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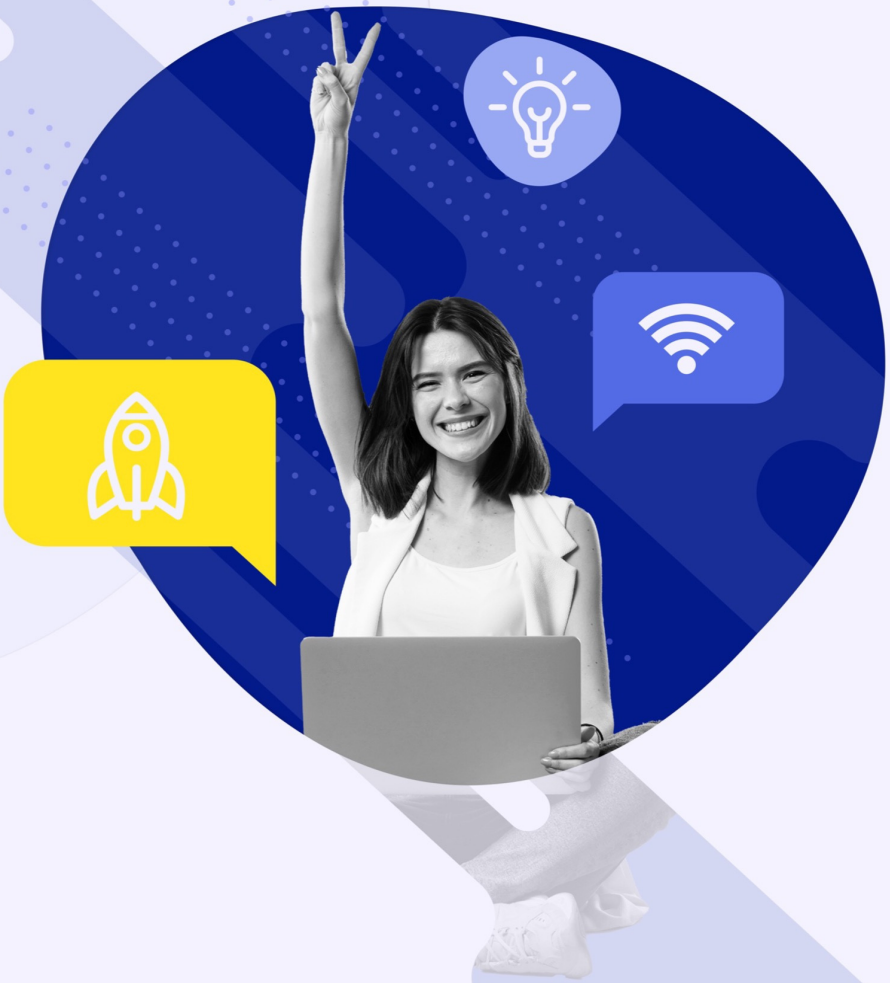

GAMEUFYING

Learning about the European policy for youth participation

Project Number: 2022-1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000086217

www.gameufying.eplusproject.eu

CONSEJO DE LA JUVENTUD DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN

CEIPES

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introduction

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Gamification represents an educational strategy that harnesses the full potential of games to improve educational outcomes. The main goal of this approach is to increase student engagement and as a result achieve the set educational objectives (UNIR, 2020).

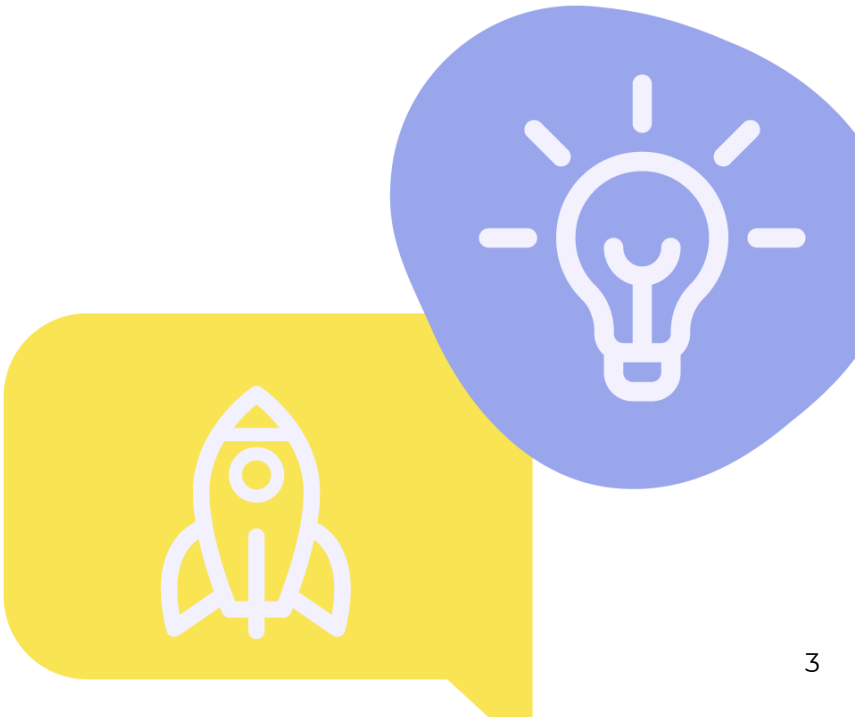
GamEUfying project was born to support this goal. It is an Erasmus+ KA2 project by four different associations from Spain, Portugal and Italy: Consejo de la Juventud de Castilla y León, ASPAYM Castilla y León, Rosto Solidário and CEIPES. Project's results include four games, including puzzles and game boards and also a role-playing activity.

This handbook, complementary to the interactive handbook also resulting from this project, shows different dynamics to implement gamification in the context of European affairs in our classrooms and focus groups. Thanks to this, substantial changes can be observed in the participants of these activities and the facilitators who take the initiative to implement them.

The main objective is that as many people as possible can benefit from the implementation of this new working methodology. In this way, young people will have a broader understanding of their environment and will be better equipped to make decisions. This is especially important for those with fewer opportunities, who are the main focus of the partners.

In an increasingly intertwined global context, understanding the challenges and processes that characterise the European Union becomes a crucial element in the formation of informed and engaged citizens. This phase of the project adopts the experiential learning philosophy, using role-playing as a unique approach to enable young people to explore, understand and actively participate in the issues shaping Europe's future.

This new edition will cover everything related to gamification and its implementation on European issues, this time carried out in the first person through the role-playing methodology, which is explained in the following section.



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Gamification and Role Playing Methodology

Role-playing is a dynamic educational methodology that offers young people a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in diverse scenarios, even in the complex world of European affairs, as the GamEUfying project proposes.

Role-playing can be found in society, as author Alfredo Blousso notes: in the 1960s in the United States, a new concept of play began to develop where participants played the role of different characters. Particularly the rise of this game modality was intensified a decade later, during the 1970s, by the popular Dungeons & Dragons. In this game, each player plays a fictional character defined by particular characteristics, using dialogue spoken by the character, acting and thinking as if they were taking on the responsibilities of the game in real life.

Basically, role-playing tries to simulate real-life situations by applying a practical methodology that accompanies the previous explanations given on a topic and involves an exercise of implementation and reflection on it (Management Journal, 2015).

While it can be intuited that the basis of role-playing is empathy towards a character to acquire or imitate their qualities and tasks, we can establish some key advantages to understand the function of role-playing:

- It fosters an environment of interest and study centred on the discussion of a problem. It is a motivating and participatory technique that uses dialogue or discussion afterwards, especially when the group is involved in what is being role-played (Blousson, n.d.).
- It enhances language development by enabling the learning of new words, concepts, and other linguistic elements, both domain-specific and general, by sharing opinions and listening to others, strengthening bonds and improving communication and expression in front of others (APPF, 2023).
- It is an optimal approach to cultivating teamwork, decision-making, creativity and interdisciplinary problem-solving skills in group functioning (APPF, 2023).
-

Even so, it must be borne in mind that this methodology must be accompanied by continuous learning, as role-playing cannot be a teaching method by itself. It is a methodology that puts the participants as the protagonists, so its level of exposure is very high and if the contents are not well worked on and the tasks are not established from the beginning, it can lose its effectiveness.

In some situations, there is a risk of detracting from the learning objectives by focusing on topics that are not really fundamental. It is crucial to remember that role-playing does not simply seek to entertain participants, but rather to build skills in an enjoyable and dynamic way (Blousson, n.d.).

Therefore, it is convenient to maintain a certain order when implementing a role-playing methodology:

1. Identify a specific topic, work on the previous contents and prepare the roles according to the participants we have.
2. Develop a particular scenario, taking into account the location, space, rules and any other relevant information.
3. The rules will set the times and duration of each intervention and will allow participants to feel safe in the speeches.
4. Prior training of the participants is very important, as they need to be aware of all the registers that will be handled. During this process, active listening and observation should be carried out, and it is even possible to intervene, if necessary, in order to guide the course of the game according to the objectives.
5. Finally, it would be beneficial to compile conclusions in which the experience is evaluated and feedback is given. These conclusions can be used to make adjustments so that the quality of the game is optimal in the future.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ROLE PLAY AND ITS ROLE IN CLASSROOMS

Gary Collins, Brata Winardy and Eva Septiana (2023) discuss the difference between traditional role-play and purely educational role-play in their article “Role, play, and games: Comparison between role-playing games and role-play in education”.

A role-playing game is one that creates interaction between two players and the game master; in addition, there are other components such as the world in which the game takes place, the interactions that involve a wide range of options to execute or the narrative that links all the elements within the game world (Hitchens & Drachen, 2008). All of these in-game features can be summarised in the diegetic framework of role-playing games. A diegetic frame is the context given to an audiovisual production, a book and within this case a game, so that we get to know the central guidelines of the universe in which we are going to immerse ourselves (Colantti, 2018).

Therefore, the diegetic framework, although initially used to explain role-playing games, can also be found in educational role-playing games. Within the role-playing game, the diegetic framework will focus mainly on world-building and how players can influence the components of this 'universe' through the game mechanics. In contrast, the diegetic framework of an educational role-playing game places more emphasis on how the narrative elements support the educational purposes of the activity and that these follow a concrete pattern: the players are learners within the activity (Stenros & Hakkarainen, 2003). For example, a participant who interacts as an important queen with the aim of learning history, cannot skip the script and change the development of the story at will, as the aim is to learn, not to improvise.

EXAMPLES OF ROLE-PLAYING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

There are numerous examples of role-playing simulations applied to the European Union. These dynamics are organised by the official body, although there are other very interesting ones developed by entities and associations in order to explain the functioning and involve participants directly with the complexity of EU mechanisms.

Through role-playing, participants develop crucial skills such as teamwork, decision-making, negotiation and effective communication, all of which are essential for active participation in European affairs.

One of the most common scenarios used by facilitators to develop the role-playing methodology is conflict resolution. The use of role-play in conflict resolution is an effective and dynamic strategy that allows people to explore and address conflict situations in a practical and participatory way. This technique involves participants taking on specific roles related to the conflict, simulating real situations to better analyse and understand the perspectives, emotions and motivations of the involved actors (Stewart & Edwards, 2012).

Role-play in conflict resolution not only provides a safe space for the expression of feelings and thoughts, but also fosters the development of communication skills, empathy and creativity. By immersing themselves in the roles of the conflict protagonists, participants can experience more deeply the complexities of the situation, which facilitates the identification of solutions and the search for mutual understanding.

This methodology is not only useful in professional settings, where it can be used to improve team management and resolve work-related disputes, but also in personal, educational and community settings. Role-play provides a unique opportunity to practise constructive conflict resolution, fostering collaboration and strengthening the skills needed to address interpersonal challenges effectively. Ultimately, role-play emerges as a powerful tool that goes beyond theory, allowing participants to learn how to manage and transform conflict in a practical and participatory way.

Some tips for influencing and convincing according to Professor Juan Flores (2013) for conflict resolution are:

1. Eliminate conflict and irritability as people who are close to seeking a solution are more likely to reject the discourse.
2. Look for the failure in the fact, not in the person; be collaborative with other opinions.
3. Listen first and then listen too; ask questions, nod, show that you are engaged in the conversation.
4. The tone should be soft, accommodating and persuasive to appeal to emotions, not just intelligence.
5. Ask for what you want in a polite way, don't forget to say thank you and please, within a confident and secure framework.

In summary, the use of role-play in conflict resolution presents itself as a highly valuable strategy that goes beyond superficial simulations. By allowing participants to assume specific roles and immerse themselves in conflict scenarios, this technique facilitates a deeper understanding of interpersonal dynamics and provides a platform for the development of crucial skills.

In the Parlamentarium in Brussels, you can enjoy the role-playing game in which you become a MEP. By engaging in discussions on real issues and topics, participants discover the EU law-making process and understand how the future of Europe is actively shaped through decision-making and policy-making. The game comprehensively illustrates the legislative process, from consulting interest groups and forming alliances, to negotiating with other institutions and issuing statements to the media.

In addition to Brussels, this game can be found in many European cities, such as Rome, Vienna and Strasbourg. It lasts between two and three hours and is available in the 24 official languages of the European Union, ideal for participants aged 14 and over. Booking in advance is recommended, and the best thing is that it is free of charge!

Model of the European Union

WHAT IS MEU? AN EXPLANATION OF EUROPEAN ROLE-PLAY

The Model European Union (MEU) is a simulation of the EU decision-making process for young people aged between 18 and 30 at the time of the conference, empowering and educating the next generation of active citizens. MEUs can take place at different levels, from local or national simulations to international conferences. They are usually organised by universities, educational institutions or organisations interested in promoting awareness and understanding of the EU. MEUs contribute to civic education by providing participants with a practical and engaging experience of how the European Union works.

To this end, MEU participants simulate the work of the European institutions in the European Parliament and debate two controversial and real legislative proposals from the European Commission each year. At the 2023 MEU, Members of the European Parliament and Council Ministers discussed the following topics: Net-Zero Industry Law Proposals1 and SLAPP Processes2. These two real-life legislative proposals tie into two prominent topics on the forefront of the European agenda. It is essential for participants to familiarise themselves with the topics and preparatory material ahead of the conference week (MEU Strasbourg, 2023).

The simulation also features a series of engaging workshops and insightful panel discussions, providing invaluable opportunities for participants to delve deeper into the topics. Through the interactive workshop sessions, participants gain first-hand experience of how decisions are made, how policies are developed and the dynamic nature of European politics. And through the panel discussions, participants gain access to a wealth of valuable information shared by esteemed panellists. Accomplished experts, policymakers and industry leaders take the stage to share their profound insights and first-hand experiences of navigating the complexities of the European Union. From seasoned diplomats to influential lobbyists, these panellists bring a diverse range of perspectives to bear on the intricacies of EU decision-making, policy formulation and the challenges posed by the year's chosen topics. The panel discussions serve as a platform for mutual learning and exchange, fostering a vibrant atmosphere of intellectual growth and discovery that helps participants shape their understanding of how the debates will unfold during the simulation.

The goal of the Model European Union is to provide an inclusive learning experience for young people that simulates EU decision-making and fosters personal and professional growth. The MEU aims to create youth-inclusive conferences that ensure that young people from all backgrounds and walks of life can experience the EU decision-making process first-hand, even if they have no previous experience or introduction to European politics. The MEU strives to provide a platform for young people to learn, express themselves and apply their skills in an immersive environment that replicates the challenges, complexities and thrills of European politics (MEU Strasbourg, 2023).

MEU believes in a European Union that celebrates diversity, promotes European identity and empowers young people to become more engaged and active citizens in their communities. Through attending the MEU, participants gain a deeper understanding of the relevance and importance of EU institutions in their daily lives. In the spirit of the EU, one of the main objectives of the MEU is to attract participants from across Europe (and beyond) so that they can build intercultural bridges, celebrate their diversity and, while learning about prominent issues on the European agenda, recognize that they have much more in common than they might at first realise.

By requiring participants to work together and compromise in order to succeed, the MEU highlights the importance of meaningful dialogue and active citizenship in Europe and empowers participants to build on their MEU experience and use the knowledge, skills and connections they have gained to benefit their local, regional and national communities (MEU Strasbourg, 2023).

ROLES INVOLVED

As the main purpose of the conference is to familiarise participants with the decision-making and law-making process in the European Union, and in particular with the ordinary legislative procedure involving both the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, participants in the 2023 MEU in Strasbourg played different roles (MEU Strasbourg, 2023):

- **Member of the European Parliament (MEP)**

The European Parliament is an important forum for political debate and decision-making at the EU level. The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by voters in all Member States to represent people's interests with regard to EU law-making and to make sure other EU institutions are working democratically.
Today, the European Parliament has 705 elected members from the EU Member States. Most of the MEPs belong to a political group, of which there are currently 7, representing all ideological tendencies in the European Parliament. Some MEPs are not affiliated to any political group and are thus known as 'non-attached' Members. It is the political groups that decide which issues will be discussed in plenary. They can also table amendments to the committee reports to be put to the vote. However, Members cannot be obliged by their group to vote in a particular way.
As MEU MEPs, young people are allocated to one of seven political groups, but must find allies in other groups as they try to get their amendments through - while also working with ministers in the Council. MEPs have a direct influence on the proposals that are adopted.
They must work as a team if they want their proposals to be effective in Parliament. MEPs also have to use all their public speaking skills and try to impress their colleagues from other political groups (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023).

- **Minister of the Council**

The Council of the European Union is formed by government ministers from each EU country, but there's no fixed composition. It depends on the policy area to be discussed: the Council meets in 10 different configurations, each corresponding to the policy area being discussed. Depending on the configuration, each country sends their minister responsible for that policy area. Thus, it is the voice of EU member governments, adopting EU laws and coordinating EU policies.
In the Council of the European Union, ministers from each Member State meet to debate proposals as presented by the European Commission. As MEU ministers, their primary focus is to defend the interests of their countries and the national governments of which they are members, while cooperating and engaging with their colleagues despite competing interests and values. This can be particularly tricky as voting in the Council is based on qualified majorities, considering not only the number of countries voting, but also the number of citizens in each country. At the same time, ministers must avoid conflicts with MEPs to ensure that proposals also reach the majority in the Parliament.

- **Journalist**

Journalists are an essential part of any political scenario – even if it is simulated. As MEU Journalists, young people have the opportunity to capture different moments throughout the simulation and then present them according to their role, publishing the latest news in real time and covering the conference in the way they prefer. MEU Journalists ensure that all those involved can follow all the decisions taken during the lightning-fast sessions. MEU Journalists also work closely with photographers who help them add visual excellence to the articles that will curate the conference proceedings.

- **Interest Representative**

Interest Representatives give lawmakers an understanding of their actions' impact on the outside world and on the daily lives of more than 500 million European citizens. Although they are often criticised for their influence on the European Union's legislative process, their actions stem from this simple reality: decisions taken at the European level have a major impact on our daily lives, economies, jobs, environment, incomes and social protections. As MEU Interest Representative, young people are experts in one of the topics debated in the MEU and it is their responsibility to ensure that the politicians they work with are able to keep track of everything that is at stake during the simulation. By putting their knowledge into practice, they have a unique opportunity to influence the way legislation is drafted and how it will affect the group and interests they represent.

- **Interpreter**

Interpreters play a key role at the MEU, interpreting speeches, debates, stakeholder meetings and press conferences from English into their mother tongue and vice versa (relay interpreting to the other booths) to ensure smooth communication between participants. Although all participants are expected to be able to communicate in English, interpreters make the conference more realistic, dynamic and inclusive. Interpreters work mainly in simultaneous mode, but they also have the opportunity to try their hand at consecutive interpreting and chuchotage (whispered interpreting), giving them the chance to hone a variety of interpreting skills in a real-life working environment that provides the best conditions for excellent interpreting practice.

- **Photographer**

As a photographer, young people capture moments of the debate and are visual storytellers, illustrating what is happening. This helps them to understand the topics, the people discussing them and the emotions that fuel these debates, making their work as a photographer even more profound, especially in an intense environment. They have to select the best photos, edit them and add the MEU watermark for the conference album that will be published online after the conference. This requires a willingness to continue the work even after the conference is over. But, as with all participants, the results of their hard work will be rewarding and lasting for them.
It is important to emphasise that MEUs usually tend to offer people roles that are as far away from their original views as possible - to challenge them and take them out of their comfort zone (Yefimenko & Gladun, 2022).

THE ORDINARY LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE

As mentioned, the key focus of this simulation is mainly the ordinary legislative procedure of the European Union. The actual procedure was adopted with the Treaty of Lisbon. Its main characteristic is the adoption of legislation jointly and on an equal footing by Parliament and the Council, it is a co-decision procedure (European Parliament et al., 2020).
The procedure starts when the European Commission submits a proposal to the Council and the European Parliament. Indeed, the Commission is the only EU institution empowered to initiate EU legal acts. It submits proposals for EU legal acts on its own initiative, at the request of other EU institutions or following a citizens' initiative.
After this, the procedure consists of up to three readings, with the possibility for the co-legislators (the Parliament and the Council) to agree on a joint text - and thereby conclude the procedure - at any reading. If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or the Parliament and Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted and the procedure ends.
A key idea is that the Council can only react to Parliament's amendments. The Council votes by qualified majority on the Parliament's amendments for which the Commission has delivered a positive opinion. It votes unanimously on the Parliament's amendments for which the Commission has delivered a negative opinion.
Another interesting characteristic of this process is that if the two institutions do not reach an agreement after the second reading a conciliation committee is convened. The Conciliation committee is composed of an equal number of members of the Parliament and Council representatives. It has to agree on a text that would be acceptable to both institutions. The Parliament delegation to the conciliation committee approves the joint text by an absolute majority of votes. The Council representatives generally vote by qualified majority (in some cases unanimity is required) (Council of the EU, 2024).
All the steps are detailed in a graphical representation available on the annex section.

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MEU SCENARIO: PLENARY SETTINGS

The fundamental scenario represented in MEU simulations is usually the Plenary sessions. Parliament meets in plenary session every month (except August) in Strasbourg, for a 'part-session' lasting four days. Additional part-sessions are held in Brussels. The European Commission and the Council of the European Union take part in the sittings in order to facilitate collaboration between the institutions in the decision-making process.

The high point of the European Parliament's political activity, plenary sittings, represent the culmination of the legislative work done in committee and in the political groups. The plenary sitting is also the forum in which the representatives of the citizens of the European Union -MEPs- take part in the EU's decision-making and express their standpoint vis-à-vis the Commission and Council.

Plenary business mainly focuses on debates and votes: a parliamentary report put to the vote in plenary is generally the subject of a debate in which the Commission, the representatives of the political groups and individual MEPs express their views. Speaking time per person, often very short, depends on the number of Members who have asked for the floor.

Plenary sittings are chaired by the President of the European Parliament. The President of the European Parliament is assisted in this task by the 14 vice-presidents. During the sitting, the President calls upon speakers and ensures that the proceedings are properly conducted. He or she also directs the voting procedure, putting amendments and legislative resolutions to the vote and announcing the results. The President's authority ensures that the votes, which can be long and complex, proceed at a rapid pace.

Interventions are usually made in their own language, and what they say is interpreted simultaneously by the interpreters into the other official EU languages. Voting generally proceeds at a rapid pace. Members sometimes have to vote on hundreds of amendments.

OBJECTIVES: SKILLS INVOLVED AND TRAINED BY PARTICIPANTS AND BENEFITS

Participation in the MEU not only helps young people to gain a better understanding of the European Union's decision-making process, but also challenges them in many ways. As a method of informal education for young people, the MEU offers participants the opportunity to improve a wide range of skills, including public speaking, critical thinking, research, writing, cooperation, working as a team under pressure and improving their negotiation and networking skills. Young people have a unique opportunity to meet other youngsters from across Europe (and beyond) and to take part in a well-organised and challenging simulation (European Youth Portal, 2021). They also have the opportunity to develop diplomatic skills, learn how the EU works as a supranational organisation and experience the challenges of reaching agreement between different nations. In this respect, the MEU "(...) fosters empathy for others, practises problem solving and impactful conversation, and respect and better understanding for both the process and struggles of the European Union." (UNC Center for European Studies, 2021).

There is no doubt that the MEU is a unique experience. It is an opportunity to practise diplomacy, find solutions to real problems, learn marketable skills, make new friends and, of course, have fun. These simulations create a group of young, intelligent citizens who have learned from and respected the EU and are ready to sit down and tackle real problems with a new set of tools for productive discussion (UNC Center for European Studies, 2021).

As a result, the MEU stands out for its educational value, academic excellence and professionalism, making it one of the most successful and prestigious simulations in the world. Moreover, by creating a truly European atmosphere in a purely European environment, the MEU confirms each year its reputation for contributing to the goal of European integration and the emergence of a European identity (Cosmopolitalians.eu, 2014).

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GAMEUFYING SIMULATION

Preparing a simulation of the European Union is an interesting educational and training activity. It must be taken into account that the participants must start from a base, that is why prior preparation is a very important step to develop in our Model.

GamEUfying simulation, named EU-NextGen Simulation, got inspiration from prior MEU simulations in order to use role-playing for leaning more about European Institutions and European affairs. Our simulation was celebrated in the city of Valladolid, (Spain) and it had a duration of four days, lasting from the 15th to the 18th February 2024. However, duration can be adapted depending on the target and the time available, lasting up to a week or more.

The name, EU-NextGen Simulation, was decided in order to frame the activity in a recognizable name for everyone and give identity to the group.

The main objective is that young people learn firsthand how the ordinary legislative procedure works.

The simulation was attended by 24 young participants and 4 youth workers from Italy, Spain and Portugal. The presence of youth workers or facilitators was fundamental for supervising and helping lead the activities. They will provide guidance and support to the participants during the simulation.

Although the content is limited in comparison with the real work of European Institutions, the experience provided is extremely positive for all participants involved. We have chosen to call this activity the EU-NextGen Simulation, and for no other reason than to frame the activity in a recognizable name for everyone and give identity to the group.

Participants in the EU-NextGen Simulation event, February 2024.

Prior Preparation

TARGET IDENTIFICATION

First of all, it is necessary to establish the educational and training objectives of the simulation. The EU context is very large, so it is necessary to anticipate from which base the simulation will start and decide the specific topics to be addressed, such as legislation, foreign relations, economy, etc.
It was imperative to duly acknowledge the diversity among participants, encompassing not solely disparities in age, but also variances in prior knowledge, experiential backgrounds, and academic pedigrees. Such dimensions are pivotal in ascertaining the requisite extent of preparatory assistance. In the present instance, owing to the prevailing unfamiliarity of the majority of participants with the subject matter, considerable emphasis was directed towards the preliminary phases preceding the simulation.

DEFINITION OF THE ACTIVITY

Next fundamental step was to shape the simulation activity. There are diverse ways in which participants can get into touch with European Institutions. In this case, the GamEUfying consortium decided to frame the simulation activity inside the ordinary legislative procedure of the EU. The scope was to allow participants to start getting in touch with the work of European institutions by starting with such a fundamental procedure.
Once the Model is structured, there are several questions to be asked: Are they going to simulate the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union or other institutions? Once the objective has been defined, we must assign specific roles to the participants (as can be seen in detail in the point dedicated to the European Union Model).
The definition of the activity should be developed on the basis of prior research. Prior to the meeting, providing to the participants information material about the European Union, its institutions and relevant policies. Encouraging participants to research and understand the roles they will play, it is also essential, that way they will get into the role and experience from the beginning.
Once the roles have been assigned and the functions have been understood, in addition to providing guidelines on how the simulation will take place, the documentation which we will be working on throughout the meeting must be distributed: prepare official simulated documents, such as legislative proposals, reports and position papers, ecc. In order to be clear about the time of each task, a chronogram was developed with all the schedules, breaks, moments of reflection and meeting, and the rest of activities. ...
All the information contained in this handbook is designed to be used as a support to facilitate the participants and to be shared in the group.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGENDA

After explaining all the previous methodology, the Agenda carried out during the weekend by mutual agreement among all the partners involved in the project will be discussed. This agenda combines work time with leisure time, as we believe it is essential that the young people who are part of this process have open spaces for connection, in order to be able to work better and enjoy the 360 degree experience. You can see the agenda we used in case you want to replicate any of its parts in Annex 4.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ROLES

The distribution of roles and functions is an important task in order to ensure that both the role-play and the involvement of the participants in the game will be as effective as possible.
For this reason, a questionnaire was initially used to ask the participants to rank their role preference in three levels, the available ones being: MEP, council minister, media or interest representative. The figure of the interpreters was therefore dispensed with, as mentioned above, this role being exercised by the group leaders.
This indispensable step would ensure that (almost) all participants have the desired profile and could get more into the role. In this way, the first option was assigned, while if it was repeated, the second option was assigned and, in last place, in case it was difficult to fit the group, the third option was given.
As there were 24 participants, it was decided to split in two, so the Parliament was made up of 12 people and the Council of the EU another 12.
Since we had 12 people in each group and the participants lacked a background, in order to facilitate participation and encourage discussion, they were divided into: 4 political groups, with 3 people per group and 6 Council member countries, with 2 representatives per country. In this way the percentages and voting would be balanced according to reality. You can see the description of the political parties we created in case you want to recreate them in Annex 5.
Another point to note is that those who placed first as media or interest representative developed their role next to the second/third choice, i.e. Parliamentarian or Minister. In this way, they were partly absent in the debates and also allowed to know the process more closely, since they had a support person in the political group or country to then channel the debate and thus we consider that the roles were more balanced.
Having developed the simulation in a few days, we believed that one person could develop two roles at the same time (obviously in consultation with them) and it was totally beneficial.

Four fictitious political groups were created and the countries chosen were varied and will be explained below. The chosen countries were: Spain, Portugal and Italy (the project partners), plus Greece, the Netherlands and Belgium. All countries were chosen by the project partners according to their situation in the EU, ensuring cultural, economic and demographic variety in the debate to be held. A brief description of the countries we provide to participants can be found in Annex 6.

SELECTION OF THE TOPICS

These proposals have taken into account both the relevance of these issues in current affairs, in public opinion and in the media, and through the European Union's forum for citizens' initiatives and the page promoted by the European Commission "Tell us what you think". The EU's priorities and strategies for the year 2024 and the new laws adopted were also consulted. The participants in this simulation were given a choice of different pre-selected topics, from which two were finally chosen to be discussed during the meeting.

All of the topics are highly relevant to the current landscape and we believe that participants are going to welcome them, even if they have already been involved with them before participating in the simulation. The issues raised in the initial survey correspond to the following priorities:

1.A Europe Fit for the Digital Age: Artificial Intelligence Act. Empowering people with the help of a new generation of technologies.

2.The European Green Pact: Financing and the Green Pact. Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent.

3.An Economy at the Service of People: The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

4.An Economy that Serves People: The Consumer Agenda. Empowering European consumers to play an active role in the green and digital transitions.

5.Promoting our European way of life: New pact on migration and asylum.

6.A new impetus for European democracy: Freedom of the Media Act. Protecting media pluralism and independence in the EU.

7.A new impetus for European democracy: Long-term vision for rural areas. Developing stronger, more connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities.

8.A new impetus for European Democracy: Equality and Inclusion. Building an Equality Union, free from discrimination based on gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Finally, the themes of artificial intelligence and the construction of a democratic and egalitarian Europe were chosen by a majority.

PREPARE MATERIALS AND PARTICIPANTS

It should be noted that in addition to the grassroots work that has been mentioned repeatedly, it is very important for everyone to participate in the debate and the decisions that are made.

The consortium decided to work in different workshops (based on the contents of this manual) prior to the simulation in order to help participants to get ready. Selected topics were: 1. what is the MEU, 2. the ordinary legislative process, 3. how to debate and 4. how to speak in public. The latter was accompanied by a dynamic where they talked about an absurd topic, and since it was the first day, we observed a greater fluency and loss of embarrassment in the participants when speaking in front of the group.

Moving to the simulation, two fictitious proposals presented by the European Commission were created to justify the initiation of the legislative process, since this is the institution that always has to start this process. The proposals were raised by the needs of a company and a women's social movement. Two basic documents were elaborated, with only 4-5 points each, a title of the law, an introduction and conclusions (see Annexe 2 and Annexe 3). These documents were printed and handed out to the participants.

Besides this, it is highly recommended to prepare supporting theoretical documents with everything that participants need to know before the simulation in order to get ready. In this case, GamEUfying consortium elaborated a document presenting the actors and institutions that will be involved as well as summarising the steps of the ordinary legislative procedure.

It is also important to prepare the agenda of the activity in advance in order to have a clear time-schedule and a clear organisation.

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The Simulation process

The simulation started with opening speeches from the facilitators in order to welcome participants. After this, participants were split in two rooms depending on the institution in which they work: the European Parliament and the Council. The four facilitators were also split into the two groups in order to provide constant support to the participants. This way, each institution started working on one of the two chosen topics: Council started with topic 1, while the Parliament started with topic 2. In the case of the Council -since they always have to react to Parliament's position-, participants were provided with a fictitious document with the amendments made by the Parliament, in order to allow them to start working while respecting the order of the steps of the ordinary legislative procedure and keep as loyal as possible to this process.
After each institution was done with the first reading, topics were switched for proceeding with the second reading. The intention was to allow all the participants to contribute to both topics as well as emphasising the idea of needed consensus between the two co-legislator institutions.

Participants in the EU- NextGen Simulation event, February 2024.

Once we got into the subject, the facilitators who were present at all time took notes in real time in the Drive (although it is possible to use another resource) naming the article referred to, the proposed change or addition and the justification for each of the changes/additions. Everything was stored in Drive folders designated with the names of each of the readings and the corresponding agency.
During the process it will be necessary to have computers or, failing that, mobile devices to help them find the relevant information and not to limit them linguistically, to draft the contents and deliver the desired amendments. On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that a printer must be used at all times or that everyone must have access to the proposed changes in order to read it individually and understand the contents for the discussion.
In general, these are the most basic steps to develop a MEU in its simplest version. It is interesting to adjust the needs of the meeting with the base of the participants, so it would be good that before getting down to business a survey questionnaire is conducted and even after that an online training to tell everyone their roles and the topics to be discussed. Motivating participants to do some research at home can ensure greater fluidity to the event.

EVALUATION PHASE

Once the entire process has been completed and the amendments have been discussed and voted on, the next step is the evaluation phase. This part is very important as it establishes evaluation criteria to measure the performance of the participants and considers the possibility of having a panel of evaluators or self-evaluations.
Of course, the assessment of the young participants is also a key factor. Therefore, at the end of the simulation, we will organise a debriefing session to analyse the experiences, lessons learned and areas for improvement.
All the information about this simulation, along with videos and photos of the process and the participants, the documents used and this manual itself will be openly available in the four official languages of the project (English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian) for users who wish to apply it to their target group and will need all the details to do so.
Last but not least, be prepared to adapt to changes and surprises that may arise during the simulation! Remember that the key to a successful simulation is careful preparation and the active participation of everyone involved.

FINAL TIPS: SPECIFIC ROLE FUNCTIONS

Lastly, it should be noted that the ordinary legislative process means that both working groups (Council and Parliament) have to be working on different areas of work at the same time. Our aim is for them to understand the EU's ordinary legislative process and the steps involved in adopting or rejecting an amendment. Therefore, participants will have to carry out a number of roles during the days of the meeting to be in direct contact with their role and develop a good parliamentary "game".
It should be borne in mind that as Parliament always has to carry out the first reading of documents, its position is always the primary to be realised, so the Council has to wait patiently for this moment.
As a key tip to ensure the smooth running of the simulation, in addition to following the agenda correctly and creating a good group cohesion, the Consortium believes that the most important thing is to know the role functions very well. This is so that, in case someone gets lost in the process, they can be hooked and guided through the legislative procedure.
Therefore, we would like to give a brief overview of each institution used and its basic functions. It is important that the person who is going to intervene in the votes or debates knows the function of his role in order to be able to perform his tasks according to what is officially required.

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The functions of the institutions are as follows

The European Commission → Represents the EU's overall interests

It is formed by a team or 'College' of Commissioners, 1 from each EU country.
It promotes the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget
The Commission is the only EU institution empowered to initiate EU legal acts. It submits proposals for EU legal acts on its own initiative, at the request of other EU institutions or following a citizens' initiative.

The European Parliament → Representing European Union citizens

It is an important forum for political debate and decision-making at the EU level. The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by voters in all Member States to represent people's interests with regard to EU law-making and to make sure other EU institutions are working democratically.

Today, the European Parliament has 705 elected members from the EU Member States. Most of the MEPs belong to a political group, of which there are currently 7, representing all ideological tendencies in the European Parliament.

In this simulation, participants will be allocated to fictional political groups. As MEU MEPs, young people must work as a team if they want their proposals to be effective in Parliament.

The Council of the European Union → Representing EU governments

It is formed by government ministers from each EU country, but there's no fixed composition. It depends on the policy area to be discussed: the Council meets in 10 different configurations, each corresponding to the policy area being discussed. Depending on the configuration, each country sends their minister responsible for that policy area. Thus, it is the voice of EU member governments, adopting EU laws and coordinating EU policies

In this simulation, as participants representing ministers, their primary focus is to defend the interests of their countries and the national governments of which they are members, while cooperating and engaging with their colleagues despite competing interests and values. This can be particularly tricky as voting in the Council is based on qualified majorities, considering not only the number of countries voting, but also the number of citizens in each country. At the same time, ministers must avoid conflicts with MEPs to ensure that proposals also reach the majority in the Parliament.

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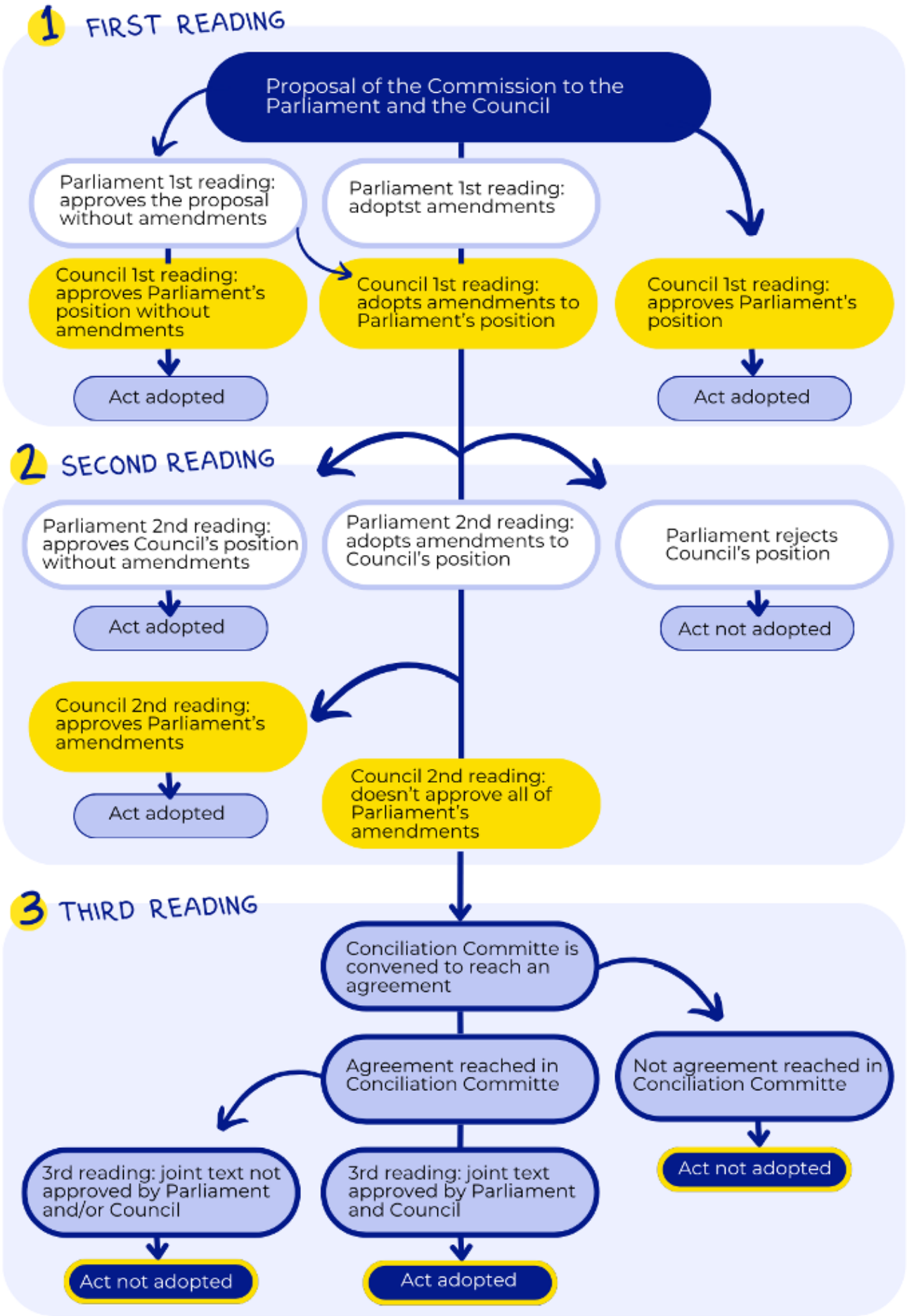

Image elaborated with Canva based on European Parliament site's information:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/olp/en/ordinary-legislative-procedure/overview

A Europe Fit for the Digital Age: Artificial Intelligence Act. Once different AI-related documents have started to be approved, the company EternaTech Solutions has proposed this innovation that they want to apply as a new point included in the future law. The company, which has been working with artificial intelligence for more than 20 years testing new techniques, has gained enough support through tests and experiments to open the debate in the European community on whether or not to regulate this new use.
Title: *Proposal for Regulating the Use of Artificial Intelligence to Replicate Deceased Relatives*

Introduction:
Recognizing the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) technology and its potential implications for societal norms and ethics, this proposal seeks to address the emerging use of AI to replicate voices and images of deceased relatives. As AI technologies become increasingly sophisticated, concerns regarding privacy, consent, and ethical considerations arise. Therefore, it is imperative to establish regulations governing the utilisation of AI in replicating deceased individuals to ensure respect for their memory, privacy rights, and the well-being of their loved ones.
Proposal:
1. Prohibition of Unauthorised Replication: The use of AI to replicate voices and images of deceased individuals without explicit consent from their legal representatives or family members shall be strictly prohibited.
2. Consent Protocol: Prior to utilising AI to replicate a deceased individual, explicit consent must be obtained from their legal representatives or family members. This consent should be documented and retained for verification purposes.
3. Limited Usage: AI replicas of deceased individuals shall only be used for specific purposes agreed upon by their legal representatives or family members. Any usage beyond the agreed-upon scope shall require additional consent.
4. Safeguards for Vulnerable Populations: Special attention shall be given to vulnerable populations, such as minors and individuals with cognitive impairments, to ensure that their rights and interests are protected in the replication process.
5. Transparency and Accountability: Developers and users of AI replication technology shall be required to provide transparency regarding the capabilities and limitations of the technology. Additionally, mechanisms for accountability and oversight shall be established to address any misuse or breaches of regulations.
6. Data Protection: Measures shall be implemented to safeguard the personal data and privacy of deceased individuals and their families throughout the replication process. This includes encryption, secure storage, and adherence to data protection regulations.
7. Ethical Considerations: The development and deployment of AI replication technology shall adhere to ethical principles, including respect for human dignity, cultural sensitivity, and non-discrimination.
Conclusion:
By enacting regulations to govern the use of AI in replicating deceased relatives, the European Parliament can uphold fundamental rights, protect privacy, and ensure ethical standards in the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence. This proposal aims to strike a balance between technological innovation and the preservation of human dignity and values.

A new impetus for European Democracy: Equality and Inclusion. The social organisation European Values Coalition has initiated this citizens' proposal on the platform https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/ which has been signed by more than 38,000 European citizens from different member states to ban the wearing of the Islamic veil on women in public spaces, as well as to encourage police prosecution to check who is forcing women to wear it.
Title: *Proposal for Legislation to Penalise the Use of the Islamic Veil and Investigate Coercion*

Introduction:
In light of ongoing debates surrounding cultural integration, religious freedom, and gender equality, this proposal aims to address the contentious issue of the Islamic veil, particularly in European contexts. While respecting individual rights and freedoms, it is essential to uphold values of secularism, gender equality, and social cohesion. Therefore, this proposal suggests legislative measures to regulate the use of the Islamic veil and investigate instances of coercion.
Proposal:
1. Prohibition of Islamic Veil in Public Spaces: The wearing of the Islamic veil, including the hijab, niqab, and burqa, in public spaces shall be prohibited within the European Union. This prohibition is intended to uphold European values of secularism, gender equality, and social integration.
2. Penalties for Violations: Individuals found wearing the Islamic veil in public spaces shall be subject to penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The severity of penalties shall be determined based on the frequency of violations and the context in which they occur.
3. Educational Campaigns: To foster understanding and awareness of European values and principles, educational campaigns shall be launched to inform citizens about the reasons behind the prohibition of the Islamic veil and promote social cohesion.
4. Support for Integration: Measures shall be implemented to support the integration of minority communities, including access to education, employment, and social services. By addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting inclusive policies, the risk of social isolation and extremism can be mitigated.
5. Investigation of Coercion: Instances of coercion or forceful imposition of the Islamic veil on women shall be thoroughly investigated by law enforcement agencies. Perpetrators found guilty of coercion shall be prosecuted and held accountable for violating the rights and dignity of individuals.
6. Protection of Religious Freedom: While regulating the use of the Islamic veil, it is essential to safeguard the right to religious freedom and expression. Individuals shall retain the freedom to practise their religion in private spaces and within the confines of the law.
7. Dialogue and Engagement: Constructive dialogue and engagement shall be fostered between religious communities, civil society organisations, and government authorities to address concerns related to cultural integration, religious diversity, and social cohesion.
Conclusion:
By proposing legislative measures to regulate the use of the Islamic veil and investigate instances of coercion, this initiative seeks to uphold European values of secularism, gender equality, and social integration. Through a balanced approach that respects individual rights while promoting social cohesion, it is possible to address cultural differences and foster a more inclusive and harmonious society within the European Union.

THURSDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY		
20:00	Arrival and check-in. Participants will arrive according to their flights/trains and will be placed in their assigned room.	
21:00 - 22:00	DINNER.	
22:00 - 00:00	Dynamics of presentation.	
FRIDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY		
	COUNCIL	PARLIAMENT
8:15 - 9:15	BREAKFAST.	
9:30 - 11:00	Welcome ceremony. Distribution of roles, presentation of the themes, explanation of the dynamics of the weekend, introductory games...	
11:00 - 11:30	COFFEE BREAK.	
11:30 - 13:30	Workshops. How to speak in public, how to deal with a debate, rules of procedure...	
13:30 - 15:00	LUNCH.	
15:00 - 15:30	The Commission introduces item 1	The Commission introduces item 2
15:30 - 16:30	Debate topic 1. Debate on the basis of Parliament's first reading on topic 1.	Debate topic 2. First debate between political groups on topic 2.
16:30 - 17:00	COFFEE BREAK.	
17:00 - 18:00	Preparation of amendments to topic 1	Preparation of amendments to topic 2.
18:00 - 19:00	Press conference. We will share what we have learnt and advanced during the day with the most ingenious questions.	
19:00 - 21:00	FREE TIME.	

21:00	DINNER.	
22:00	Intercultural night. This activity will allow you to learn more about the participating EU member states.	
SATURDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY		
	COUNCIL	PARLIAMENT
8:00 - 8:45	BREAKFAST.	
9:00 - 10:00	Debate T1. Topic 1 will be addressed as a whole, with the representatives of interests from topic 1 taking the floor.	Debate T2. Topic 2 will be discussed together with representatives of interests from topic 2.
10:00 - 10:45	Preparation of amendments to topic 1.	Preparation of amendments to topic 2.
10:45 - 11:00	Submission of amendments topic 1	Submission of amendments topic 2.
11:00 - 11:30	COFFEE BREAK.	
TOPIC SWITCH		
11:30 - 12:00	The Commission introduces item 2.	The Commission introduces item 1.
12:00 - 12:45	1st reading topic 2. First review for the Council following Parliament's reading.	Debate topic 1. Views are exchanged on the resolution of the Council's reading of topic 2.
12:45 - 13:30	Preparation of amendments to topic 2.	Preparation of amendments to topic 1.
13:30 - 13:45	Submission of amendments topic 2	Submission of amendments topic 1.
13:30 - 15:00	LUNCH.	
TOPIC SWITCH		

15:00 - 16:00	Topic 1 debate. Views are exchanged on the resolution of the Parliament's reading of topic 1.	2nd Reading of topic 2. Parliament's last reading following the Council's changes to topic 2.
16:00 - 17:00	Press conference.	
17:00 - 18:00	FREE TIME.	
18:00	Visit to Valladolid & Group dinner.	
SUNDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY		
9:00 - 9:45	BREAKFAST.	
TOPIC SWITCH		
9:30 - 10:30	2nd reading of topic 2. Council's last reading following the Parliament's changes to topic 2.	Resolution T1. On the Council's final decision on topic 1.
TOPIC SWITCH		
10:30 - 11:00	Debate T1. Topic 1 will be addressed as a whole, with the representatives of interests for the last convictions.	Debate T2. Topic 2 will be discussed together with representatives of interests from topic 2 for the last convictions.
11:00 - 11:30	COFFEE BREAK.	
11:30 - 12:30	Review of Parliament's proposals in final votes and programming of qualified majority voting.	Resolution T2. On the Council's final decision on topic 2.
12:30 - 13:30	Final votes in front of the European Commission. Resolution of votes before the European Commission, joint votes on what has already been decided to visualise the voting process by simple majority (Parliament) or qualified majority (Council).	
13:30 - 15:00	LUNCH.	
15:00 - 16:00	Press conference. Latest press releases and official photos.	
16:00 - 17:00	Final Conclusions. Youthpass distribution, questionnaires, signatures...	

DESCRIPTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Four political parties of different ideologies have been created on the basis of the 7 political groups already existing in the European Parliament. These new formations have completely invented names, but have characteristics in common with the political currents of today.

1.European Progressive Union Party (EPUP).
Ideology: European social democracy.
Keywords: Equality, economic justice, sustainability, cooperation, social rights, social investment.
Motto: "Building a fair Europe for all".
Key policies: Increased investment in education and social services, promotion of renewable energies, protection of labour rights, international cooperation to address common challenges.
Description: EPUP advocates progressive policies focused on social equality, economic justice and environmental sustainability. Their approach focuses on building an inclusive Europe, where social and labour rights are at the centre of decision making. They advocate greater cooperation between member states and seek to promote social investment programs to improve the quality of life of all European citizens.

2. European Conservative Party (ECP).
Ideology: European Conservatism.
Keywords: Tradition, stability, national autonomy, family, national security, market economy.
Motto: "Preserving our values, building our future".
Key policies: Promotion of economic stability, defense of cultural and traditional values, border security, intergovernmental cooperation with respect for national sovereignty.
Description:The PCE advocates conservative policies that seek to preserve traditional European values, economic stability and national autonomy.They defend the importance of the family, national security and a regulated market economy.The PCE advocates a strong and sovereign Europe, promoting cooperation among member states, but maintaining the identity and autonomy of each nation.

3. European Green Movement (EGM).
Ideology: Environmentalism and progressivism.
Keywords: Sustainability, environmentalism, social equity, climate change, human rights.
Motto: "For a green and fair future for all".
Key policies: renewable energy development, climate change measures, environmental protection, gender equality, social justice, promotion of sustainable practices in industry.
Description:The EVM focuses on environmental and social issues, advocating policies that promote sustainability, renewable energy and social equity.They seek concrete measures to address climate change, protect biodiversity and promote sustainable economic practices.They also advocate social justice, gender equality and human rights as an integral part of their political platform.

4. European Liberal Alliance (ELA).
Ideology: European liberalism.
Keywords: Freedom, market economy, civil rights, international cooperation, innovation.
Motto: "Freedom, progress and cooperation".
Key policies: reduction of state intervention in the economy, promotion of free enterprise, protection of individual rights, support for research and development, promotion of mobility and European collaboration.
Description: ALE advocates liberal policies that prioritise individual freedom, market economy and international cooperation. They defend civil rights, freedom of expression and the free movement of goods and people in the European area. The EFA seeks to reduce state intervention in the economy and to promote innovation and competitiveness. In addition, they advocate greater European integration through dialogue and collaboration.

Country descriptions

We provided the participants with a copy of these descriptions that way they could learn more about the countries they were representing and the countries present at the discussion table when making decisions, being able to inquire more about the topic:

1. Spain:
Spain, located in southwestern Europe, boasts a diverse economy with sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture playing significant roles. As a member of the European Union, Spain benefits from its strong trade ties within the single market. However, the country faces challenges related to unemployment, particularly among youth, and issues regarding labour rights. Spain has made strides in promoting gender equality and LGBTQIAP+ rights, although there is still room for improvement.

2. Italy:
Italy has a diverse economy, with industries ranging from fashion and design to agriculture and automotive manufacturing. The country faces challenges related to corruption and organised crime, which impact its business environment. Italy is committed to upholding human rights, although issues such as migrant rights and discrimination against marginalised communities persist. The government has implemented reforms to address these concerns, but further efforts are needed to ensure full protection of rights.

3. Greece:
Greece's economy relies heavily on tourism, shipping, and agriculture, with ongoing efforts to diversify into other sectors such as renewable energy and technology. The country has faced economic challenges, including high levels of debt and unemployment, exacerbated by the global financial crisis. Greece has made progress in addressing human rights issues, although concerns remain regarding treatment of migrants and refugees, as well as access to justice and freedom of expression.

4. Netherlands:
The Netherlands has a highly developed and open economy, with a focus on international trade, finance, and logistics. The country is known for its progressive policies on issues such as LGBTQIAP+ rights and drug decriminalisation. However, debates persist regarding labour market flexibility and social welfare reforms. The Netherlands upholds human rights standards, although challenges remain in areas such as discrimination and integration of minority communities.

5. Portugal:
Portugal's economy is diversified, with sectors such as tourism, textiles, and renewable energy contributing to its growth. The country has made progress in promoting human rights, including LGBTQIAP+ rights and decriminalisation of drug use. However, Portugal faces challenges related to income inequality, youth unemployment, and access to healthcare. The government is implementing reforms to address these issues and strengthen social inclusion and economic sustainability.

6. Belgium:
Belgium's economy is characterised by its openness to international trade and investment, with key industries including manufacturing, services, and pharmaceuticals. The country upholds labour rights and environmental standards, although debates persist regarding income inequality and social welfare reforms. Belgium is committed to protecting human rights, with a focus on issues such as freedom of expression, minority rights, and refugee integration. The government collaborates with international partners to address global challenges such as climate change and humanitarian crises

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