

Simulation Game - The European Parliament

Manual for facilitators



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Introduction / About the method

- Method: Simulation Game
- Objectives: The idea of a simulation game is to experience the decision-making process in parliament and to demonstrate the variety of positions in a democracy
- Democracy skills addressed: negotiation, debating skills, parliamentarism, decision-making, empathy, respect, pluralism
- Short Description (process): The participants take the role of a political decision-maker (in this case members of the European parliament) and simulate a law-making process
- Possible time formats: 60-180 minutes
- Age group: 15yrs+
- Necessary materials/software: role/position sheets (Annex II); scripts (Annex III); table signs (Annex IV), paper and pen to take notes
- Other: We recommend to take part in a simulation game yourself and experience it from the perspective of a participant before facilitating one.
- About the author: polyspektiv is a company specialized on projects and methods on civic education. For questions, you can contact Leonie Augustin (la@polyspektiv.eu)

Before the game

	Offline	Online
Distribution of roles	Decide how many members each parliamentary group should have (It is important to know the number of participants in advance). The European Conservative Party (ECP) should be the largest group, then European Social Party (ESP), European Liberal Party (ELP), European Ecological Party (EEP). With 21 participants the distribution could be: 1 Commission, 6 ECP, 6 ESP, 4 ELP, 4 EEP or 1 Commission, 7 ECP, 6 ESP, 4 ELP, 3 EEP. Attention: The parties in the simulation game are fictitious!	
Preparation of the room(s)	<p>Arrange tables and chairs in a semicircle, as in the plenary of the European parliament. Put the signs with the names of the groups on the tables.</p> <p>In the front, you put the table for the president.</p> <p>You can use other materials/decorations to create an authentic atmosphere.</p>	<p>Create an online meeting (e.g. via Zoom). Participants should have the possibility to go into Breakout Rooms.</p> <p>Technical clues: make sure, everyone has a camera/mic. Ask participants to turn camera on, and change to gallery view</p>
Materials	<p>Print</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one role profile per person • the president's script for yourself = the facilitator (Annex III) • the Commissioner's script for the person representing the Commission (Annex III) • one group script for each political group (Annex III) • table signs 	<p>Send (1-2 days before the game)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one role profile per person

Opening

	Offline	Online
Announcements	The facilitator presents themselves, welcomes the group, and briefly explains what a simulation game is; and then explains that the participants will be transformed into members of the European parliament. (see script for the president/facilitator, Annex III)	Same as for offline. Technical clues: make sure, everyone has a camera/mic. Ask participants to turn camera on, and change to galley view
To Do	Ask if anyone wants to play the role of the European Commission or distribute it by chance. Distribute the other roles by chance and ask the participants to sit together in their groups.	Ask the participants to add the name of their political group in their name. If possible, participants should wear a piece of clothing or have a background colour of their political group.
Please note		For the online version, we recommend having 2 facilitators. The representative of the European Commission should be played by a co-facilitator, not a participant. This way, one facilitator can concentrate on the moderation of the debate, taking notes and one on the technical management. Moreover, it would be more difficult helping a participant playing the European Commission in the online version.

Group meeting (1)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	<p>Explain that the participants now have time to discuss within their groups their common position and formulate a speech.</p> <p>Tasks for the groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a position and amendments • Choose a person who gives the speech in plenary • (For the long version): Choose a committee (distribution should be half/half) 	
Rooms	Make sure that every group has the possibility to sit together with some distance to the other groups	Create on breakout room per group.
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role profiles • scripts for the parliamentary group for the speech (1 for each group) • script for commission representative 	Role profiles
To do	<p>Make sure all groups adapt their roles and understand what they have to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a position and possible amendments • Prepare a speech and nominate a speaker • (only in the 180 min version: decide who will join which committee; the groups should be divided equally on the two committees). <p>Explain to the person representing the European Commission the task.</p>	<p>Make sure all groups adapt their roles and understand what they have to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a position and possible amendments • Prepare a speech and nominate a speaker • (only in the 180 min version: decide who will join which committee; the groups should be divided equally on the two committees).

Plenary session (1- about 30 minutes)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	see script for the president/facilitator	
Rooms	Plenary	
Material	Paper to take notes	
To do	<p>Moderate the debate; make sure, all aspects of the topic/positions are clear to everyone; take notes on the different amendments proposed by the participants.</p> <p>Keep track of the time</p> <p>In the short version: continue directly with the vote.</p>	<p>Same as in the offline version. Here, the facilitators can split up the tasks, e.g., one moderating, and one taking notes.</p>

Committee meetings (only in the 180min version)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	<p>Explain that before a proposal is voted in plenary, the responsible parliamentary committees must discuss the issue and agree on a common position. Committees play an important role in policymaking.</p> <p>There are 20 standing committees in the European Parliament. The members of each committee are MEPs with a specialist knowledge on the topics covered by the committee.</p> <p>For the topic of combustion engines there are two responsible committees: the Committee on the Environment and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. Each parliamentary group should divide equally on the two committees.</p> <p>In each committee, the participants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the proposal from their specific angle (environmental and economic questions) • vote on the amendments and define a common position 	
Rooms	Two rooms, where the members of the committee can sit around a big table	Two breakout rooms
Material	Paper to take notes	
To do	<p>If necessary, help moderating the debate and take notes. Amendments are adopted by simple majority. The participants of one committee can also vote for someone to moderate the meeting (=the rapporteur).</p> <p>Keep track of the time! The MEPs need time to discuss their ideas, but also need enough time to vote on the different amendments they bring forward.</p>	
Afterwards...	<p>Summarize the different amendments of the two committees into one document.</p> <p>If possible: print/copy and hand it over to the group</p>	<p>Summarize the different amendments of the two committees into one document (the facilitator can show this to everyone by sharing his/her screen and send the documents to the participants via the chat).</p>

Group meeting (2) (only in the 90 min and 180 min version)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	<p>Before sending the groups to their rooms, explain the tasks for the second group meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a position • Think about a strategy: do we have a majority, or do we need to find a compromise? With which group should we negotiate? • Choose someone who briefly presents the position in the plenary meeting <p>In the long version with committee meetings: Briefly present (or let the committees' rapporteurs present) the committees' position.</p>	
Rooms	Make sure that every group has the possibility to sit together with some distance to the other groups	Send groups to different breakout rooms.
To do	Make sure all groups understand what they have to do; answer questions if necessary	

Informal negotiations (only 180 min version)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	<p>Explain that every amendment and the proposal, will be voted upon afterwards. To get a majority, it might be necessary for the groups to find a compromise during the plenary meeting, afterwards it will be too late to negotiate.</p>	
Rooms	One or two rooms where the participants can move freely and talk to each other.	Keep the breakout rooms open and give the participants the possibility to change to other rooms so that they can negotiate with each other.

Plenary session (2)

	Offline	Online
Announcements	All amendments and the proposal will now be voted on. MEPs can always vote in favour, against or abstain. A simple majority (more yes than no votes) are necessary for a proposal to pass.	
Rooms	Plenary	
Material	Paper to take notes, maybe a video projector	
To do	<p>Moderate (see script for the president/facilitator)</p> <p>If there is a projector, you can show the document with the current proposal/amendments. This makes it easier for participants to follow the debate/voting process.</p>	<p>Moderate (see script for the president/facilitator)</p> <p>The co-facilitator can share their screen to show the document with the current proposal/amendments. This makes it easier for participants to follow the debate/voting process.</p>
Afterwards	Thank the participants for their contribution and ask them to leave their roles behind and get back to their normal identities.	

Reflection

	Offline	Online
Open question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was it? Are there any spontaneous comments/questions? 	
Reflection on the role and the process	<p>Examples for questions you can discuss afterwards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you feel in your role? Was it easy/difficult to adopt a role? In your role, were you happy with the result? Did you have the impression you and your group had an influence on the final result? Does this process seem realistic to you? Why? Why not? Explain, that the Council of ministers would now discuss and vote upon the proposal. This process takes a lot longer. But: the simulation game shows this in a simplified way what the ordinary legislative procedure in the EP looks like. It also demonstrates the variety of positions that exist in the EP (and other parliaments) and how challenging it can be to come to a common result/compromise. 	
Personal opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you personally think of the result? Would you have voted in favor or against? 	

Annex I: Time schedules

60 min

Introduction and Opening Welcome, Introduction to the simulation game, adoption of the roles	(about 5 min.)
Group meeting Discussion on the group's position and amendments Appointment of the speaker	(about 10 min.)
Plenary session Opening Presentation of the European Commission's proposal Each group's speeches, Debate Vote on the amendments, Final vote, End of the session	(about 30 min.)
Reflection and evaluation	(about 15 min.)

90 min

Introduction Welcome, Introduction to the simulation game, (technical clues) Adoption of the roles	(about 10 min.)
Group meeting 1 Discussion on the group's position and amendments Appointment of the speaker	(about 10 min.)
Plenary session 1 Opening Presentation of the European Commission's proposal Each group's speeches, Debate	(about 15 min.)
Group meeting 2 Agreement/strategies on amendments and compromises Informal negotiations with the other groups	(about 20 min.)
Plenary session 2 Vote on the amendments, Final vote, End of the session	(about 20 min.)
Reflection and evaluation	(about 15 min.)

180 min (with committee meetings)

Introduction Welcome, Introduction to the simulation game, (technical clues) Adoption of the roles	(about 10 min.)
Group meeting 1 Discussion on the group's position and amendments Appointment of the speaker Division on 2 committees (environment and economy)	(about 15 min.)
Plenary session 1 Opening, Presentation of the European Commission's proposal Each group's speeches, Debate	(about 20 min.)
Committee meetings Discussion, reports with amendments	(about 25 min.)
Break	(about 20 min.)
Group meeting 2 Agreement/strategies on amendments and compromises	(about 10 min.)
Informal negotiations	(about 20 min.)
Plenary session 2 Vote on the amendments, Final vote, End of the session	(about 25 min.)
Break	(about 5 min.)
Reflection and evaluation	(about 30 min.)

Annex II: Role profiles

Decide how many members each parliamentary group should have (It is important to know the number of participants in advance). The European Conservative Party (ECP) should be the largest group, then European Social Party (ESP), European Liberal Party (ELP), European Ecological Party (EEP). With 21 participants the distribution could be: 1 Commission, 6 ECP, 6 ESP, 4 ELP, 4 EEP or 1 Commission, 7 ECP, 6 ESP, 4 ELP, 3 EEP. Attention: The parties in the simulation game are fictitious!

Simulation of the European Parliament

The idea of a simulation game is to make politics tangible and to enable people to realistically experience political debates from the perspective of a decision-maker. The goal is not to discuss the participants' personal opinions, but to take a role – in this case – of a member of the European Parliament.

Please imagine

There are four groups present in the European Parliament:

ECP - European Conservative Party

ELP - European Liberal Party

EEP - European Ecological Party

ESP - European Social Party



The political groups have different ideas on how the EU should solve problems. They struggle to find the best solution. In order to convince others of their ideas, they present their positions passionately in their speeches.

Topic

In order to reach its targets for reduction in CO2 emissions, the EU is taking several measures within the framework of the so-called Green Deal. In today's session of the European Parliament, you will be discussing the topic of combustion engines. The European Commission proposes that from 2035 on there should be an EU-wide ban on combustion engines for new cars. The aim is to reduce emissions of vehicles to 0. Step-by-step, petrol- and diesel-engined vehicles, as well as hybrid cars, should disappear from the market. Instead, electric cars, public transport and non-motorised vehicles should be used. Thereby, innovation and new technologies shall be promoted.

You are a member of the ECP - The European Conservative Party

As a member of the European Parliament, you represent the interests of the citizens of the EU.

The European Conservative Party wants to preserve what has successfully been tried and tested: traditions, values, institutions. The ECP wants to promote economic growth and people's prosperity. The ECP does not want the European level to decide on too many questions. Instead, member states should keep important competencies.

The ECP is very sceptical about the ban. The economy has been sufficiently affected by the corona crisis. Further costs for companies should be avoided. Innovation needs time and the economy should not suffer from environmental actions. If at all, a target date of 2040 would be more realistic.

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You are a member of the ESP - The European Social Party

As a member of the European Parliament, you represent the interests of the citizens of the EU.

The European Social Party stands up to protect people from personal and social risks. The ESP fights for the common good. It is important to provide better for and affect less the poorest people in the EU.

The ESP supports the ban. The climate and environment must be protected for the benefit of future generations. However, according to the ESP, the ban needs an amendment: Less wealthy people should receive financial aid to be able to afford the use and purchase of alternative vehicles.

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You are member of the ELP - The European Liberal Party

As a member of the European Parliament, you represent the interests of the citizens of the EU.

The European Liberal Party is committed to a free market economy and a free society, where companies and citizens can make their own decisions. Government institutions should not interfere in every-day-life, but rather provide and protect the necessary infrastructure.

The ELP considers a ban problematic. According to you, it is more important to offer incentives for the production and use of environmentally friendly alternatives. Before forbidding combustion engines, the EU should make sure, that there is enough charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. Moreover, consumers and producers should have a larger choice: Hybrid engines for example are a good alternative to cars which are powered purely by combustion or electric motor.

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You are a member of the EEP - The European Ecological Party

As a member of the European Parliament, you represent the interests of the citizens of the EU.

The European Ecological Party fights for the environment, sustainability, and diversity. The EEP wants people to be able to engage actively in politics and society and to take responsibility for their future.

The EEP supports the ban. You want to enhance the proposal by adding a funding programme for the development of energy-neutral engines and for non-motorised vehicles as well as public transport. Given the climate emergency, the EEP wants to advance the date to 2030.

Annex III: Scripts

Script for the president/facilitator

Introduction

You are about to take part in a simulation game about the European Parliament. The idea is to experience what the decision-making process in the parliament is like. For this, we'd like to ask you to take the roles and adopt the positions of Members of the European Parliament. The positions you represent might not be identical with your personal views. Nevertheless, in order to make this a vivid and authentic experience, I'd like to ask you to assume the role and consider what they might be saying about this topic. This helps to create empathy and tolerance for the different perspectives that we have in a democracy.

During the simulation game, you will belong to four different parties. These parties are fictitious, but they represent the ideas that exist in the European Parliament. You will find information about these Groups on the information sheet in front of you.

We also have a representative of the European Commission. The topic of the simulation game today is the ban on combustion engines for new cars.

I'd like to ask you now to take __ minutes to discuss within your group what you think about this proposal and if you have any amendments. Please also name one person who will give a speech later during the plenary session.

(First) plenary meeting

Dear colleagues,

as the president of the European parliament, I would like to welcome you to today's plenary sitting in Strasbourg.

Today we will be dealing with the topic of combustion engines. As you know, it is always the European Commission which makes a proposal, which is then voted on firstly by Parliament and then by the Council. I would like to ask the Commission representative to present the proposal.

Mr./Mrs _____

Now, the speakers for the political groups will have 2 minutes each to present their views.

- European Conservative Party: _____
- European Social Party: _____
- European Liberal Party: _____
- European Ecological Party: _____

Are there any questions or comments?

I will now summarize the amendments. (...)

For the 60 min version

I will now shortly interrupt the session to give you a few minutes to discuss within your political group what you think of these amendments, if you are in favour, against. You can also use the time to discuss with the other groups in order to see if you can find a compromise.

For the 90 min version

You now have 20 minutes, to firstly discuss within your political group what you think of these amendments, if you are in favour, against. You then have to discuss with the other groups in order to see if you can find a compromise.

For the 180 min version

You will now go to your respective committees to further discuss the proposal and vote on the amendments. Half of your political group should go to Committee on the Environment, the other half to the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

Continuation of plenary meeting/Second plenary meeting

I will now give the opportunity to every group to shortly tell us, if you have further amendments.

- European Conservative Party
- European Social Party
- European Liberal Party
- European Ecological Party

We come to the vote now:

Amendment of ____ about ____: Who is in favour?. (...) Votes against? (...) Abstentions?
(...) The amendment is adopted / rejected.

(Continue like this for each amendment)

Final vote

I will shortly summarize all the amendments you have adopted. (...) We now come to the final.
Please raise your hands.

Votes in favour of the proposal? (...)

Votes against? (...)

Abstentions? (...)

The proposal is adopted / rejected.

Parliaments' position will now be forwarded to the Council of ministers.

Many thanks to the representatives of the Commission and to you all. I am closing the sitting.

Script for Commission representative

Madam President / Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

my name is _____. I am happy to be talking to you today as the representative of the European Commission.

The European Commission is the body which proposes new rules where necessary and monitors their implementation. Today's subject is the ban on combustion engines.

Please let me explain to you, why I think this is an important and necessary measure:

Ladies and gentlemen, I would be happy if you approved our proposal. Thank you very much for your attention.

Script for the parliamentary group

Madam President / Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

[illegible]

Thank you for your attention.

Annex IV: How to write a simulation game

This simulation game can of course be adapted to other topics. Some things which are important when writing a simulation game:

1. The topic/structure: reduction of complexity

To make a topic / a process manageable for the participants, it is important to reduce some complexity, without distorting the facts. Ask yourself: what are the main elements/basic knowledge, I'd like to impart and what details, I can leave out?

2. The roles/positions: overlaps and controversies

The aim of a simulation game is to experience the chances and challenges of democratic decision-making and the striving for a compromise. Therefore, it is important that the positions leave enough room for dispute and controversies, but also that it is not impossible to come to a decision in the end. Make sure that between some roles there is interest overlapping. Parties which are in a fundamental opposition should not have the majority.

3. Open result

One of the playful elements of a simulation game is that the result is always open. The facilitator does not know to which result the participants come in the end. Hence, it is important not to dictate every single step and arguments in the roles.

Annex V: Table signs

If possible, print on colored, thick paper:

ECP: blue paper

ESP: red paper

ELP: yellow paper

EEP: green paper

other: white paper

ES
P
European Social
Party

ESP

European Social Party

ELP

European Liberal
Party

ELP

European Liberal Party

EE
P

European Ecological
Party

EEP

European Ecological Party

EC
P

European Conservative
Party

ECP

European Conservative Party

President of the European Parliament

President of the European Parliament

European Commission

European Commission