

# **Model European Council Simulation**

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(developed for a middle or high school classroom of 15-29 students)

Simulations may include several different institutions and simulate numerous inter-relationships in the EU. However, the most efficient classroom arrangement will focus on the European Council. The European Council members are the national executives from the 25 member states. This institution convenes four times a year and establishes the general direction for EU decision-making. The European Council does not develop actual policies, but instead discusses urgent issues and negotiates the EU's position on such matters. This simulation requires students to determine their country's positions. The European Council simulation facilitates active discussions on current events, but it does not entail a thorough knowledge of policy-making in the EU.

## **Preparing the Simulation**

*1. Teachers begin the exercise by assigning the countries to each student.* Each class would ideally have 25 students to represent each country of the EU-25. However, the simulation accommodates smaller and larger class sizes. If classrooms contain fewer than 25 students, then teachers might remove the smaller countries from the pool of assignments (Luxembourg, Malta, Cyprus, etc.). If classrooms contain as few as 15 students, then teachers might focus on particular regions (assign the original EU-15 from Western Europe or fifteen countries from Central and Eastern Europe). If classrooms contain more than 25 students, then teachers might add the candidate states to the pool (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Croatia).

*2. Teachers should decide if they want students to focus on one topic or multiple topics.* One topic will likely take entire length of time for a class (approx. 50 minutes). However, teachers can choose to hold several simulations through the school week, with each day focusing on a topic.

## **Research for the Simulation**

*3. The simulation requires preparatory research.* Teachers might assign one or more written assignments to complete before the simulation (*see Appendix D for some sample guidelines for these assignments*).

*4. Teachers might require the students to research and author "alter-ego" profiles of the person in their position.* The student playing the British Prime Minister would then research and produce a report on Tony Blair. The information for this assignment can be

found on the internet, in news articles and on the member state sites. This assignment allows students to understand the background and preferences of their personality.

5. *Teachers might also assign a country profile.* The teacher decides the information to be included in this profile. Students might investigate the history, politics, economics or current demographics of their country. Students might also study the country's relationships with their bordering neighbors or their interests in the European Union. The information for this assignment can be found on the internet, in most textbooks, in news articles and on the member state sites. This assignment allows students to understand the background and preferences of their country.

6. *Teachers can assign a policy history.* For instance, if the simulation will focus on immigration in Iran, then the student should investigate the history of immigration policy (Judicial and Police Cooperation) in the EU. If a simulation focuses on air pollution, then the student should investigate the history of environment policy in the EU. If a simulation focuses on diplomatic relationships with Iran, then the student should investigate the history of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This assignment might ask students to explain the purpose of a particular policy area and describe the EU's role in making policies for that area. The information for this assignment can be found on the internet, in most textbooks, in news articles and on the EU website. This assignment allows students to understand the background of a particular country and become familiar with the EU decision-making process.

7. *Teachers **should** assign policy position papers.* This assignment requires students to determine their country's position on each topic under consideration and to study the background of that topic. Students **should** write a short diplomatic statement, to read at the beginning of the conference. Students also might write such a statement and a longer paper that examines the background of their country's position. Students **should** also study the background of the topic. Why is immigration a pertinent topic? Why discuss air pollution? What is happening in Iran? The information for this assignment can be found on the internet, in news articles and on the member state sites. This assignment informs the student on their position for the simulation and should enable the student to discuss the topic.

## **Conducting the Simulation**

8. *Teachers can make this simulation as formal or informal as they like.* In the spirit of a true diplomatic summit, students could dress up, sit around conference-style tables with

name placards for their countries, and observe familiarities like referring to each other by “Mr.,” “Ms.,” and their surnames.<sup>1</sup>

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**The simulation can proceed in the following manner:**

1. Each representative reads their county’s statement on the topic. The teacher may have the students read these statements in alphabetical order by country name or in random order (15 minutes, approx).
  2. The teacher might ask a representative to propose a common EU position for deliberation in the body. If the body remains quiet, the teacher might propose this position.
  3. The deliberation should then address the common position. Some members might stand and explain their support for the proposal. Some members might stand and explain their opposition to the proposal. These members might propose changes to the common position (15-20 minutes).
  4. The teacher should then open the body to informal negotiations. Members should leave their seats and informally discuss the issue with their allies and opponents (10 minutes, approx.).
  5. Members should re-convene to vote on the common proposal (5 minutes).
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## **Learning in the Simulation**

This simulation facilitates several different types of learning. Students engage in intra-personal, linguistic learning in the preparation for the simulation. Students employ bodily-kinesthetic, inter-personal intelligences in the actual simulation.

The simulation also exposes students to a variety of information about the European Union. Students learn about the individual countries and leaders within the EU. Students learn about EU policy areas and current events in Europe. Perhaps most important, students develop a sense of inter-governmental decision-making in the EU and other such international institutions. The member states often disagree on EU matters. These disagreements result in watered-down proposals or legislative deadlock. Students should become aware of this inter-governmental bargaining process. Hopefully, students will disagree on a certain proposal and work to persuade their colleagues of a particular course of action. Some simulations may be unable to provide a consensus on the topic. Such simulations would be very successful, in that they instruct the students in the realities of such decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Bridge to the Future: Enlarging the European Union*

## Contact Information

If you have any questions about the simulation guide or the Model EU.

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