



INTERNATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

February 5-7, 2014

Dubai, UAE

www.ite-c.net

Proceedings Book

Editors

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Çakır İlhan

Prof. Dr. Aytekin İşman

Prof. Dr. Cem Birol

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet ESKİCUMALI



General Coordinator

Prof. Dr. Aytekin İŞMAN

Conference Coordinators

Prof. Dr. Ayşe ÇAKIR İLHAN, Ankara University, Turkey

Conference Associate Coordinator

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet ESKİCUMALI, Sakarya University, Turkey

Conference Secretary

Dr. Oytun Sözüdoğru , Near East University, North Cyprus

Future Learning and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Vocational Teacher Education Päivi Aarreniemi-Jokipielto.....	527
Experiencing the European Union: A simulation game on the European Citizens' Initiative Marco Brunazzo, Pierpaolo Settembri.....	533
Enhancing Academic Performance Through Post-Listening Organisers and Note-Taking Among Colleges of Education Students in Kwara State, Nigeria Rasaq Ayodeji Iliyas.....	543
Special child learning difficulty or specific teacher difficulty? Thomai Alexiou, Doriana Nikaki, Martha Giannakaki, Maria Laftsidou.....	551
New Teaching Methods in Nursing Education (HEVI) C. Marcean, M. Alexandru, E. Cristescu.....	559
Using Social Media in Collaborative Learning: A Facebook Application Derya Kıcı, N. Emel Dilmen.....	563
Marginalization of University Professors Training in Tunisia: From Pedagogical Provisions to Bureaucratic Formalities Amani Bel Abed, Nadia Hamrouni.....	564
Gaziantep'te Yabancı Dil Eğitiminde İlkokullarda ve Ortaokullarda Karşılaşılan Problemler Sinem Kahraman.....	572
The Intrusive Sounds in the Connected Speech Mehmet Deniz Demircioğlu.....	586
Başarılı Öğretmenin Vasıfları Muhammed Aydın.....	593
Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Yönelik Tutumları Ahmet Eskicumalım, Kerim Karabacak.....	596
Teachers Trainers: Village Elders Oytun Sözüdoğru, Bahire Efe Özad.....	606
Philosophy of Education of Human Anatomy for Dental Students Bolekova Adriana, Lovasova Kvetuse, Kolesar Dalibor, Kluchova Darina.....	610
Turing Teaching of Science Easy, Friendly, Intriguing and Innovative, Employing Various Teaching Aids M. Masroor Akhtar Khan, Moin Uddin.....	615
Asian Parenting Styles and Academic Achievement Through the Lens of Confucianism Grace H. C. Huang, Mary Gove.....	621
Prediction of Students' Academic Achievement at Higher Secondary Level on the Basis of Secondary Level Academic Achievement B.B. Ramanuj.....	626
Turkish Preservice Middle School Mathematics Teachers' Misconceptions for Constructing Histograms Oktay Mercimek.....	630
Time Impact on Training Effectiveness of Physics Teachers in Saudi Arabia Yousef Alhaggass.....	635
Teaching an EAP Course in a Synchronous Videoconferencing Platform: Technological, Pedagogical and Administrative Reflections Elif C. Onat, Nuri Kuruoglu, Tufan Adiguzel.....	638

Experiencing the European Union: A simulation game on the European Citizens' Initiative

Marco Brunazzo^a Pierpaolo Settembri^{b*}

^a University of Trento

^b European Commission

Abstract

Simulations can be extremely successful in acquainting participants with a negotiation's logic and process, especially in those political systems in which negotiations are prominent, such as the European Union (EU). After a brief introduction on the constructivist approach to teaching the European integration, in this paper we present step by step a simulation game on the adoption of a real piece of European legislation: the regulation that implemented the European Citizens' Initiative, one of the main innovations of the Lisbon Treaty. Special attention is devoted to the different phases of a simulation design, from the choice of the topic, the choice and allocation of roles, the preparation of all needed documentations, to the debriefing and assessment phases. The paper originates from a two-years long experience with undergraduate students of two Italian Universities.

Keywords. Simulations, Problem-based learning, Constructivism, EU negotiations, European Citizens' Initiative.

Introduction

"The most important thing is not winning but taking part": Baron De Coubertin's maxim does reflect the spirit and the logic of simulation games. Real negotiations may dramatically fail to deliver an agreement, and so too may simulations. However, simulations of negotiations do not have winners and losers: they do not even have a clear notion of victory. Yet even participants in simulation games who find themselves on the losing side may be those who have benefited most from them. The value of a simulation lies in the process. The outcome is to a large extent irrelevant.

Simulations can be extremely successful in acquainting participants with a negotiation's logic and process, especially in those political systems in which negotiations are prominent, such as the European Union (EU). Everything in the EU points up the central importance of negotiations. There are negotiations between the EU institutions and bodies (the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and many others), between them and national/subnational governments and parliaments (inside and outside formal procedures), and between public and private actors. Nothing happens in the EU without negotiations. For this reason, the EU is a particularly suitable field of study for negotiation theories (Meerts and Cede 2004; Elgröm and Jönsson 2005; Dür et al. 2010); simulations, in their turn, can be a powerful instrument to teach how the EU actually works. As an example, we develop step by step a simulation game on the adoption of a real piece of European legislation: the regulation that implemented the European Citizens' Initiative, one of the main innovations of the Lisbon Treaty. Before illustrating the selected example, we introduce some general remarks about the problem-based learning approach and the use of simulations in teaching.

Problem-based learning approach and simulations

Simulations have acquired prominence in contemporary teaching, and especially in international relations. Suffice it to consider the indexes of the leading journals on contemporary politics, teaching, and the discipline of political science to see how extensive the use of simulation games is, and how complex and structured they have become. The pedagogical and educational foundations of simulations are based on the so-called "student-centered" approach (Jonassen and Land 2000), where students actively take part in a learning process that is "constructive, cumulative, self-regulated, goal-oriented situated, collaborative, and individually different" (De Corte 2000, 254).

Today, the growing availability of information and the complexity of the problems to address require universities not only to furnish students with specific skills necessary to acquaint them with debates and issues in

specific disciplines; they are also required to transmit the meta-skills (the ability to do research, the ability to organize meetings, the ability to speak in public, the ability to defend a position through reasoning) that can be applied in diverse environments (at school, but also – and above all – at work).

This change entails the need to identify teaching methods that respond better to the new requirements. The main reason for such a need is, probably, the emergence of a global knowledge society. As Bursens and Van Loon (2007, 2) point out “this era – the ‘information age’ – can be characterized by an ‘infinite, dynamic and changing mass of information’ (Dochy and McDowell 1997, 280) and requires cognitive, meta-cognitive, and social competencies of its citizens. Students need to achieve not only a sound base of discipline specific knowledge and skills but also a number of ‘higher order’ skills and attitudes. In this way, students should become able to cope with ever-changing environments and abstract and complex work processes”.

In light of these changes, many teaching activities are nowadays informed to the Problem-based learning (PBL) approach, which is “the learning that results from the process of working toward the understanding or resolution of a problem” (Barrows and Tamblyn 1980, 18). The theoretical approach that underpins these teaching methodologies is one and the same, i.e. constructivism, whereby what we learn is the result of the construction, interpretation and modification of our representations of reality, which are, in turn, the result of our experiences with the real world. Simulations are one of the main instruments adopted in the PBL approach.

From an educational point of view, simulations have been widely used in the field of international relations, economics, sociology and other disciplines. Certainly, simulations have had mixed fortunes. In the late 1980s, Dorn (1989) identified a peak in scientific contributions on simulations between 1971 and 1975 and a contraction in the period 1981-1986. But the continuing importance of simulations and role-games is confirmed, for example, by the existence of a scientific journal dedicated to them, *Simulation and Gaming* (whose first issue came out in March 1970), and several international associations. More recently they have started to be used in European Studies featuring the decision-making process of the EU.

Despite the many examples and contributions (or probably because of them), it is not easy to define a simulation (or a “simulation game”). In fact, to be precise, a distinction should be drawn among simulation games, games-simulation, gaming simulation, games with simulated environments, teaching games, learning games, instructional games and educational games. To make a long story short, here we embrace the minimalistic definition proposed by Dorn (1989, 2-3):

A game is any contest or play among adversaries or players operating under constraints or rules for an objective or goal. A simulation is an operating representation of central features of reality. A simulation game is an exercise that has the basic characteristics of both games and simulations. Consequently, simulation games are activities undertaken by players whose actions are constrained by a set of explicit rules particular to that game and by a predetermined end point. The elements of the game constitute a more or less accurate representation or model of some external reality with which players interact by playing roles in much the same way as they would interact with reality itself.

One reason of the simulation’ fortune is its adaptability. A simulation can be organized for a few or many participants, besides a number of observers; participants may be homogeneous as regards several variables (a class of students, for instance, or a group of officials); rules may differ in their degree of specificity; participants may have various amounts of informative resources or skills of different kinds; it can also be organized accordingly to the time available. The aim of a simulation is, in general, to achieve a goal (approval of a legislative text, for example) through interaction among the participants.

In a *role-playing* simulation, each participant is given a role and is asked to act as the real person whose role he is interpreting would act. To this end, an important resource for each participant is information about the characteristics and objectives of the person that he interprets. Playing a role can be very difficult, especially if the participant does not agree with the ideas of the real counterpart. But this is one of the factors that make a simulation useful: it forces the participant to assume the guise of a “stranger” and to understand the latter’s point of view. The participant may play the role of a real person (the president of the European Council) or an imaginary one (king of Alpha Centauri), an individual (head of government) or a collective actor (European Commission).

A simulation consists of individual and collective activities. The former may, for example, comprise the preparation of positions or writing reports or press releases, as well as the drafting of amendments; the latter comprise the more or less formalized interaction among participants. The interaction may take place during the formal simulation sessions or outside of them (by e-mail, for example, or through informal contacts). This means that simulation activities have a formal beginning and a formal end. Anything can happen between those two moments as long as it remains within the limits established by the simulation: players can bargain according to the initial position of the character that they represent but without going beyond their mandate. This does not

mean that the role remains the same: characters may change their minds, as happens in any real decision-making process. As in reality, however, changes of position must be justified.

The fact remains that a simulation is a simplification of reality. Some positions may be caricatured and certain rules oversimplified. There is no minimum degree of simplification: it depends on the number of actors, on the process to be simulated, and on the rules to be followed. It goes without saying that the simulation of a decision-making process that in reality involves numerous actors requires careful simplification work if there are very few participants. Experience, but also common sense, will guide the teacher in selecting the process to be simulated.

Scientific literature have sometime questioned the usefulness of simulations, especially in international relations courses (Butcher 2012, 177). However, other scholars have emphasized how simulations enable students:

- to benefit from active learning, defined as “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell and Eison 1991, 4);
- to experience relevant aspects of the real world which had previously only been studied in abstract in traditional courses;
- to feel the impact of the stress and constraints (e.g. time, information availability, and information reliability) found in crisis situations;
- to witness the prevalence of different decision-making models under specific circumstances (e.g., rational actor model, governmental process model, organizational process model, groupthink);
- to measure the importance of personalities, trust, and personal relationships in the decision-making process, as well as the role of leadership;
- to understand the nature of public opinion and assess its reliability as a tool for decision-making;
- to appreciate the importance of information in decision-making and recognize the remarkable amount of information that policy-makers need about current affairs, historical situations, scientific progress, etc.;
- to see the interaction between domestic and international politics;
- to assess the validity of different explanations of policy-making (e.g., elitism, pluralism, and hyperpluralism) in different situations;
- to gain a first experience in empirical research;
- to acquire a range of skills that may be valuable in a future profession, such as being in someone else shoes, organizing events, reading between the lines, understanding the nuances of diplomatic language, realizing the importance of reasoning and rhetoric to convince or to refute;
- finally, given the fact that the teacher is always in the shadow, to work in group and help each other.

The simulation on the European Citizens’ Initiative

There is no straightforward recipe on how to prepare a simulation exercise: the design of a simulation can be tailored to specific pedagogical needs. We will discuss here an example of simulation concerning the approval of a regulation on the European Citizens’ Initiative we run in Italy and in Brussels in 2011 and 2012 with the undergraduate students of our courses in Public Policy Analysis and European and International Politics.

We have choose the European Citizens’ Initiative for a series of reasons: it is sufficiently accessible for an audience of non-experts, it is able to mobilize students and generate debate, it is suitable for a simulation exercise given the constraints (time available, participants, etc.), there is a balance between the possible arguments within the negotiation (e.g. in favor or against a certain course of action), and, finally, sources of information are accessible so that students can prepare themselves properly.

We are conscious that there are some disadvantages in replicating a real EU negotiations in a simulation. The main one is the risk of recreating a process with very few elements in common with the actual one or, on the contrary, that one of predetermining its outcome. However, there are also some advantages. The most important is that original documentation can be used: the Commission proposal, the prior green paper, the contributions to the public consultation, the report from the European Parliament committees, the opinions of the Committee of the Regions and of the European Economic and Social Committee and others are all available on the EU internet site. Participants can contact experts and inquire about the procedure, they can easily obtain information about the issues at stake from various sources and find the real positions of NGOs and other stakeholders.

Moreover, a negotiation that has attracted significant media attention (like that one we proposed) entails the availability of documents, press releases, position papers and other materials, especially on the Internet. This not only reinforces the motivation of the students but also helps them prepare their positions and find new arguments to defend them. Finally, the participants acquire familiarity with the original documents, understand the relationships among them, and learn how to search in the appropriate databases. The European Citizens’

Initiative is suitable for simulations also because it is a self-standing issue, that is an issue addressed for the first time and by a single Commission proposal. If, on the contrary, a procedure relates to previous initiatives, or to other procedures running in parallel, is chosen, the negotiation may not be fully grasped because all its ramifications cannot be reflected in the simulation.

It is important to remember that a simulation – however accurate – is and remains a simplification. It is always useful to keep a simulation's limits in mind when conceiving one. For example: one cannot simulate all the steps of a decision-making process: it is necessary to focus on the most significant ones; there cannot be as many actors as there are in reality: only the most representative ones should be chosen; one can hardly simulate the negotiation and the adoption of an entire text: the focus should be limited to the most significant issues.

For these reasons, we have decided to simulate the major steps of the policymaking associated to the selected regulation. In the first part of the exercise (2 meetings of about 2 hours each), students have been required to present brief position papers at the public consultation on the Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative proposed by the European Commission playing the role of one of the public bodies, associations, NGOs or private citizens involved. This part was not *strictu sensu* a simulation, but just an occasion to make them familiar with the dossier. In the second part (2 meetings of about 3 hours each), students have simulated a COREPER II and a General Affairs Council meeting, interpreting the national permanent representatives and the national foreign ministers respectively.

In every simulation the teacher should be fully aware of his delicate role as the "discreet engine" behind the exercise. The teacher should carefully find an intermediate point between being a passive observer and the *deus ex machina* (pre)determining the course of the exercise from A to Z. The teacher should always be present, although not always visible or in the front line. In particular, he:

- Should hold some introductory lectures, explaining the subject and the organization of the simulation, and offer suggestions on negotiating strategies;
- Should prepare and supply the material for the simulation;
- Can, if appropriate, take an active role in the simulation to facilitate the discussions (for example as an advisor to a key player);
- Should always be reachable by e-mail or via a dedicated website;
- Should provide feedback after the exercise and help link the theoretical notions presented in the introductory lectures with the experience of the simulation;
- Should submit the exercise to evaluation by the participants.

Last but not least, even when the teacher relies on an already-existing exercise, he should be aware that no simulation exercise can be prepared without thorough knowledge of the persons who will take part in it: the simulation should be adapted to the participants (and not viceversa). In our exercise, we have played different roles. In the first part, we have played the role of the Commission Secretariat, in the second one that one of the Council General Secretariat. In both cases, we have played a discreet role, yet close enough to the Presidency to steer the negotiation if necessary.

EU negotiations involve hundreds of actors. At least approximately 12-15 participants are necessary for the proposed simulation to reproduce the realistic dynamics of the EU decision-making within the framework of an ordinary legislative procedure (OLP). In the second part of our simulation, actors that have been represented were the European Commission, the Presidency of the Council, and the representatives of some members in the Council. When choosing the national delegations present in the Council, we have paid attention to the range of viewpoints that would be represented. There was no *a priori* rules as regards the delegations to be selected: they have been chosen in such a way as to reflect the variety of viewpoints in the real negotiation. A balanced number of "big" and "small" states has been reached, as well as of "old" and "new" member states, supporting or opposing the regulation.

Presidency, Commission, and national delegations have therefore negotiated within the Council of the EU. But what about the European Parliament? With a limited number of participants (between 35 and 40 students), it was difficult fully and realistically to integrate the European Parliament into the simulation. In one case we have opted for the creation of a small delegation of European Parliament representatives, comprising the rapporteur and two representatives from two other European Parliament political groups (the shadow rapporteurs). The role of the European Parliament delegation was to represent the Parliament in trilogue meetings with the Presidency and the Commission in order to exchange views on the positions emerging in the respective institutions. In another case, the limited number of participants made it difficult to envisage also this role for the European Parliament, then we have chosen a procedure that takes place only within the Council. In this case, the position of the European Parliament has been invented by the instructors, so that between the meeting of Coreper and Council they foreseen an imaginary trilogue meeting whose outcome – prepared by the instructors and

reflecting the position of the European Parliament – was announced by the Presidency at the beginning of the subsequent meeting.

Allocating the roles – finding the right person for the role – is a delicate task: although all roles are important, and although all roles allow a good negotiator to shine, they do not necessarily entail the same skills. Knowing the participants, we have allocated the most sensible roles by ourselves. We have chosen, as the Commission representatives, students able to speak in public, to digest a significant amount of information in short time, to justify and defend the proposal while answering questions and countering objections from the national delegations, rapidly to understand whether suggestions for amendment are acceptable and, if not, why. As the President of the Council or as the chair of the Coreper II, we have selected participants with a consensual attitude, good at listening, calm and balanced but also with the right mix of political intuition and charisma to imagine a viable compromise and persuade the delegations to accept it. As the representatives of the European Parliament, we have selected students familiar with bold rhetoric and possessing political intuition and advanced negotiating skills. All other roles have been allocated at random. Students have been simply reminded of the importance of each role: with their arguments, attitude, irony, suggestions and alliances each of them can change the outcome of the negotiation.

In general, the amount of information to be shared with participants is the instructors' choice. In our exercise we have decided to provide the students with the following documents:

- An introduction to the simulation (prepared by ourselves);
- The Commission Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative;
- The Commission proposal (original document);
- The report drawn up by the responsible EP committee (original document);
- The report from a Council preparatory body to the higher level (prepared by ourselves);
- The relevant articles of the Treaty of Lisbon applicable to the procedure (notably articles 293 and 294 for the ordinary legislative procedure);
- Confidential or guiding instructions for each player (prepared by ourselves), to which we will return later.

Given that participants have been encouraged to search for additional pieces of information by themselves, the following documents have been also made available to them (non-exhaustive list):

- The press release of the Commission announcing the adoption of the proposal;
- The opinions of the Committee of the Regions and of the European Economic and Social Committee.

We don't have distributed the documents all at once preventing participants from concentrating only on the narrow range of issues of interest to their delegation and failing to grasp the big picture. Of the essential documents, the distribution of the confidential instructions and the report from a Council preparatory body to the higher level, for example, have been delayed until the very beginning of second part of the exercise. The report, in fact, reduces the scope of the exercise by focusing it on the issues outstanding after the (imaginary) work of the Council preparatory bodies.

At the beginning of the second part of the negotiation, all players have received short instructions about the tasks that they were supposed to perform, even if in real negotiations such guidelines may not always exist, at least not in written form.

There follow examples of instructions for different roles in the simulation exercise concerning the European Citizens' Initiative.

European Commission

The primary mission of the Commission is to obtain the approval of its proposal and to preserve as much as possible of its original content. The Commission is convinced that the preparatory process of the proposal, which involved a wide range of stakeholders, provides sufficient guarantees about its quality.

During the negotiations, the Commission will defend its choices, based on the arguments put forward during the preparatory stages and building on the views expressed by the stakeholders in the context of the public consultation.

Political realism, however, will require the Commission to compromise. In doing so, it will seek to defend its original proposal and to minimize the substantial changes.

The ordinary legislative procedure requires the agreement of Parliament and the Council on the same text. Against the wishes of the Commission, the Council may amend the proposal only by unanimity (rather than by qualified majority). The President of the Commission specifically asked its services and the Commissioner responsible to secure an agreement by Council and Parliament at first reading.

Presidency

You have one mission: to reach an agreement, ideally by consensus, if necessary by a qualified majority. For an agreement in the Council to become an agreement on the regulation it is necessary that Parliament and Council find a compromise on the same text, possibly with the agreement of the Commission. Without the consent of the Commission, the Council may change the Commission proposal only by unanimity.

You will have to be, and appear to be, a diplomatic president, respectful of all positions, but at the same time pragmatic and resolute. It is up to you, in constant contact with the Commission and benefitting from the assistance of the General Secretariat of the Council, to put forward solutions that mediate among the different positions of delegations and reach a shared agreement.

You will represent the Council in “trilogue” meetings with the Parliament and the Commission. And you will inform the Council about the outcome of your contacts with the Parliament.

Country X (broadly favourable)

You are a supporter of the Commission’s proposal, even if you consider it too conservative in some respects. Regarding the minimum number of signatures, you consider that requiring a minimum percentage of signatories in each of the Member States involved would be unsatisfactory. The existence of a European public sphere means that, by definition, all citizens can participate, not so much on the basis of their nationality, but simply by virtue of the fact that they are European citizens.

At the same time, you flirt with the idea of setting the minimum age required to sign an initiative at 16 years in all countries, regardless of the age required for the European elections.

You consider it essential to multiply the opportunities for citizens to propose and support an initiative. Of course, the possibility of collecting signatures via the Internet should be ensured.

You are concerned by the provision in the proposal requiring all signatories in Europe to prove their identity (with a document) in order to sign an initiative and establish the country where the signature is collected. You believe that a much preferable approach would be to use the address of permanent residence as the criterion with which to determine where the signatures come from. In the case of signatories resident in third countries, the criterion of citizenship should apply.

The transparency of funding is a key element that you intend to promote. Any information about public funding must be constantly updated.

Lobbies cannot fund European citizens’ initiatives.

Finally, you maintain that it should be possible to resubmit a citizens’ initiative on an issue on which European citizens have already expressed themselves. You believe, however, that this should be allowed at least two years after the first initiative.

[You cast xx votes in Council.]

Country Y (strongly against)

You are strongly opposed to the Commission’s proposal and seek the support of those countries that are only moderately favorable or otherwise unhappy.

You are not convinced that the citizens’ initiative could be an effective tool with which to influence the European Commission’s legislative agenda.

EU decision-making rules are clear and you care little that many EU states have provisions within their constitutional arrangements for certain forms of direct democracy: the EU is not a state. That said, you obviously cannot boycott the adoption of a proposal designed to implement a provision and one of the main innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon. You can, however, make the use of this instrument so complicated and cumbersome that its effectiveness would be impaired.

You think that the minimum number of countries from which the statements of support come should be raised to a half of the Member States plus one. You also believe that a million signatures is too few: it is not representative of the European population. You want to prevent legislative initiatives with little relevance from emerging. The age at which a citizen can support an initiative should be 21 years, because only adults can understand the political implications of the initiatives proposed.

You do not mind if initiatives are financed by lobbies and interest groups, as long as their contributions are made public. In your opinion, the idea that lobbying is always a bad thing is definitely exaggerated in the EU.

You believe that the Commission can take up to two years to follow up on an initiative on which enough signatures have been collected.

[You cast xx votes in Council.]

European Parliament (rapporteur)

You head the Delegation of the European Parliament and you speak for the majority of its members (the other members of the delegation will be vigilant that you are respectful of all the views expressed in the Parliament).

The draft report adopted by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and other committees on 28 October 2010 summarizes the positions of the Parliament on the main elements of the Commission proposal, and you will stick to them in your contacts with the Council.

It is important to underline and to make clear to participants that, especially in the case of the confidential instructions given to national delegates represented in the Council, they are not a mere script to be read out. They set out the overall position of the government as regards a proposal and entrust the representative with the responsibility to obtain as much as possible and to lose as little as possible in the negotiation. Obviously, the lower the level of the meeting, the narrower the margin of manoeuvre for the representative to depart from the instructions received. At the highest political levels, when ministers and heads of state or government are themselves involved in the negotiation, instructions are redundant, and what matters are the priority of the government and the political responsibility of the negotiator.

Preparing the national instructions is perhaps the most delicate and time-consuming task in the organization of a simulation. If these instructions are not realistic, participants will encounter confusing discrepancies between the instructions that they have received and the information that they obtain from real sources (e.g. the national press). The idea, on the contrary, is that they can complement the information that they receive with what they can find themselves. If the instructions are deliberately polarized and caricatured in order to create a more lively debate, there is a high risk that the negotiation in the simulation will depart from the real negotiation, and that what the participants have experienced will bear little resemblance to what EU negotiators actually do.

The “instructions” for institutional actors (Presidency of the Council, Representatives of the Commission and of the European Parliament) were straightforward: as the previous example suggests, they were not so much related to the content of the simulation as to the role that they are required to play by the treaties. National instructions were more demanding. They have been prepared on the basis of a number of documents. For example, the public consultation prior to the proposal often elicited contributions from a country’s national parliament, regions, other public bodies and NGOs: a careful reading of these documents has provided a detailed overview of the country’s stakes in the negotiation.

At the end of the simulation, the feedback session enabled us to focus the attention of participants on key aspects of the simulation and thereby show them the most important lessons to be learned. At this point, participants have also been helped to understand what they did wrong and what they would do differently if they were given a second chance (Dochy and McDowell 1997, 279-298). Feedback from students was equally important for the instructors to understand how the exercise has been perceived and, if necessary, how it could be improved in the future.

There are no strict rules on how a feedback session should be conducted. Our experience is that feedback should be collective: the success of a simulation does not spring from individual performances but is a collective endeavor to be measured in terms of the quality of the outcome and of the negotiations that produced it. As a consequence, the feedback session should focus on group dynamics rather than on single interventions.

There is no single optimal outcome: a successful simulation is one that reproduces realistic dynamics, confronts students with realistic problems, and concludes with a realistic solution. A simulation does not need to conclude with a unanimous vote to be successful. Under certain circumstances, failure to reach agreement is a realistic outcome which does not jeopardize the value of the exercise: on the contrary, it reinforces it.

The feedback session should be used to illustrate the critical junctures of the simulation, i.e. the turning points where the negotiation could have taken a different course. In this regard, the role of players at particular moments should be underlined: the Commission presenting its proposal, replying to questions, and explaining the reasons for not accepting an amendment; a delegation supporting the point made by a previous speaker, followed by several other manifestations of support for the same proposal; the Presidency deciding on the right time to table a compromise proposal; the negotiators finding compromises within trilogue meetings, etc.

Comparison with the actual outcome of the negotiation is always an enriching exercise. For this reason, we have invited an expert who has taken part in the negotiation or knew the substance of it. Differences in the process are more important to underline than differences in the outcome, because they can contribute to shedding light on those dynamics that simulations cannot fully replicate.

The assessment is an essential part of most academic experiences and simulation games are no exception. Yet it cannot be conceived as for any other exam at the end of a course: it has to be adapted to the specific features of this teaching tool. There are various possible ways to assess a simulation game and what we describe here is just the approach we followed in this case.

First of all, we did not use the simulation game to assess individual performances. When a participant had to be marked individually (e.g. when the simulation is part of a course for which each student has to be marked), we relied on other assignments complementary to the simulation, such as the drafting of individual position papers. In our view the simulation game is a collective experience for which there is no “right” conduct. The outcome is the result of individual and collective actions (preparation, tactics, skills, disputes, deliberation, etc.) as well as exogenous factors (time available, role and instruction assigned, rules of the game, information, topics selected, etc.). It would not be fair to assess individual performances when an important share of the outcome does not depend on individual behaviour.

We believe that a simulation is successful when the participants find it useful and benefit from it. If this is the case, then there is no other place to start than the participants themselves. In our view the starting point is thus self-assessment. However, the first question we ask our participants is not, quite trivially, whether they liked the simulation game or if they benefited from it. We ask them to share their feelings about what they just experienced, ideally by mentioning the adjective(s) that describe them best. Usual inputs include terms like “surprised”, “excited”, but also “frustrated” and “confused”. We use each of the inputs received to shed light on selected aspects of the simulation game (e.g. key moments in the negotiation) or some important elements of the EU decision-making process (e.g. the role of the rotating Presidency, the informal negotiations, the voting rules, etc.).

At the end of this rather informal exchange of views, we usually make sure that the following aspects have been included in our debriefing:

- highlight the role of institutional actors, particularly the Presidency and the Commission, as well as the representatives of the European Parliament when applicable;
- underline the importance of informal arenas: some of the crucial decisions and of most significant progress in the negotiation are often made outside the formal meetings;
- explain the difference between the simulation and the real negotiation: usually the real negotiation takes place over a longer period of time, involving more actors, speaking more languages and addressing more issues at the same time;
- emphasise the influence of personalities: one of the most interesting features of simulation games is that exactly the same exercise played by a different group of participants leads to very different dynamics and outcomes. A couple of examples will suffice to convince them that the outcome was in large part determined by the influence (ability, knowledge, character, attitude, etc.) of some actors;
- explain the missing parts of the process. Our simulation, for example, does not reproduce entirely the role of the European Parliament, mainly for logistical reasons (i.e. we did not have enough participants to represent both the Member States in the Council and a sufficient number of political groups in the EP). Yet, participants need to be aware of the full role the EP plays under ordinary legislative procedure.

Separate from this assessment/feedback session, we ask participants to provide a more detailed evaluation of the exercise, which we use mainly to improve future simulation games.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have explained how we conceived and organized a simulation game on the EU, building on an example concerning the Regulation establishing the European Citizens’ Initiative. We have treated simulation games within the framework of the constructivist approach to education, and, more specifically, the problem-based learning approach. We consider simulations to be an important instrument with which to supply the new skills required by the emergence of a global knowledge society: simulations may be useful in equipping students not only with specific knowledge about the EU but also with a number of “higher order” skills like comprehension of the complexity of the “real” world.

For the students, simulation games are powerful tools with which to learn politics. They enable them effectively to experience how politicians decide, how intricate decision-making can be, and how different the points of view of political actors may be. For teachers, simulation games are useful instruments with which to make their classes more participatory and collaborative, so that students become the protagonists of their learning. In other words, a student learns if and when she interacts with colleagues and the teacher. This interaction emphasizes the social dimension of knowledge: the meanings and purposes are socially constructed, and so are the behaviors. We think that, together with good knowledge of the topics, this is an important life-lesson for students.

Although this paper is deliberately celebrative of simulations as tools to teach and learn how the EU works, simulations do not constitute a panacea. For example, they do not replace traditional learning, and they work better when they build on solid knowledge about the EU and its institutions: moreover, they also have intrinsic

limitations in regard to reproducing the dynamics of real negotiations within the EU. We will describe, among the many possible, four of these limitations, which concern timespan, socialization, contingencies, and complexity.

The duration of a simulation exercise is limited to a few weeks at most. Real negotiations rarely last less than one year and often last more than two. The difference is not so much in the amount of time taken by Coreper and Council to discuss an issue, which is limited in both cases, as in the time taken by the issue to be debated at technical level and, crucially, addressed between meetings. In a simulation, the negotiation must necessarily proceed through a dense sequence of meetings concentrated into a few days or weeks. There is little or no time for national positions to be properly articulated, for contacts to be established, for like-minded delegations to recognize each other, for the Presidency and the Commission to learn to work together, etc. In simulation exercises, issues are inevitably dealt with more superficially than in real negotiations.

A related issue is socialization. Whereas the participants in a simulation play their roles for a limited number of days and have little time to familiarize themselves with each other's preferences, skills and attitudes, EU negotiators get to know each other relatively well. A specific feature of EU negotiations, in fact, is their atmosphere of informality and familiarity. In some cases, negotiators are required to meet several times a week. They learn to cooperate, to understand difficulties, to accommodate preferences and, most importantly, to build and sustain trust in their counterparts. Commission, Council and EP officials, national diplomats, MEPs and even ministers operate in small circles or communities that develop not only specific codes of behavior but also a genuine mutual understanding. Simulations do not allow this.

Real negotiations, moreover, do not happen in a vacuum: they are embedded in a specific context that determines their pace, their development, and their outcome. These factors cannot be fully reproduced in a simulation: the imminent elections of the European Parliament may cause the negotiation to be concluded ahead of schedule; a recalcitrant Presidency of the Council may delay the conclusion of a delicate file until the following semester; budgetary reasons may compel negotiators to conclude within a certain deadline. Exogenous pressures may be equally powerful: an international crisis, the threat of a pandemic, the imminence of an international conference, or the sudden fall of a national government may have a decisive impact on a negotiation. Simulations can cope with these contingencies only badly.

Finally, real negotiations are inevitably more complex than simulations, even if they are based largely on the same documentation. Simulations usually take place in one language, whereas real negotiations are multilingual. Simulations cannot focus on highly technical issues impenetrable to non-experts. On the contrary, real negotiations can be painfully complex and require experts to fly to Brussels and discuss the details of certain provisions over several weeks. Whereas the participants in a simulation are alone, a national negotiator can and does draw on a huge body of expertise available at various levels of the public administration. Whereas simulations are by definition concerned with a single issue, real negotiations rarely are so: concessions are sometimes made and compromises reached across procedures, and not necessarily at the same time. In fact, one of the peculiarities of EU negotiations is that they are "repeated negotiations", i.e. consist of several rounds in which no actor is systematically on the losing side. This dynamic can be replicated in simulations to only a very limited extent.

As said above, the scientific literature is divided on the efficacy of simulations. Some authors are enthusiastic: they only see the positive effect of simulations. Others are more critical: they consider the traditional approach more useful and regard simulation as some sort of trivialization of the teacher's activity. Our position is midway between these two. Simulation games can be effective if they are well organized and if they go together with other formative opportunities. In other words, simulation games demonstrate their potential only if they are included in a teaching course structured into different learning opportunities and based on "traditional" and "innovative" methods at the same time. It is likely that not all the students will react positively to the simulation, given that they also react differently to more traditional classes. However, our experience is that simulations motivate students to learn more about the EU.

References

- Barrows H.S., Tamblyn R.M., *Problem-based Learning: An Approach to Medical Education*, Springer Publishing Company, New York, 1980.
- Bonwell C., Eison J., *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 1, George Washington University, Washington, 1991.
- Brunazzo M., Settembri, P., *Experiencing the European Union: Learning How EU Negotiations Work Through Simulation Games*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2012.
- Bursens P., Van Loon C., *Multilevel Simulation Games in EU Studies: Powerful Learning Environments in*

Political Science?, paper presented at the EUSA 10th Biennial International conference, Montreal, May 17-19, 2007.

Butcher C., "Teaching Foreign Policy Decision-Making Processes Using Role-Playing Simulations: The Case of US-Iranian Relations", in «International Studies Perspectives», 13, 2012.

De Corte E., "Marrying Theory Building and the Improvement of School Practice: A Permanent Challenge for Instructional Psychology", in «Learning and Instruction», 10, 2000.

Dochy F., McDowell L., "Introduction: Assessment as a Tool for Learning", in «Studies in Educational Evaluation», 23/4, 1997.

Dorn D.S., "Simulation Games: One More Tool on the Pedagogical Shelf", in «Teaching Sociology», 17/1 1989.

Dür A., Mateo G., Thomas D.C., "Negotiation Theory and the EU: The State of the Art", in «Journal of European Public Policy», 17/5, 2010.

Elgström O., Jönsson C. (Eds.), *European Union Negotiations: Processes, Networks and Institutions*, Routledge, London 2005.

Jonassen D.H., Land S.M., *Preface*, in Jonassen D.H., Land S.M. (eds.), *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, 2000.

Meerts P.W., Cede F. (Eds.), *Negotiating European Union*, Palgrave, London, 2004.

Authors information

Marco Brunazzo is assistant professor in European Politics and Director of the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence at the University of Trento. He has published two books and several articles on different topics related to EU politics.

Pierpaolo Settembri has been an official of the European Union since 2007, and he is currently working in the Secretariat-General of the European Commission. He has published two books and several articles on EU-related topics and has carried out teaching activities at LUISS Guido Carli in Rome, at Sciences Po in Paris and for the College of Europe in Bruges.