

Suitable Frameworks for Council of the EU Simulations

Council of the EU 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. An economics/trade topic such as a negotiation about the mandate to be given to the European Commission to negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA) with a third-party could also be well suited for a class on economics or international political economy. Outside of course frameworks, they can be organized as competitions or as one to three -day conferences, bringing together participants from a range of backgrounds or countries.

Choosing Topics for Council of the EU Simulations

The Council of the EU discusses, at the ministerial level, the most essential EU policies across a wide range of topics, including agriculture, consumer protection, economy and finance, employment, fisheries, security and defense, foreign affairs and international relations, etc. As one main purpose of simulating the proceedings of the Council of the EU is allowing participants to experience and understand the Council of the EU's proceedings, any issue requiring policy determination, however mundane, that falls within the responsibilities of the Council of the EU is suitable to be the topic around which to design a simulation. Of course, if an additional teaching goal is gaining in-depth understanding of any 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.

Note that voting rules may differ depending on the policy areas. While most votes occur with qualified-majority voting, some require unanimity (simple majority is only used for some internal matters).

Creating Material

There are 28 'natural' players in a Council of the EU simulation: One representative from each state (the appropriate minister of each EU Member-State, depending on the Council configuration), and the European Commissioner for the topic under discussion. For example, on issues of commerce, the 27 Ministers of Trade represent their countries and are joined by the European Commissioner for Trade. The Presidency of the Council is held by rotation; to preserve realism, designate the participating minister of the Member-State 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. 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/>

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, if you as the instructor want to change the topic discussed in the Council of the EU Simulation, pay close attention to the configuration of the Council¹ required for the new topic and the list of participants who attend the meeting of the Council of the EU.

Each player will require information allowing them to plan and act their roles as similarly as possible to how the Council of the EU members conduct themselves in the real world. Begin by providing some background information on the topic, on the events leading up to the Council of the EU meeting focusing on this particular topic, and the scope of the negotiating directives (i.e., the negotiated proposal that will be put to vote) that the Council of the EU 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, for their eyes only. You may hint at other countries that might be aligned with their views or oppose them, or let participants figure this out on their own. Based on this information, each Council of the EU representative must plan their objectives, strategy, and tactics, on their own. In addition, provide participants with any maps or other documents that they will require for the simulation.

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;²
- Sources on the role of the Council of the EU, in particular;³
- Sources on the Foreign Affairs Council configuration;⁴
- Sources on the Council of the EU procedure⁵; and
- Sources on EU concepts/jargon (e.g.: Schengen, Lisbon, Euro, subsidiarity etc.).⁶

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/>

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

³ For example, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

⁴ For example, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/fac/>

⁵ For example,

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/december/tradoc_118238.pdf ;

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11103-2013-DCL-1/en/pdf>

⁶ For example, http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/tips/words-style/jargon-alternatives_en.htm ; <http://en.euabc.com/>

In addition, you might also include sources on the particular subject-matter or topic to be decided by the Council of the EU. You might also include sources on the particular subject-matter or topic to be decided by the Council of the EU. For sources on the particular subject-matter of EU FTAs with 3rd parties, 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 Council of the EU 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 negotiation requires 1½ hours of run-time. It can be expanded 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.

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 representative of the Member-State holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU to begin the proceedings. Depending on the topic, the appropriate Minister from the Member-State holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU is the chair of this simulation. The European Commissioner for the specific topic on the agenda will help in facilitating the negotiations.

The simulation ends with the Council of the EU announcing an impasse or adopting a negotiating directive (in the case of the FTA with Tradeland simulation, an FTA negotiation mandate for the Commission). 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.