EUR OPE3E

HOW TO INVOLVE **ALL** YOUTH IN THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

EUROPE THROUGH YOUNG EYES

Exchange, Explore, Exhibit

EINFÜHRUNG

In der politischen Bildung zählt "learning by doing" zu den effizientesten Methoden. Aus diesem Grund haben das YES Forum und seine Mitglieder bereits seit mehreren Jahren das Potenzial von politischen Simulationen für die Sensibilisierung der europäischen Jugend für die EU erkannt.

Politische Simulationen sind ein innovatives, leistungsfähiges Instrument, dass die TeilnehmerInnen in die "Scheinpolitik" einbezieht, um ihnen die Funktionsweise politischer Institutionen zu vermitteln und gleichzeitig ihre bürgerschaftliche Beteiligung zu fördern. Indem sie in die Rolle von Politikern und wichtigen Akteuren des politischen Prozesses schlüpfen, machen junge Menschen praktische Erfahrungen und erzielen so eine ideale pädagogische Wirkung.

Ein Problem in diesem Bereich ist jedoch nach wie vor die Eingliederung: politische Simulationen sind sehr oft nicht an eine große Vielfalt von Profilen angepasst. Das YES Forum hat mit einem früheren Erasmus+-Projekt, "YourEP", begonnen, dieses Problem anzugehen. Das als Experiment konzipierte Projekt, dass einen partizipatorischen Ansatz verfolgte und eine vielfältige Gruppe junger Menschen einbezog, ermittelte zunächst Schlüsselprinzipien, um politische Simulationen so inklusiv - unabhängig von den Profilen und Schwierigkeiten der TeilnehmerInnen - und zugänglich - unabhängig von den Kenntnissen der TeilnehmerInnen oder ihrem Interesse an Politik und der EU - wie möglich zu gestalten.

Auf diesem Erfolg aufbauend wurde ein neues Erasmus+ Projekt, Europe3E ("*Europe through young Eyes: Exchange, Explore, Exhibit*"), ins Leben gerufen, um die gleichen Anstrengungen zu unternehmen. Es bot die Gelegenheit zu einem neuen Experiment, um die zuvor ermittelten Grundsätze zu verfeinern und die Auswirkungen dieser Grundsätze in dem Leitfaden, den Sie gerade lesen, genauer zu beschreiben!

Um den Einsatz politischer Simulationen durch die Einbeziehung von mehr und vielfältigeren TeilnehmerInnen zu fördern, wird dieser Leitfaden **im ersten Teil ein Plädoyer für diese wirkungsvolle Methode halten** und **im zweiten Teil** die vom YES Forum aufgestellten Grundsätze erläutern, um **solche Initiativen so zugänglich und integrativ wie möglich zu gestalten**.

In den folgenden Abschnitten wird anhand konkreter Beispiele veranschaulicht, wie diese Grundsätze angewandt werden können, wobei der Kontext, in dem sich Europe3E bewegen musste und die Auswirkungen, die er auf die konkrete Anwendung dieser Grundsätze hatte, berücksichtigt werden.

Der **dritte Teil wird in der Tat veranschaulichen, "was hätte sein sollen"**: Wie sahen die Pläne aus, eine politische Simulation des Europäischen Parlaments für eine relativ große Gruppe in

einem transnationalen Kontext auf integrative und zugängliche Weise zu organisieren ... vor dem Ausbruch von Covid-19. Da diese theoretischen Pläne immer noch auf früheren konkreten Erfahrungen beruhen, haben sie ihre Effizienz in Bezug auf Inklusion und Zugänglichkeit bewiesen und können daher als Inspiration für Organisatoren dienen, die mit wenigen Einschränkungen durch Covid-19 konfrontiert sind. Oder hoffentlich, langfristig gesehen, überhaupt keine.

In einem **vierten und letzten Teil wird gezeigt, wie das YES Forum mit der Covid-19-Pandemie zurechtkam** und vor allem, wie die ursprünglichen Pläne angepasst wurden, nicht nur, damit eine politische Simulation weiterhin stattfinden konnte, sondern auch, damit sie trotz der neuen Einschränkungen integrativ und zugänglich blieb.

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1 | POLITIK SIMULIEREN: SICHER, ABER … WARUM?

1| Was ist eine Simulation?

Eine Simulation ist die Nachbildung einer szenariobasierten Umgebung, in der die Beteiligten Situationen aus der realen Welt erleben können. Durch aktive Lerntechniken sind die TeilnehmerInnen in der Lage, zu interagieren und ihr bisheriges Wissen und ihre praktischen Fähigkeiten anzuwenden, um Probleme zu lösen.

Eine Simulation ist also eine Vereinfachung der Realität. Dadurch bietet sie den TeilnehmerInnenn die Möglichkeit, einen bestehenden Prozess und ein Objekt zu erleben und zu verstehen.

Es stellt einen pädagogischen Wandel dar, weg von der traditionellen Lernumgebung, in der der Professor im Mittelpunkt der Vorlesung steht und die alleinige Verantwortung für die Wissensvermittlung trägt, hin zu einer Umgebung, in der der TeilnehmerInnen im Mittelpunkt steht und die Möglichkeit hat, sein eigenes Wissen aufzubauen und Fähigkeiten zu entwickeln.

Politische Simulationen bieten unterhaltsame Lernwerkzeuge, bei denen die TeilnehmerInnen bestehende oder neu geschaffene Akteure - z. B. aus der Politik und den Medien - verkörpern, um Situationen nachzustellen, die in bestehenden Umgebungen entstanden sind. Auf diese Weise können sie nicht nur theoretische Konzepte besser verstehen, sondern auch die gesamte Funktionsweise eines bestimmten politischen Gremiums.

Durch das Eintauchen in die simulierte Situation sind die TeilnehmerInnen in der Lage, Entscheidungen zu treffen und die Folgen ihres Handelns zu erfahren, was in ihnen ein Gefühl der Verantwortung weckt. Dies fördert ihr kritisches Denken und ihre Urteilsfähigkeit.

Politische Simulationen können besonders für TeilnehmerInnen aus sozial schwachen Verhältnissen wichtig sein. Aufgrund der vorhandenen Symbolik und der sehr strengen Protokolle - wie die Verwendung einer besonderen Sprache und spezifischer Kleidung - kann das politische Umfeld in der realen Welt als sehr weit von ihrem Alltag entfernt wahrgenommen werden. Dies kann zu mangelndem Interesse, einem Gefühl der Ablehnung und auch zu Angst vor Verständnis führen. Eine Simulation kann diese Barrieren durchbrechen und den TeilnehmerInnen zeigen, dass die Welt nicht so weit entfernt ist und dass sie sich beteiligen können - und sollten -.

Simulationen können jungen Menschen helfen, ihre Stimme und ihren Platz in der Gesellschaft zu entdecken!

2| Welchen Zweck hat die Simulation von Politik?

Die Entscheidung für den Einsatz von politischen Simulationen kann mit drei verschiedenen Zielen verbunden sein, die sich nicht gegenseitig ausschließen. Das bedeutet, dass es möglich ist, dass nur ein Hauptzweck bei der Vorbereitung einer Simulation vorhanden ist; es ist aber auch möglich, dass alle diese Zwecke von den Moderatoren der Simulation ins Auge gefasst werden.

SUBSTANTIVES WISSEN	ENTWICKLUNG VON FÄHIGKEITEN	GRUPPEN BILDUNG

Inhaltliches Wissen: Mit diesem Ziel vor Augen sind die Organisatoren und Moderatoren der Simulation mehr daran interessiert, dass die TeilnehmerInnen etwas über das zu behandelnde Thema lernen können. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf dem Inhalt des Planspiels. Es ermöglicht den TeilnehmerInnen, sich mit einem bestimmten Thema vertraut zu machen, indem sie vorher recherchieren, über die verschiedenen Dimensionen des Themas nachdenken und während der Diskussionen in das Thema eintauchen. Es gibt eine größere Flexibilität bei den Verfahrensregeln.

Ein Beispiel: Wenn der Zweck eines politischen Planspiels darin besteht, dass die TeilnehmerInnen Wissen über die Situation von Migranten und Flüchtlingen in Europa entwickeln und begreifen, wäre es egal, welches politische Gremium darüber diskutieren wird.

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Die Europäische Union (EU) ist für bestimmte Aspekte nicht uneingeschränkt zuständig; so hat die EU beispielsweise nur begrenzte Befugnisse, um Themen im Zusammenhang mit der Integration von Migranten in den Mitgliedstaaten zu diskutieren. Diese reale Einschränkung kann jedoch aufgehoben werden, so dass die TeilnehmerInnen freier über das Thema diskutieren können.

Kompetenzentwicklung: Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf dem Prozess und auf der Verhandlungsdynamik. Da die Regeln und Verfahren politischer Gremien verwirrend sein können und sich nur schwer mit Worten erklären lassen, kann das Nachstellen der Regeln und Verfahren den TeilnehmerInnen helfen, ihre Funktionsweise und Dynamik besser zu verstehen. Während ihrer vorangegangenen Recherchen werden die TeilnehmerInnen eher daran interessiert sein, die grundlegenden Teile des institutionellen Gremiums, das sie nachstellen werden, kennenzulernen.

Ein Beispiel: Bei Simulationen des Europäischen Parlaments, bei denen der Schwerpunkt auf dem Verständnis der Funktionsweise dieses europäischen Organs liegt, wird der Moderator versuchen, diese Erfahrung so realitätsnah wie möglich zu gestalten. Natürlich ist es fast unmöglich, jede bestehende Geschäftsordnung nachzubilden - und es ist auch nicht das Ziel, wie wir im vorherigen Abschnitt dargelegt haben, sind Simulationen eine Vereinfachung der Realität. Aber das Ziel wäre, sie so weit wie möglich anzuwenden und, wenn möglich, den TeilnehmerInnen die vorgenommenen Änderungen zu präsentieren.

Gruppenbildung: Simulationen bieten ein positives Umfeld, dass als Eisbrecher dient und die Entwicklung einer Gruppenidentität fördert. Die TeilnehmerInnen tauschen Erfahrungen aus, entwickeln Fähigkeiten und durchleben den Prozess gemeinsam. Der gesamte Verlauf der Simulation kann die Teilnehmenden einander näher bringen.

3| Warum Simulationen durchführen?

Die Entscheidung, eine Simulation durchzuführen, kann mehrere Vorteile haben, nicht nur für die TeilnehmerInnen, sondern auch für die Moderatoren. Die wissenschaftliche Literatur zu politischen Simulationen ist sich einig: Im schlechtesten Fall sind sie mindestens so effektiv wie traditionelle Lehrmethoden, im besten Fall zeigen sie signifikante Verbesserungen der

Lernergebnisse der TeilnehmerInnen in den folgenden Hauptkategorien.

Die **Erweiterung der Kenntnisse und des Verständnisses grundlegender Konzepte**. Ein Teil der Vorteile von Simulationen in diesem Bereich besteht darin, dass **die Informationen besser behalten werden**, da die Lernergebnisse in der konkreten Erfahrung der TeilnehmerInnen verwurzelt sind. **Durch** Simulationen können die TeilnehmerInnen auch die **Verbindung zwischen abstrakter Theorie und realen Situationen** besser erkennen.

Diese allgemein als Soft Skills bezeichneten Fähigkeiten umfassen die **Verbesserung der Teamarbeit und die Verbesserung der Beziehungsfähigkeit**.

Zu einem großen Teil tragen Simulationen auch zur Stärkung der **organisatorischen Fähigkeiten, der Anpassungsfähigkeit, des Konfliktmanagements, des kritischen Denkens** ... und vielem mehr bei!

01 Cognitive outcomes

02 Behavioral outcomes

03 Affective outcomes

04 Facilitator and participants

Simulationen sind auch eine gute Möglichkeit, einen effizienten und **ansprechenden Rahmen zu** schaffen**, der die Interaktion zwischen Moderator und TeilnehmerInnen erleichtert!**

Die vorangegangenen Lernergebnisse helfen den Moderatoren in der Tat, **die TeilnehmerInnen** auf entspannte, spielerische Weise **in die Erarbeitung eines gemeinsamen Ergebnisses einzubeziehen**.

Simulationen stellen die TeilnehmerInnen vor eine spielerische Herausforderung und geben ihnen die Möglichkeit, ihre Lernerfahrung selbst zu steuern.

Es **steigert die Freude am Lernen und die Motivation, aktiv zu lernen**, was wiederum andere Vorteile wie eine **höhere Aufmerksamkeitsspanne, Selbstvertrauen und Selbstwertgefühl, weniger Stress** ...

2 | HOW TO TWEAK YOUR SIMULATION…

…TO MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE, ADAPTED TO YOUR PARTICIPANTS' SPECIFIC NEEDS

Designing your political simulation is a great start, guaranteeing a huge impact on its participants already. But to aim for a maximum positive impact, you should also take time to think about inclusion and diversity in your simulation!

To help you, this part will present a set of basic principles to apply when designing a political simulation while making it accessible to all youth, regardless of their knowledge, skills, special needs etc.

These principles will remain a bit abstract in this part, with few examples, so that they can be adapted to diverse situations. They will, however, be illustrated in more details in the third and fourth parts of this guide: there, you will get to discover how these principles were applied (and developed!) by the YES Forum in several Erasmus+ projects including a simulation of the European Parliament. This illustration will present the process that was led itself, and provide concrete examples of results etc (e.g. extracts of documents, tools … which were used to apply these principles).

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PLEASE NOTE! 📖

This is an already rather extensive yet probably not exhaustive list of principles; in any case it can represent altogether quite a lot for any organiser. Inclusion doesn't need to go full scale from the very start though, **be pragmatic and choose your priorities!**

 These principles can be applied at various stages of designing a political simulation. You can address them from the very start and make sure to embed these in your early reflections, but you can of course start designing your simulation, conduct an "inclusion check" (e.g. slip into youth shoes: "How would I feel in such a simulation? Anything I'd change to make participation easier?") and then tweak some aspects of your original design accordingly. Finally, you can also carry out your political simulation directly, and assess it afterward (e.g. "Were participants representative of youth diversity? Who was over-represented, who was missing?"), reflecting on what can be changed through these principles' glasses to make it more inclusive next time!

1 | Inclusive political simulations: Why?

As explained in the first part , the educational potential of political simulations is undeniable. "Learning by doing", when it comes to civic education, may be the most potent method: how can one understand the complexity of a political process better than by experiencing it from the inside?

A lot of public and private initiatives offer young people such experiences. However, the underrepresentation of youngsters with fewer opportunities – in the Erasmus+ dialect, youth experiencing any kind of obstacle to take part in such activities (details below) - is even more striking in the specific case of political simulations. To a large extent, this underrepresentation is due to these activities' design (no blaming, no shaming of course, achieving the organisation of a political simulation itself is, in itself, already quite a challenge!) and can be improved by tweaking these designs in small yet meaningful ways, making it easier for all youth to join and share the fun.

Barriers to participation in political simulations

Numerous obstacles indeed often make it difficult – if not impossible – for youngsters with fewer opportunities to participate:

- If they don't belong to the right social environment, they usually lack information and awareness about such opportunities;

- Many political simulations are designed for students, de facto expecting a certain level of knowledge, hard and soft skills from participants, and excluding all youth not pursuing higher education or from a "distant field" (i.e. compared to political science or social sciences in general);

- Participating fees – and very often, travel expenses as well – prevent youngsters with financial difficulties to participate, for the more ambitious political simulations;

- The required level of English to take part in such events, when organised at the international level, is systematically too high for youngsters with fewer opportunities;

- The organisation of these events itself, its complexity, and the level of knowledge required to take part, also make them inaccessible to many youngsters.

- Young people with a lack of social skills (e.g. "lack" in this case can mean not being at ease in a group, comfortable with speaking in front of an audience etc), even when interested in the topic(s), may refrain from joining.

And that is just the tip of the iceberg!

Inclusion in political simulations, a way to unleash their full potential for those who can benefit it the most

So in a majority of situations, political simulations attract mainly law students, European affairs students, or are sometimes organised for high school students. Which is completely fine, as it complements their formal education and is 100% absolutely relevant in their curricula.

However, benefits to these participants are "marginal" compared to other potential participants: they already know a lot about how politics work and rather have details to learn and not general basic knowledge about it (e.g.in an EP simulation, EU affairs students don't learn how the EP works – they know it already thanks to their studies – but they "refine" their learning about it, like learning how tricky finding a compromise on a draft bill is etc). Participants who don't have such knowledge have therefore the most to learn: opening simulations to them can therefore achieve a much bigger impact.

That's not to say that simulations should focus ONLY on participants with special needs, no knowledge on politics etc: the perfect simulation has an adapted place for everybody!

2 | Inclusive political simulations: How?

So, where to start to make sure your political simulation will be inclusive, accessible to all participants, regardless of their knowledge, skills, needs, personal background …?

Before considering the promised set of principles, you should first assess your target group's needs – you certainly know it well enough though, so it will be easy to slip into its shoes and imagine how a political simulation can feel!

To make it easier, use existing frameworks to categorize your target group's profile when it comes to special needs. The European Commission's "Erasmus+ - Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth" remains, for that purpose, a very practical tool. Its framework can't, of course, account for the complexity of a young person' specific situation, but it will provide you with an easy and understandable framework to support your further reflections. It defines "young people with fewer opportunities" as follows:

> *"young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors and obstacles below. The following situations often prevent young people from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility, democratic process and society at large:*
>
> - *Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.*
>
> - *Health problems: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions etc.*
>
> - *Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties, early school-leavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance etc.*
>
> - *Cultural differences: immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties etc.*
>
> - *Economic obstacles: young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long-term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems etc.*

- *Social obstacles: young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or anti-social or high-risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans etc.*

- *Geographical obstacles: young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, young people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) etc.*

[…] The 'comparative disadvantage' is important, because being in one of the situations referred to above does not automatically lead to fewer opportunities compared to peers (not all people from minorities are discriminated, a person with a disability is not necessarily disadvantaged if the environment is adapted etc.). "

With that framework in mind, it will be easier to understand how the principles below can address – and solve – specific obstacles, and later on to focus your efforts on the most relevant principles for your target group's needs.

Diversify the audience

A balanced, representative mix of participants is an asset itself: besides the bigger impact you could achieve as explained above, participants can also make your work easier! Experienced, knowledgeable participants in politics and simulations can tutor "newbies" for instance, or very outgoing (i.e. "with high social skills") participants can contribute to an atmosphere encouraging the most shy of their peers to speak up.

To diversify your audience, reach out and extend your network if needed!

- If you are an already experienced simulation organiser willing to improve its event's inclusiveness, you can team up with social NGOs in particular: they can share their expertise in youth outreach, invite their target group's to your activities for a mutually beneficial exchange.

- On the other hand, if you work with disadvantaged youth: partner up with a simulation organiser!

Here are a few ways to find new partners:

- Political simulation organisers: besides each country's relevant public institutions (political education agencies and such), consider having a look at EU-wide networks to locate their members closest to you. In particular, BETA Europe (https://www.beta-europe.org/) is relevant as it is a network of European Parliament simulations, and JEF Europe (Young European Federalists; https://jef.eu) organise very diverse political education activities at the local level all over Europe, including political simulations.

- Social NGOs : EU-wide networks are also a good starting point if you don't have an extended local network of partners yet. Try Social Platform (www.socialplatform.org) or, why not … YES Forum ! (https://www.yes-forum.eu/)

Participatory design – give a say to participants

Nobody knows more about someone's knowledge, skills, needs, background etc than this "someone" in particular! Which means that giving a say to your target group's when designing your simulation will ensure it reflects its specific needs, as choices will have been made with young people, not just "for" them.

This co-ownership of your activity should be a constant effort, from developing the first concept for your simulation to evaluating it at the very end. There are many ways to do so: you can include representatives of your target group – ideally, future participants themselves – in all decision making, especially organisational meetings, but you can also consult them at any time to "steer" the design in the right direction by offering them multiple choice (e.g. an online poll to choose the simulation's topics).

Ongoing support

In a diverse group, participants will be more or less autonomous, comfortable with the simulation's process, requirements etc. Participants who are less comfortable with some aspects (e.g. little knowledge about politics in general such as its vocabulary, speech impediment making it harder to speak in front of a hemicycle etc) will need support to make sure the obstacles they experience don't prevent them from taking part in the simulation.

To provide that support, adapt to your capacities:

- Social and youth workers can be included in the simulation itself: as participants, they can young people "from the inside", while remaining on an equal footing;

- Mentors: Identify participants who are the most autonomous, usually because this is not their first simulation, and ask them to team up with other participants and help them if needed;

- Volunteers: some young people with experience in such activities can be given a special role, instead of being participants, to support any participant in need.

In the best situation, this support should not stigmatize participants by making them stand out from the crowd because they have a guardian angel. Volunteers should keep that in mind for instance and offer help to all participants.

Include accessible learning solutions

Joining a political simulation without prior knowledge of politics – from its basic vocabulary to its detailed processes – is an extremely stressful situation. It will, if not takin into account and tackled, simply prevent many participants to join: not because the doors are closed to them, but rather because they will "self-censor" themselves out of a lack of self-confidence resulting from their "insufficient" knowledge of politics.

A first way to tackle this issue is, very simply, to advertise your simulation explicitly as a (fun) learning activity requiring no prior skills or knowledge. It can't be implied only: make sure it stands out on your flyers for instance!

Moreover, to put all participants on an equal footing before the simulation itself in terms of political knowledge, offer them adapted and accessible learning solutions. You can for example include "pre-simulation activities" to learn the basics in person, with group activities and non-formal methods. You can also share some of the many learning tools, games, quizzes, podcasts, Youtube videos … that the Internet offers you for free, with such a diverse offer that you will always find something adapted to your young participants (e.g. in your language, more or less detailed to adapt to their starting point, relying on text or visuals to adapt to different learning styles etc). Ideally, a mix of all of that will be perfect!

Learning the fun way

Roleplaying in itself is a fun, playful experience. However, in "political simulation", many people will notice "political" first, and think "Wow, serious stuff there". Think of some tricks to make sure your participants are not just a homogeneous bunch of politi-geeks!

Some "fun components" will provide several advantages regarding inclusion and accessibility:

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- Making your simulation more attractive and enjoyable even for young people who are not spontaneously interested in politics at first.

- Helping participants focusing on learning about the process: with a funny topic for instance, they will just need to be creative and rely on their imagination to take part in debates, without any need for some expertise on specific, sometimes technical issues!

- Introducing participants to real-life issues through a fun shortcut, as a parallel can easily be made between a fun topic and actual issues!

 The topic(s) of your simulation is the easiest way to add some fun to it: think of a provocative but silly legislative proposal for instance, guaranteeing some laughs during debates!

Keep it simple!

In designing your political simulation, you will face a dilemma: sticking to actual politics as much as possible and ending up with a realistic yet complex simulation, or simplifying actual politics and ending up with an easier simulation which, though, does not reflect how things really work 100%.

When searching for the right balance, adapt to your future participants. In general, it is worth choosing the way of simplicity in any case:

- It will be open to young people regardless of their appetence for politics and its complexity: the ones interested in "superficial" aspects will be able to join, while the "hardcore roleplayers" interested in the most tricky aspects (e.g. negotiating a political alliance, behind the scenes talks and compromises, backstabbing politics etc) will nonetheless be able to unleash their roleplaying frenzy!

- Think of your political simulation as a future "map to actual politics": if it succeeds in giving the right basic knowledge on politics, it will be the key to open participants' minds to politics' complexity and diversity later on. For instance, they will get the basic vocabulary and knowledge to understand news articles about politics, and dig deeper from then on.

Besides your simulation's main processes – the political mechanisms and how it will simulate them – there are many other aspects to consider, for which simplicity is also an asset. You may be tempted to make the simulation more realistic by "enforcing" a dress code (e.g. MPs usually don't wear flip-flops, that is even forbidden in many parliaments): however, that will create a "symbolic" obstacle by forcing participants to mimic formal behaviours they may not

comfortable with, or even hate altogether in actual politicians. And what of young people who don't a suit or "formal enough" attires? Moreover, simplicity in these aspects can also help focusing on the legislative process itself by overlooking its most formal, ceremonial and yet not-so-indispensable aspects.

Flexibility

Your participants will have diverse profiles, most probably, with a merry mix of levels of knowledge, hard and soft skills, personalities, needs, difficulties … and there is no "one fits all" solution to make the simulation adapted to all of them.

Well, there might be one: give participants some margin in how they can engage in the simulation! Such flexibility will make sure participants can take part regardless of their specific situation. It can be implemented in many ways:

- Keep your simulation's timing flexible, to add breaks if needs, of shorten them If participants really want to keep debating etc. In real life, MPs themselves can usually vote to take a break in the middle of a seating after all!

- The roles can offer adapted missions to participants: a young person who would die from social anxiety when speaking in front of an audience will not thrive as a MP for instance, but can probably manage one-on-one interviews as a journalist. Adding the possibility of choosing a spokesperson or letting "assistants" step up etc can also make sure participants have a way to voice their opinion regardless of their social skills.

Remove financial obstacles

An ambitious, international political simulation will incur costs and a participation fee may be necessary to cover them. But even a small-scale, local political simulation can have hidden costs: how much will a participant need to spend if he/she needs to take a bus round trip two consecutive days, add lunch, drinks and such? Will it prevent some participants to join?

Keeping such costs as close to zero is the best alternative: whether they are financially fragile or not, young people's budget is usually limited anyway, and paying to join an activity about politics on a voluntary basis will rarely be on top of their priorities when budgeting, excluding many potential participants.

No miracle recipe here unfortunately, but solutions are there nonetheless! On the one hand, keep costs as low as possible by using all available opportunities: local, regional and national public institutions are actually very often super happy to lend their premises for free for such occasions! Just ask. In addition, the list of public and private funds focusing on civic/political

education is ever growing, consider applying to be in capacity of making your even entirely free and even offer grants to participants who may need them! All countries have their own funds and private foundations to consider, and at the EU scale, Erasmus+ , the Europe for Citizens programme or even the EU Solidarity Corps (if youth-led, your simulation is eligible to "Youth Initiatives" small grants) are waiting for you.

3 | A COVID-FREE CASE STUDY …

… OR HOW TO SET UP AN INCLUSIVE SIMULATION IN A PANDEMIC-FREE WORLD

In this part, you will find concrete examples of how the YES Forum designed its previous simulations of the European Parliament with inclusiveness and accessibility in mind first and foremost, to address its own target group's specific needs.

However Europe3E, the Erasmus+ project which allowed for the creation of this guide, started in late 2019. Therefore it originally planned a political simulation design adapted for a pre-Covid-19 world, allowing the gathering of large groups, closer contact with participants for their support and such pre-2020 features. This original designed was born from previous experiments by the YES Forum which showed the efficiency of the principles applied for inclusion and accessibility.

Indeed, because this design was previously successful in opening YES Forum's simulations to participants regardless of their background, this part will explain what should have been: this YES Forum's recipe for an inclusive political simulation can provide inspiration to organisers who can set-up their own simulation with no or little interference from Covid-19 restrictions, or who will read this guide when the sky is clear, in a few years.

The next and final part of this guide will, on the other hand, focus on showing how this original design was adjusted after the Covid-19 outbreak, to allow the organisation of a political simulation in the context of ever-changing Covid-19 restrictions while staying true to its original purpose: inclusion and accessibility.

1| Turning reality into a simulation's basic structure

Before even thinking about specific ways to tackle obstacles young people can face to participate in a political simulation, it is necessary to come up with a basic design: how the simulation will unfold, what will its basic structure and steps be?

When designing this basic political simulation design, YES Forum remains attentive to inclusion and accessibility however through a careful reflection on the three following main aspects.

Educational purpose: setting clear goals

Setting clear learning goals is the first step, as these will also be adjusted to the target group of such an initiative.

In the case of the YES Forum and its network, all activities are designed to be open to underprivileged youth. Simulating the European Parliament for YES Forum and its members therefore serves, to sum it up, three main purposes:

- **EU Awareness & Political education** more generally: young disadvantaged people have less opportunities to learn how politics work, what impact it has on their daily life, why it matters to be active citizens. YES Forum's political simulations therefore aim to empower young participants in that regard by offering them the space and framework to reflect about these topics.

- **Intercultural exchange**: the disadvantaged profile of YES Forum's target group also means most participants have few or no opportunities to get in contact with different cultures, often because they have never had the chance to travel abroad, or to study in higher education where Erasmus+ ensures all students get a chance for intercultural exchanges. YES Forum's political simulations therefore focus, besides the previous aspect, on bringing participants from different cultural backgrounds together to exchange about their diverse viewpoints through a playful challenge.

- **Participants' self-development**: for most of YES Forum's participants, a political simulation is also a rare opportunity to improve a wide array of soft skills, such as the behavioural and affective outcomes detailed in the first part.

These clear goals serve as a compass to navigate the following aspects when turning the reality of how the European Parliament works into a political roleplay game.

Content vs. Process

A political simulation game can teach many things and skills, and the most ambitious of them – such as international simulations of the United Nations or European Union as a whole – cover two main layers of learning outcomes:

- **Content**: Roleplay is used to create a playful atmosphere allowing the participants to explore and exchange each other's knowledge on the selected topic, improving the learning outcomes through a game format. For instance, participants will learn a lot on climate change – its origins, detailed impact, potential solutions – through a simulation focusing on this issue.

- **Process**: The game mechanics, as they imitate how a political institution works in real life, teach the participants not so much about the issue at hand, but about the broader political framework and its underlying processes. This way, participants know better how politics work at various levels, how democratic principles are turned into concrete political structures etc.

Because of its diverse target group and the resulting educational goals presented above, **YES Forum chooses to focus the learning experience offered by its political simulations on the process** behind politics and not on content, because:

- **No pre-requisite to join**: focusing on the process over the content means participants don't need any prior knowledge of the debated issue, so that both higher education students with in-depth knowledge on the topic they study and young participants with less expertise can be involved altogether.

- **No pre-selected theme**: it: also allows to give more of a say to participants in the political simulation's design, like choosing the theme they care the most about as a group.

Level of complexity

After learning goals and the balance between content and process are clearly set, the challenge remains to turn reality into a game whose rules participants can understand. This is indispensable to guarantee they are able to be fully involved in the political simulation.

Like at any political scale, the European Union in general and European Parliament in particular follow complex procedures to produce law. Even more so at the European Union level, due to the specifics of this supranational entity.

The aim of YES Forum's political simulation is not to get all participants to grasp the full complexity of how the European Union works, as even a Master's Degree in European Union affairs is rarely enough. Instead, YES Forum ambitions to cover the main structures of the European Union (e.g. which institutions are involved and how they collaborate with each other) while reflecting on democracy in action.

That is why YES Forum prioritizes simplicity over realism when adjusting the following aspects of its simulations to its target group's needs.
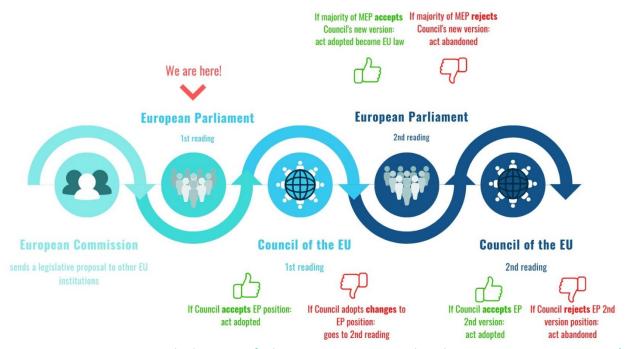

Figure 1: A zoom on which part of the European Union legislative process YES Forum's participants simulate.

Scale of the simulation: In the EU field, political simulations still have a lot of margin on what to actually simulate. The most realistic and therefore complex simulations can encompass all the steps of the ordinary legislative procedure at the EU level (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/infographic/legislative-procedure/index_en.html): some participants will roleplay the European Commission drafting a text proposal and handing it to the European Parliament (EP), other participants will roleplay Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) negotiating their own amended version of the text proposal in 1st reading and sending it to the Council of the EU, and finally other participants will roleplay Member States' national ministers

in the Council coming up with their own compromise in 1st reading, sending it back to the EP for a 2nd reading … and the game can go on until the text proposal is adopted.

Such a degree of realism would hamper YES Forum's efforts however, and that is why the scope of the simulated process is always narrower: as displayed in the above diagram, YES Forum's political games only simulate the first reading by the European Parliament. This narrower focus allows for a simpler process, easier to understand for participants because it shares more similarities with how a parliament works at the national level, and allowing to focus the learning process on democracy in action at the EU level while still hinting at the broader picture.

Roles: Even with such a limited scope, participants could play many, many roles. The most ambitious simulations indeed include not only MEPs, but also representatives of the other EU institutions: EU Commissioners defending their text proposal in front of the European Parliament, national ministers in the Council of the EU observing parliamentary debates, the little-known Council of Regions and European Economic & Social Committee presenting their opinion on the text proposal, interpreters reflecting the EU's multilinguism, jurists keeping MEPs on legal tracks, MEPs' assistants representing the "shadow workers", lobbyists, journalists, citizens themselves … the list goes on and can literally include the Dalai Lama depending on the topic.

YES Forum, also to simplify its simulation's process and thus make it more intelligible to participants regardless of their familiarity with EU politics, keeps three main categories of roles only:

- Members of the European Parliament: they are of course indispensable to simulate how the European Parliament works as they are the elected officials at the core of this legislative work.

- Journalists: while adding diversity to roles and providing a role more adapted to participants with specific needs (e.g. social anxiety making it hard to engage in group discussions), having journalists among the participants is a way to invite all of them to reflect on the role of the press, and the media in all their diversity, in modern democracies.

- Lobbyists: including them allows to show how the civil society in all its diversity can be involved in the legislative process through advocacy work, while inviting participants to reflect on lobbying and, in particular, to nuance the widespread "evil lobbying" cliché.

Political Groups: A limited number of political groups in YES Forum's simulations not only makes these easier to engage with, but also more relatable for all participants who, through national politics, are usually familiar with the traditional left/right political divide.

That is why the YES Forum simply keeps a right-wing and a left-wing political group, as well as a third "deal maker", either a centrist or a green political group. This latest choice depends on the topic of the simulation: it is easier for participants to picture their new role's opinion on certain issues as Green MEPs – e.g. any debate on climate change – or Centrist MEPs – e.g. debates more focused on individual freedoms.

Simulation's steps: With these basic elements in place, reality is then broken down into a few phases only, keeping the essential steps. In the case of YES Forum's political simulations, the exact number of steps actually depends on how much time is available for the simulation, but they usually revolve around these three main phases:

- Political Groups' Session: this step is great for a progressive start relying on smaller working groups, as participants band together depending on their role. MEPs gather with their colleagues from the same political group to define their position on the simulation's topic, lobbyists build a strategy to influence MEPs later on, and journalists can start observing other participants while thinking of their favourite way of reporting about it.

- Parliamentary Committee Session: with at least two topics to debate during the simulation, participants can split into Parliamentary Committees specialized on one or the other, and lead lengthy debates separately, while opening the floor to lobbyists who are invited to share their expertise.

- Plenary Session: finally, all participants can gather for the final debates and votes, the most symbolic yet engaging part of a good simulation, as each vote can bring unbearable suspense!

2| Making this EP simulation accessible to our target group's needs

Now that we've got a nice overall design for a political simulation of the European Parliament, how can we make sure there are no barriers for young people's participation regardless of their personal background, difficulties and such?

Below are concrete examples of how the set of basic principles for inclusion in political simulations presented in the second part has been applied by the YES Forum over the past few years. Use these as they are, or as inspiration, there are many other ways to tweak a simulation's design towards more accessibility for all youth!

When available, these concrete examples will also be illustrated with visuals, documents and any relevant material from these political simulations.

Identifying our target group's needs

Overall plans and activities have to be adapted to YES Forum's target group, "young people with fewer opportunities" in all their diversity. The first step is to get a general feeling of what these "fewer opportunities" would mean for future young participants, in order to anticipate on some of their needs and plan adapted opportunities to further adapt to their needs and expectations.

As YES Forum collaborates with its member organisations for its projects, these partners are in charge of identifying their target group's specific needs and communicate them to the YES Forum. With a diverse membership, the result is usually a very diverse mix of young people, the "fewer opportunities" to consider depending on each partner's core activities:

- Young people from rural areas are always represented, from the far reaches of Northern Sweden to the Romanian countryside. The distance from urban centres has common meanings in terms of „youth struggles" for different partners, with variations in intensity though: higher unemployment, a more difficult access to culture, leisure activities etc, lacking public infrastructure in terms of transport especially etc.

- Young people from deprived suburbs, in particular the French „banlieues", experiencing many co-dependent exclusion factors such as poverty, unemployment, discrimination (stigma of living in poor areas, often with a migrant's background too), lack of public infrastructure …

- Young people with a migrant background

- Long-term unemployed youngsters

- Young people with social difficulties (social anxiety, shyness etc.)

- Educational difficulties (drop outs etc.)

- Health issues

Despite these various obstacles, all meaningful when it comes to joining a political simulation, YES Forum's political simulations manage to involve all participants in their activities and their evaluations reported a high level of general satisfaction from the young participants.

So now, here are the tricks that are implemented to get to these results!

Participatory design – give a say to participants

To make sure the entire process, and especially the implemented political simulations, are adapted to their interests and needs, young participants are involved in all steps of YES Forum's initiatives in that field.

Project Management itself gives space to young participants in decision-making: Transnational Partners Meetings, for instance, gather 1 young participant and 1 staff per partner (cf. Figure 2). Kick-off meetings, for example, decide on diverse aspects of such projects and receive direct input from young people representing their peers from the partners: in the case of YES Forum's simulations, it results in a greater diversity of methods to learn about the European Union before an actual simulation, and a stronger focus on considering linguistic needs and diverse English skills throughout the entire process.

Figure 2: The typical invitation to YES Forum's Partners Meetings, involving staff and young people on an equal footing.

Designing political simulations' details also uses direct input from the young participants themselves, through various methods:

- A preliminary international meeting with all participants including workshops to brainstorm and decide on several aspects of political simulations: for instance, a World Café (cf. Figure 3) can let participants suggest ideas for the topics they want to discuss in a simulation, or the roles they want to embody, or even the dress-code they want to implement … or not!

- YES Forum, through its latest Europe3E project especially, used a method called Photovoice to identify the main areas of interest of the participants through an accessible way. Photovoice indeed combines a creative and accessible tool, photography, with a well-established process to help a group exploring issues of common interest. This helped all participants contribute to the selection of themes and detailed topic for their future political simulation (cf. Figures 12 and 13 on page 41). For more information on the use of Photovoice, please check all of Europe3E results here: www.yes-forum.eu/projects

- A Facebook group gathers all participants and uses online polls to take final decisions based on the suggestions gathered in earlier steps through a democratic process. The nature of the topics to address and the precise topics themselves are chosen this way for instance (cf. Figure 4).

Figure 3: Extracts from the Powerpoint used in the context of a World Café focusing on exchanging ideas for diverse aspects of the political simulations with young participants.

As a result:

- YES Forum's political simulations take into account young participants' wishes and needs from the very beginning and throughout the entire process of designing them, gradually adapting activities thanks to participants' direct input;

- They also promote the young participants' ownership of such projects, and in turn their motivation to be involved. This is especially meaningful to motivate young people with a strong disillusionment – from distrust to plain hate – of politics, resulting from a sense of abandonment (in deprived suburbs and rural areas especially).
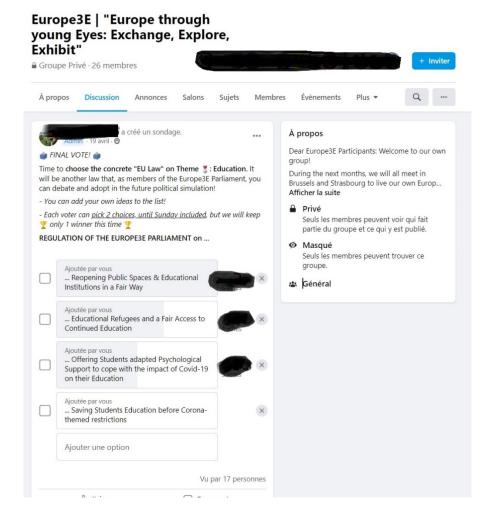
Figure 4: An example of one of the online polls used to let participants decide on the simulations' aspects whenever there was room for it (very professionally anonymised).

Ongoing Support

One of the YES Forum's assets is its member organisations' expertise in youth & social work. In our political simulations, these skills also come in handy.

Reaching out to youth in all its diversity, and more specifically attracting said diversity into a political simulation, is a challenge for any organiser. Fortunately, YES Forum members can already rely on their daily youth and social work to invite young people into political simulations. This outreach work makes sure a great diversity of young people hear about the opportunity and receive explanations an encouragement from youth workers. That way, participants include a lot of young people who would probably not hear of or consider joining a political simulation, instead of a homogeneous group of youngsters already interested in and knowledgeable of politics.

After this outreach work, YES Forum partners in a political simulation support their own young participants in the various stages of the project, in order to cater for all their needs and adapt to their personal difficulties. For instance, before political simulations themselves, partners organise local meetings with their participants at the local level: they organise activities adapted to their smaller groups' needs, for example focusing on getting basic knowledge about politics for groups who don't feel confident about it at the beginning (e.g. visiting their town hall, national parliament, debating current trends, doing street interviews), building the participants' self-confidence (e.g. preparing to talk in front of an audience, building trust within the group, or "training" before the actual simulation (cf. Figure 5). Thanks to the flexibility offered by such local meetings, the methods themselves are also adapted to participants.

Partners' staff are even involved as participants in YES Forum's political simulations to help their young participants "from the inside" … and learn as well! To make sure young participants can also participate on an equal footing regardless of their English skills, some partners also involve interpreters, or help their participants through the staff involved in the simulation itself.

Figure 5: An example of a template for a preparatory activity before a simulation. Partners use it in local meetings to make it easier for young participants to slip into their new role's shoes (e.g. doing it in their native tongue, in a small group making it easier to speak in public etc).

Back to Basics! The Blended Learning Experience

Joining a political simulation can be an intimidating prospect when you don't know much about politics yet, even though you are interested. To remove this barrier, a strong focus is put on including complementary learning opportunities to allow all young participants, as well as partners' staff, to take part in YES Forum' EP simulations regardless of their prior knowledge of the European Union.

This preliminary learning uses a large variety of methods, blending "physical" and online activities to adapt to the individuals' own learning style.

- As explained above, partners organise local meetings with their smaller groups prior to any political simulation. One of the objective of these local meetings is to fill any "knowledge gap" participants feel would hinder their engagement in the actual simulation. Methods and material are offered to all partners (cf. Figure 6), but in the end each group is free to pick activities in the offered pool of methods or choose different ones: the priority is to focus on the participants' needs (e.g. which areas, in politics or EU-related fields, they wished to explore) and learning styles (i.e. non formal methods are predominant, but range from preparing and conducting street interviews to visiting local and national political institutions).

- Online activities are offered to complement the partners' preparation and offer an even more flexible learning platform. So far a hidden Facebook group has been used instead of creating a whole new platform. As most of participants already use Facebook on a daily basis, it remains the most accessible online tool to let everybody engage with each other. It is used to:

    o Share accessible, adapted learning material. We make use of the many great resources available online, such as EuroparlTV (now the "European Parliament's Multimedia Center", multimedia.europarl.europa.eu) short, educational and subtitled videos or quizzes (cf. Figure 7). Online games and quizzes also make for fun learning opportunities. Memes as well have a lot to teach!

    o Get to know each other, and discuss topics of common interests, besides the design and preparation of the political simulation themselves.

- In addition, an international meeting is usually organised a few months before the actual simulations. Such meetings gather all participants to conclude a preparatory learning phase in the heart of Europe itself, Brussels, still with a variety of non-formal methods (cf. Figure 8).

Guidelines
Blended Mobility C1 – Pre-departure Preparation
March-June 2020 | Local Activities, Partner countries

As an E3E partner, the next few months will be focused on finishing the **recruitment of your young participants and preparing them** before our training in Brussels in June.

Local Preparations

Each partner will be responsible for this preparation by organising or taking part in local activities with its young participants. Reminders:

- Each partner must organise at least 1 local meeting with its participants, more are possible;
- Local activities can be part of the partner's daily activities if relevant;
- Local activities can include a wider group than the E3E participants (e.g. partner's target group)
- Each local activity must be reported to the YES Forum with this template.

The activities should aim at:

1. **Fostering good conditions** for the rest of the project *(Page 2)*
2. **Getting participants acquainted with politics** *(Page 7)*
3. **Introducing participants to photography** *(Page 14)*

To achieve these goals, you will find below a list of ideas, links and even some contacts! **Two activities are mandatory** (see p. 2), all others are suggestions: we trust you to adapt to your participants' profiles, needs etc!

Speech Impro	
Duration	30 min to 1H, depending on group size
Group Size	2 to 20
Material	Optional: Paper and pens to take some improvised notes

Objectives
Building participants' self-confidence before joining – and talking in front of – a whole international group; Preparing them to roleplay as politicians later on.

Step-by-step Method
- The group is given a not very serious theme/question: "Cats or dogs?", "Chocolate should be forbidden", "A eulogy to your favourite candies" …   - Participants have a moment to improvise a personal and short speech. The shorter the preparation is, the more challenging – but funny – the results!   - Each participant gives his/her speech in front of the others.   - Several rounds can be organised with different questions/themes.   - Debriefing: Rather optional, but you can discuss with participants what helped them, or could have (e.g. just writing keywords on a post-it beforehand, thinking of a charismatic politician/star etc).   Variant: **"Debate battle"** with funny topics, if participants each have to defend a different opinion.

Remarks
The activity can easily involve a **wider audience** than the project's participants.   If that works well, the activity can be made **more challenging and/or competitive by**:

Figure 6: Extracts from Guidelines shared with all partners to support their local preparations with young participants, offering a pool of methods to prepare on diverse aspects ("Fostering good conditions for the entire project", "Learning the basics about politics", "Discovering the EU")
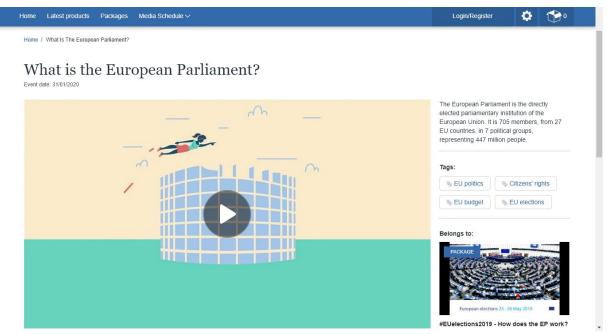
Figure 7: An example of a 2 to 3min video clip developed by the European Parliament and available online, dubbed and subbed in all 24 official EU languages, in a simple and accessible – and catchy! – format. Check multimedia.europarl.europa.eu
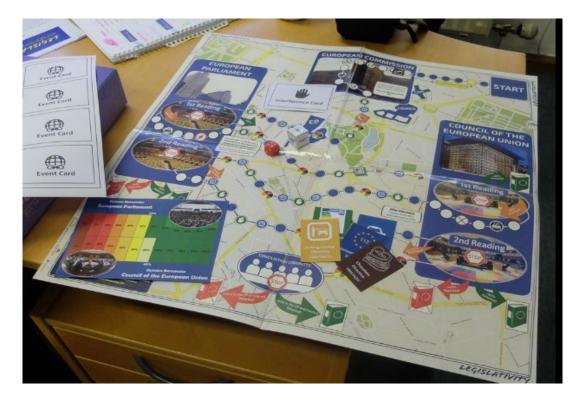

Figure 8: Among the methods used to learn about EU politics first, the perfect board game, "Legislativity"! Check it on https://europa-zentrum.de/projekte/legislativity-das-spiel-zur-eu-gesetzgebung/

Learning the fun way!

Roleplaying in itself can be a fun, playful experience. Roleplaying politics is not as sexy as some D&D though. That is why following young participants' suggestions, YES Forum political simulations usually include other creative features to make them even more entertaining.

For instance after a vote by young participants, it was decided to debate two different proposals during one of these simulations. One was realistic ("Resolution on True Equality in High School") and the other one not so realistic … and quite fun! ("Regulation on the Protection of European Fantastic Creatures"). Though unrealistic on paper, this proposal actually led to funny yet deep debates about how to protect endangered species in real life! (cf. Figure 9)

As mentioned above, learning methods also include a large majority of non-formal methods: all kinds of games, youth activities, and eve board games! (cf. Figure 8)

This "entertaining extra-layer" is an asset in several regards when it comes to inclusion, as it:

- Makes a simulation more attractive and enjoyable even for young people who are not interested in the EU at first, or sceptical about the experience (e.g. because they distrust politics altogether for instance)

- Helps participants focusing on the democratic legislative process: with a funny topic, they can be creative and rely on their imagination to take part in debates, without needing any expertise on specific, sometimes technical issues!

- Introduces participants to real-life issues through a fun shortcut, as a parallel can easily be made between such an unrealistic and fun topic and real-life issues!

European Commission

YoUrEP

Strasbourg, 31.05.18

Proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE YOUREP EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the Protection of the European Fantastic Creatures

As adopted by the YourEP European Parliament on 1st Reading on 31.05.18
In favour: 21 votes
Against: 0 votes
Abstention: 1 vote

Because:

(A) Climate change and overexploitation of Europe's magical resources have a dramatic impact on our fantastic wildlife. Many legendary creatures are now being threatened with extinction, for instance because of hunting.

(B) The biodiversity of Europe's fantastic ecosystems must be protected as Europe depends on these ecosystems for its Mana production. Mana is the magical energy sustaining the world.

The YourEP European Union decides:

(1) This text covers all fantastic creatures. Fantastic creatures are defined by their mana production and magic powers.

(2) EU Member States are required to create Magic Protection Areas covering 25% to 75% of their territory, depending on Member States .

(3) Hunting and fishing is forbidden in the Magic Protection Areas.

(4.1) Outside of Magical Protection Areas, hunting is allowed in a given year when the population density is increased by more than 15%. Otherwise, hunting and fishing can be forbidden for a year or less to let the population grow.

Figure 9: The "Proposal for a Regulation on the Protection of European Fantastic Creatures" as debated, amended and adopted by one of the political simulations! Unicorns were fortunately safeguarded in Magical Protection Areas, even though witches can still hunt them under certain conditions and quotas to protect their trade.

Chill out! Keeping it simple

Early on in its first political simulation, YES Forum's young participants decided to avoid reproducing the formal social norms often prevailing in politics. For instance, there was no dress code for the simulation itself, and participants didn't have to use typical ceremonial greetings to address each other (e.g. "Honourable Members, dear friends and colleagues"). Such a chill, non-formal atmosphere has been constantly favoured since then in other simulations.

On the one hand, it avoids creating "symbolic" obstacles by forcing participants to mimic formal behaviours they are not comfortable with, or distrustful of. On the other hand, it also helps focusing on the legislative process itself by overlooking its most formal, ceremonial and yet not-so-indispensable aspects.

Figure 10: Flip flops and baseball cap instead of a suit and a bow tie work very well too? Believe it or not, this smiling face was a very involved MEP!

Flexibility is the key! The many ways of participating

To cater for all participants' needs and personal difficulties, YES Forum's simulations remain flexible in many aspects.

They rely on several progressive sessions – basically Political Groups, Committees, and a final Plenary session – like any simulation of the European Parliament , but their timeframe keep a margin which always proves useful: to take time to accommodate the specific needs of young participants (e.g. adding extra breaks when needed), but also because in the end, some participants want to debate longer than planned!

Moreover, group discussions are a key component of political simulations. However – just like in real politics – YES Forum makes sure to offer alternative ways of participating to ensure all participants, even if they are facing social or interpersonal difficulties, can engage in its simulations (cf. Figure 11). For instance:

- Space for individual reflection: simulations plan specific times to let participants reflect by themselves, and for instance write their own amendments to be proposed to the other participants later on.

- Informal times: Any legislative process revolves around key, unavoidable official steps involving group discussions. But in between, there is also a lot of work! During informal times (breaks, lunch and dinner, evening drink …), participants are encouraged to keep roleplaying: participants who are uncomfortable with group discussions can discuss their ideas in one-on-one conversations over a relaxed coffee break.

- Lobbyists & Journalists: These roles, because they involve more "behind the stage" work than for MEPs, offer flexible ways to engage with other participants, beyond groups discussions.

- Spokespersons: Young participants can also ask other participants, or the staff supporting them, to act as their "spokesperson" during a simulation, especially during group discussions.

Figure 11: Screenshot of a slide of the Powerpoint used to introduce one of the political simulations. It made the "many ways of participating" explicit, to make sure participants were not blocked from participating because of their different social ease for instance.

A free opportunity

Finally, YES Forum's simulations are entirely free for young participants thanks to Erasmus+ funds. This allows all costs are covered: participants don't have to personally pay for their trips, accommodation or food and can therefore get involved regardless of their financial situation. Financial support to all partners also helps them dedicating enough time to support their young participants.

A lot of other public funds are available! Political simulations, especially with the new Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027), have a privileged position to access such funds.

In addition, co-funding from other sources is sought to make sure both participants and partners are not financially endangered at any time (e.g. accommodation can be very expensive in Strasbourg and Brussels sometimes). Members of the European Parliament themselves are very often happy to sponsor such political simulations.

4 | EINE COVID-FREUNDLICHE FALLSTUDIE …

… ODER WIE MAN SICH AN DIE COVID-19-BESCHRÄNKUNGEN ANPASSEN KANN, OHNE DIE ZUGÄNGLICHKEIT ZU BEEINTRÄCHTIGEN

Wie oben erläutert, ist das Erasmus+-Projekt Europe3E, das zur Erstellung dieses Leitfadens geführt hat, Ende 2019 angelaufen.

Ziel war es, einen letzten "Crash-Test" der YES Forum-Methode für integrative und zugängliche politische Simulationen durchzuführen, letzte Anpassungen vorzunehmen und das gesamte Rezept in diesem Leitfaden zu präsentieren. Während diese letzte Feinabstimmung aufgrund des Covid-19-Ausbruchs und der chaotischen Handhabung in ganz Europa nicht wie ursprünglich geplant möglich war, wird im vorangegangenen Teil erläutert, was auf der Grundlage früherer YES Forum-Experimente, die die Effizienz des Rezepts bewiesen, hätte geschehen sollen.

Das Europe3E-Projekt musste jedoch wie die meisten internationalen Projekte in den Jahren 2020-2021 eine unerwartete Wendung nehmen. Der Ausbruch von Covid-19 machte diese ursprünglichen Pläne, die in "normalen Zeiten" gut angepasst und effizient waren, angesichts

der sich ständig ändernden Covid-19-Beschränkungen sowohl auf lokaler als auch auf nationaler und europäischer Ebene völlig unrealistisch.

Die Arbeit des YES-Forums inklusiv und zugänglich zu machen, bedeutete in diesem Zusammenhang in erster Linie etwas viel Einfacheres: sie stattfinden zu lassen. Um anderen Organisatoren, die mit ähnlichen Schwierigkeiten konfrontiert sind, zu helfen, wird in diesem Teil erläutert, wie das YES Forum seine ursprünglichen Pläne an die Beschränkungen des Covid-19 und ganz allgemein an einen unsicheren Kontext angepasst hat und dabei eine ziemlich schwierige Aufgabe bewältigt hat: integrativ und zugänglich zu bleiben.

1 | Sein oder Nichtsein (online)

Obwohl es technisch möglich ist, wurde schon früh beschlossen, nicht genau dasselbe Simulationsdesign beizubehalten, sondern es nun an die Online-Zusammenarbeitstools anzupassen.

Online-Aktivitäten haben in der Tat ein großes, unbestreitbares Bildungspotenzial, aber die Erfahrungen des YES Forums mit politischen Simulationen und darüber hinaus haben systematisch gezeigt, dass sie im Gegenteil zu einem Ausschlussfaktor für die vielfältige und benachteiligte Zielgruppe des YES Forums werden können. Online-Formate funktionieren gut bei bestimmten homogenen Gruppen (z. B. HochschulstudentInnen, die schon lange vor dem Ausbruch von Covid-19 durch ihr Studium an Online-Kollaborationstools gewöhnt waren), sie sind jedoch keine Wunderlösung und können im Gegenteil zu einem Ausschlussfaktor werden, wenn man mit breiteren Gruppen arbeitet, einschließlich junger Menschen mit geringeren Möglichkeiten.

Neben vielen anderen Faktoren, die die Online-Tools zu einem zweischneidigen Schwert für die Arbeit des YES-Forums machen, sind dies die folgenden:

- Benachteiligte Jugendliche verfügen nicht immer über einen eigenen Laptop, um bequem von zu Hause aus an einer Online-Sitzung teilnehmen zu können, oder sogar über einen persönlichen Raum zu Hause, um dies zu tun;

- Trotz aller Klischees sind nicht alle jungen Menschen Digitalexperten: Viele verfügen nicht über die notwendigen digitalen Fähigkeiten, um sich auf den Inhalt von Online-Aktivitäten und nicht auf deren technische Aspekte zu konzentrieren;

- Junge Menschen, die nicht an die Online-Zusammenarbeit in einem vertrauten Umfeld wie der Schule gewöhnt sind, fühlen sich selten wohl dabei, mit einer Gruppe völlig Fremder über einen Bildschirm zu sprechen, während sie allein zu Hause sind.

Abbildung 12: Einige Bilder, die von Europe3E-Teilnehmern mit der Photovoice-Methode in den Niederlanden und Griechenland aufgenommen wurden, zeigen ein nicht allzu überraschendes gemeinsames Thema. Der Einsatz von Photovoice erwies sich als perfekt für den Covid-19-Kontext: Die Aktivitäten waren zunächst durch die Fotografie sehr konkret und wurden erst dann durch die Online-Zusammenarbeit etwas abstrakter.
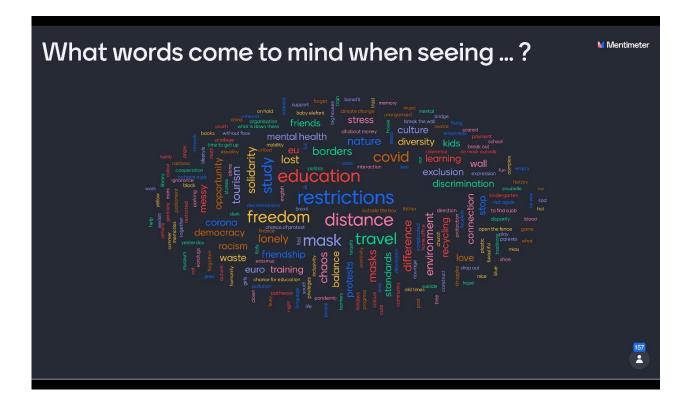
Abbildung 13: Im Europe3E-Projekt gingen die Teilnehmer von den Photovoice-Bildern aus und extrahierten die Hauptthemen, die sie in ihnen sahen, durch eine Wortwolke, die später zu den Themen der politischen Simulation führte.

2 | Ein flexibler Rahmen

Die ursprünglichen Pläne des YES-Forums für das Europe3E-Projekt sahen vor, eine politische Simulation des Europäischen Parlaments in einer Hauptsitzung durchzuführen, bei der eine Gruppe von 30-40 Teilnehmern in einem transnationalen Treffen zusammenkommt. Die Projektpartner hätten sich in einem solchen Rahmen auf die Anwerbung und Vorbereitung junger Teilnehmer konzentrieren und die allgemeine Organisation dem YES Forum als Projektkoordinator überlassen können.

Natürlich haben diese Pläne Anfang 2020 nicht überlebt. Nachdem eine vollständige Online-Version der gleichen Pläne von der Partnerschaft aus den oben genannten Gründen als kontraproduktiv erachtet wurde, wurden viele fantasievolle Szenarien erforscht.

Unter den alternativen Plänen, deren Namen fast das gesamte Alphabet ausschöpften (vgl. Abbildung 14), waren die letzten Optionen:

- Anstelle eines internationalen Treffens, bei dem alle Partner und Teilnehmer zu einer großen politischen Simulation zusammenkamen, ermöglichten bilaterale Austausche den Projektpartnern und ihren jungen Teilnehmern, sich in Paaren zu treffen und die politische Simulation Europe3E in einem viel kleineren Rahmen mit höchstens einem Dutzend Teilnehmern zu spielen. Ein kleinerer Rahmen war in der Tat viel besser an die Beschränkungen des Covid-19 angepasst und bot den Teilnehmern dennoch die Möglichkeit, ins Ausland zu gehen, was viele von ihnen zuvor noch nie getan hatten. Angesichts der sich ständig ändernden Covid-19-Beschränkungen, die die Planung einer Auslandsreise schon wenige Tage vor der geplanten Abreise zu einem Risiko werden ließen, blieb diese Option ehrgeizig. Aus diesem Grund fand letztlich nur ein bilateraler Austausch statt: Die meisten Partner konnten immer noch nicht reisen, einige mussten sogar eine geplante Reise in letzter Minute aufgrund neuer, unerwarteter Einschränkungen absagen.

Lokale Simulationen: Partner, die nicht mit ihren jugendlichen Teilnehmern reisen konnten - und das waren letztlich die meisten - erhielten die notwendigen Instrumente, um eine noch einfachere und kleinere Version der politischen Simulation zu Hause mit ausschließlich lokalen Teilnehmern durchzuführen. Der interkulturelle Austausch beruhte auf dem anschließenden Vergleich der Ergebnisse der Gruppen.
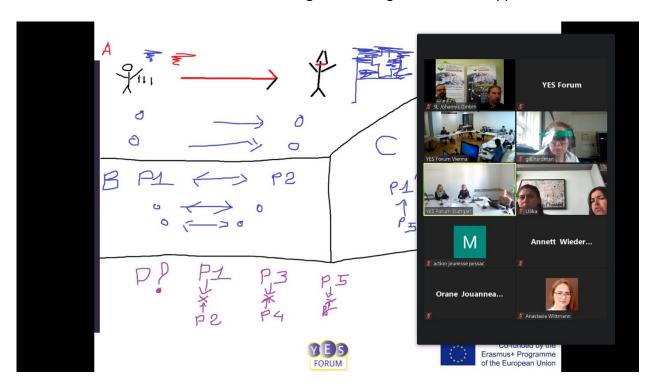

Abbildung 14: Während des größten Teils der Laufzeit von Europe3E blieb halb Europa zu Hause, was zu hybriden Partnertreffen und ... talentierten Brainstormings auf der Suche nach alternativen Plänen führte. Stellen Sie sich vor, wie die Pläne E und darüber hinaus aussehen könnten.

3 | Ein minimalistisches und adaptives Simulationsdesign

Das ursprüngliche Layout der politischen Simulation von Europe3E wurde radikal geändert, um den neuen Anforderungen gerecht zu werden, insbesondere dem Bedarf an einem Design:

- Geeignet für sehr kleine Gruppen (im Falle einer lokalen Simulation mit wenigen Teilnehmern), aber flexibel genug, um bei Bedarf eine etwas größere Gruppe einzubeziehen (im Falle eines bilateralen Austauschs zwischen zwei Partnern);

- Minimale Vorbereitung sowohl von den Moderatoren als auch von den TeilnehmerInnen, um zu vermeiden, dass die Partner und die Jugendlichen viel Zeit für die Vorbereitung einer Aktivität aufwenden müssen, bei der ein hohes Risiko besteht, dass sie abgesagt wird;

- Diese kann von einem Moderator geleitet werden, der keine Erfahrung mit politischen Simulationen hat, so dass Mitarbeiter von Partnerorganisationen mit wenig oder gar keinem Fachwissen über EU-Angelegenheiten die Aktivität trotzdem selbst durchführen können, wenn professionelle Moderatoren des YES Forums nicht zu einer bilateralen oder lokalen Simulation reisen können, um Unterstützung zu leisten.

- Möglichst wenig Einsatz von Online-Tools, um eine Kluft zwischen den jungen Teilnehmern je nach ihren digitalen Kenntnissen zu vermeiden.

Die daraus resultierende politische Simulation war schließlich eine minimalistische und noch flexiblere Version des ursprünglichen Entwurfs. Die Hauptstruktur blieb ähnlich (d.h. Rollen, Fraktionen, Umfang der Simulation, wie im dritten Teil dargelegt), wurde aber vollständig in das folgende "brettspielähnliche" Set von druckbarem Material umgewandelt, um die Verwendung in jedem Kontext so einfach und unkompliziert wie möglich zu machen.

Dieses "Europe3E Small Simulation Pack" wurde in der Tat so konzipiert, dass Moderator und Teilnehmer nur ein paar Seiten der Einführung durchgehen müssen, um den Gesamtzusammenhang der Simulation zu verstehen, dann das folgende Material ausdrucken und einfach den Anweisungen folgen!

- **Anweisungen**: Schritt-für-Schritt-Anweisungen, die während der Simulation zu befolgen sind, alles auf nur einer Seite und passend für einen halben Tag! (vgl. Abbildung 15)

- **Vorschläge für den Text**: Zwei Entwürfe für "EU-Gesetze", die von den Teilnehmern erörtert, geändert und angenommen werden können. Sie weisen verschiedene Merkmale auf, die den Teilnehmenden die Handhabung erleichtern, z. B. eine sehr

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begrenzte Anzahl von Artikeln und hervorgehobene Teile, die den Elementen entsprechen, die in den Verhandlungen am leichtesten angepasst werden können (vgl. Abbildung 16).

- **Rollenkarten**: Ein Satz von Karten, die jede verfügbare Rolle mit einigen grundlegenden Hinweisen vorstellen, die die Teilnehmenden aus ganz Europa dank ihrer Vertrautheit mit der nationalen Politik nachvollziehen können (vgl. Abbildung 17).

- **"Wer bist du?"**: Ein Dokument, das den Teilnehmenden hilft, in neue Schuhe zu schlüpfen, mit Leitfragen und Tipps, wie sie ihre neue Rolle kreativ verkörpern können.

- **Vorschläge für Änderungen**: Vorlagen, die es den Teilnehmenden es so einfach wie möglich machen, Änderungen an den Textvorschlägen einzubringen.

Europe3E Small Simulation - Instructions

This game is a short simulation of political negotiations in the European Parliament. You should first:

- <u>Prepare participants</u> so that they understand the context of the activity thanks to the full Infokit.
- <u>Print the annexed material</u>: Text Proposals, Role cards, Amendment and "Who are you?" templates.

Afterward, simply follow the basic steps below, breaks included!

Step 1 – Political Groups' Session (1H15)
MEPs are freshly elected, lobbyists just got their job, a journalist has a new topic to cover … Time to step into new shoes!

1. Picking Roles: distribute Role cards randomly, let participants negotiate or be more creative! (cf. Infokit, p.8)

2. Help participants imagining their new role through the "Who are you?" template and plan a break.

Step 2 – Parliamentary Committee Meeting (1H45)
A fraction of MEPs, specialized on the topic, spend more time preparing the ground for the later votes.

1. <u>Intro</u>: Participants present themselves and Political Groups through their "Who are you?" creative work (15 min)

2. <u>Hearings</u>: Political Groups & Lobbyists present their basic opinion on the proposal. Do they like it? Do they want to change it? How? (15 min)

3. <u>Debate</u>: What does each player think of the others' general positions? (15 min)

4. <u>Groups' Break</u>: Political Groups split up and discuss how they want to modify the text. Lobbyists get meetings with them to convince groups separately. MEPs submit Amendment Proposals alone, together with others, or as entire Political Groups (30min)

5. <u>Amendment Presentations</u>: The Committee gathers once again. Each Amendment Proposal is presented by the MEP(s) who wrote it and leads to a short debate. The Committee is done when all have been examined (30 min)

Step 3 – In the corridors … Informal negotiations (45min)
Committee work is done, time for a break … but debates and negotiations never really end!

On a break, participants are encouraged to hold informal negotiations. Can they find a majority to vote for their Amendment Proposals? Or build an alliance of MEPs or Political Groups with a new "compromise Amendment"?

Tip: Set a deadline for the last Amendment Proposals, to have time to sort them for the later votes (cf. Infokit p.10)

Step 4 – Plenary Session (45min)
The day has come, little is left to debate, time for all MEPs to vote the official Europe3E position!

1. <u>Official Statements</u>: MEPs separately and/or Political Groups altogether express themselves about what they think can be achieved. Lobbyists also express their feelings on the earlier discussions' results (15 min)

2. <u>Votes</u>: Sorted out (cf. Infokit p.11), Amendment Proposals are voted in turn. The final amended text is adopted – or not?! – through a last vote (20 min)

Tip: Use the "Track Changes" feature of Word to visualize the impact of Amendment Proposals before each vote.

3. <u>Concluding Statements</u>: Everybody is invited to have a final statement. Happy or not? (10 min)

Abbildung 15: Die endgültige "Covid-freundliche" Version der Europe3E-Simulation sollte so einfach wie möglich sein. Die Anweisungen für die gesamte Simulation umfassen nur eine einzige Seite!

Brussels, 15.04.21

Proposal for a
REGULATION OF THE EUROPE3E EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL
on Mandatory Climate Lockdowns to reduce CO2 Worldwide Emissions

Because:

(A) Human activity, through the emission of greenhouse gases, is the main origin of climate change, which is a **threat to citizens' wellbeing**. Strong efforts are needed to limit climate change and protect citizens.

(B) The lock-down measures used to fight the Covid-19 pandemic have led to a big reduction of CO2 emissions. By reducing human activity, such lock-downs can be a powerful tool to fight climate change.

The Europe3E European Union decides:

(1) Each year, Member States must enforce a **"Climate lock-down"** of (a) **8 consecutive weeks** or (b) **10 weeks scattered** throughout the year.

(2) Citizens can **leave home only for** the following **essential services: grocery shopping** and **urgent medical appointments.**

(3) All businesses are **closed except essential** services. Their **employees must take a 2 weeks individual lock-down another time** in the year.

(4) A **new Climate Police** can check **citizens at home with no prior notice.**

(5) A **maximum 10€ fine** is applied to citizens who don't respect lock-downs.

(This document is a fake creation for the simulation of the European Parliament „Europe3E". It is of course not endorsed by the European Commission, European Parliament or any other official institution of the European Union)

Abbildung 16: Der kühnste der Textvorschläge, die die jungen Europ3E-Teilnehmer aushandeln konnten.

Member of the European Parliament

MEPs negotiate and vote EU laws. They are split in Political Groups according to their political beliefs.

CONSERVATIVE RIGHT
GROUP MEMBER

THEY ARE MORE PRO-BUSINESS AND PREFER DEPENDING ON PRIVATE INITIATIVES TO SOLVE ISSUES.

THEY ARE STILL OK WITH SOME STATE INTERVENTION AND MARKET REGULATION, INCLUDING TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE.

BUT IT IS BETTER TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BEHAVE IN A GOOD WAY THAN FORCING THEM TO DO SO.

Member of the European Parliament

MEPs negotiate and vote EU laws. They are split in Political Groups according to their political beliefs.

EUROPEAN LEFT
GROUP MEMBER

THEY ARE MORE PRO-WORKER AND IN FAVOR OF STATE INTERVENTION WHEN IT IS NECESSARY.

EQUALITY AND SOLIDARITY ARE KEY PRIORITIES FOR THEM.

ECOLOGY IS IMPORTANT AS WELL. IT NEEDS STRONG POLICIES. BUT NOT WITHOUT CONSIDERING EMPLOYMENT.

Member of the European Parliament

MEPs negotiate and vote EU laws. They are split in Political Groups according to their political beliefs.

EUROPEAN ECOLOGIST
GROUP MEMBER

THEY ARE COMMITED TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM, DIVERSITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

THEY ARE FEDERALISTS & WANT A STRONG ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION IN THE EU.

NO TIME TO LOSE. RADICAL ACTION IS NEEDED NOW TO AVOID THE WORST OF CLIMATE CHANGE. CITIZENS AND BUSINESS BOTH NEED A STABLE CLIMATE.

Lobbyists try to influence MEPs. They promote law-making which takes their needs into account.

PRO-ENVIRONMENT
LOBBYIST

SUBTLE ACTION WAS NEEDED DECADES AGO. TOO LATE FOR NON-AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES NOW. YOU CAN PROVIDE THE SCIENTIFIC DATA SHOWING THEY ARE FAILING ALREADY.

A HISTORIC ACTION TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE ONLY SOLUTION. SHORT-TERM SACRIFICES WILL BRING LONG-TERM BENEFITS. FOR PEOPLE & BUSINESSES ALIKE.

Lobbyists try to influence MEPs. They promote law-making which takes their needs into account.

PRO-BUSINESS
LOBBYIST

CLIMATE CHANGE CANNOT BE DENIED. BUT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES WILL DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD IF TOO RADICAL. IF THEY CREATE AN ECONOMIC CRISIS.

YOU HAVE ASKED ECONOMISTS TO HELP. THEIR DATA SUGGEST A SAFER WAY: BALANCING THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEED FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH SUBTLE POLICIES.

No way to know what MEPs are doing without you to report about it. Or about who influences them!

JOURNALIST

YOU WANT TO GIVE PEOPLE THE INFORMATION THEY NEED SO THAT THEY CAN FORM THEIR OWN OPINION. NOT TO PROMOTE YOURS.

IT IS NOT EASY TO REMAIN NEUTRAL. OR TO GET THE INFORMATION SOME PEOPLE WOULD KEEP HIDDEN. BUT YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO SO AND SHARE YOUR INVESTIGATIONS WITH THE WORLD.

Abbildung 17: Die Rollenkarten, die den Teilnehmenden helfen, während der Europe3E-Simulationen des EP in ihre neuen Rollen zu schlüpfen.

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