Monica Threlfall, "Gendered Policies in Europe"
- [Europeans' Attitudes to Parental Leave](#)

Charts, tables and reports:

- [Maternity, Paternity, and Parental Leaves in the OECD Countries](#)
- [Report from the Commission on the Implementation of Council Directive 96/34/EC, 2003-](#) Each of the then 15 member countries of the EU reported to the European Commission the details of their parental leave law. Though a bit technical, it is thorough. Good when you need detailed information.
- [Impact of children on women's employment between Member States - 3-page results of an EU-wide survey of working parents](#)
- Other related information:
 - [Council Directive 96/34/EC](#) on the framework agreement on parental leave - the actual legislation that established minimum standards for all EU member countries. Skip the legal jargon to get to the main points.
 - [International Policies Toward Parental Leave and Care](#)
 - [Women, Work & Employment in Europe](#) - European website covering topics such as "Who or what constitutes a family" and "The 'male breadwinner model'".

Country specific information

Austria

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Austria](#)

Belgium

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Belgium](#)

Denmark

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Denmark](#)

France

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: France](#)

Germany

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Germany](#)

Greece

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Greece](#)

Ireland

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Ireland](#)

Italy

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Italy](#)

Latvia

- [Family Policy in Latvia](#)

Malta

- [FAQs on Malta & the EU: Maternity & Parental Leave](#)

Netherlands

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: The Netherlands](#)

Poland

[Family policies and gender in Poland](#)

Portugal

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Portugal](#)

Spain

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: Spain](#)

Sweden

- *Family Benefits & Family Policies: Sweden*

United Kingdom

- [Family Benefits & Family Policies: United Kingdom](#)

Rules of Procedure

The power of the Chair

Ultimate power to oversee, direct and run each meeting will be vested in the Chair. All delegates should address their forum through the Chair, and the Chair will have the sole power to open and close sessions, recognize speakers, set time limits on speakers and debates, control discussion and debate, and maintain order. The Chair must make every effort to be fair, to avoid partisan behavior of any kind, to ensure the smooth flow of proceedings, and to make sure that all discussions are relevant and as productive as possible.

Performance

Delegates should remember at all times the importance of the three Cs: **cooperation, compromise, and consensus**. All delegates must at all times behave in accordance with the norms prevailing in a meeting among representatives of democratic governments, and should avoid any kind of hostile, aggressive, or disruptive behavior. In the event of disruptive behavior by a delegate, the Chair may issue a formal warning to that delegate. If the delegate fails to co-operate after two formal warnings, the Chair may require the delegate to be silent for a specified time, or (as a last resort) may order the delegate to be expelled from the meeting chamber for a specified time. A silenced delegate may vote, but any delegate expelled from a meeting will lose all voting rights for the duration of his/her absence. The Chair may also caution or expel observers, and – if necessary - clear the room of everyone except faculty advisors and members of the Secretariat. (In extraordinary circumstances, a faculty advisor may be expelled at the discretion of the Chair, but only if he/she is being excessively and obviously disruptive.) It is left to the Chair to define "disruptive behavior", but it may include open hostility, verbal abuse, constant interruption, raising of voices, delaying tactics, a refusal to follow the rules of procedure, a refusal to co-operate in decision-making, or consulting with another delegate in a manner that interferes with the smooth flow of the meeting.

Speakers

Delegates must remain seated while speaking. Speakers may not be interrupted by anyone but the Chair. Speakers should normally address each other through the Chair.

Voting

Where votes are taken, they should normally be open, and made by roll call in alphabetical order by member state, and recorded by the Chair. The Chair will be the last called to vote. Voting will be verbal, and expressed either as "Yes", "No", or "Abstain".

Once a vote has been declared open, no one will be allowed to speak other than to cast their vote. Once all votes have been cast, the Deputy Chair will tally the vote and immediately announce the result. The decision of the Deputy Chair on a tally will be final.

Responsibilities of delegates

All delegates must attend all scheduled meetings. Any delegate who cannot avoid missing all or a substantial part of a meeting (i.e., more than ten minutes) must register their anticipated absence with the Chair in advance. They may appoint an alternate (who will have the powers and responsibilities of the delegate), or they may give their vote to another delegate. Either way, they should inform the Chair through a Point of Personal Privilege, otherwise they will lose all voting rights for the duration of their absence.

All delegates must always observe appropriate standards of etiquette, and refrain from disruptive behavior. Delegates are encouraged to remain seated throughout each meeting, but may leave the chamber for short periods without the permission of the Chair. Anyone leaving a meeting chamber loses all voting rights for the duration of their absence unless they have appointed an alternate or given their proxy to the delegate of another state, and so informed the Chair.

Delegates may confer with no one but their deputy.

Request to speak

Any delegate wishing to address any meeting for any reason must raise his/her hand and be recognized by the Chair. Verbal requests are not acceptable, nor is speaking out of turn.

Temporary adjournment

A Chair or a delegate may call for a temporary adjournment of a meeting for a specified time (no more than ten minutes), and (if necessary) be given a maximum of one minute to explain his/her rationale. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires the support of at least nine delegates to succeed. The Chair will then call a temporary adjournment if the vote is successful. No one delegate may call for an adjournment more than once in any one meeting.

Closure of debate

The Chair will normally decide on the closure of a debate, but a delegate may move for closure, and (if necessary) be given a maximum of one minute to explain his/her rationale. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires the support of at least eight delegates (twelve in the Commission) to be successful. The Chair will declare the debate closed if the vote is successful.

Closure of meeting

The Chair will normally decide on the closure of a meeting, but a delegate may move for closure, and (if necessary) be given a maximum of one minute to explain his/her rationale. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires unanimity to be successful. The Chair will then close the meeting if the vote is successful. No one delegate may call for a closure of a meeting more than once in any one meeting.

Point of Order

If, during a meeting, a delegate feels that the meeting is running in a manner contrary to these Rules, he/she may rise to a point of order. The Chair may overrule, or accept the appeal. If accepted, the Chair may make an immediate ruling, or ask the delegate to speak on the point of order for a maximum of one minute (but he/she may not speak on the subject of the debate). The Chair will then immediately rule on the point of order.

Point of Information

If a delegate wishes to obtain a clarification of procedure or of any other matter, he/she may rise to a point of information and receive clarification from the Chair or anyone else designated by the Chair.

Point of Personal Privilege

If a delegate wishes to raise a question, leave the room for an extended time, or make a request relating to personal comfort or their treatment by other delegates, he/she may rise to a point of personal privilege and receive an immediate ruling by the Chair.

Votes of no confidence in the Chair

While it is understood that all meetings will be run on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, it may be necessary in extraordinary circumstances - and solely as a last resort - to censure or remove the Chair.

If a delegate feels that the Chair is not giving fair time to all delegates, is being excessively partisan, is failing to keep order, is clearly failing to maintain the smooth progress of the meeting, or is otherwise failing to fulfill his/her duties in the best interests of the meeting, that delegate may call for a vote of no confidence. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires the support of at least ten delegates to be successful. The Chair may not vote, but must record the name of the delegate making the motion.

If the vote goes against the Chair, the meeting may issue a verbal caution, remove the Chair from the meeting room for a specified time, or arrange temporary or permanent replacement of the Chair by an alternate. This

will be decided either by consensus, or by a verbal vote, with each delegate having one vote, and a simple majority prevailing.
Again, the Chair may not vote.

No more than two votes of no confidence may be called in any one meeting, and no one delegate may make such a call.

If the Chair is removed through a vote of no confidence, his/her duties will be carried out for the duration of his/her absence by the delegate from the country seated directly to the left of the Chair. A deposed Chair will lose his/her rights to participate and vote only if removed from the meeting chamber.

Bargaining, coalition-building, and package deals. These are normal elements in Union decision-making, and can be undertaken during formal meetings or in informal sessions outside meetings.

Arbitration and the Secretariat

In the event of problems, conflicts, or questions over procedure, the Chair may call for arbitration by a member of the Secretariat, whose decision will be final. A member of the Secretariat may
- having given due notice to the Chair - briefly interrupt any meeting on a Point of Order or a Point of Information.

Amendments to the rules

None of these rules may be changed except by the instructor.

Scenario

Over the past 30 years, an increasing number of European women have joined the workforce. However, those who work, as well as those who *would like* to work, find it difficult to combine a job with family responsibilities. Because the traditional "male-breadwinner" model is still prominent in much of Europe, both policy and societal attitudes have created an environment in which many women either quit working or take a flexible part-time – often low-paying – position once they have children so that they can take care of their family. Men's attitudes have been slow to change, leaving women responsible for most of the household chores and childcare duties. Furthermore, childcare facilities are hard to come by and/or the cost is prohibitive in many EU member countries.

As the number of women in the workforce has increased, so too has the number of non-traditional families. Single parents, cohabitating and homosexual couples, adoptive parents and step-families are finding it increasingly difficult to raise children because policy meant to help families reconcile work and kids only apply to the "traditional" father-mother-children family. For example, only France, The Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Sweden legally recognize homosexual couples; whereas parental leave allowances aren't available to non-traditional families in Greece, Italy and Spain. Traditional culture and the dominant religious ideology play a major role in shaping policy in many EU countries.

Nevertheless, the 27-member European Union is committed to promoting equality between men and women. This means creating policy that enables women to work, while at the same time promoting a shift in societal attitudes towards women and work. Men must also be given the opportunity, not to mention the encouragement, to take on more responsibility at home so that women who choose to work are not overwhelmed. The situation is all the more critical because of the declining birthrate in most of Europe, with women deciding to have only one child or no children at all. The shrinking population is causing growing concern, as Europe's aging population moves into retirement leaving fewer workers to pay their social security benefits. Thus it is also in the EU's economic interest to promote women's employment.

In June 1996, the Council of the European Union adopted a Directive on parental leave. The general purpose of the Parental Leave Directive is "to facilitate the reconciliation of parental and professional responsibilities for working parents" - in other words, to make it easier for *both parents* to combine work and family life. The directive obligates all EU member countries to provide parents the right to at least three months' leave for childcare purposes (as distinct from maternity leave) after the birth or adoption of a child until a given age up to eight years. "It can be taken either by the mother, by the father or by both parents at the same time, in any form they choose: all in one go, split into several periods, or fragmented by working part time. In all countries, parents are *guaranteed to get their job back* following their parental leave, or to be reassigned to a similar job."

[Maternity and Paternity Leave in the EU at a Glance](#) – This chart gives a short overview of maternity and paternity leave in the EU. It describes the number of weeks off given and the percentage of pay that new parent's receive during this period.

The Parental Leave Directive was meant to be a minimum standard. Because the cultural and economic situations of the European Union's twenty-five member countries is so varied, the Parental Leave Directive has had mixed results. Since countries were left to create or adjust their own laws to meet the standards set by the directive, the resulting parental leave law and policy is different from country to country. Some countries, for example, have gone above and beyond the minimum by providing pay during leave (though sometimes at very low rates, such as Italy's 30% of wages) or by creating incentives for dads to take leave (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Sweden).

The executive body of the EU, the Commission, has asked you – the members of the Council – to update the 1996 Parental Leave Directive. According to the Commission, the original Directive has not been effective enough. On average in the EU, there are too few women in the labour market and those who do work face limited choices and wages lower than men's. Furthermore, while parental leave is gender neutral, relatively few men are taking advantage of this right. This is because the many families cannot afford to lose the higher pay that men receive in countries where leave is either unpaid or a percentage of the original salary.

The Commission is also concerned with increasing child poverty rates and continuing low birth rates. A suspected cause of child poverty is that in many countries non-traditional families aren't allowed family benefits, even as such families are becoming increasingly common. And while it may seem more likely that women who work are less likely to have children, this might not be the case. Nordic countries are characterized by a relatively high number of children despite high female participation in the workforce, while Southern European countries have both low female participation rates and low fertility. "Policies which help women reconcile work and family may actually stimulate both participation and fertility...providing an additional channel to reduce the future burden on younger generations of financing a growing number of retirees." (OECD)

The Commission's role is to look out for the interests of the EU as a whole. It would like to see the European Union social policy held up as a model for the world. As a Council Minister however, you (and your team) represent *your country*, and thus must keep its best interests in mind as you consider new parental leave policy. You *do* want to keep your job as minister in the next election after all. Therefore you need to know how changes to the parental leave law might impact your country – both positively and negatively. In countries with mostly small to medium sized companies, such as Malta, business may be hurt if they are required to pay employees while they are on leave. If women have a difficult time landing traditionally male positions, you might want to encourage more men to take leave because temporary workers will be needed to fill in for them. When women take these temporary jobs, they not only gain necessary experience for a permanent position, but also change work-place attitudes that may be biased against them.

How long should parental leave be? According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), extensive leave may "deteriorate labour market skills, and damage future career paths and earnings. There is some evidence that very long parental leaves make it more difficult for women to return to the labour market..",

while there is “evidence that extended parental leaves have a negative impact on the salary of returning mothers.” (OECD)

Your country’s social and political history is also important. The European Union added ten new members in May of 2004, and another two in January of 2007, many of which were under communist rule in the not too distant past. Council Ministers from these countries have very different issues to contend with, such as large traditional agrarian constituencies and a societal preference for the male-breadwinner model. In countries such as Italy, Poland, or Spain, the Catholic Church looms large in the political landscape, promoting traditional values. The government of the United Kingdom has traditionally been less interventionist in the area of social policy.

Over the next several days, your team will learn about the country you represent, the European Union as a whole and the Council in particular, and, of course, parental leave. You do not need to become an EU or policy ‘expert’ to do well in this simulation. Your team, however, should be well prepared. Formulate a policy position for your country and a good persuasive argument so you might convince other teams to see things your way. Seek out possible allies, form a coalition, pressure your adversaries. And don’t forget to have fun!

On the [Resources](#) page, you’ll find information to help you prepare. Feel free to research independently and share items of interest with your team-mates and perhaps other countries.

The Simulation

Despite what is written in the press, it is most unusual for a ministers' meeting to finish without having made some kind of agreement, although it may be vague and not always entirely satisfactory. During the negotiation, there are various factors which you should bear in mind. Obviously you must decide how important this issue is to you (i.e. are you prepared to block any agreement) and what kind of negotiating style you intend to adopt: you may want to be loud and aggressive or perhaps a quiet but authoritative line might be suitable. It is not necessarily the case that the loudest participant is the most effective in attaining his/her goals. In the real world, you must probably have to meet your opposite members again in the future; as a result, it is most unusual that delegates behave badly and in general the tone of such meetings is friendly but formal. Names are rarely used, "the delegate of the Netherlands" or "Mr/Madam Chairman/woman/President" being more typical. The language used by delegates is also relatively formal; jokes or unusual expressions are virtually impossible to translate-especially into 23 languages-and such do not have the desired effect.

Before the meeting officially commences, you will have 15 minutes to greet your counterparts from other member states and have an informal opportunity to take stock of the upcoming meeting.

The chair will then open proceedings by welcoming delegates to the meeting. Each delegation will then in turn make a general statement. Although the chair has some discretion in deciding which delegation should speak first, it is usually either the delegation on the Commission's or chair's left. This round of opening statements, known as the *tour de table* risks taking up much of the meeting if delegates do not remain concise; the chair sometimes sets a time limit on each statement.

After the initial round of debate, and particularly consensus seems to be lacking, the chair will propose a recess of 15 minutes (approximately 1 hour into the simulation). When delegates return from the recess (which can even be interpreted as a second meeting two months down the line), the chair will announce A points and B points. In EU Council parlance, A points are those on which there is general agreement between all of the member states. By contrast, B points are those which represent a lack of consensus-issues that would need further negotiation to be adopted (or dropped from the agenda as the case might be). Wide-ranging discussion should ensue with each national delegation seeking to amend the proposal in a way to suit itself. The chair will seek to sum up at appropriate points in the debate and attempt to identify points of disagreement.

Rules of Procedure

Though somewhat informal, meetings of the Council do follow rules of procedure. These help to keep the meeting on track and to facilitate and eventual agreement. It is to your country's advantage that you are familiar with these rules. As is true for all legislative bodies, members with thorough knowledge using skillful manipulation of the rules of procedure most often maintain the upper hand. Print out a copy of ***the rules*** and bring it with you to the simulation.

Qualified Majority Voting

Decisions in the Council are taken by vote. Voting procedure depends on the issue being discussed. On some issues unanimity is required; in others only a simple majority or a "qualified majority."

From 1st January 2007, a qualified majority will be reached if the following two conditions are met:

- if a majority of Member States approve;
- and a minimum of 255 votes is cast in favour of the proposal, i.e. 73.9 % of the total.

In addition, a Member State may ask for confirmation that the votes in favour represent at least 62% of the total population of the Union. If this is found not to be the case, the decision will not be adopted.

Distribution of votes for each Member State (from 01/01/2007)

Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom	29
Spain, Poland	27
Romania	14
Netherlands	13
Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal	12
Austria, Sweden, Bulgaria	10
Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Finland	7
Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia	4
Malta	3
TOTAL	345

The Council of the European Union

Which Council?

As you learn about the European Union it may be confusing trying to sort out the differences between and the role of various councils. The council you will be simulating is **The Council of The European Union**, frequently referred to as simply "the Council". (Until 1993, the Council of the European Union was known as "The Council of Ministers").

The **European Council** is the name given to the meetings held (usually quarterly) by the heads of state or government of each member nation and the president of the European Commission. The European Council does not pass legislation directly, but rather acts as a sort of steering committee for the EU. The role of the European Council is probably the most difficult for Americans to understand as we have nothing similar in our own government to which to compare. For the simulation, it isn't necessary to understand the role of the European Council, but it is important to know that it exists.

Finally, it is important not to confuse either of these councils with the entirely separate **Council of Europe**, which is not part of the European Union.

The role of the Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is one of three legislative bodies of the European Union. It is similar to the U.S. Senate in its legislative role, but is quite different in its membership. When the Council meets, a government minister from each member country attends. This minister works in a particular policy area in their home country. For example, the Farm or Agriculture minister deals with agricultural policy, the Environment minister with environmental policy, and so on. When the Council of the European Union meets, which ministers attend depends on the topic discussed. Thus, there isn't just one Council configuration, but several. The nine Council configurations are:

- General Affairs and External Relations
- Economic and Financial Affairs ("ECOFIN")
- Justice and Home Affairs
- Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
- Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry and Research)
- Transport, Telecommunications and Energy
- Agriculture and Fisheries
- Environment
- Education, Youth and Culture

The other two legislative branches of the EU are the Commission and the European Parliament. As the executive branch, the Commission proposes or initiates legislation. The Council then reviews the proposal, debates, negotiates, and may amend the legislation before adopting (or rejecting) it. The legislation you will be debating for this simulation will be an actual Commission proposal.

The European Parliament (EP) is a directly elected body which shares responsibility for passing legislation with the Council. For simplicity's sake, the EP is not included in this simulation. Nevertheless, you will likely find references to it in your research, so you should have an idea of its role in the legislative process.

Role playing a Council Minister

As you research your country and the topic you will be debating, keep in mind that as a Council Minister your role is to represent the interest of your country. Ministers are held accountable by their country's parliament for the decisions they make in the Council, thus they must have a thorough understanding of the issue at hand. A well-prepared minister will know:

- How or why did the issue come up in the first place?
- How was it dealt with in past Council meetings?
- What is the central issue?
- What nations have been most involved in supporting or opposing different solutions?
- How far apart are the principal concerned nations?

The Presidency

Every six months a new member state takes over the presidency of the Council. This is an opportunity for that state to set the policy agenda for the EU, to showcase its diplomatic and legislative ability, and to broker agreements between states. For the simulation, the individual or team holding the presidency will be responsible for chairing meetings.

Writing a position paper for your country

What's expected

Your instructor's guidelines may differ from these here, so be sure to check with her/him first. In general, however, a your paper should be 2-3 pages. Begin with a brief overview (a few paragraphs) of your country providing:

- relative statistics (population, GDP, major industries, etc.)
- a brief history of its membership in the EU (how long, under what circumstances did it join, does it use the EURO as currency, etc.)
- any relative facts that might impact its position on this topic (predominant religions, customs, industrial relations, ties or conflicts with non-European nations, immigration, social forces, popular sentiments)

The rest of the paper should state your country's position on the topic, including:

- The issue as seen from your country's perspective.
- Does the country have a stake in this issue or not?
- Suggest implicitly on which points and under what conditions your country might be willing to negotiate. When and where will it draw the line?
- To what extent can your country make compromises without compromising its position?

Research

General information on your country can be found at the following web sites:

- [EU Open Data Portal](#) - A comprehensive database of European information.
- [Country Watch](#) - Basic country information is available to anyone, more detailed information can be accessed from campus computers or through the [UW libraries](#) web page. Choose "E-Resources/Article Databases: Find by Name" and then search for Country Watch.

For topic-related information, see the topic web page for news articles or other documents (if available) that refer to your country. The official documents often mention which countries are for or against policy and why. Doing a Google search of the topic with the name of your country might provide more current resources, especially recent news articles. The web sites of interest groups may also provide country-specific information. For environmentally related topics, [Greenpeace](#) maintains web pages for countries worldwide, for example. You can also [Ask a Librarian](#) at the UW-Libraries for help with your research.

Your country team

Your team has been assigned a country...now what?

Begin by getting to know each other a bit. Introduce yourselves of course, but beyond that explore your background, academic interests and skills and even personality types. Why? Your team is expected to perform a variety of tasks throughout the simulation, each of which require specific skills. It will help to know who on your team is best suited for taking on certain tasks.

Divide the workload according to what works best for your team. Above all, be fair – don't leave any one person to do more than their share!

Suggested team 'roles' or tasks

It's a good idea to decide who will do what early on. Some things to consider...

- Are you outgoing, like to interact with others, don't mind speaking in front of a group?
- Do you have good research and/or writing skills?
- Do you enjoy debate, scheming and plotting to get your way, winning an argument?

The following are suggested team roles. These can be combined or split in whatever way works best for the team. For example, the writer role might be shared by the country and topic experts if you choose to collaborate on a writing assignment. Or the speaker and negotiator may be one and the same person.

- Country expert - researches the country your team represents; advises other team members for writing assignments, during negotiations with other teams and at the simulation.
- Topic expert - researches the topic; advises other team members for writing assignments, during negotiations with other teams and at the simulation.
- Writer - writes position paper (if one is assigned) and proposal (if your team submits one).
- Speaker (Minister) - does the talking for your group at sessions.
- Negotiator - communicates with other teams, makes deals, builds coalitions.
- Record keeper/note taker - keeps track of communications between your team and others (these may be part of your participation grade).

Communicate early and often!

Get the email address and phone number of your teammates. It's a good idea to keep a record of simulation-related email messages and other communication. Not only will this help you with the simulation, but these records may be counted towards your participation grade (ask your instructor). If your class is using a course web page (WebCT, Desire2Learn, Blackboard or some other course management page), use discussion lists

to communicate with teammates and negotiate with other teams. Some may even have chat rooms available.

Get into the role. Learn as much as you can about the person you are role playing. Try to find out what the real person in your role is like. Are they younger or older? Male or female? Old-fashioned or modern? Conservative or liberal? At the very least, use your country's background and position to imagine what would be expected from the person you are role playing. Even if you don't necessarily agree with the position you are meant to take, you should try to imagine yourself into this role as much as you can.

Problems?

One purpose of this exercise is to learn teamwork. If you have concerns or a problem arises be sure talk with your instructor before things get out of hand.

What's next?

Once you've decided who will do what, your team is ready to begin learning about the [European Union](#).