

Preparing and running simulations



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Introduction

Objectives of this handbook

Over the past decades, the use of simulations as a student-centered and student-active teaching method has been increasingly used in the political science curricula. It is believed that the following teaching method creates an authentic environment for learners, which enables them to take a more active role in their learning and critically engage with various political and governance-related matters (such as interactions between various policy actors and institutions) in a more efficient manner.

Although simulations are not the only active teaching method used in field of political science education – for instance a wide variety of other tools and forms of learning have been integrated in teaching activities such as debates, technology-based assignments (online forums; wikis) and multimedia-based activities (novels; films; audio-podcasts) – they remain by far the most widely used student-active teaching approach in the field.

This is particularly relevant when discussing the challenges associated with teaching European studies, given the fact that the use of simulations is particularly well-suited to elaborate and explain the complexities of the EU negotiation system and multi-level governance structure.

The goal of this hand book is to provide scholarly references, practical tips, and template concerning the preparation and conduction of simulations in the context of EU decision-making.

THE AUTHORS

Index

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SCHOLARLY UNDERSTANDING OF SIMULATIONS.....	5
EU-FOCUSED EXERCISES.....	7
PHASES OF THE SIMULATION.....	11
ONLINE VS OFFLINE.....	15
MATERIAL AND PRACTICAL TIPS.....	18
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	30
REFERENCES.....	32

Scholarly understanding of simulations

What do colleagues say?

As we move forward, it is important to provide a clear definition of a simulation as a pedagogical tool; give an overview on the state of the art when it comes to literature published on the use of the following method in the political science and European studies curriculum; and shed a light on the particularities and focus on the following study compared to the existing scholarly research on the subject matter.

In practical terms, simulations are **designed to construct real-life scenarios of decision-making bodies** such as international (e.g., the UN Security Council; European Parliament; Council of the European Union) and national institutions, where learners are assigned with the role of a political actor (e.g., minister; MEP, national delegation; diplomat or lobbyist) to deliberate and come to a feasible proposal on a particular issue such as piece of legislation or resolution. According to Smith and Boyer (1996) and Boyer and Smith (2015), a successful design and implementation of a simulation requires four important development requirements; which includes **1) the definition of teaching goals of a simulation 2) construction of the simulation** when it comes to definition of the roles of the actors and their power dynamics; identification and selection of the scenario; setting the rules of the simulation **3) implementation of the simulation** (including taking an active role of moderating the simulation and answering to participants' queries) **4) debriefing** (reflections of participants on their experience of participating in the simulation; and broader contextualization of the simulation in the framework of teaching activities in the course or program).

In this regard, the literature on the use of simulations related to local political issues and international relations could be tracked back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the first case studies and teacher guidelines were published to highlight the exchange of good teaching practices and expertise on the subject. Looking at the more recent literature, it could be argued that the use of simulations in teaching activities have been extensively highlighted in numerous political science publications and workshops,

covering such topics as successful implementation of the decision-making exercise (e.g. Sands and Shelton 2010) as well as practical approaches of organizing simulations on a large scale and new settings (e.g., Zaino and Mulligan 2009 and Guasti et al. 2015).

The main arguments in favour of the use of simulations in political science curriculum could be summarized as follows: it could be argued that simulations positively affect study results and students' motivation (Raymond and Usherwood 2013); improve students' interest in the subject of the course and increase learners' interest in politics in general (Zaino and Mulligan 2009; Fink 2015). Simulations also help to improve interpersonal skills such as negotiation, public speaking, teamwork, and collaboration as well as critical thinking in a safe-learning environment (Schnurr et al. 2014; Bernstein 2008; Mariani and Glenn 2014). Moreover, some scholars found affirmative conclusions that simulations assist in constructing "authentic working life experiences to all students" which could be comparable to the benefits and skills acquired through the participation in internships. From a didactic point of view, many scholars noted that simulations can help teaching staff to transform theoretical material into more accessible and comprehensible material for learners, which can explain complex issues in a more engaging and stimulating way.

EU-focused exercises

Specificities of EU-related simulations

Focusing particularly on the scholarly research of teaching European studies, it could be argued that multiple articles have been published over the recent years, highlighting various aspects of using simulations as a pedagogical tool, including such issues as evaluating the correlation between the characteristics of participants involved in EU simulation and their effect on learning outcomes; measuring the impact of EU simulations on the level of support for the EU and influence on European identity; assessing the barriers for effective implementation of simulation in teaching the European Union; looking at running EU simulations as an active learning pedagogical tool to bolster students' performance and knowledge of the decision-making process in the EU institutions; as well as numerous step-by-step recommendations on adapting and integrating simulations in European studies curriculum.

When it comes to particular benefits related to use of simulation in the European studies curricula, it could be pointed out that the following pedagogical tool could be better suited to explain the complexities of multilevel political structure of the European Union as well as the decision-making process and develop students' EU-related political competencies. Simulation exercises replicate the multifarious stages and stakeholders inherent in the EU's decision-making procedures, affording students the opportunity to assume the roles of EU member state delegates, European Commission functionaries, and European Parliament representatives, among others.

In particular, the following aspects appear particularly relevant as far as the learning process, students' engagement, and didactic dynamics are concerned:

Role-Engagement Paradigm:

Embedded within these pedagogical exercises is the principle of role-engagement. Participants are ascribed distinct roles and corresponding responsibilities that closely mirror the authentic functions pervading the EU institutions. This pedagogical

construct facilitates a nuanced grasp of the motives, restraints, and imperatives underpinning diverse EU actors.

Contextualized Scenarios:

Simulations are predicated upon plausible real-world or hypothetical policy scenarios. These scenarios may encompass domains such as environmental governance, trade accords, immigration policies, or fiscal negotiations. Through engagement with these contextualized scenarios, students cultivate a heightened appreciation for the labyrinthine intricacies enmeshed within EU decision-making pertaining to pivotal issues.

Deliberative Process Emulation:

Participants traverse the spectrum of policy drafting, negotiation, and ratification, mirroring the authentic modus operandi of EU officials. The iterative nature of these simulations entails phases such as proposal formulation, committee deliberations, plenary debates, amendment iterations, and eventual balloting. This experiential pedagogy underscores the exigencies of consensus cultivation, strategic concession-making, and the imperative of harmonizing disparate agendas.

Inquiry and Preparedness:

Successful participation within these simulations necessitates meticulous inquiry and preparation. Students are required to undertake comprehensive research on their allocated roles, the institutional echelons they embody, and the specific policy issues implicated. This compels students to immersively engage with EU policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional dynamics in a tangible and substantive manner.

Collaborative Discourse and Effective Communication:

Substantive EU decision-making conventionally hinges upon dexterous collaboration and eloquent communication across member states, institutions, and stakeholders. The simulation milieu substantiates these proficiencies as participants orchestrate negotiations, cultivate coalitions, and vociferously advocate their viewpoints during deliberations.

Cultivation of Critical Acumen:

The simulated environment fosters the cultivation of critical cogitation. Confronted with disparate perspectives and unanticipated complexities, students hone critical thinking faculties. This encompasses the nuanced dissection and rebuttal of counterarguments, the cultivation of a perspicacious multilateral outlook, and the ability to recalibrate strategies contingent upon the evolving simulation dynamics.

Substantive Insights:

Simulations furnish students with a vantage point into the multifaceted challenges and constraints incumbent upon EU decision-makers. In so doing, they unveil the intricacies of policy conceptualization, tactical negotiation, and the delicate equilibrium between national prerogatives and the collective aspirations of the EU framework.

Enhanced Engagement:

In contradistinction to passive didactic methods, simulations of EU decision-making expedite a deeply immersive and participatory educational encounter. By conflating theoretical erudition with practical application, these simulations transcend the boundaries of conventional pedagogical paradigms. The resultant elevated engagement catalyzes an augmented comprehension and sustained assimilation of the subject matter.

In sum, the deployment of simulations as didactic instruments within the domain of EU decision-making augments the efficacy of pedagogical endeavors, furnishing students with a heightened and multifaceted cognizance of the intricate dynamics endemic to the EU's functional apparatus, institutional architecture, and policy formulation processes. This pedagogical paradigm effectively bridges the chasm separating theoretical acumen from practical proficiency, capacitating students for prospective roles within EU-related domains or the realm of policy analysis.

For the sake of simplicity, in this text, we will primarily refer to the simulation of the decision-making process of the **Council of the European Union**¹.

¹ Info at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

 **Legislative institution.** The Council represents the governments of the EU Member States. The Council adopts EU laws and coordinates EU policies. The Council of the EU is also known as the «Council of Ministers» or «the Council».

 Each EU Member State holds the **presidency** on a 6-month rotating basis. The Council meets in 10 different «**configurations**», one for each policy area: GAC, FAC, Ecofin, JHA, Agrifish, EPSCO, COMPET, TTE, ENV, EYC. The **national ministers** in charge of that policy area in their own country attend their designated configuration.

Council preparatory bodies

- **Coreper II, Committee of Permanent Representatives**, is composed of each member states' permanent representatives to the EU. They prepare the work of GAC, FAC, Ecofin, and JHA.
- **Coreper I** is composed of each country's deputy permanent representatives. They prepare the work of Agrifish, EPSCO, COMPET, TTE, ENV, and EYC.
- There are more than 150 highly specialised **Working parties** and (14) **Committees**.

General Secretariat

- 17 Directorates-General.

Councils

- Stabilisation, Association, and Cooperation Councils; APC-EU Council of Ministers.

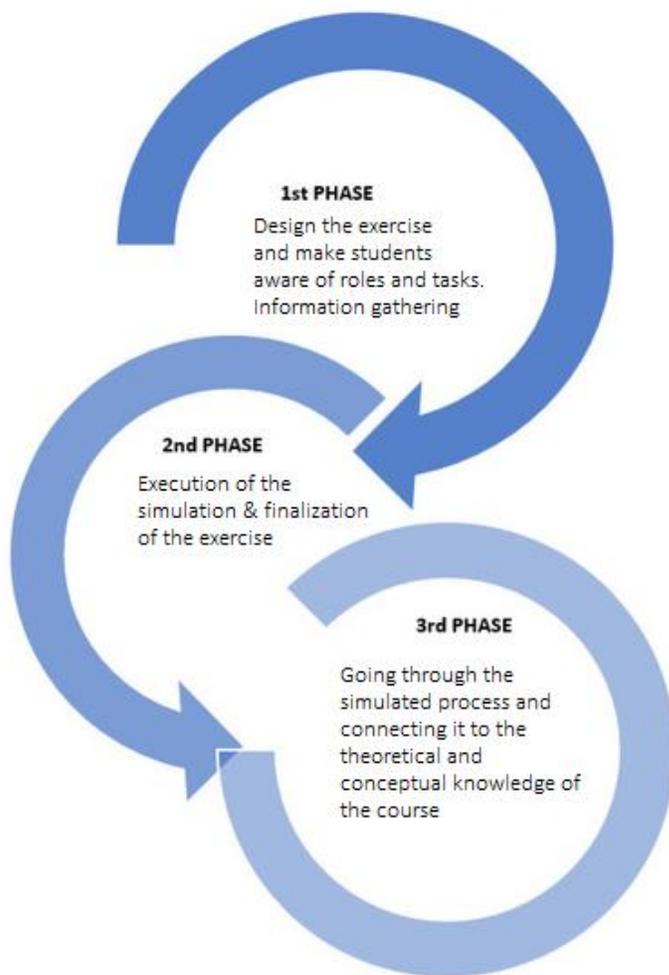
SOURCE: <https://www.humanitarian designers.org/>

The Council of the European Union is a pivotal institution within the EU framework, representing member states' governments and playing a **central role in policy-making and decision-making processes**. It shares legislative authority with the European Parliament, jointly adopting laws through a co-decision procedure. The Council is a forum for member states to coordinate policies, address economic matters, and formulate foreign policy positions. It also engages in budgetary decisions, economic policy coordination, and international relations, working closely with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Council operates through various configurations dedicated to specific policy areas, enabling ministers from member states to collaborate, negotiate, and decide on matters crucial to the functioning of the EU and its member states.

Phases of the simulation

Planning stage by stage

For the successful organization and conduction of a simulation planning is key. We recommend to clearly distinguish three phases of 1) preparation, 2) implementation, and 3) de-briefing that will contribute to translate students' theoretical knowledge into tangible comprehension through the three stages.



SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

1st PHASE - Preparation: Building a strong knowledge base

During the preparatory phase, students undertake the task of collecting and familiarizing with a spectrum of materials and sources. This involves collecting and

digesting relevant information, which helps them become well-acquainted with the EU's intricate legislative processes and key themes. By referring to official documents, academic analyses, and current events, students develop a comprehensive grasp of the policy context they'll be simulating. This phase highlights the importance of thorough research, enabling students to better understand their assigned roles and the overall objectives they're meant to pursue. The preparatory work acts as a foundation, enhancing students' comprehension of the complexities inherent in EU decision-making.

2nd PHASE - Implementation: Conducting the simulation

Moving from preparation to action, the core of the exercise unfolds. Participants embody their designated roles, mirroring the diverse roles within the EU's institutional framework. Whether conducted in a physical classroom or a virtual environment, this phase combines meticulous research with dynamic role-playing. Students adeptly navigate the intricate pathways of policy creation, replicating the intricate negotiations, discussions, and collaboration central to EU decision-making. This immersive experience prompts students to integrate their acquired knowledge with the demands of the policy context, refining their understanding of the intricate interplay between varying interests, procedural structures, and geopolitical dynamics.

3rd PHASE - De-briefing: Illuminating Epistemic Dimensions

The culmination of the simulation leads to the de-briefing phase, a crucial step for reflection and insight. During this stage, students come together to unpack the intricate paths they traversed during the simulation. The de-briefing involves a thoughtful introspection, where participants discuss the strategic choices, challenges, and partnerships they encountered. The fusion of practical experience and educational perspective illuminates the many facets of policy formation and negotiation, invigorating a deeper understanding of the process. Moreover, this phase aids in comprehending the broader implications of EU decision-making, including the delicate balance between national autonomy and European unity.

Critical aspects to consider in the conduction of EU simulations

When designing a simulation of EU decision-making it is key to bear in mind in which direction and to what extent contextual, structural, environmental factors affect the nature of the exercise and its conduction.

Simulations are often facilitated through modern platforms like **Learning Management Systems (LMS)**. We recommend using online learning platforms within a controlled virtual environment to gather reading and audio-visual material, facilitate pre-exercise group discussion and brainstorming and submitting relevant material. The platform contributes to effectively bridge theoretical/conceptual knowledge with practical application, allowing students to witness the complexities of policy formulation firsthand.

PREPARATION MATERIAL FOR A SIMULATION OF COUNCIL DECISION MAKING IN THE MOODLE ENVIRONMENT

▼ Preparing EU simulation on Russia's war against Ukraine (December 21)

Following the appeal of the President of the European Commission, the Member states - invited by the Council Secretariat - have convened an extraordinary session of the Council to be held in Tartu (Republic of Estonia).



-  Development of Member states' position
-  Template of country position towards the issue
-  Match students / Member states
-  Example of Council conclusions
-  EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine (since 2014)
-  EU actions of solidarity towards Ukraine
-  Development of Member states' position

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

At the core of these simulations lies a set of factors that drive its management. One of the remarkable aspects is their **scalability**, enabling adaptation to various class sizes. This adaptability ensures that simulations can be tailored to accommodate both smaller and larger groups of students while maintaining the essence of the exercise. This scalability not only enhances accessibility but also mirrors the flexible nature of decision-making dynamics within the EU. Needless to say, settings such as the Council of the European Union (or European Council) can be scaled up by grouping two or

more students as representatives of the same country. In this case, rules or processes of intra-state bargaining and consensus building should be in place.

Integral to the success of EU simulations is the **allocation and internalization of roles** by students. By assuming the roles of different EU actors, such as member state representatives, commissioners, or parliamentarians, students gain multifaceted insights into the varying perspectives and motivations that shape policy discussions. Effective internalization of roles and role-playing, in general, encourage students to think critically, engage in negotiation, and appreciate the complexities of consensus-building and decision-making.

Identifying appropriate **learning spaces** is pivotal in optimizing the simulation experience. Whether conducted within physical classrooms or virtual settings, the chosen environment should encourage active participation and constructive discourse. If possible, try to favor flexible classrooms and to avoid static or over-constraining learning spaces. The former facilitates group formation, bi-lateral and multi-lateral interaction, and – in general – students' mobility across the learning space.

STATIC VS. FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



SOURCE: www.spaces4learning.com

Moreover, time constraints imposed during simulations reflect the **real-world urgency and deadlines** that often characterize policy-making, fostering a sense of dynamism and pressure akin to actual decision-making scenarios.

The **role of the lecturer** in facilitating the simulation is crucial. Acting as a moderator, the lecturer guides students through the process, ensuring that discussions are fruitful and on track. This role may involve introducing scenarios, providing context, and intervening to maintain a balanced and productive exchange of ideas. In particular, when it comes to the context of the Council of the EU, the lecturer will adopt the role of the Council Secretariat or of the rotating presidency.

Lastly, the **realism of the exercise** is a paramount consideration, particularly in relation to the number of participating students. This factor contributes to the authenticity of the simulation, as it mirrors the multilateral dynamics of EU decision-making, wherein a multitude of voices must be considered and to the internalization of the practical learning. Thus, the comprehensive engagement of a substantial number of students further enriches the learning experience, simulating the complexities and challenges encountered within the actual EU framework. In particular, we recommend students and instructor to use – across the simulation – a formal and institutional language and to conform to the [EU jargon](#).

Online vs. offline

How the learning environment affects the learning experience?

In this section, we will briefly introduce different learning settings in which simulations and role games can be executed and discuss the related constraints. The formats introduced include in-person, hybrid (a mix of in-person and online), and fully online setups. Each format has its own advantages and implications for learning.

The constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, have incentivized educators to re-think the approaches of organizing and conducting simulations and – in general – engaging in interactive learning.

	In-person	Hybrid	Online
Preparatory work (instructions)	Sent in advance (either LMS; or on paper). Asynchronous	Sent in advance (either LMS; or on paper). Asynchronous	Sent in advance via LMS. Asynchronous
Implementation of simulation	In class, on-site. Synchronous	Some students are joining on-site; some joining via video-conferencing (online). Synchronous	Fully online with the means of video-conferencing (Zoom; MS Teams; breakout-rooms + Google docs, Padlet)

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

In the **in-person format**, students receive instructions and materials beforehand through an online platform (LMS) or physical copies. This allows them to get ready at their own pace. The simulation itself happens in a classroom setting, where students engage in real-time discussions and role-playing.

The **hybrid format** combines in-person and remote participation. Students still get instructions asynchronously, just like in the other formats. During the simulation, some

students are physically present in the classroom, while others join remotely through video conferencing. This mix of on-site and online interaction offers the possibility to bridge distant physical spaces, however it might prevent the emergence of effective group dynamics and student interaction, given the limits posed by technology.

Online simulations take full advantage of educational technology. Students still prepare on their own time by accessing materials through an online system. The actual simulation, however, takes place entirely online. This is usually done using video conferencing tools like Zoom or MS Teams. Students work in groups in virtual breakout rooms and use collaborative platforms like Google Docs or Padlet. Even though the interaction is digital, it still aims to capture the essence of decision-making and policy discussions.

The implementation of the simulation implies different settings such as plenary discussion and thematic table discussion as well as drafting, discussion / approval of amendments and voting. In order to increase realism and internalization of roles, we recommend changing (or modifying) the learning space as we move from one setting to the other. Additionally, we recommend using the [Council voting calculator](#) to conduct the voting procedures and compute majorities. The tool is adaptable to a varying number of participating Member states.

	Offline	Online
<i>Preparatory phase</i>	moodle (P/D)	moodle (P/D)
<i>Plenary discussion</i>	Physical format	Zoom
<i>Thematic table discussion</i>	Physical groups	Zoom breakout rooms
<i>Note taking / drafting</i>	Physical format	GoogleDoc
<i>Amendments</i>	Word	GoogleDoc
<i>Voting</i>	Council voting calculator	Council voting calculator

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

Material and practical tips

How to practically organize a simulation?

In this section, we will briefly introduce a few tools and tips in order to design the simulation exercise. The tools presented here are very flexible and can be easily adaptable to different learning settings, institutional environments, and group size.

As discussed above, in the **preparatory phase students** independently collect, process, and are exposed to the preparatory material in relation to the country assigned. In the light of the information collected during the preparatory phase, participants are assigned a specific Member state (alone or in group) and required to develop (and share with other participants – via the LMS) a country profile sheet.

Assigning Member States: To prepare the simulation exercise effectively, students are required to identify the specific EU member state they will represent throughout the simulation. This pairing ensures an equitable distribution of roles, aligning each student with a country's perspective.

Engagement with Crisis Materials: A crucial preliminary step entails a thorough engagement with the provided materials pertaining to the simulated crisis. These resources are generally made accessible within the LMS section dedicated to the exercise. Familiarity with these materials is imperative, as they serve as the foundational basis for understanding the context and nuances of the crisis scenario.

Country-Specific Information Gathering: An essential task is the collection of pertinent information concerning the assigned member state. This information serves as the basis for completing the "Country profile". Within this template, each section necessitates a succinct elaboration on the country's stance, accompanied by references to substantiate the position.

Individual Preparatory Endeavors: The preparatory phase of the exercise is inherently individual, with each student embarking on the exploration and comprehension of

their assigned member state's position in isolation. This independent engagement sets the stage for informed and rich discussions during subsequent collaborative sessions. Students representing the same country can coordinate and discuss the country position, but each of them needs to individually go through the above-mentioned steps.

EXAMPLE OF COUNTRY PROFILE SHEETS RELATED TO THE DEBATES ON RUSSIA’S AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

COUNTRY PROFILE IN THE CRISIS: FINLAND

Factors	Position	Relevance
Relations towards Russia	Warm	Very high
Relations towards Ukraine	Mid-Warm	High
Trade/gas ties with Russia	Very high (positive perception)	High
Initiative	Position	Relevance
Formal condemnation of Russia's actions	✓	+
Strong stress on territorial integrity of Ukraine (Crimea)	✓	+
Financial aid to Ukrainian government / economy	✓	+
Economic sanctions towards Russia	✓	
Visa restrictions	✗	+
Stronger role of NATO at the borders of Russia	✗	
Suspension of Russia from Parliamentary assembly of Council of Europe	✓	
Permanent expulsion of Russia from G8	✓	
Stop to imports	✗	
Recall ambassadors	✗	+
Military support to Ukrainian government	✗	+

COUNTRY PROFILE IN THE CRISIS: _____

Factors	Position	
Relations with Russia		
History of tensions of Russia		
Geographical proximity		
Initiative	Position (explain with references from relevant sources)	Relevance (how much does this initiative matter for the country)
Denunciation of Russia's invasion		
Condemnation Putin's regime		
Denunciation of Russia as a 'regime supporting terrorism'		
Diplomatic support for Ukraine		
Delivery of military support to Ukraine		
Support for new economic sanctions towards Russia		
Support for individual travel bans and asset freeze towards individuals		
Support for individual travel bans and asset freeze towards individuals		
Support for import bans (incl. energy / gas)		
Recall ambassadors from Russia		
Direct financial and infrastructural support to the opposition in Russia		
Support Ukraine's EU membership bid		
Support Ukraine's NATO membership bid		
Support for an EU 'Magnitsky act'		

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

Country profile sheets might vary in terms of complexity and sophistication. In general, the focus is on Member states' position and policy relevance. The former relates to the country's support or opposition to the proposed initiatives, while the latter relates to the significance of the policy and/or initiative in the light of the country's national interest. While the focus (and complexity) of the proposed initiatives is decided by the instructor, their function is to activate the students' independent data collection and source gathering in the preparatory phase.

Beyond the traditional sources of information about Member states' positions (i.e. governmental websites, media outlets, etc.), additional material can be provided by the lecturer in order to increase students' engagement. In particular, a new trend implies the possibility to develop fictional government positions on the topic debated by means of ai writing generators.

FICTIONAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT DEVELOPING USING AI

 <p>REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS</p> <p>STATUS: CONFIDENTIAL TALLINN, 20.08.2023</p> <p>Policy brief: Supporting the shift to qualified-majority voting in EU foreign policy</p> <p>Background</p> <p>The EU's foreign policy is hampered by the unanimity rule in the Council of the EU, which allows any member state to veto or dilute decisions on matters of common interest. This undermines the EU's ability to act as a global player and defend its values and interests in a changing world. The unanimity rule also creates a perception of disunity and weakness among the EU's partners and adversaries, and reduces the EU's influence and credibility in international fora.</p> <p>The Treaty of Lisbon provides some legal mechanisms to introduce qualified-majority voting (QMV) in certain areas of foreign policy, such as <i>passerelle</i> clauses and enhanced cooperation, but they require political will and consensus among the member states. The European Commission has proposed to use these mechanisms to move from unanimity to QMV in selected areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), such as human rights, sanctions, civilian missions and EU positions in international organisations. However, the proposal has not received much attention or support from the member states or the public.</p> <p>Objective</p> <p>The objective of this policy brief is to present the arguments and benefits of supporting the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy, and to propose some concrete actions that Estonia can take to advance this agenda.</p> <p>Arguments and benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy would enhance the EU's ability to act swiftly and decisively in response to global challenges and opportunities, such as climate change, human rights violations, regional conflicts, terrorism, migration and trade. This would allow the EU to play a more proactive and constructive role in shaping the international order and promoting multilateralism. Supporting the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy would strengthen the EU's coherence and consistency in its external action, as it would reduce the risk of divergent or contradictory positions among the member states, and increase the accountability and transparency of the decision-making process. This would improve the EU's reputation and reliability as a partner and a leader in global affairs. Supporting the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy would boost the EU's influence and credibility in the world, as it would demonstrate the EU's unity and commitment to its values and interests, and increase its leverage and bargaining power in international negotiations. This would enable the EU to defend its interests more effectively and assert its values more confidently. Supporting the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy would benefit Estonia's national interests, as it would allow Estonia to participate more actively and effectively in shaping the EU's foreign policy agenda, and to benefit from the solidarity and protection of the EU in case of external threats or challenges. This would enhance Estonia's security and prosperity within the EU. Estonia would be able to influence more directly and substantially the EU's foreign policy decisions on issues that matter for its interests, such as Russia, NATO, cyber security, energy security, digital policy, human rights and democracy. Estonia would be able to rely more on the EU's collective strength and support in dealing with potential challenges or crises arising from its geopolitical situation or its relations with third countries, especially Russia. Estonia would be able to benefit more from the EU's economic opportunities and development assistance resulting from its foreign policy actions, such as trade agreements, sanctions relief, development aid or humanitarian assistance. <p>Proposed actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estonia should endorse the European Commission's proposal to move from unanimity to QMV in selected areas of CFSP, and advocate for its adoption by the Council of the EU. Estonia should also support extending QMV to other areas of CFSP that are relevant for its interests, such as energy security, cyber security and digital policy. Estonia should engage in constructive dialogue with other member states, especially those that are reluctant or opposed to the shift to QMV in EU foreign policy, such as Poland, Hungary, Cyprus or Ireland, and try to address their concerns and reservations. Estonia should also seek to persuade them of the advantages of QMV for their own interests and values, as well as for the common good of the EU.
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SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

Implementation of the simulation

As the simulation begins, the lecturer (impersonating the Council Secretariat) takes the lead in providing an **insightful introduction of the exercise**. This step is essential to ensure that students understand the context before the exercise starts. While maintaining a formal and institutional tone, the lecturer points out the significance of the exercise, linking it to real EU proceedings.

During this explanation, the lecturer brings up key EU documents and decisions. This adds depth to the simulation, **connecting classroom learning to actual policy-making scenarios**. This way, the simulation becomes more meaningful and engaging.

INTRODUCTORY SLIDES

Dear colleagues, how to move on?

Our relationship with Ukraine a commitment to the principles of international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also encompasses support for market economy, sustainable development, and good governance. **Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine has heavily affected the nature and direction of our Partnership.**

The European Union expressed its unhinged support to Ukraine's struggle for freedom and has condemned without hesitation Russia's aggression

'Supporting and strengthening relations with Ukraine' has been identified as one of the key objective by the current **Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union** to grant a 'safe and secure Europe'

Rationale and goals

EU foreign ministers will **look forward to future cooperation and full integration of Ukraine.**

They will **take stock of what has been achieved** since the last summit in Brussels in 2020 and bilateral high level meetings, focusing on the tangible benefits delivered to the citizens of Ukraine. The **candidate status** brings Ukraine even closer to the EU. The summit will discuss how to further **strengthen cooperation in the priority areas** agreed in Brussels:

- Membership and europeanization
- Support for Ukraine
- Condemnation for Russia

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

An important part of the lecturer's talk is **revisiting the rules for voting** and the limitations that guide EU decision-making. This quick review clarifies the boundaries within which participants need to work. It also mirrors the real-world complexities of EU negotiations, making the simulation more authentic.

AGENDA OF THE SIMULATION

10 min	Introduction
15 min	Preparation of national declarations
35 min	Declarations of national positions
20 min	Informal negotiations
40 min	Thematic table discussion
15 min	Presentation of thematic drafts
15 min	Inter-delegation negotiations
15 min	Amendments and consensus building
5 min	Approval of the final text of the declaration

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

To guarantee a smooth development of the exercise, the lecturer outlines the **simulation's agenda**. The idea is to set the tone for the discussions to follow. The structured approach echoes the way the EU addresses its own challenges, giving the simulation a purposeful direction. The agenda unfolds as follows:

Introduction: The simulation commences with a comprehensive introduction by the facilitator, contextualizing the crisis scenario and outlining the overarching objectives of the exercise. This session lays the groundwork, preparing participants for the intricate role-playing that lies ahead.

Preparation of National Declarations: Participants, representing distinct EU member states, undertake the task of crafting national declarations that summarize their country's position on the issue discussed.

Declarations of National Positions: Students present their national declarations, succinctly articulating their country's stance. This phase marks the formal initiation of debate, whereby each delegation's perspective comes to the fore, facilitating a diverse exchange of ideas. Note taking is recommended to students in this phase.

Informal Negotiations: The simulation progresses to a more interactive stage of informal negotiations. Participants engage in bilateral or multilateral discussions, pursuing mutual understanding and the exploration of potential alliances, to advance national interest.

Thematic Table Discussion: Discussions pivot to *thematic tables*, identified themes are addressed. Participants engage in focused discussions to discern common ground, potential conflicts, and areas necessitating further negotiation.

EXAMPLES OF THEMATIC TABLES AND RELATED QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

Rationale and goals

EU foreign ministers will **look forward to future cooperation and full integration of Ukraine.**

They will **take stock of what has been achieved** since the last summit in Brussels in 2020 and bilateral high level meetings, focusing on the tangible benefits delivered to the citizens of Ukraine. The **candidate status** brings Ukraine even closer to the EU. The summit will discuss how to further **strengthen cooperation in the priority areas** agreed in Brussels:

- Membership and europeanization
- Support for Ukraine
- Condemnation for Russia

Thematic tables

1 – MEMBERSHIP

How should Ukraine's accession bid be supported? When should negotiations start and according to which principles?

Which key reforms should be required to start the accession process without unnecessary delays?

2 – SUPPORT

How could the EU support Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression be supported within the framework of the partnership and broadly by the EU and its member states (incl. military assistance)?

Which policy initiatives, financial frameworks, policy mechanisms should be activated to this end?

3 – SANCTION

Should the sanctioning regime towards the Russian federation be further strengthened?

Beyond sanctions and economic retaliatory measures, which other punitive measures should be taken?

Should the EU and NATO deepen their coordination to deter Russia's aggression?

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

In order to facilitate the thematic table discussion, each theme is accompanied by a number of direct questions to students that will discuss them in groups.

Students can be allocated to the different thematic tables (and related topics) in advance, during the preparatory phase, or in-class, at the start of the simulation. Needless to say, the former guarantees a higher degree of individual preparation and preliminary familiarization with study materials.

Presentation of Thematic Drafts: Delegations present thematic drafts, aggregating their positions on specific aspects. This phase implies the convergence of individual perspectives into a collaborative framework, contributing to a more comprehensive policy draft.

Inter-delegation Negotiations: The agenda transitions to inter-delegation negotiations. Here, the synthesis of thematic drafts is confronted with the realities of differing perspectives, encouraging adaptive negotiation and the pursuit of consensus.

Amendments and Consensus Building: Participants delve into the process of amending and refining the draft declarations with the support of the lecturer (acting in his/her capacity of Council secretariat). This stage is primarily about the idea of consensus-building, wherein participants maneuver through the complexities of reconciling differing viewpoints.

Approval of the Final Text: The culmination of the simulation sees the approval of the final text of the declaration/bill. This decision – according to the voting mode – can be reached by consensus, unanimity, or qualified majority.

Crucial elements shaping the simulation

The effectiveness of a simulation hinges on several factors that affect the dynamics and outcomes of student-led negotiation. These aspects are instrumental in guiding participants through the landscape of decision-making simulations, instilling both the essence and the challenges encountered in real-world scenarios.

Limited Time: Time serves as a key constraint that infuses the simulation with a sense of urgency, mirroring the time-sensitive nature of policy formulation. Participants are compelled to synthesize information, negotiate, and converge on decisions within a restricted timeframe. This element not only heightens the realism of the exercise but also fosters skills in quick thinking, adaptability, and efficient collaboration – qualities indispensable in the realm of policy dynamics.

Scarce Information: Mimicking the ambiguity often encountered in actual policy scenarios, the scarcity of information augments the complexity of the simulation. Participants are challenged to navigate through uncertainties, fostering strategic thinking and resourcefulness. This scarcity compels students to leverage the available information judiciously, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions despite incomplete data.

Need to Find Agreement: The quintessential essence of the simulation lies in the collaborative endeavor of reaching agreements. Participants, embodying diverse roles,

must navigate ideological differences and national priorities to converge on viable solutions. This aspect highlights the multifaceted nature of consensus-building, fostering negotiation skills and diplomatic acumen.

Unanimity-based vs. Majority Decision-Making: The simulation format can encompass either unanimity-based or majority-based decision-making procedures. Unanimity, while fostering comprehensive consensus, is often arduous to achieve due to disparate perspectives. Conversely, majority-based decisions expedite the process and might prove more effective, but may highlight lasting divisions. The selection between these approaches introduces an element of authenticity and challenges participants to grapple with procedural nuances inherent to EU decision-making.

Table discussion and finalization of the work

Thematic table discussions are a crucial stage within the simulated EU decision-making process, offering an effective platform for dynamic interactions and collaborative engagement. This phase is marked by a systematic approach that guides participants towards a coherent policy perspective.

EXAMPLES OF THEMATIC TABLES' TEMPLATES

	Countries	Statement	Proposed amendment (supported by ALL-1 members of a working group)
GROUP 0 (EXAMPLE)		The Member states support the adoption of more stringent economic measures and - under the coordination of the European Commission - propose freezing any bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership	AMENDMENT 1 The Member states support the adoption of more stringent economic measures and [CUT] propose freezing any bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, <i>until further developments.</i>
GROUP 1 (GOV) Should clearer enlargement perspectives be given to EaP countries? In which ways can the opportunities enshrined in the DCFTA be better capitalized and the goals achieved?			

SOURCE: Authors' elaboration

Participants assemble in distinct groups, either physically or within a virtual setting, based on the simulation's format. This arrangement ensures deliberations focused on the specific theme debated in the table and fair distribution of viewpoints across thematic tables.

The process begins with participants filling in respective table template, outlining the countries involved and the central statement in focus. Student discussions begin with a brief introduction round, allowing participants to identify their countries and highlight priorities related to the posed questions. This approach acknowledges the diverse perspectives within the group and prepares the ground for subsequent dialogue. As the introductory phase comes to an end, the conversation shifts towards developing concrete ideas, encouraging a collaborative exploration of potential solutions. Participants actively contribute their insights, engaging in constructive exchanges that blend diverse viewpoints to reach consensus. As discussions progress, participants collaboratively craft a comprehensive statement that directly addresses the posed questions. This statement encapsulates the group's insights and agreements distilled from the thematic table deliberations.

The identification of a designated "note taker" is recommended. He/she assumes the role of capturing key points, discussions, and formalizing the group's statements. This role ensures that the essence of discussions is documented for reference in later stages of the simulation.

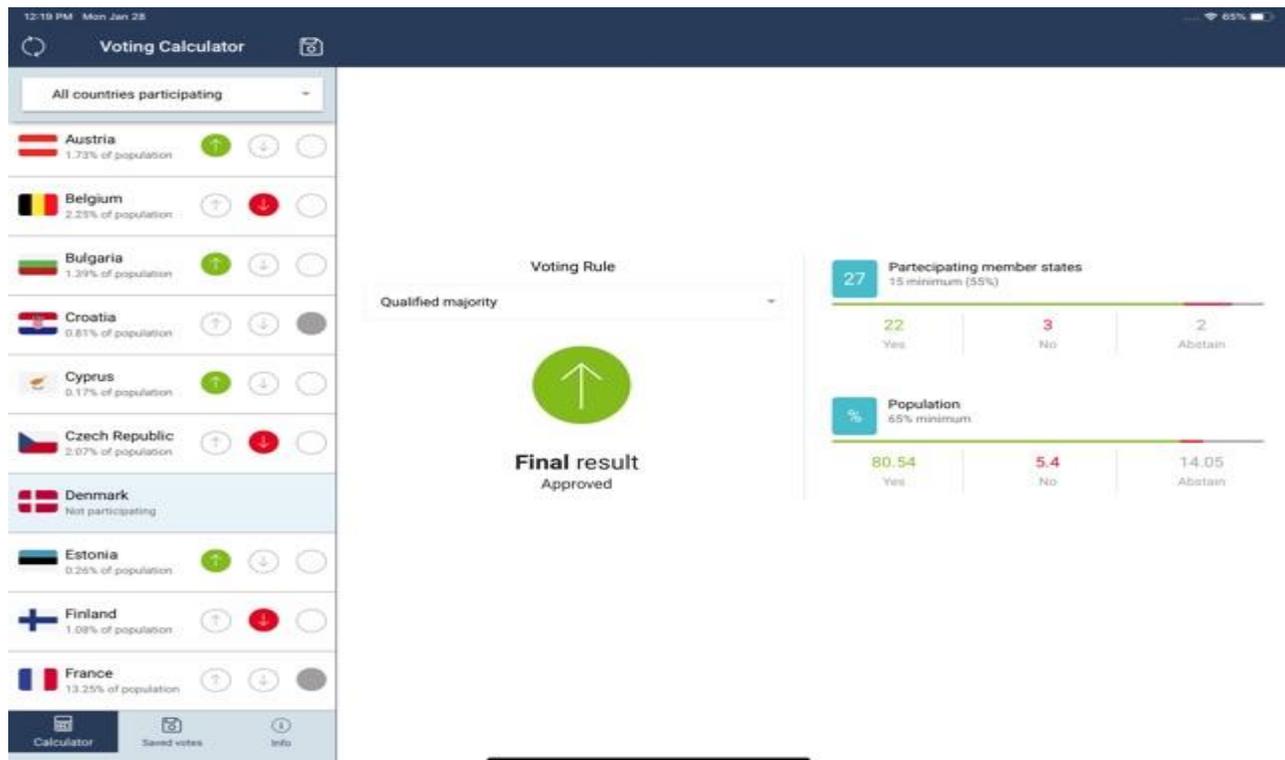
In order to facilitate consensus building, we recommend to introduce limits to the possibility of amending texts. A possibility is to require that amendments obtain unanimous approval from all members, except one, within the proposing group. This ad hoc constraint still mirrors the complexities of real-world consensus-building processes.

As the simulation progresses, it enters its pivotal **final phases**, where collaborative discussions (within and across the groups) evolve into concrete decisions. These stages highlight the focal point of EU decision-making process, thereby capturing the intricacies of consensus-building and the successful decision-making.

Following effective thematic table discussions, the focus shifts towards formalizing a coherent text and discussing proposed amendments. This phase adds depth to the deliberations, as participants critically evaluate amendments introduced by other groups, in the light of their national priorities. These amendments might introduce fresh perspectives or modifications to the previously agreed-upon statements.

In scenarios where a consensus or unanimity prove elusive even after rigorous discussions and amendment evaluations (or is not an option), the simulation enters a phase of decision through voting. This process mirrors the real-world mechanisms employed within the framework of the Council to reach conclusions when unanimity remains out of reach. To facilitate an effective voting process, the simulation employs the Council Voting Calculator. This tool emulates the actual voting mechanisms employed by the EU Council, further enhancing the authenticity of the exercise. Participants engage with this calculator to cast their votes, while the Calculator and the voting process itself are managed by the lecturer in his/her capacity of Council Secretariat.

COUNCIL VOTING CALCULATOR



Throughout these phases, the role of the lecturer takes on paramount significance. Acting as a facilitator, the he/she assumes a pivotal role in guiding discussions, fostering consensus, and ultimately aiding in the finalization of an agreement. The lecturer's role transcends that of an instructor to become a mediator, encourager, and guiding presence. By offering insights and mimicking the role of the Secretariat in bringing together divergent viewpoints, the facilitator plays a vital role in finalizing the exercise.

Final considerations

What do bring home?

This short manual hopefully provides a useful framework for educators venturing into the realm of EU-focused simulations. Throughout the sections, we have discussed aspects and challenges related to role selection, thematic discussions, and decision-making processes, offering a compass to navigating the complexities of European Union dynamics within an engaging and immersive learning context.

Beyond the actualization of formal knowledge about EU institutions and policies, these simulations are designed to favour the emergence of essential skills such as negotiation, leadership, and consensus-building. The dynamic nature of the exercises encourages participants to think critically and act decisively, enhancing their research, analytical, and interpersonal abilities.

Thematic table discussions, as examined in detail, function as student-led incubators of EU policy formulation. Participants are challenged to navigate diverse perspectives, handle nuanced language, and participate in consensus-building exercises. The manual underscores the importance of maintaining the necessary formality, employing EU-specific jargon, and exercising time management to create an authentic and impactful simulation experience.

As the simulation progresses to its final phases, where amendments are formalized and votes are cast, the role of the facilitator emerges as pivotal. Acting as a guide and mediator, the facilitator plays a crucial role in steering discussions towards consensus. Tools like the Council Voting Calculator introduce an additional layer of authenticity and realism, replicating the procedures employed in real-world EU decision-making.

In essence, this manual has the ambition to help empowering educators in the creation of engaging and impactful EU simulations. It is not merely about instructing on EU institutions, but about fostering an environment where students actively participate in a credible reproduction of the intricate decision-making processes of the EU. Through

simulations, educators have a unique opportunity to shape future leaders equipped with a profound understanding of the complexities inherent in global governance.

On behalf of the NearEU team, we wish educators and learners alike an enriching experience as they engage in EU-focussed role games and decision-making simulations. May the experience be filled with insights, collaborative discoveries, and the cultivation of skills that extend beyond the classroom. Happy learning and teaching!

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