



ROLE GUIDE

INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES



Model European
Union Strasbourg

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FOREWORD BY THE INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES' COORDINATOR

Dear Interest Representatives,

On behalf of the whole MEU Strasbourg 2020 Organizing Team, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this fourteenth edition of the world's longest serving simulation of European politics. You have been chosen for your skills, attitude, motivation, knowledge, and other various qualities to take on one of the most demanding roles in this simulation. Being an Interest Representative means you will have to utilize your skills, develop and follow your strategy in order to make an impact on the decision-making process in which you have no voting rights, representing your given interest group. When I was in your shoes during MEUS 2016, I fell in love with both the challenges and the experience that come with this role, which is why I am honoured to be able to work together with you and ensure you enjoy and learn from this unique event.

There will be many factors influencing your success and this Guide is been conceived to help you fully prepare for the rewarding journey ahead of you. The Guide covers all aspects of your role, with elements ranging from a general presentation of interest representation in the European Union to pro tips on how to get the best out of your participation in MEUS 2020. You will find information about what will be expected from you before and during the simulation itself. I suggest giving this guide a thorough read as all the information has been designed to empower you during your Strasbourg week and help you enjoy the single best, most realistic experience one could hope for.

During the upcoming period, you will be receiving additional materials, both role-specific and general. These materials were all created to ensure you feel ready for the simulation itself and therefore, it is important you devote some of your time to read them before the conference. My role is to guide you through your preparation and coordinate your work during the conference. Do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

I wish you all successful preparation and an even more successful conference!

Best regards,

Ksenija Ivanović
Interest Representatives' Coordinator



1. INTEREST REPRESENTATION IN THE EU

Interest Representatives (in further text: IRs) are indeed an essential part of the European policy-making process and of the European Union's political sphere. It is estimated that over 30'000 individuals working for private or public interests are gravitating in and around the Brussels "EU bubble", meaning there are more IRs in the *de facto* EU capital than there are European public servants.

As a body with limited funding and manpower (despite all the claims of EU red tape, bureaucracy and over-budgeting), the European institutions, and especially the European Commission, have tried to rely more on these actors to draft legislation and provide expertise on a wide range of issues through reports, advisory committees, impact assessments, stakeholders' consultation, and similar processes. The rising contestation of the influence IRs gained this way also led to the adoption of a series of measures to ensure certain transparency and control over what IRs do and should not do.

In the eyes of the public opinion, Interest representation still carries, a negative image, especially when the already complex institutional framework of the European Union is made even more opaque to European citizens as a result of their action. Nevertheless, interest representatives, in all their diversity, participate in a much-needed dialogue between lawmakers and the wide range of conflicting interests of a Union of 500 million inhabitants.

WHO IS BEING REPRESENTED?

It is essential to emphasise that IRs, although often seen negatively due to what may be concluded from the very name, cover for MEUS a large branch of public, private or non-governmental organisations, and that their objectives and methods can differ. Think thanks, corporate associations for big and small business, public actors (local governments and regions, national institutions or even ministries), citizens' representation organisations (NGOs, consumer-rights associations, etc.), even religious institutions all aim at having European institutions and lawmakers take their opinion and the interest of their clients/members/supporters into account when preparing, debating and negotiating EU laws.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

An essential part of what IRs do is try to influence EU legislation when it is being drafted by the European Commission, through various stakeholders consultation mechanisms. The aspect of interest representation modelled at MEUS is what happens once the European Commission, having heard opinions and advice from all relevant actors, makes its initial proposal public and sends it to the European Parliament and to the Council of the European Union for debate.

Once a proposal is made by the European Commission, it is up to decision-makers to make their choices, propose and adopt amendments and finally, vote on the whole proposal. This is where IRs are stepping in. This kind of influence is the kind of which we are trying to showcase and encourage during MEUS by having participants take on this role. IRs are experts on various issues and therefore, decision-makers tend to rely heavily on their support, advice and work.

2. INTEREST REPRESENTATION AT MEUS

As an IR at Model European Union Strasbourg, you will play the role of a professional advocate tasked with influencing legislation on a particular issue. Two topics will be discussed during MEUS 2020, and you have been assigned one of them, along with one interest group whose interests you will work to advance during the simulation.

Once the European Commission makes its proposals public, they are handed to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union for discussion, amendment and possibly approval. If you are not familiar with what the Ordinary Legislative Procedure looks like, do not worry! The figure below, in the section “Know your playing field” will help you understand the process. You will have to convince European policy makers to endorse your vision as much as possible and to propose (and pass) amendments advancing your agenda and supporting your views.

Being an IR at Model European Union Strasbourg therefore means you will have to convince a variety of politicians, be they Members of the European Parliament (also known as “MEPs”) or Ministers in the Council of the European Union (usually just “Ministers”), to first of all listen to you, secondly to introduce the changes you want to push through, thirdly to defend these changes until the end of the legislative process.

To be listened to is not an easy task. As most of the other participants will have little to no experience in dealing with IRs, you should expect them to be quite wary when dealing with you. Your first challenge will thus be to build serious and professional relationships with those lawmakers you identify as especially important to you, overcoming their probable initial reluctance. In this quest, your tools should include a thorough knowledge of your field, which will allow you to establish yourself as a reliable source of knowledge, a clean public face demonstrating your willingness to work, and an open mind coupled with strong interpersonal and networking skills. Even before your arrival to Strasbourg, you should work to build friendships and trusted relationships which will last beyond the Strasbourg week itself... but will also prove essential during the simulation! Interest representation at MEUS is a 24/7 job, in which you build, develop and use your relationships from day one.



Introducing the changes you pursue will require you to arrive to the simulation with a clear idea of the changes you want to see implemented in the legal text you will be working on. This is why preparing a Position Paper and an influence strategy before the simulation is essential and will help you pursue clear goals. Your expertise must also find its expression in your ability to provide strong ideas to push forward during the debate, as well as to put your proposed amendments in a reliable legal wording. To achieve these goals you should prepare in advance.. You will have to fight to make sure your ideas are debated, and more importantly that they are accepted by a vote in one of two institutions acting as co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

If you manage to push some friendly changes, the final and maybe most difficult part of your mission starts: defending these changes. Each proposal in Model European Union Strasbourg is subject to three readings, where amendments can be proposed in the first two readings, and where the third reading allows only for a final vote in each institution on whether to pass or reject the final version of the proposal. This means that pushing an amendment through a majority vote in one institution is just not enough: there is still a chance that this amendment may be rejected later down the road, or that the proposal itself will fail altogether. You will therefore have to put your efforts into ensuring that your ideas are not only included in the text, but stay there until the very end of the simulation.

All through your perilous journey in the esoteric field of European lawmaking, you will find that your job is the most flexible role of the simulation. You can choose to attend debates in the European Parliament, observe the power dynamics, and use your expertise (and Internet connection) to pass notes of information to your inside connections.

Or you can focus more on networking during coffee breaks and socials, or connect with Journalists, whose regular publications will shape the tone, mood and direction of the simulation and whom you should never miss an opportunity to befriend. You can choose who to work with - be it decision-makers or your colleagues. You may find that forming an alliance with a fellow IR enables you to spread your message to a wider audience. Or you may work better on your own.



The essential ingredient to success in your work is enthusiasm! This is a high-energy role and your networking job is round the clock. This is also a chance to practice the art of political persuasion from an impressively realistic simulation and—above all—to forge close friendships with people from across the world that last beyond the final vote.

Interest Representatives at MEUS perform most of their job by approaching MEPs and Ministers during informal times (coffee/lunch breaks and social events) and by delivering presentations to the two institutions, as well as participating in discussions in the EP (option just been introduced for MEUS 2020). However, such types of interaction don't accurately model the important role played by interest representatives from all horizons all the way through the European Union's decision-making process and in particular when the Ordinary Legislative Procedure is used. This kind of approach, based mostly on personal contacts (considering that informal occasions tend to be the best opportunity for you to exercise some influence) excludes from the scope of the simulation many of the actions and ways that Interest Representatives would use to influence lawmakers. For example, their work and collaboration with the media might affect public opinion, which directly reflects on what decision-makers have to take into account when choosing their priorities. Due to many opportunities for creativity, it is safe to say that being an Interest Representative is quite interesting, while also challenging, both in the EU and at MEUS.

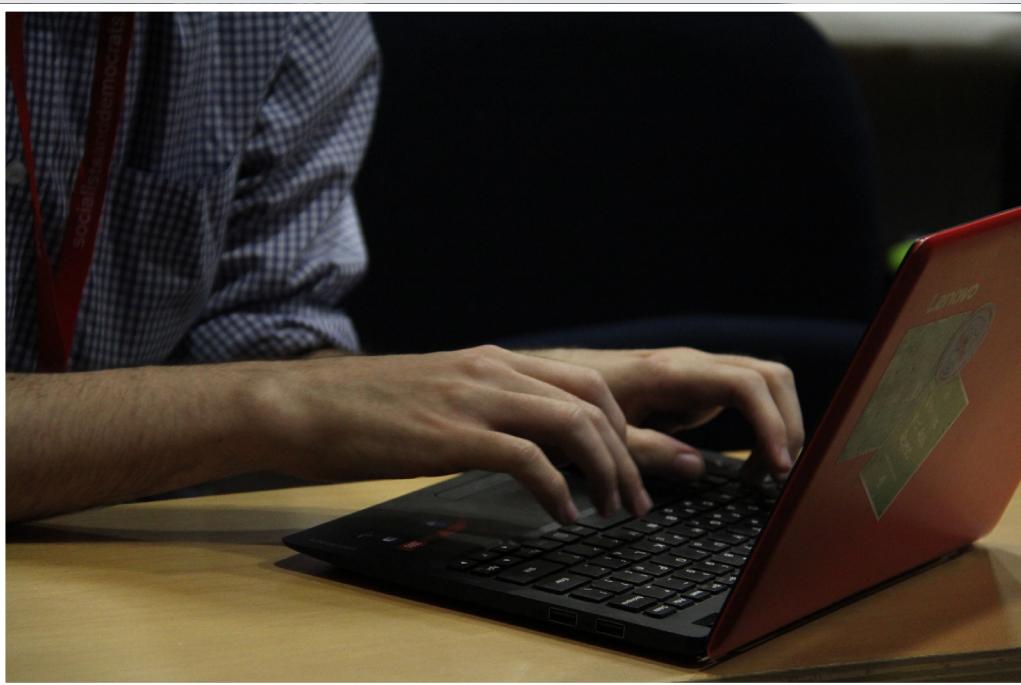
To help you overcome all of the obstacles and challenges you will face as IR, we introduced the *Influence System* at MEUS 2019. This exciting and useful tool will be briefly explained in a further text, alongside your other options and potential approaches for making an impact. However, you will be provided with a special guide to all rules related to the Influence System. Do not be scared of it, it will prove to be the tool making your role even more authentic and fun!

3. PREPARATION STAGE: YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS

3.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

Reading this guide is your first step to prepare for MEUS 2020. In this section, we will go through all of the steps you need to take in order to come to the conference ready for the experience! Remember, even though Organisers are in charge of the event itself, you are the ones creating your experience. Therefore, coming unprepared means you will not have a great time as you will lack the knowledge and the skills to fully enjoy MEUS. Even though the preparation stage might seem a bit overwhelming when you first encounter all of the materials and tasks, do not worry – with some effort on a weekly basis, you will face no obstacles! Each of you has things to do and we do not expect you to put MEUS first, so the preparation stage is tailored to be feasible and for each task you will have as much time as we can possibly provide.

During this period, as well as during the conference, we will be using **Slack**, a communication tool which is easy to use and allows for an organised approach to discussing various topics. Make sure to join all necessary channels in order not to miss out on any of the important information or relevant discussions. I suggest downloading the app so that you could regularly check our platform and stay up-to-date. Slack is quite easy to use! In case you wish to familiarize a bit more with it, you may also take a look at some of the many online tutorials on how to join a channel or discover other useful tips. Once you join *Slack*, do not hesitate to introduce yourself to your fellow IRs. Many of them will become your lasting friends and some of them will even be working with you during the conference.



Before the conference, you will be required to complete several tasks, some of which require only 10 minutes. Completing these tasks is not obligatory, but it is definitely recommended to complete them, as this will affect not only your level of knowledge, but also your initial influence at the simulation. You will find more information on what this means below, in the description of the Influence System.

After we have covered the basics, I believe it is time to get into the preparation process itself! If you wish to excel at MEUS 2020, you should definitely:

3.2 KNOW YOUR INTERESTS

Knowing the interest group you represent is essential to play your role optimally, set a clear strategy and deliver. Before MEUS, check the group's website, their press releases, especially on the topic you will be lobbying on, and take as much information as you can about it, as it could come in handy during the simulation.

This also includes knowing which national actors your group represents in Brussels, and their respective assets and influence in their home Member States. Discover their allies, how much they are spending on interest representation and whether they are active on many different issues. Here are some questions you should ask yourself:

What organization or interest do you represent?

Is your interest group a national or a pan-European lobby?

What goals does it pursue?

What is its stance on the proposed Directive/Regulation?

Has its position changed over the years?

Who is the interest group working with?

How specific are their goals?

What is their approach to lobbying?

Finding answers to these questions will help you get into your role as effectively as possible. When you start your research, it is useful if you put some basic data and every link you find interesting or useful in a separate file. Many of the initial info you may find in the [Transparency Register](#).

Once you are provided with the list of represented interest groups and discover who will be representing each one, make sure to devote a few minutes to each of these, in order to identify your potential ally. You do not need to get into details if you don't have much time, as you should focus on your own interest group. Before the conference you will get a chance to discover other IRs' official agenda through reading their Position Papers, which are explained below.

3.3 KNOW WHO'S WHO

MEUS, as well as the "EU bubble", is inhabited by a lot of various actors, and you will need to know everything about them. Further down this guide, you will also find tips as to how to interact with each of these roles, but here is a general list:

MEUS Organising Team: these are the Organisers of Model European Union Strasbourg. You will find more about them and who to ask help from in the general guides. Your go-to person for anything related to the simulation, both before and during your week in Strasbourg, will be the Coordinator for your role!

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs): MEPs are the elected representatives of over 500 million European citizens. They are grouped in political groups of roughly similar ideology, but also have a specific country of election. The European Parliament is, along with the Council, one of two co-legislators, and MEPs should be amongst your first "targets", as they have the power to amend the legislative proposals and to eventually adopt or reject them.



Ministers in the Council of the European Union (Ministers): Ministers are members of their respective national governments who sit together at the Council table. The Council is the other co-legislator, and Ministers there represent their country's interests. Although, as national politicians, they are all part of a political family, this aspect often fades away in comparison to pure national interest.



Journalists: Journalists are participants whose job it is to report on any and all aspects of the simulation. They will publish news articles to keep all participants informed about the ins and outs of MEU Strasbourg politics, take pictures and videos and maybe even make memes out of you.

Journalists can have a huge impact on the rhythm of the conference depending on the issues their news segments put forward (or simply overlook), or the grilling questions they ask during interviews and press conferences, meaning they are key actors you should befriend and work with to advance your objectives.



Commissioners: The two Commissioners are members of the Organising Team tasked with playing the role of members of the European Commission during the simulation. Each one of them will thus be assigned one of the two proposals under consideration at MEUS 2020 and will have to defend it throughout the legislative process, including against your efforts!

Your fellow IRs: There will be 10 IRs at MEUS 2020. Indeed, 5 will spar on each of the two proposals under consideration. This means you will have to deal with several other Interest Representatives defending different, sometimes opposing views from yours. It will therefore be essential for you to keep an eye on your fellow IRs, sabotaging their moves when they could damage your own efforts, but also working with them where your objectives are aligned. Forming a coalition with one or two other IRs could prove decisive during the simulation's tensest negotiations.



3.4 KNOW YOUR PLAYING FIELD

Two legislative proposals presented by the European Commission are selected for discussion and will be discussed during three successive readings by both the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, acting as co-legislators, as by the schema in the next page.

ORDINARY LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE

THE ULTIMATE CHEATSHEET

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

FIRST READING

- Commission proposes and outlines Proposal A to the Council
- Ministers present their opening statements on Proposal A
- General debate and proposal of amendments on Proposal A
- Debate on proposed amendments on Proposal A
- Voting on amendments by Qualified Majority Voting

- Commission proposes and outlines Proposal B to the Parliament
- Presidents of political groups present their opening statements on Proposal B
- General debate and proposal of amendments on Proposal B
- Debate on proposed amendments on Proposal B
- Voting on amendments by Simple Majority Voting

SECOND READING

- Commission outlines amended Proposal B to the Council
- Representatives of the Parliament present the passed amendments on Proposal B in the First Reading
- Ministers present their opening statements on Proposal B
- General debate and proposal of amendments on Proposal B
- Debate on proposed amendments on Proposal B
- Voting on amendments by Qualified Majority Voting

- Commission outlines amended Proposal A to the Parliament
- Representatives of the Council present the passed amendments on Proposal A in the First Reading
- Presidents of political groups present their opening statements on Proposal A
- General debate and proposal of amendments on Proposal A
- Debate on proposed amendments on Proposal A
- Voting on amendments by Simple Majority Voting

THIRD READING

- Representatives of the Parliament present the passed amendments on Proposal A
- General debate on final version of Proposal A
- Final vote on Proposal A by Qualified Majority Voting
- General debate on final version of Proposal B
- Final vote on Proposal B by Qualified Majority Voting

- Representatives of the Council present the passed amendments on Proposal B
- General debate on final version of Proposal B
- Final vote on Proposal B by Simple Majority Voting
- General debate on final version of Proposal A
- Final vote on Proposal A by Simple Majority Voting

As you will only be working on one proposal, this means you will get two successive chances to get amendments passed: once in the Council, once in the Parliament.

During these three readings, Parliament and Council will also send elected representatives to Trilogue meetings, which are organized to allow informal inter-institutional discussions across the whole week. Trilogue representatives have the potential to make themselves essential to the creation of a final legislative agreement between both institutions, which makes them high priority targets for any IR looking to protect their client's interests.

You should also read the **MEUS 2020 Rules of Procedure** carefully, as they will serve as the guidelines for the simulation itself, as well as the general schedule of the week. It is essential that you know exactly how the week will unfold so you can time your actions and make the best use of the time at your disposal during your stay in Strasbourg.

Knowing the schedule should also mean knowing when you have the opportunity to approach other participants. As we said, networking is key and it should be your first priority. Contacts are essential to success. IRs are renowned for working the hardest at coffee breaks and during the social program. This means there is no time-out for you: if you can find another participant willing to listen to your arguments at 2 a.m. in a club, then go for it.

During the simulation, you will have to present your views and goals briefly, in both Council and Parliament. This brief speech or presentation will be based on your research and interests you are representing. It is crucial you make a good first impression on decision-makers and interest those who might end up working with you. When the time comes, you will be notified on the duration of this presentation.

Alongside formal presentations you will be making, you will have the opportunity to listen to discussions in the EP and join the debate. Please make sure to familiarize yourself with the Rules of Procedure beforehand, as when you are participating in debates, you will have to follow the rules. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity but do not overuse it. Remember, most of your work is done behind the scenes.

3.5 DO YOUR RESEARCH

Knowledge is power and your potential for success will be significantly shaped by how well prepared you are. Prior research is going to be a vital element of your participation at the simulation. As an IR for a specific interest group, you are working on a single topic, and should focus on this one exclusively to try and learn as much as you can about it.

Make sure that the decision-makers are aware of how you can help them make informed choices on how to vote on complex, nuanced issues. Your challenge is to strike a balance between providing reliable facts whilst also presenting your cause in a way that puts a positive spin on what you are championing.

Before coming to Strasbourg, read as much as possible about your topic, prepare notes, print documents, have key numbers in your head or on a couple of handy flash cards... The more knowledge you will be able to accumulate before the simulation, the more time you will have to preach your vision to lawmakers. Preparation is key to appearing as a serious and reliable partner to lawmakers and establishing yourself as an expert, if not THE expert, in your field, which will give you an edge over other IRs and help you advance your agenda.

You should know the text of the proposal as extensively as possible, at least knowing the structure of the text and where to find specific provisions. Research all the debates (at public and private level) about the issue, find your interest group's position and proposal and expand on it, look at existing policies in this field in Europe and across the world, etc. The more diverse and complete your research is, the more versatile you will be during the simulation.

3.6 THE INFLUENCE SYSTEM

The Influence System (IS) is, simply put, an innovation which deals with major challenges faced by IRs at MEUS. It enables them to engage more with other participants as well as to have a large impact on the final outcome of the decision-making process. This is because IRs receive the opportunity to perform many of the activities their real-life colleagues use every day to make a change.



Each IR at MEUS receives their initial "influence" - the in-game capital, based on their preparation and completion of given task. Each day of the simulation, additional influence will be rewarded to each participant, with an opportunity for IRs to earn extra influence by completing specific tasks. The Interest Representatives' Coordinator is in charge of keeping track of each IR's influence and informing them once per day of their balance. This means that participants do not need to constantly keep count of how much influence they have left. IRs should focus on using the system creatively so as to fulfil their strategy! How will they be doing this?

The influence will be used by IRs to purchase actions they feel will help them influence decision-making, if their proposal receives approval from Interest Representatives' Coordinator. All actions taken must be logical and effective. However, the Influence System leaves interest representatives room for creativity. Therefore, each IR may propose an action which is not mentioned in this document, as well as suggest the influence they wish to spend on it. If the move makes sense, it will be approved! Please be aware not all actions are equally complicated and ambitious, which means that the more demanding the action is, the more influence needs to be spent on it.

The IS also allows Interest Representatives to join influence with a fellow Interest Representative if they deem it appropriate and Interest Representatives are strongly encouraged to do so! This means interest representatives may purchase more influential actions and strategize together to achieve their common goals. Working in a small team allows participants to better influence the decision-making process, but choosing the right teammate is also a challenge in itself.

Interest Representatives may also use this system to foster their cooperation with fellow Journalists, which might really come in handy during the simulation. Even though participants are not allowed to purchase actions which require other participants to do something, there are several options enabling you to utilize the power of media! However, it is up to Interest Representatives to make these connections. All of the options and the rules regarding cooperation with the media are outlined for you in the Influence System file you will receive. This possibility should not be overlooked as the media have great influence over the decision-makers. Getting your ideas promoted or damaging the credibility of your opponent might just be the last step towards successful completion of your agenda! The options IRs have if they utilize the Influence System to the best of their ability are almost endless.

Even though the whole System might seem a bit confusing at first, it is very easy to use once you get a grasp of its rules. The rules as well as other details and tips regarding the Influence System can be found in the Influence System file. During Workshops Day, before the official beginning of the simulation, we will work together on mastering the rules in case anyone has any doubts about how it all works. I may only suggest using this creative tool as much as possible.

3.7 GET YOUR STRATEGY TOGETHER

Before arriving to Strasbourg, you will be required to write a **Position Paper** for the organisation you will be representing, outlining the vision of the organisation on the topic you will be working on. You will find guidance on how to prepare this document later on, as well as information on where to upload it. Your Position Paper will be made public to all the other participants, so use it as a formal tool for public relations that will help others know what you (officially) stand for. When writing it you should ask yourself: *Are you for or against passing this piece of legislation? Which changes do you recommend? What are your main arguments?*

You will also have to prepare a more detailed **influence strategy**. This document will remain private but will be useful to help you lay out your thoughts on how you will represent your interest group. Further information on how to build your influence strategy will be sent to you in a later email, along with the information regarding your Position Paper. Your influence strategy should answer several questions: *Who are your most likely allies? Who do you need on your side? What are the most important changes you want to see? What approach will you take to the different actors? Will you work with the press, with another fellow IR?* This document is where you set your own goals for the Strasbourg week, and outline your plans on how to achieve them.

Eventually, arriving to MEUS with a handful of **amendments** already written will help you focus on selling your vision to MEPs and Ministers without having to come up with last minute wording.

Aside from this guide, you have received two small practical guides on how to prepare your Position Paper and your influence strategy, including a clear list of information that should figure in each of the respective documents.

4. STRASBOURG: WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

Once you are ready for the conference, it is time for you to use every move in your playbook and accomplish your goals. Even though you should definitely always have in mind the strategy you came up with, do not hesitate to make a change if you see things are unfolding in a different way. You should always represent your interest group's interest, but you will have to adapt if you wish to succeed. After all, you cannot possibly predict what everyone else is up to!

4.1 TALKING TO MEPS

The European Parliament is, in a sense, the easier institution to navigate. First, because its sessions are public, which means you will be allowed to listen to the debates in Parliament at all times during the simulation and you will know more or less where each MEP stands on the issue being discussed. As you will find out, this is very different from the secretive Council. You will also have the option of participating in the debates, which has not been the case in previous editions of MEUS. However, this also means you should familiarize with the Rules of Procedure, as you will have to respect all of the rules if you wish to be given the floor.

MEPs are organized in 8 political groups representing a large variety of political ideologies. Each group has a leadership consisting of a group leader and up to two secretaries. These will be elected by MEPs in each faction during their first group meeting of the week.

Parliament will also elect members to attend a number of key meetings during the week, such as the Trilogue representatives who meet at least once a day with their Council counterparts to forge an overall agreement, or rapporteurs tasked with presenting the adopted amendments to the Council after each of the first two readings.

It is essential to get as many MEPs "on your side" as possible, as soon as possible, but due to the sheer size of Parliament, you will probably not have the time to establish personal relationships with an absolute majority of MEPs.

An important part of your job is therefore, when preparing for the simulation, to identify the groups whose political line matches your vision, but also, during the simulation, to keep an eye on what is happening in the Parliament in order to find out who are the most important MEPs to gain support from. Group leaders, Trilogue representatives and others have the institutional potential to be key interlocutors, but so do other outspoken, charismatic MEPs, whose voice may also prove essential. Always remember a group leader does not necessarily bring you all his group's votes and you will need to make sure a majority of Parliament supports your view if you want the changes you advocate to be introduced. As MEPs are not keen on working with IRs until they are sure of their expertise and intentions, it is important that you make a lasting good impression on them during your presentation. If you are a good public speaker, joining the debates might be a great option for you.

4.2 TALKING TO MINISTERS

The Council is much more of a secretive place than Parliament, holding most of its meetings behind closed doors. This means your first obstacle when dealing with Ministers is actually getting the information about what has been said during the session. You will find that a significant part of your time, and of Journalists' time, will be spent trying to learn more about what has been said in the Council room.

Voting rules in the Council are also very different from the voting rules in Parliament. Where Parliament just need a simple majority of the votes to adopt amendments (or agree to a final text), Council follows the rules of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), meaning any substantive matter requires at least 55% of the Member States, representing at least 65% of the population of the European Union, to vote in its favour in order to pass (abstentions are therefore nothing other than a polite NO vote). As a consequence, it is much more difficult to get a majority in the Council, as a blocking minority is so easily reached.

This means that any time you get to spend with one or several Ministers will be much more important to you than the time you would more easily get to spend with MEPs, especially if you are talking to Ministers from one of the "big EU countries". As countries' population is taken into account through QMV, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland are much more "important" than Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg or the Baltic States. But make sure you keep talking to as many Ministers as you can: all of them can be good sources to learn about what is happening in the Council and ignoring "small countries" could mean missing the 55% of Member States threshold.

When talking to Ministers, try to always keep in mind that their focus lies in their national interests, as well as their government's political orientation, so make sure to put forward relevant arguments matching your interlocutor's specific vision and concerns.

4.3 TALKING TO JOURNALISTS

At a first look, there seems to be no reason to talk to Journalists when you are an Interest Representative: they are not lawmakers and will not cast a crucial vote in your favor last minute, meaning they may not be worth the time and energy to befriend and talk to. That would be a mistake.

Journalists can be your friends. Their job is to fish for any and all information and, as said before, knowledge is power. This means having strong relations with Journalists is another way to learn about what is happening across the simulation. You will not be able to be everywhere at all time, and an exchange of information with a journalist can prove a perfect tool to get an advance look to some breaking news, or even to encourage them not to publish an article that would harm your chances. Why lose your time making the same case over and over again to over a hundred lawmakers, when a Journalist friend can make it the most important piece of news of the day? This is called shaping the opinion, and it is worth it! Make sure to discover the options our Influence System gives you when it comes to working with the media. Using this wisely can make a lasting impact.

Journalists are always looking for a story or an interview: publicity stunts can be used to raise the profile of your organisation or cause, exchange of favors can spin the wording of a news segment in a more friendly way... Beware however as this can be a double-edged sword; be aware that Journalists have their own agenda, and be careful that they do not report negatively about you. If a Journalist finds evidence of any wrongdoing or questionable behavior on your part, this may well make it to the front page and inflict long-term damage to your credibility. You will also need to be willing to give out some information in exchange for their cooperation.

4.4 TALKING TO THE COMMISSION

Although Commissioners are members of the Organising Team, they have a role to play during the simulation, with their own agenda. This means they are yet another category of participants you can try and persuade. As there is only one Commissioner for each topic, befriending the one in charge of the proposal you are working on could prove useful, as their voice, considered one of expertise and political balance, can wield significant influence in key debates and votes. Beware however, as they are experienced participants and know exactly what to expect from a cunning IR's "friendship" offer.

4.5 TALKING TO OTHER INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES

Group work is widely regarded as one of the most effective strategies. By joining forces with like-minded IRs, you can exercise greater clout and have a greater impact on the decision-making process. At MEUS 2020 you will be able to do both individual work and team work. While being responsible for upholding the interests of your organisation, you will be able to join forces with your allies, using the Influence System. Always remember it is easier for politicians and Journalists to identify and believe in a coalition rather than a single interest group!

Although teamwork is strongly encouraged, you are ultimately representing the interests of your own organisations, e.g., if a policy choice is likely to strongly affect your interests, you should not feel like you have to take the same positions as the other IRs you may be working with.

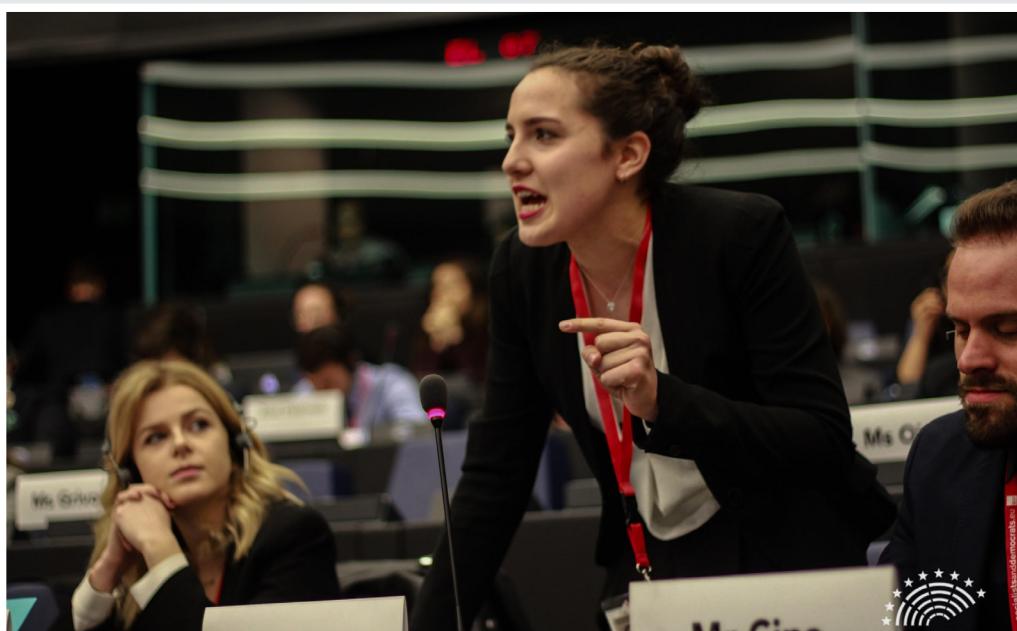
Ideally, you should combine individual research with collective lobbying. This requires the development of a common framework for performing IR activities, an effective division of tasks and, to some extent, mediation between views which may slightly differ. Moreover, the position of an interest group may vary as the conference progresses. This is very realistic and leaves the door open not only for individual work, but also for the possibility of making new alliances.

Getting in touch with other IRs prior to the simulation can prove very beneficial to your efforts. You can use whatever means you have in mind in order to prepare as a group, and the Interest Representatives' Coordinator will make sure to connect you if need be.

When teaming up with fellow IRs think of what joining forces and utilizing the Influence System together may bring you. You might be able to purchase more expensive and therefore impactful actions, as well as to easily work with the media. Think creatively about your actions and make them work!

4.6 STEPPING INTO THE DEBATE

As an Interest Representative, you will have a mandatory, brief presentation of your views in both the Council and the Parliament when your topic is being discussed in that institution. This will enable you to showcase your views and arguments in order to leave a good first impression and demonstrate your expertise. However, if you enjoy public speaking and find it to be a useful tool, you may join the debates in the European Parliament and speak when given the floor by the Chairs. You may take part in debates yourself or help other MEPs with preparing their questions, amendments, etc. If you feel like delivering a speech in front of the Parliament or the Council would help you make your case officially and more effectively to a broader audience, there is one specific tool at your disposal through the Influence System: you can spend some influence and ask to book a presentation slot in front of the Parliament or the Council. With these three options you may step into the debate during MEUS 2020. Use them wisely!



These presentations are a great opportunity to address all the Ministers or MEPs, to catch their eye, to build your public profile, or to hammer a specific point at the right time in the debate. These however are short interactions, so keep them simple and to the point. Make sure to build on that by following up with decision-makers who displayed an interest in your position. After your presentation, the lawmakers might have a chance to ask you questions. These will be a mix between the ideas you presented, the direction in which they want to steer the conversation and how the debate has already been going. They might therefore ask you questions you do not expect.

If nothing comes to mind, acknowledge that you need to do some research and ask the Minister/MEP to allow you to get back to them. In this case, do so as soon as possible, before the conversation has moved on and the information is no longer useful. Also, try not to use this answer too often, lest your reputation as an expert be damaged. The two most effective ways to always give a satisfactory answer are to do your research and to spin the question in a manner that brings it back into territory you are familiar with.

Booking a presentation slot in case you wish to deliver a speech is more useful in the Council, as in the European Parliament you have the option of participating in the debates. However, if you do not wish to spend your time listening to everything going on, booking a presentation slot is a great solution for when you wish to be heard.

4.7 SUPPLYING INFORMATION

As emphasized previously, knowledge is a good IR's most essential tool, meaning your research prior to the simulation is vital: the more prepared you are, the faster you will be able to provide participants with crucial information during the debate.



In order to better play your role, which entails frequent research activity, you are allowed to bring your laptop to the European Parliament and use the Internet. Since the MEPs and Ministers are not allowed to do the same, they may occasionally ask you for information about specific EU legislation or Directive or Regulation-related issues. Since the end of roaming charges in the EU however, most participants can access the Internet on their smartphones, meaning you cannot only rely on this technological advantage to forge your strategy.

A key asset will be your responsiveness in face of the debate's evolution. Although you will not be taking part in the main debate in the Council, being able to provide a friendly MEP or Minister with essential talking points matching your position is one way to make your voice heard. Same goes with providing them with a rebuttal to an amendment you want to oppose. So listen to the debate in Parliament when you are there, and always have a note ready to be sent to your allies in the room!

It is essential for you to understand that most participants are busy people. They have their own agenda to advance, their next speech to prepare, their amendments to write and pass... This means any job you can do for them will buy you at least some gratitude and will give them a free argument to use in the debate. With this in mind, do not hesitate to provide lawmakers with talking points (if not ready-to-use full speeches), or to send them professionally written amendments, along with short explanatory statements they could use to defend them in front of their colleagues. At MEUS, as is the case in real life, some lawmakers are happy to just take up the arguments, or even the amendments, written for them by friendly IRs and defend them in the debates, as it grants them an easy way to partake in the discussion. Take care however not to abuse this strategy, or to choose your recipients poorly: if you send the same amendment to every MEP, they will all know which ones have actually been written by an IR!

5. MEUS: AN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVE'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Be polite and considerate. Be courteous, but do not be afraid to take a firm position. When performing your activities, do your best to project an image which is positive, constructive and flexible. Expect some participants to distrust or even oppose you outright simply because of your job title; win them over through time, knowledge, honey, and smile.

Respect your adversaries. There will be IRs trying to influence legislation on behalf of interests which are different from or even contrary to yours. Always be sportsmanlike. Compete - but do not fight.

Master your time. Be part of the process as early as possible and throughout all stages, 24/7. Any time is lobbying time, coffee and lunch breaks, tram journeys, and parties included... When working with other IRs, share your time and tasks! Put your ideas forward as soon as possible: an amendment whose key idea has not been debated during the general debate is often a stillborn amendment.

Build coalitions within the EP and the Council. Whatever issue you are lobbying, you certainly are not alone. The more people you can get on your side, the better. Know your topic. Back up your arguments with facts and figures.

Provide MEPs and Ministers with convincing arguments and exclusive information; this is extremely helpful in building mutual trust. Learn who your best allies are, secure their support, then work quickly to build a large majority around them and your ideas.

Connect with legislators. Provide them with the information they need, do your best to make yourself useful. Spoon-feed them talking points and amendments if needed, they will be grateful to you for making their job easier and giving them a possible moment of glory amongst so many politicians. If your interest group has strong ties with/influence in any specific country, start by lobbying MEPs and Ministers from said country. Ignore no one: even someone you disagree with or does not seem useful to achieve your goals could prove a valuable source of useful information.

Monitor the debates. Monitor emerging issues, use your contacts to be informed about the latest developments, be prepared with position statements. Never miss your chance to address an issue as soon as it is raised: this is a window of opportunity that may never open again! Always take the initiative, be proactive and do not wait for other participants to approach you. If you can put your key priorities on the debate agenda from day one, you already won a battle by ensuring they will be debated.

Put the note passers to good use. Send note after note, constantly reminding as many people as possible that you exist and they should work with you. When your topic is debated in one institution, keep on sending notes to lawmakers in the other institution: they will be grateful for the follow-up intel. In particular, make sure Ministers are reminded about you and care for your opinion.

Be brief. For written communications, try to keep it to a page or less. Remember: MEPs and Ministers have busy schedules. Offering them a written amendment is always more appreciated than asking them to write one.

Prioritize. What do you really want to change and what would be a nice thing to have? Push as far and as hard as you can but be also open to compromise if it delivers on your main objective.

Adapt. Despite all of your efforts, the debate can spin in a totally different direction than what you expected or hoped for. If this happens, adapt and try to make the best out of the situation. Do not hesitate to pick-up an original idea going in your favour and put your weight behind it.

Persist. Do not expect instant results. If a particular tactic does not bear fruit, then be prepared to try something different. Always have several strings to your bow as a backup plan. You may not see it through direct results, but the work you do could end up paying.

Take nothing for granted. Do not rely too much on your interest group's real-life weight, resources or PR clout. When you arrive in Strasbourg, you open a blank page, and only your hard work will make it relevant. Remember all your interlocutors believe they owe you nothing.

Build up name recognition. If people do not know you, why should they care about you and your deeds? Make sure people know your name and your interest group, and they know how many voters/euros/jobs you represent. Try to get invited to one of the Parliament's group meetings, as this will solidify your image as an expert and establish you as a reliable working partner for many MEPs.

Use the media. The media is one of the most effective lobbying tools that you have at your disposal. Involve the Journalists in the activities you are doing. Write press releases and comment on the most recent developments. Leak selected information, fake news if need be and if a Journalist buys it! Try to get media attention on your case.

Use the Influence System. It is designed to give you additional means of pressure over politicians, so use it and remind them that ignoring you is ignoring the people you represent. Effective lobbying is attention-grabbing, and it can help you achieve just that.

Play the inter-institutional game. If you do your information-gathering well, you will be better informed about what is happening in Parliament than the Council is, and vice-versa. So make the most out of this knowledge: make sure your ideas get supported in the general debate, that they are talked about in Trilogue, adopted in the first reading, seen as red lines in the negotiation, and unchanged in the second reading. If you play your hand well, people will feel like they have no choice but your hand-crafted deal, or no deal.

Count and whip the votes. Nothing is won until the final vote is cast. Do not take any vote for certain until it is cast. Do not take a promise to file one of your amendments for certainty that it will indeed be filed, let alone adopted. Count the vote you have, the ones you could get and the ones you will never get, get as many of the second category into the first one and make sure there are more YES than NOs.

... And last, but not least: *Have fun!*

**Model European Union Strasbourg 2020
Interest Representatives' Guide**

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