

May 28, 1997

THE MODEL EUROPEAN UNION

The EuroSim Experience

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I. Introduction

Very few Americans have a clear understanding of the European Union. Yet, in many respects, that organization is our most important international partner. Intercollegiate simulation of the EU decision-making process is one device to help correct that deficiency.

The problem addressed by this paper is whether that enterprise is an effective, efficient, and practical means to achieve that end. The tentative answer, based on the ten-year experience of the New York Consortium for European Union Studies and Simulations and its predecessors, is a qualified "yes". Such simulations attract to the study of the EU a substantial number of college students and they provide a more vivid and deeper understanding of the EU than would a more conventional approach, but their costs are also substantially greater. Those costs may limit the appeal of the model EU and, thus, its potential as an educational tool.

To elaborate that answer, this paper will review briefly the course of development of EuroSim (as this activity is now known). Then, it will present its main underlying principles. Next, it will describe its organizational structures. Finally, it will offer an informal evaluation of the project so far.

At least two other intercollegiate consortia sponsor model EUs. Edgar Morgan has organized one in Pennsylvania and Maryland and Professor John McCormick has done the same in the Midwest. However, this paper will deal only with the New York State project, as I am not well enough informed on the other two.

II. History

A. Origins. EuroSim began with the ambition of a SUNY Brockport undergraduate student to organize a model United Nations. Late in 1986, he proposed this to the Department of Political Science, which referred it to me, as the departmental member whose professional interests were most appropriate. I favored the use of simulations in teaching, but doubted the need for yet another model UN.

As my primary academic specialty was western European politics, I proposed the European Community as the subject for simulation, unaware that, apparently, no such intercollegiate project had been executed previously. The students agreed, planning to organize a model EC for spring 1988, with other SUNY schools attending. Hence, the first name: State University of New York Model European Community. Meanwhile, a delegation of Brockport students attended the 1987 Harvard National Model UN, to gain some experience with simulations.

B. SUNYMEC. The students mailed invitations for SUNYMEC88 to political science departments and political science student clubs at

all SUNY four-year colleges and university centers in Fall 1987, but received not a single response. Telephone calls to faculty members were more productive, but, still, we lacked a critical mass. By spreading our net more widely to include private colleges, we succeeded in attracting five schools (Brockport, Cortland, Jamestown CC, Skidmore, and Albany) and about thirty-five students, enough for starters. The first intercollegiate EC simulation was held on the Brockport campus in Spring semester 1988.

SUNYMEC remained a Brockport project for the 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992 simulations. I went to France as director of Brockport's social sciences program in Paris for 1989-91 and my colleague, Barbara Jancar-Webster served as SUNYMEC faculty advisor.

C. NYCMECS. The next phase in the development of our project was its internationalization and institutionalization. Already in its second running in 1989, some European students participate. Four Luxemburgers came with a faculty advisor (Dr. Armand Clesse). Luxemburgers came to Brockport again in 1990 and 1991 and were joined by a couple of Belgium Flemings who were studying at a New York State school.

Their presence added so much to the simulation that we decided to expand the concept by increasing the number of European participants and by alternating venues between Brockport and Luxemburg. Dr. Clesse agreed to provide the European site for the 1992 simulation, with generous special arrangements made by the Luxemburg government and, with the assistance of a student intern from one of the participating NYS schools, recruited about eighty European students to take part. All simulation activities were held in the sumptuous facilities of the European Parliament in Luxemburg. Since then, the simulation has alternated between Brockport and Europe (Luxemburg in 1992 and 1994, Brussels/Leuven in 1996 and 1998).

During the 1992 simulation, the American faculty advisors agreed to organize a consortium of their schools to sponsor American participation in the simulations. Preliminary discussions at a later meeting in Spring 1992 led to the drafting of a constitution and formal establishment of the New York Consortium for Model European Community Simulations at a meeting at St. John Fisher College in October 1992. With the aid of pro bono services by a lawyer, NYCMECS registered as a not-for-profit organization under New York State law. When the Maastricht Treaty transformed the European Community into the European Union, NYCMECS became the New York Consortium for European Union Studies and Simulations. The simulations themselves were called NYSLUX, to identify the two sponsoring partners.

D. EuroSim. As a result of political changes in Luxemburg in summer 1995, Dr. Clesse's Institute for European and International Studies could no longer serve as European sponsor for the simulations. Professor Luc Reyckers arranged for the Department of Political Science of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, to replace the IEIS. One of his assistants, Jos De La Haye, organized the January 1996 simulation with the help of intern Matthew Hagenah, a recent graduate of a NYCEUSS member. It met on the Leuven campus and in the European Parliament's Brussels building. The transfer from Luxemburg

to Belgium required a name change for the simulation to EuroSim.

III. Principles

As the simulation evolved, a set of rather clear principles emerged pragmatically as its foundation. They included:

A. Student-faculty collaboration. From its origins, the simulation has been the product of faculty-student collaboration. Each year one or two undergraduate students at the base American school has been appointed by the Consortium Director to serve as Student Director or Directors with the main task of coordinating the involvement of student organizations at the member-schools. This has included organizing a set of regional workshops during the preparation period preceding each simulation. The purpose of the workshops is to facilitate the orientation of the student participants and give them some practice in simulation activities.

At most schools, student organizations are involved in making preparations for the simulation. Typically, intellectual preparation is faculty-led and organizational preparation is student-run. At some schools, all aspects of preparation have been entirely a student-organizational activity with a faculty member serving only as a passive advisor. The simulations themselves, however, are run entirely by the students. Faculty members are even discouraged from counseling their students during the simulations.

Student-faculty collaboration was institutionalized in the Consortium constitution by formalizing the role of Student Director and by providing for student-faculty parity on the Council and ex officio student membership on the Executive Committee. For practical reasons, however, faculty members have tended to dominate both bodies.

B. Intercollegiate collaboration. Initially, SUNYMEC was based on the example of the Harvard National Model United Nations. SUNY Brockport organized and sponsored the simulation with the other schools, in effect, its customers. However, the smaller size and more intimate setting of SUNYMEC [HNMUN attracts 1500-2000 participants each year] made a more collaborative relationship natural. The visiting schools sought a more active role in shaping the project and Brockport responded sympathetically. The Consortium constitution institutionalized this by providing general policy decisions be made by the Council on which all participating schools are represented equally and that the Consortium Director (who has always been a Brockport faculty member) be appointed by and responsible to the Council.

In practice, the operations of the Consortium have been highly collaborative. Most important policy decisions have been taken by the Council or the Executive Committee, both of which are broadly representative. Faculty advisors on the Council have used a variety of professional special skills for the benefit the project. One member set up and operates the Internet listserv, three of them run evaluation surveys at the end of each simulation and have presented the results in an ECSA paper, another prepared and distributed to all schools a detailed bibliography on the year's issue, etc.

The Consortium has also been an unusual collaboration between a variety of institutions. It has included seven public and eight private schools. Four of the members (Buffalo, NYU, Cornell, and Columbia) have full graduate programs. The rest are undergraduate colleges. They are scattered widely across the state.

C. International collaboration. An especially important quality of the project has been the extent of its international character. Nine of the ten simulations have included European students. Three of the simulations so far have been run by Europeans in Europe and a fourth is scheduled for Brussels/Leuven in January. Several European schools (Catholic University of Leuven, University of Saarbrücken, Institute for European and International Studies/Luxemburg, St. Patrick's/Maynooth, European University/Hague, University of Trier) have been engaged in the project institutionally. Several hundred European students have participated.

IV. Structures

A. Consortium. The structure of the Consortium includes:

1. Members. All Consortium members are "accredited institutions of higher education in New York State". The by-laws provide for the possibility of non-voting associate membership for "other accredited institutions of higher education". One school (North Adams State/Massachusetts) held such a membership for one year.

2. Council. The Consortium has "a Council to make its policies and oversee the conduct of its financial and administrative affairs". Also, it appoints the officers and the executive committee for one-year renewable terms. Council membership consists of one faculty representative and one student representative from each school. It meets during each simulation and, usually, once late in the Spring and once in the Fall each year.

3. Executive Committee. The Executive Committee consists of four members elected by the Council and the Director ex officio. It meets at the call of the Director, but conducts most of its business by telephone and e-mail.

4. Officers. The by-laws provide that the "officers of the Consortium shall be a Director and such other officers as the Council shall appoint". Also, the Director "shall appoint a Student Director, subject to the approval of the Council". In practice, general management of the Consortium has been entrusted to the Director, assisted by a faculty advisor "Co-Director" and the Student Director. Also, some of the schools contributed a one-time levy to hire a fundraiser who was given the title of Associate Director for Development. In addition, the Council appointed a lawyer to serve as legal counsel pro bono and, in most recent years, has selected an intern to serve in Europe to assist in organizing the simulations there or to help recruit European students to come to the simulations in Brockport.

5. Means of communication. Besides the more conventional means of communication, the Consortium operates two Internet listservs. The first (NYSLUX-1@ubvm.cc.buffalo.edu) has an open subscription list. All faculty advisors and most students subscribe.

This list has quite a bit of traffic, especially in the preparation phase for a simulation. Especially, students make a lot of use of it discussing the issue on which the simulation is to deliberate. Access to the other listserv (NYMEUS-1@ubvm.cc.buffalo.edu) is controlled by the SUNY Buffalo faculty advisor. This listserv is used by the faculty advisors and their European counterparts to transact most of the Consortium's administrative business between simulations.

B. Simulation.

1. Preparation. Preparation for each simulation consists mainly of two sets of activities. The students must prepare intellectually, organizationally, and psychologically for their individual participation and the organizers of the simulation must prepare the informational materials required by the students and make the necessary arrangements for travel, housing, meals, and meeting facilities.

a. Preparation of students. The intellectual preparation of the students is organized and directed by the faculty advisors at most Consortium schools. At the members with doctoral programs, the "faculty advisor" is usually an advanced graduate student. In a few cases, the intellectual preparation has been carried out through student clubs in consultation with a faculty member.

Intellectual preparation means gaining an understanding of five main areas. First is the institutions and processes of the European Union. Second is the policy area of the issue on which the simulation will focus. Third is the political and social character of the country of the alter ego of the student. Fourth is the political party or interest group, if any, with which the alter ego is affiliated. Finally, students may obtain information about the political, professional, and personal qualities of their respective alter egos.

Typically, organizational preparation in the Consortium has been the primary responsibility of student clubs, usually in consultation with a faculty member. They organize training and practice in the parliamentary, political, and leadership skills required to participate effectively in the simulation. Also, roles must be assigned, delegations organized, and efforts coordinated with those of other appropriate delegations. That part of the preparation process has been bolstered by the regional seminars mentioned above.

Psychological preparation is perhaps the most difficult and the most likely to be neglected. A model EU is a highly complex activity and can generate a large amount of student frustration. For students to realize maximum satisfaction from their participation they need to understand the character of the simulation fully. They need to see it as mainly a problem-solving exercise which cannot succeed without problems to solve. They need to understand that the simulation may be reflecting life accurately if it results in discord and stalemate and should not perceive that outcome as failure. All that must be explained to the students in advance to reduce the frustration quotient. Nevertheless, despite the most conscientious preparation, human nature being what it is, the students may understand with their minds, but their psyches will still take a pounding when their best efforts at the simulation fail to produce the desired results--as is often the case for even the most talented students.

b. Organizational preparations. Besides the preparation of the individual students, general organizational preparations must be accomplished. They consist mainly of providing the participants with materials they require for their preparations and making the organizational arrangements for the simulation. These are chiefly the responsibility of the Consortium Director and the host institution.

The required materials consist of four main documents. One is a set of guidelines to the policy-making process that the model EU will simulate. The students need to see in detail how the EU policy process will be adapted to the simulation format. Although this is basically the same for each simulation, it must be revised each time to take into account the specific policy issue to be discussed and any changes in EU legislation.

A second document provided each time is a list of the EU officials whom the students will be representing--their "alter egos". In addition to the revisions required by the usual turnover in office-holding, the list must be adapted to supply the membership of the EP committees and Economic and Social Committee sections appropriate for the policy issue selected. The students cannot organize their delegations until they have the revised list of alter egos.

A third essential document is the set of rules and procedures. This would seem to require little revision from year to year as procedures in the EU evolve slowly. However, quite apart from the changes required to reflect that evolution, a constant effort has had to be made to ensure that they provide a workable procedural basis for the simulation. This is so because so much of the students' activity at the simulation consists of parliamentary maneuvers. Incomplete or unclear rules are simply an added source of student frustration.

A less substantial, but equally important, document presents the assignments of the delegations. This is an annual revision of a "grid" first used in 1993. It permutes the schools through a regular sequence of EU member-States (plus the Commission) in such a way that, over time, each school gets its turn at the choice assignments. Also, it alternates the assignment of the members of the governments between American and European participants so that, for instance, the prime minister of a country is represented by an American in even-numbered years and by a European in odd-numbered years.

In addition to those documents, prepared for specific simulations, three aids for model EU preparations in general are available. The first is a "user's manual" that attempts to provide explanation, information, and documentation on the organization of model EUs. The second is a "leader's guide" to model EU preparations. This is, in effect, a set of fifteen lesson plans that can be used by faculty members or student leaders in preparing students for model EUs. The third aid is a forty-minute videotape made by a professional production company based on the simulation held at Brockport in 1993. The "user's guide" and the videotape are available from the Department of Political Science, SUNY, Brockport, NY 14420, for \$10 each. The "leader's guide" is available from the EU office in Washington, which financed the production of all three aids.

2. Execution. Obviously, the fruit of the preparations described above is the actual simulation, which has three main ele-

ments: the issues on its agenda, the institutions that will discuss those issues, and the process by which the discussion will proceed from institution to institution.

a. Issues. Three types of issues have been the mainstay of our simulations. The principal activity at each simulation has been deliberation on a major policy resolution. The policy area is selected by the Consortium Council at its meeting during the preceding simulation. Some of the policy areas have been the admission of Austria, a Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Intergovernmental Conference, and European Monetary Union. A draft resolution dealing with the area selected is prepared by the students representing the Commission by midterm of the semester preceding the simulation and distributed to all delegations for their use during their preparations. During the simulation, the draft resolution is considered by all institutions following the process described below.

A second type of issue discussed at the simulations is the foreign policy section of the "Conclusions of the Presidency" that are presented at the end of each meeting of the European Council. That is reviewed only by some of the institutions. This activity has been included mainly to keep those institutions busy when they have finished their work on the main resolution.

The third type of issue is a "crisis". The student organizers of the simulations concoct an emergency situation, which they announce to a special general session of participants about two-thirds of the way through the simulation. Past crises have included assassinations, race riots, currency collapses, etc. The institutions may interrupt their other deliberations to deal with the crisis, or they may ignore it. The purpose of the crises is to give the students an opportunity for a change of pace at a point in the simulation when their deliberations may be dragging a bit--to give them a break if they want to take it.

b. Institutions. All of the major EU institutions, except the European Court of Justice, are included in our simulations. These are:

1) Commission. A full-sized mock Commission is treated as the manager of the process. It has the dual responsibility a) of ensuring that the process proceeds in as orderly and realistic a way as possible and b) of promoting the adoption of a resolution as nearly like its draft resolution, or, at least, as much as possible like the sort of thing that the real-life Commission would want.

2) Council. Four members of each government are included in each simulation, forming four versions of the Council. a) The heads of government (including for France the President) compose the European Council. b) The Foreign Ministers form the General Council. c) One minister from each government each time joins the Technical Council that would, most appropriately, deal with the issue selected for the subject of the principal resolution. For instance, when the Common Foreign and Security Policy was the issue, the Defense Ministers formed the Technical Council. Finally, the members of the European Affairs Council form another Technical Council. The performance of those roles may evolve during a simulation. For instance, the Foreign Ministers may meet by themselves at times, form a joint council

with the Defense Ministers at other times, and act as advisors to the heads of government in the closing session of the European Council.

3) Council auxiliaries. Each simulation includes two career government-servant positions for each delegation. Always present are the members of COREPER II, the diplomatic representatives of the governments to the EU. The other group is composed of the highest civil servants, usually the Political Directors, of the ministries most directly concerned with the policy issue that the simulation is considering. Thus, when the accession of Austria was the subject of the main resolution, the Political Directors of the Foreign Ministries were included and they were replaced by their counterparts in the Social Affairs Ministries when social welfare was the issue. These participants meet as groups to discuss the substantive issue, but they also act as staff assistants to the members of the governments. For instance, the COREPER II members might work with the PMS and the Foreign Ministers and the Political Directors might assist the other two ministers.

4) European Parliament. As the European Parliament has many more members than we have participants, we simulate the two EP committees that are most appropriate to the subject of the main resolution. They meet separately at first and, later, join the Economic and Social Committee section (see below) to act as a plenary session of the EP. Also, the MEPs organize and act as parliamentary groups.

5) Economic and Social Committee. We treat the ESC like the EP, representing only the ESC section that would deal with the subject of the main resolution. Similarly to the MEPs, the MESC members form into labor, business, and "other" Groups. With more students and the right issue, the appropriate section of the recently-created Committee of the Regions might also be included.

c. Process. The general scheme of the process is to replicate the decision-making system as accurately as possible, given our physical and temporal restraints. The underlying rationale for the design of the process is to ensure that all participants have something relevant to the workings of the EU to keep them busy at all times during the simulation. [A schematic "flow chart", showing the process and a detailed simulation schedule appear in the "user's manual" mentioned above.]

1) Typically, the simulations begin with a Thursday afternoon opening ceremony that is followed by a reception and banquet that have as their main purpose to give the participants an opportunity to become acquainted with their trans-Atlantic counterparts. Later that evening, organizational meetings and caucuses of the different bodies are held and officers and steering committee members selected.

2) The main activity of the simulation is deliberation on the principal policy resolution. The EP committees, ESC section, and the various forms of the Council consider it in separate meetings first. Then, the EP and ESC bodies meet jointly and the Technical and General Councils do so also, each striving to find common positions. Alongside those activities, COREPER II and the Political Directors work on details and provide support to their governments. That work takes up most of the time on Friday and Saturday. Saturday evening is usually a social occasion--a dance or party. The versions of the

resolution adopted by the joint meetings are conveyed to the European Council for final decision in the closing session of the simulation Sunday morning. Beside the formally-structured process occur many caucuses of parties and interest groups, corridor conferences, etc., in search of consensus.

3) A second policy process reviews a draft foreign policy review for a "Conclusions of the Presidency" statement. This activity involves COREPER II, the General Affairs Council, and the European Council when they are not engaged in the main deliberation.

4) A third activity is reaction to the announcement of a crisis, usually made to a plenary meeting of all participants early Saturday afternoon. Consideration of that matter is not obligatory. It really serves to engage institutions whose members are not preoccupied with the main show. If they are immersed deeply in deliberation on the principal motion, they may choose to ignore the crisis.

V. Evaluation

Three faculty advisors in our Consortium have conducted surveys of student evaluations of the simulations beginning in 1992 and have presented a thorough and thoughtful scholarly paper based on them. They are Munroe Eagles, SUNY Buffalo; Henry J. Steck, SUNY Cortland; and Laurie Lanze, SUNY Fredonia. Copies of their paper can be obtained from one of them. Here, I will make only an informal, impressionistic, and unscientific appraisal from my perspective as former director of the consortium and the simulations and as a former instructor of undergraduate international organization courses. Furthermore, I have mainly in mind comparison of EuroSim with the classic model United Nations and with simulations of parts of the EU. Also, I will not attempt to duplicate the extensive literature on simulations as pedagogical devices. I will deal only with the EuroSim form of simulation.

In order to see well both the particular value and difficulties of EuroSim, some of its distinctive characteristics must be understood. For one thing, the decision-making process that is simulated is much more complex than in the typical model UN. In the latter activity, the participants meet in committees of one sort or another and, then, report to the plenary session. In EuroSim, the process proceeds through several different types of institutions that interact en route to a final decision. Thus, the process is far more difficult and complex and presents a much more challenging organizational problem for the students to solve.

A second distinctive characteristic is the variety of types of roles that the participants perform. In a model UN, all students, except the simulation organizers, represent diplomats. They differ from one another by the different UN members their delegations represent and by the committees to which they are assigned. However, they all have the same institutional and occupational perspective. In EuroSim, several quite different perspectives are represented. Students play the roles of professional diplomats, high level civil servants, international organization managers (the Commission), heads of governments, ministers, and members of the EP and the ESC. Also,

most of them act as members of a variety of political parties or interest groups. In addition, in the past three EuroSims, some students have formed a press corps, adding the role of journalist.

Third, EuroSim provides the opportunity for greater specificity in the roles the students perform. With the exception of the civil servants, the alter egos of the students are real persons--Helmut Kohl, Jacques Santer, MEP Dieter P. A. Schinzel, PM Ingvar Carlsson, etc. Enterprising students can do research on their alter egos and endeavor to represent their points of view and even personalities more specifically than can be done with the faceless diplomats who populate the typical model UN.

Fourth, the past six simulations have included European students systematically. On average, about one third of the participants have been European. Moreover, the roles have been assigned in such a way as to encourage the closest possible collaboration between the Americans and the Europeans. Half of the governmental roles of each country are played by Americans and the other half by Europeans. Americans and Europeans are distributed as evenly as possible among the committees, parties, and interest groups. The American and European members of the Commission prepare the draft resolutions jointly.

All of these characteristics combine to produce a more complex and sophisticated simulation than is typical of model UNs or of simulations of parts of the EU.

A. Value

1. Problem-solving exercise. EuroSim is, above all, an academic exercise in problem solving. First, of course, the students must deal with the three different types of policy problems that are posed. A second form of problem solving is less evident and, often, vexing to the participants. They must also solve decision-making process problems. They must figure out how to get the system going and to keep it on the track. They must deal with excessive resort to obstruction by parliamentary maneuvers. They must work out difficult and sensitive matters of relations among institutions and with colleagues from other schools and across the Atlantic.

The complexity of the exercise increases the difficulty of the problem-solving greatly, as compared to the model UN. Thus, it is very challenging for the typical undergraduate student, but also very educational in terms of developing problem-solving skills and in gaining a true understanding of the nature of European integration. Only through direct involvement in its complexities, I believe, can students grasp its difficulties.

2. Leadership role-playing. I suspect that participation in any simulations appeals especially to students who see themselves as embarked on a course that will lead them to positions of leadership in society in a few decades. EuroSim provides an unusually good opportunity to try out the roles that they hope to be filling in real life someday. The specificity of the alter egos makes it especially attractive for that purpose.

3. International collaboration. The close collaboration that EuroSim requires among students of various nations provides an unusual opportunity for promoting international understanding. Students

from different countries must work together very closely to solve the problems posed by EuroSim. They become very well acquainted. Some European and American counterparts have become good friends, traveled together after the simulation, and remain in touch for years.

B. Difficulties.

The peculiar difficulties of EuroSim are, as might be expected, pretty much the mirror image of its values.

1. Complexity. The greater complexity of EuroSim makes it more difficult to organize and run smoothly. This is so because of the decision-making process required, the amount and range of knowledge that must be acquired by the students, and the variety and level of leadership skills, and because of its inter-continental character. More organizational problems arise, engendering greater student frustration. The stress level is higher. The contents of the final policy resolutions are less likely to be generally satisfactory to the participants. The students are less likely to have a strong sense of accomplishment.

2. Cost. The systematic internationalization comes at a high cost. The most expensive single item in the budgets of the simulation and of the individual students is the trans-Atlantic transportation. EuroSim has benefited from generous subsidies for this purpose from the Washington office of the EU Commission, student organizations, college administrations, and others, but the burden on individual faculty members and students' families remains heavy.

3. Faculty Preparation. The general ignorance of EU affairs in the American population is partly reflected in the academic community. Relatively few undergraduate programs have faculty members who regard the EU as a primary specialization and, therefore, feel competent and willing to undertake the exceptional effort required to prepare students for participation in a model EU.

IV. Conclusion

For faculty members and students willing to make the effort and spend the money, a simulation like EuroSim can be a very useful experience. The difficulties are substantial, but can be managed. A very large part of the answer lies in adequate preparation. Faculty members need to be sufficiently conversant in the subject matter. Students must have enough intellectual and psychological preparation. The last point is perhaps the most important and the least understood. Students must be prepared psychologically to accept that this is a problem-solving exercise, that the presence of problems to be solved is essential and not the result of incompetent organization.