

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the European Union flag, which consists of twelve gold stars arranged in a circle on a blue field. The flag is shown waving, with folds and ripples in the fabric, set against a clear blue sky with some light, wispy clouds. The flag is the central focus of the image.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SIMULATION

background guide

POLI / INTL 361

October 2023

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Welcome to our simulation of the European Parliament! This guide outlines vital details about the simulation. Read it carefully so that you are fully prepared. We promise: this will make the simulation more productive and enjoyable.

What is the European Parliament?



The European Parliament is a key institution of the European Union. Since 1979, the Parliament has been directly-elected, providing the citizenry of the EU with a means to democratically influence policy. In fact, the Parliament is the *only* directly-elected EU-level institution.

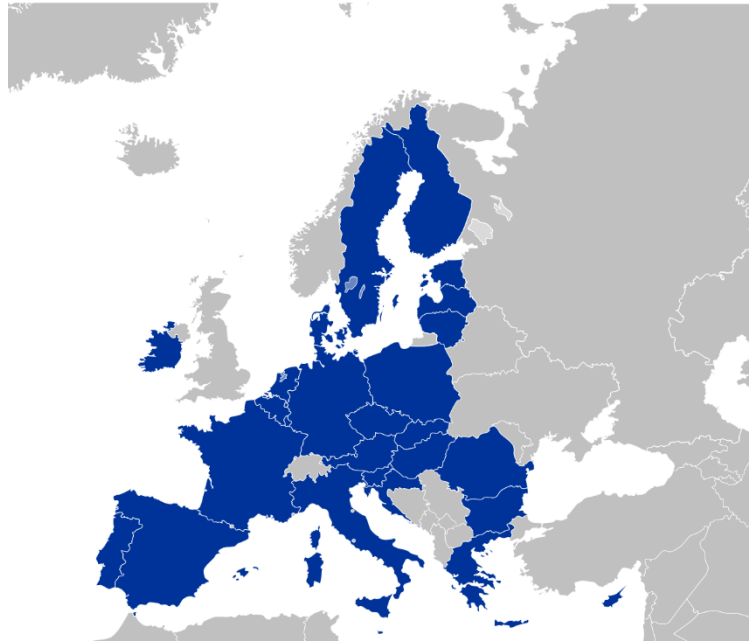
Since its inception, the European Parliament's powers have steadily grown, helping to shrink the *democratic deficit*. (This is another way of thinking about the distance between the people and the EU's decision-making. The idea of a deficit means that the people do not have adequate influence.)

The Parliament works with another EU institution - the Council of the European Union - to **create legislation** and **set the EU's budget**. The parliament also plays an important **supervisory role**, helping to hold the other EU institutions, EU officials, and member states accountable.

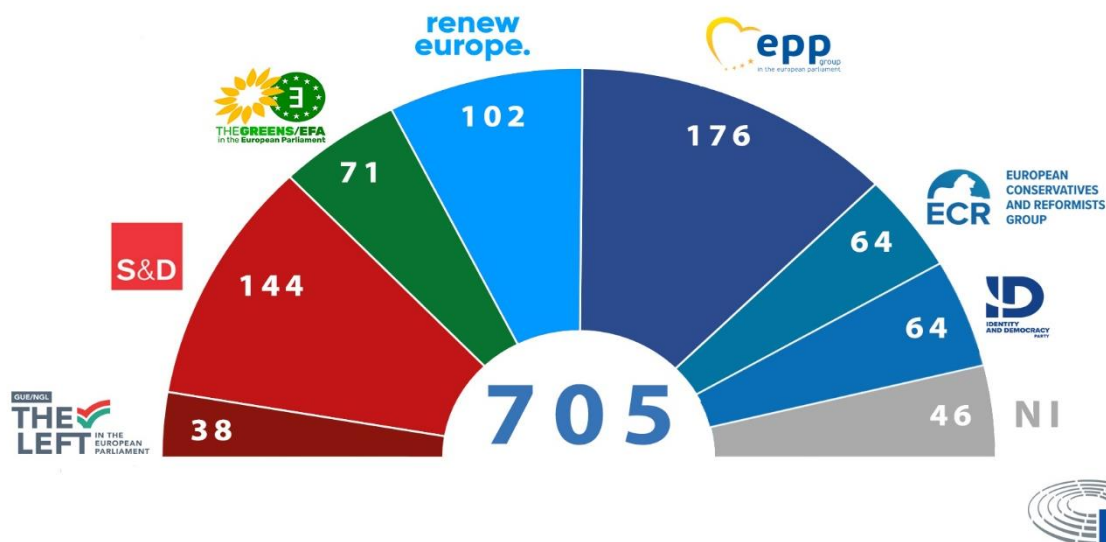


What is an MEP?

Currently, there are 705 Members of the European Parliament - also known as MEPs - from the twenty-seven member states of the EU. MEPs serve concurrently for five-year terms. The next general election will be held in 2024.



The allegiance of MEPs is complex, but not that different from elected institutions you may be better familiar with. First, MEPs are meant to represent the preferences of their national constituencies. Second, they are usually members of a national political party. As a result, though the European Parliament is a supranational institution, national parties shape its members' preferences. Third, MEPs nearly always join a political group in Parliament. Groups bring together like-minded MEPs, forming a sort of 'composite' political party that lacks the strong ties of a national political party. Groups also conform to the left-right spectrum of national parties.



During the simulation, you will assume the role of an MEP from a member state and work to move Parliament into action. The specific opportunities available to you genuinely reflect the composition of Parliament after the 2019 elections. Your 'profile' mirrors a real MEP with a national political party identity and a European Parliament group identity. Your main task, then, is to understand what these identities entail and behave accordingly. Your speeches, votes, and contributions to draft resolutions should be deeply informed by your profile.



Quick tip: Don't go rogue.







Being successful in the simulation starts filling out your profile and staying true to it. Your profile has boundaries - namely, your national party. Learn what your national party stands for and channel this into your contributions as an MEP.

Committees: the EP's backbone

Committees are a vital organ of the European Parliament. They are the locus of legislative work, advising the Parliament and other EU institutions during the various phases of the legislative process. **Key functions include producing reports, proposing amendments, and even drafting resolutions on legislation.** Committees also help the Parliament perform its supervisory and diplomatic functions, conducting hearings, leading inquiries, and organizing delegations.



There are currently twenty standing committees. They vary in size depending on the significance of the issue under their purview. MEPs usually sit on committees where they can offer some degree of expertise and/or where they have a keen interest.

 <p>Udo BULLMANN Chair S&D Germany</p>	 <p>Bernard GUETTA Vice-Chair Renew France</p>	 <p>Hannah NEUMANN Vice-Chair Verts/ALE Germany</p>
 <p>Raphaël GLUCKSMANN Vice-Chair S&D France</p>	 <p>Maria ARENA Member S&D Belgium</p>	 <p>Katalin CSEH Member Renew Hungary</p>

Our simulation will involve the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), which is a branch of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Though MEPs may serve on multiple standing committees, you will only serve on one.

Committee Topics

Each committee in our simulation is assigned a topic. The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) will engage **climate change**, while the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) will consider the **migration crisis**. Not only are these issue areas in the wheelhouse of the actual EP committees, they also widely discussed today because of their impact on the EU, its member states, and its citizens.

European Parliament
2019-2024



Subcommittee on Human Rights

DROI(2023)1005_1

DRAFT AGENDA

Extraordinary meeting

Thursday 5 October 2023, 11.00 – 12.00

Strasbourg

Room: DE MADARIAGA (S1)

(with optional remote participation)

5 October 2023, 11.00 – 12.00

1. Adoption of agenda
2. Chair's announcements
3. Exchange of views with the ASEAN Representatives following the 5th EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights on 3 October 2023 in Brussels
4. Any other business
5. Next meetings
 - 9 October 2023, 15.00 – 19.00 (Brussels)

Quick tip: details are a source of power for the Parliament in this simulation. For example, don't simply ask for new legislation. Instead, prescribe what this legislation needs to accomplish and what it should look like.

The actual functions of the European Parliament limit what committees can do. For example, you will not be able to draft legislation. (EU legislation originates in the European Commission, which possesses the right of initiative according to the Treaty on the European Union.) You will not be able to apply sanctions punish actors. These actions are limited to the European Council, where representatives of national governments meet.

These limits should not stop committees from making the most of the tools they do possess. Possible outcomes include launching inquiries, leading a delegation to meet with affected communities and institutions, and/or tasking EU institutions with carrying out additional study or drafting legislation.

Resolutions: your most valuable tool

Though the European Parliament is often a body that reacts to initiatives beginning with other EU institutions, it can also be proactive. This may involve anticipating work that will eventually find its way onto the Parliament docket. The Parliament may also try to prod other bodies into action and identify opportunities to lead based upon its treaty-designated responsibilities. This simulation is structured in such a way that the Parliament can play the role of a provocateur, pushing itself and/or others into action, or merely opting to shine a light on an issue as a matter of concern.

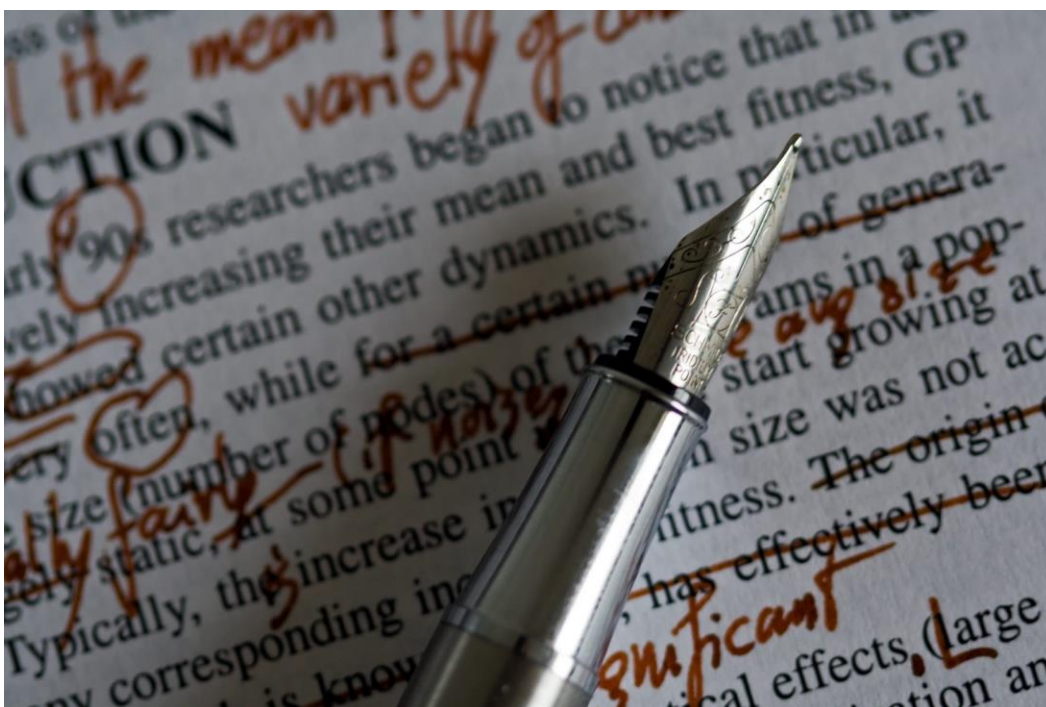
Of course, whatever the Parliament does during the simulation is up to you. Outcomes are dependent on your vision for what the Parliament can and should do, alongside what you know about the issues under consideration. With this in mind, the principal tool at your disposal is the **resolution**. Resolutions are **written statements of intent** representing the will of those who sign on in support. They are action-oriented by nature because they articulate some sort of proposal that addresses an issue or issues. Resolutions come about thanks to the inspiration of an MEP or group of MEPs and, then, negotiations with other MEPs so as to gain enough support that a majority of the members will vote in favor of adoption. This suggests that the practical work of a committee involves sharing ideas about what should be done and then looking for common ground. As the simulation will demonstrate, it is no easy task.

The first step is to generate a **draft resolution**. As the name implies, a draft resolution is a working document penned by one or more MEPs. It is then circulated among the other MEPs as the starting point for substantive discussions. Clearly, the author of the draft wants to see the draft adopted with minimal changes, but when you lack a majority, changes should be expected if not welcomed. Though some might argue that it is the goal of an MEP to limit changes because changes imply trading off one's policy preferences, organizational culture might lean toward making accommodations for the sake of consensus. Even when consensus is the norm, it may be difficult to find broad agreement when the issue is contentious, and solutions require sacrifice. It can also be especially challenging for MEPs when they come from groups on the fringes of the political spectrum. Regardless, the challenge of achieving broad agreement should not stop any MEP from trying to influence outcomes by producing and circulating draft resolutions.

Resolutions: how to write them

You might ask: what goes into a draft resolution? There are two things to keep in mind. First, resolutions follow a certain structure and, second, there is a generally accepted writing style. We'll touch on each in turn.

Typically, there are **three sections to a resolution**: the heading, the preamble, and the operative section. Much like a conventional paper you've written for your classes, the **heading** identifies the body responsible for discussing and later voting on the resolution, the topic, and the signatories. For our purposes, the body applies to either the committee or the plenary; the topic depends on the issue area addressed by the resolution; and the signatories are the MEPs who endorse discussing the resolution. (FYI: you do not have to have helped draft a resolution to be a signatory. In fact, you don't even have to agree with it. Being a signatory merely means you think the draft is worthy of formal consideration by the body.) Next is the **preamble**, which outlines reasons why the body is addressing the topic and how Parliament or other bodies - including EU member states and institutions - have addressed the topic previously (if at all). Last is the **operative section**. As the name suggests, here we find the specific recommendations and/or actions that will be taken. Arguably, the operative section is the most important part of a resolution because it translates the will of the body into some sort of outcome. This is where Parliament goes from talking about an issue to doing something about it.



To an outsider, the writing style will probably seem unusual. The resolution's preamble and operative section are effectively a single sentence broken down into separate clauses. Each clause begins with either a preambulatory phrase (you guessed it...for the preamble) or an operative phrase (for the operative section). A quick Google search will turn up frequently used preambulatory and operative phrases, but here are a few examples of each:

Preambulatory phrases	Operative phrases
Affirming	Accepts
Bearing in mind	Authorizes
Deeply concerned	Calls upon
Fully believing	Condemns
Having examined	Designates
Noting with deep concern	Invites
Recalling	Proclaims
Taking into consideration	Recommends
Welcoming	Requests

Aside from using the proper style, draft resolutions should be clear and concise. Avoid the temptation of trying to accomplish too much in a single preambulatory or operative clause. Instead, keep clauses tightly focused on a single point or idea.

The other stylistic details to keep in mind involves capitalization and punctuation. Preambulatory and operative phrases are both capitalized. Affirming becomes AFFIRMING; Accepts becomes ACCEPTS. The rest of the clause follows standard rules, otherwise. Regarding punctuation, each preambulatory clause ends with a comma, while each operative clause ends with a semi-colon except for the final clause, which ends with a period. These are no small considerations because **a draft resolution can only be formally discussed if it aligns with the rules governing style and structure**. Committee chairs and the Parliament president will refuse to allow a vote on a resolution if it is out of compliance.

Resolutions: what to do with them

Though MEPs should begin the simulation with ideas for resolutions in mind, they should not arrive in committee with draft resolutions already prepared. Instead, the first order of business ought to involve discussion of the issue before the committee. During the discussion, MEPs should try to identify shared interests and preferred outcomes. This sort of convergence is fertile ground for collaboration on a draft resolution, at which point MEPs may caucus together and begin to iron out details and brainstorm solutions. Of course, not every MEP will find others with identical preferences, and there may be certain points that cannot be negotiated. In these circumstances, MEPs may opt to write draft resolutions independently. This is a perfectly acceptable path to take, though MEPs should keep in mind the benefits of collaboration to build a broad base of support.

Once a draft resolution has been prepared, it must be formally presented to the body. The author or chosen representative of a group of authors must be recognized by the chair, at which point they will read the draft resolution. If another MEP supports the resolution, they can then motion to adopt it. If this motion is seconded, then the body will formally debate it. The debate should involve reasons why the resolution should be adopted, reasons why it should not, and questions other MEPs might have about the draft. During the debate, MEPs can also propose amendments, or changes to the draft. Amendments can come in two forms: friendly and unfriendly. Friendly amendments are changes that the author(s) of a draft resolution agree with; unfriendly amendments, as the name indicates, are not supported by the author(s) of the draft resolution. Friendly amendments can be immediately implemented without need for a vote. By contrast, unfriendly amendments must be formally voted on and require a majority in order to be folded into the draft resolution.

To propose an amendment, an MEP needs to be recognized by the chair to speak, at which point they should offer their proposed change in language consistent with the structure and style described above. The author(s) of the draft should be given the chance by the chair to respond, indicating whether they agree with the proposed change.

After sufficient opportunity to debate the draft resolution, an MEP can call the question - which is another way of saying, 'enough talk, let's vote!'. If another MEP does not believe debate should end, they can ask to continue, but this requires a majority vote in favor of extending debate. Should no one disagree with ending the debate or if there is minority support for extending debate, then the body enters formal voting. No more changes can be made, and there is no further discussion. The chair or vice-chair should re-read the final version of the draft, including all amendments, at which point the chair calls for a vote. If a simple majority of MEPs vote in favor, then the draft resolution passes.

Hot takes:

- The majority in committee depends on the MEPs present for the vote (including the chair). If there are 20 MEPs, then 11 constitute a majority.
- The committee composition does not give any group a majority. You will need to form coalitions to advance anything out of committee.
- If a resolution passes committee, it will then be automatically placed on the voting agenda for the plenary session. If a resolution does not pass committee, MEPs can try to resubmit it during plenary, but there is no guarantee it will be voted on.
- Committees should try to be consistent with the resolutions sent to plenary. Committees should not, in other words, send contradictory resolutions to the plenary for a vote.
- Simply because a resolution is endorsed by a committee does not mean it is no longer subject to scrutiny. If you're on the losing side of a committee vote, then try to rally support in plenary for changes to a resolution or even support for voting it down.

Stages of the simulation

The simulation divides into three different stages: **committee, group, and plenary**. A bulk of the simulation is devoted to the **committee stage** because most of the Parliament's work occurs in committees. Each committee has been assigned a different issue area to discuss, and each committee is expected to generate resolutions to be considered by Parliament. The group stage is vital to ensuring an informed vote in plenary.

Groups are like political parties in that their members have similar interests and policy preferences. MEPs form groups for a variety of reasons, among which is the need to share information and coordinate their votes to influence outcomes. Another way to think of the function of groups involves the obligation of an MEP to vote on all business before Parliament. MEPs, however, cannot be in multiple places at the same time and they are not experts on every subject. When meeting in groups, MEPs can tell other MEPs about what's going on in committee and make recommendations about how the group should vote in plenary. Though MEPs are not obligated to follow this advice, they water down the influence of the group if they chart their own path. There is power in numbers. Therefore, the group stage should involve (a) sharing information and (b) developing strategies for the group in plenary. (Strategies may involve how individual members should vote in addition to talking points and amendments.)

Plenary brings together every member of Parliament. Though plenary may involve speeches and information sharing, it is also where the business of Parliament is completed. Our simulation ends with plenary, when MEPs will debate and vote on resolutions coming out of the committee stage. (An important point to remember is MEPs can participate in the debates on any resolution under consideration. MEPs are not limited to debating subjects considered in their respective committees.)

Each stage is coordinated by prominent MEPs in leadership positions. The committee stage is managed by a **chair** and a **vice-chair**. Normally, the chair runs the meeting while the vice-chair offers support. For example, the chair has the responsibility for calling on MEPs to speak before the committee and ensuring decorum, while the vice-chair should help manage speaking lists and counting votes. During the group stage, each group has a president who will run the meeting much like a chair. Though groups work like any parliamentary body, we'll simplify things for our simulation. Groups will merely discuss committee business and work toward common positions in plenary. Thus, the group president is responsible for making sure that the group devotes enough time to discuss each committee and arrive at a strategy during plenary. Last, plenary is run by a **president**. This is a high-profile position with a lot of responsibility. During the simulation, our president will function much like a committee chair. The president will set and manage the agenda, recognize speakers, maintain decorum, manage votes, and open and close this session of Parliament. **Vice-presidents** will also support the president, maintaining speaking lists and counting votes. For simplicity's sake, the committee chairs will serve as vice-presidents during plenary. (We will designate these positions during the simulation's sign-up phase.)



Schedule of events

Our simulation runs for three weeks, with stages arcing across the three weeks according to the following schedule. MEPs should want to make the most of every second. Believe it or not, once activity picks up, you'll find yourself watching the clock. So, do your best to arrive on time and immediately head into the activity assigned for the day and time.

Session	Event	Time	Objectives
October 23 rd	Plenary Session	4:00-4:20 pm	Opening remarks
	Committee Meetings	4:30-6:40 pm	MEPs join their respective committees and begin discussion. By the end of the first session, each committee should have one or more resolutions under development. MEPs should be preparing drafts and working to form majorities.
October 30 th	Committee Meetings	4:00-5:20 pm	Committees resume work on resolutions. By the end of the session, each committee will have voted on all items before the committee. Chairs and Vice-Chairs: be hyper-aware of the time. All items must be voted on, so do not let debate crowd out voting.
	Group Meetings	5:30-6:40	MEPs join their groups to discuss committee outcomes, answer questions, and work toward common positions.

November 6 th	Group Meetings	4:00-4:20	MEPs rejoin their groups to share updates and remind members of preferred voting preferences for the upcoming plenary.
	Plenary Session I	4:30-6:10	MEPs join the plenary to debate the measures before the Parliament. MEPs may also propose resolutions and amendments to any items under debate.
	Plenary Session II	6:10-6:40	MEPs vote on items before the Parliament.



Logistics

We will utilize our normal classroom (2107), an adjacent classroom (2104) for the simulation, and nearby public spaces for the simulation. As a rule, **plenary sessions** will be held in room 2104 because it most resembles the Parliament's main meeting room, the hemicycle.

For **committee meetings**, ENVI will meet in 2104 and DROI will meet in 2107.

For **group meetings**, EPP and Renew Europe will use 2104. S&D and the Greens/EFA will share 2107. Because of their smaller sizes, ECR, ID, and The Left will meet in the public spaces adjacent to the classrooms.



Quick tip: groups matter a great deal to how Parliament works, this includes spatial dynamics during meetings. While in committee and in plenary, groups sit together. Moreover, their placement in the room reflects their political alignment. Groups on the left sit - surprise! - on the left while groups on the right - another surprise! - sit on the right. (That is, the right and left when you stand in the front of the room looking at the seats.) Know your group so that you can quickly identify other group members and find your seats. Committee and plenary leadership will sit at a separate table in the front of the room.



Paper requirements

Your paper is a tool to help you prepare and excel during the exercise. Successful papers will demonstrate a command of the issue, an awareness of your MEP profile, and a healthy dose of informed creativity and imagination. Unlike the paper for the first simulation, the EP simulation paper entails general research on your committee's issue area as well as focused research on your group and your national political party preferences to elaborate on your MEP profile.

Everyone must submit a paper prior to the start of the simulation. **The official due date and time is October 23rd at 3:00 pm. Papers must be uploaded to Canvas in a Word-formatted document.**

If you have questions, ask sooner rather than later. **Professor Burdett is your principal resource for questions involving this simulation.** Professor Newmann will likely suggest that you contact me, so save yourself the time of having to write the same email twice.

Additional details:

- Papers must be 5-6 pages (roughly 2000-2500 words), double-spaced with one-inch margins, using a 12-point Times-Roman font
- You must use *at least* 10 unique, reputable sources. None of the assigned readings for the class count toward the 10-source minimum, though you may use them. Wikipedia and other like encyclopedias are not viable sources either.
- Your sources must be properly cited, and you must attach a properly formatted bibliography to the paper. (The bibliography does not count toward the page total or word count limits.)
- MLA in-text citations is the required citation format. Note page numbers when available. When page numbers are not available, note the best location identifier (e.g., section heading) and the website.
- The first page should be a coversheet with key identifying details: your name; the date; your parliamentary group; your national party; your committee; and the topic assigned to your committee. (The coversheet does not count toward your page total.)

Structure your paper according to the following sections and address the following prompts in your narrative:

I. Introduce yourself as an MEP

- Identify your MEP profile: what is your member state, national party, and group alignment? Give a little bit of background about each.
- What do you stand for as an MEP? What are your general political preferences?



II. Discuss your committee topic

- Explore the issue before your committee.
- What are the relevant facts? What are recent trends? What is the impact on Europe and your member state?



III. Apply what you know about your group and national political party to the issue. What are your policy preferences on the issue?



IV. Sketch out a plan of action for the simulation: what do you want to see happen? What should Parliament do? What about the EU member states?

A word on sources:

No matter what committee you're sitting on, you will need to conduct background research as well as research into current events and viewpoints. You should be able to accomplish both objectives primarily - if not exclusively - using the internet. Keep in mind, though, that not every source is a reputable source. Use your judgment. However, if you are unsure, follow up with us for advice.

The EU and its member states have a sizeable footprint online, and there are vast materials published in English alongside their native tongue. If you happen to stumble across a link only to see a language you cannot read, take a moment to see if there is a dropdown menu letting you select the language, or a clickable flag that will translate the website for you.

We chose topics for the simulation that are widely discussed in European institutions, widely covered by European news sources, and widely analyzed by experts and thinktanks. You should have no trouble finding reliable sources for background on Europe's migration crisis and the impact of climate change on Europe. Make sure that Europe is the focus of this background research, because you are ultimately searching for solutions in your capacity as a member of the *European Parliament*.

You may have a little more trouble researching national political parties, depending on the size of your member state. Additionally, not all political parties are well-resourced, which may mean that their web-presence is not as rich as other parties. If this is the case, we recommend reverse engineering and triangulating. Reverse engineering may involve looking carefully at materials produced by the parliamentary group of which you are a member in the EP. It stands to reason that many of the viewpoints of the group will be shared by your national political party. (Of course, the first, best source is the party itself, especially party manifestos produced for election campaigns.) Triangulating involves finding sources that reference viewpoints of the national party, quote its members, and analyze national party behavior. You can get a sense of what a party stands for from what others write about the party.

Some worthwhile general sources include, but are not limited to:

The Parliament and the EU

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/home>

https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en

European Parliament Groups

<https://www.eppgroup.eu/>

<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/>

<https://reneweuropegroup.eu/>

<https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/>

<https://ecrgroup.eu/>

<https://www.idgroup.eu/>

<https://left.eu/>

Reputable thinktanks

<https://carnegieendowment.org/programs/europe/>

<http://www.carnegieeurope.eu/>

<https://www.csis.org/regions/europe/european-union>

<https://www.cfr.org/european-union>

<https://www.epc.eu/en/>

<https://www.brookings.edu/regions/europe/european-union/>

<http://www.ceps.be/>

<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk>

<http://www.onevoiceforeurope.eu/>

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/europeanInstitute/>

<http://www.iss.europa.eu/>

Reliable news sources

<https://www.politico.eu/>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/>

<https://www.euronews.com/tag/european-politics>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cwlw3xz0ljmt>

Reliable news sources (cont'd):

<https://www.economist.com/europe>

<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/>

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en>

Most of the news sources here will allow you to read a limited number of articles for free. Older articles may be behind a paywall. If that is the case, try searching for the article through the [VCU Library](#) search engine.

This list is just a starting point. You should try to tinker with search terms involving key words related to your MEP profile and your committee topic. Google, [Google Scholar](#), and VCU's library are worth using as you branch out to learn more about your topic and yourself as an MEP. In addition to modifying search terms, you should also consider using advanced searches and adjusting the dates so that you'll only receive links and references to sources published over the past few years.

Bottom line:

Don't be intimidated by unfamiliarity with the European Union or the European Parliament. Tap into the skills you've acquired writing and research papers for other classes. Take initiative. Be creative. Inform your role.

Addendum: “EP Rules of Order”

The **EP Rules of Order** help regulate interactions between members of an organization during formal meetings. The rules are simple and must be used during our simulation for the committee and plenary stages. The EP Rules are not required for the group stage because your work in this forum largely involves sharing information and discussing a common position.

The Basics:

- The chair has the sole authority to call a meeting to order, recognize members to speak or make motions, oversee a vote, and recess a meeting. The chair can also call members back for important business.
- MEPs cannot speak during debate or discussion unless recognized by the chair. The chair can also cut off an MEP if their contribution is deemed to be out of order or irrelevant to the matter under discussion.
- MEPs should raise their tent cards if they wish to be recognized by the chair.
- If more than one MEP wishes to speak, the chair will start and then manage a speaking list.
- MEPs can caucus quietly during a meeting, but they may be asked to leave by the chair if their conversation is deemed disruptive.
- MEPs may submit draft resolutions for considering during general discussion. After the resolution has been read aloud by the sponsoring MEP or MEPs, the chair will ask if there is a motion to adopt the resolution. Any MEP can so motion. To continue, the motion must be seconded by another MEP, at which point debate begins. The debate shall continue until (a) an MEP ‘calls the question’ or (b) the chair ends debate due to time considerations. (When an MEP calls the question, debate will end unless an objection is made immediately and a majority of the MEPs agree to continue debate.)

- MEPs may submit amendments to the resolution during debate. Friendly amendments - i.e., amendments agreed to by the sponsor of the resolution - do *not* require a vote. Unfriendly amendments must be voted on. No motion is required to consider amendments during debate.
- Upon conclusion of debate, the chair will call for a vote according to three options: for, against, abstain. A record of the vote will be kept by the chair.
- The committee or plenary returns to general discussion upon the conclusion of a vote.
- There is no limit to the number of resolutions proposed or voted on by a committee.
- Resolutions that are not in the proper format cannot be considered. The chair's ruling on eligibility is final, though the chair must provide a clear explanation of the reasons for this decision.

Any updates to or modifications of these rules will be provided to participants prior to the start of the simulation.