European Council Summit Meeting of the European Union

University of Pittsburgh

Rules and Procedures

The European Councils are important but fairly loosely structured affairs with relatively informal rules. However, they succeed because they have an established routine and require careful, lengthy, and structured preparations. There are also extensive consultations before the actual meetings begin. Moreover, since the European Council usually makes decisions along fairly broad outlines, a more formal and specific translation and implementation procedure through specific actions by other EU Institutions (Council, Commission, and Parliament) usually follows. As a result, the rules will have to deviate somewhat from the "real thing" for the purpose of this conference. This is also consistent with other EU simulations in Europe and the U.S., which have come to rely on parliamentary procedure.

The European Council and the EU Overview

The European Union is the political and economic union of 27 European countries. It has its roots in the aftermath of World War II, when economic cooperation and interdependence were encouraged in order to create a more unified, peaceful Europe.

Governance in the European Union is complicated, with a large number of actors participating in any particular process. The European Council is made up of the Heads of State/Government, and it sets the overall political direction of the EU. However, the European Council has little direct power, and day-to-day politics typically takes place through the three major law-making European institutions: the European Parliament, which is directly elected by citizens in EU member-states; the Council of the European Union, which is composed of the relevant government minister for each individual member-state based on the topic of meeting (i.e., the Environmental Council would contain all member states' Environment Ministers); and the European Commission, which represents the interests of the EU as a whole with the President being selected by the European Council. Although the specific process differs based on issue area, the Commission generally proposes new laws, and the Parliament and Council of the European Union choose to adopt them.

As indicated above, the European Council is typically "big picture"-oriented and plays little direct role in the legislative process. However, the fact that all of the Heads of State/Government of the EU gather together to speak with the same voice gives special emphasis and power to their agreements, and what happens in the European Council is sure to impact the views of the Commission, whose President is selected by the European Council; the European Parliament; and the Council of the European Union, who ministers presumably represent the same government as the Heads of State/Government in the European Council.

As a result, decisions of the European Council often lack direct legal impact but greatly influence the legislative process. For the purposes of this simulation, we are emphasizing the role played by the European Council, but, in practice, it is only one of a number of major, influential bodies within the European Union.

Procedure and Basic Rules Overview

Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government

Seating Arrangement:

The Heads of State and/or Government (HoG) are seated in alphabetical order (using the English name of the country). At the head of the table is the Chair (see below: Role of the Chair). In a virtual simulation, of course, visual placement of HoGs on the screen cannot be controlled. In this situation, note that roll call, *tour(s) de table*, and voting will be conducted in alphabetical order by the English name of the member-states.

In addition to the Heads of State/Government, each member-state may also have an additional delegate present. These hold the role of *attaché*. Attachés can help HoGs by sending notes to other HoGs/attachés, helping prepare responses, and in general being flexible with HoGs focus on the meeting at hand. Attachés can share equal responsibilities with HoGs and swap roles with their HoG between topics or during lunch. Alternatively, attachés can serve entirely in a supportive role or as an observer.

To avoid unnecessary confusion, role switching (i.e., swapping the face or "official HoG" of a member-state with the attaché) is only permitted between topics and at lunch.

The Individual Sessions

Chairing:

In order to provide structure to the sessions, modified **rules of parliamentary procedure** apply (with certain exceptions). **The President chairs all sessions.**

Role of the Chair: It is important to recall that these are proceedings among delegates of equal rank. They would usually have known each other for some time and would have interacted often. Thus, the atmosphere is one of collegiality, equality and congeniality. This includes the relationship between the Chair and the other participants. While the Chair is formally in charge of the proceedings and entitled to all courtesy and respect, they would usually "propose" and "suggest," rather than "decree" and "dictate." The Chair, more than any other participant, is interested in a harmonious and consensual outcome of the conference.

Roll Call -- Quorum:

The first order of business will be to establish roll and a quorum. This is done by the Chair at the beginning of the session and does not require a motion. The Chair may record absentees informally by comparing their roster to the participant list in the virtual platform. The Chair may also call on countries to identify themselves as present (note: there is no "present and voting"). If member state representatives will be delayed or temporarily absent for some reason, courtesy requires that they notify the Chair beforehand.

Setting the Agenda:

The Chair will normally decide the order of the agenda, but a delegate may also move to "set the agenda." In this case, courtesy requires that the delegate be given a maximum of one minute to explain their rationale. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires the support of a simple majority of delegates present to be successful. The Chair will declare the agenda set as such if the vote is successful. The Chair will say: *"<country name> wishes to set the agenda as follows, unless other proposals are put forth at this time."* If there were an objection by a delegate, the Chair would respond: *"<country name> moves to set the agenda…"* Two other delegates would have to second the motion, which would be brought to a vote, following a brief justification (not exceeding one minute). A simply majority is needed to carry the motion.

Tour de Table:

The *tour de table* is a tool for moving a discussion forward by asking each HoG to give a short summary (~2 minutes) of their thinking. Although the Chair can engage in a *tour de table* during the regular meeting, each European Council begins with a mandatory *tour de table*, before establishing roll or quorum. Think of this as an opportunity to signal your interests and intentions. Are you upset about one of the major topics on the agenda? Say so! Look for and draw the attention of potential allies. In both the mandatory and any additional *tours de table*, try to use your speaking time in order to build alliances, convince others, and protect your interests.

Speaking Order and Time:

There is no speakers' list. In a virtual simulation, delegates wishing to speak should use the videoconferencing software's feature to virtually raise their hands and must be recognized by the Chair; physically raising one's hand on video is not sufficient. It is the Chair's obligation to ensure and guide the flow of communication, and to afford each member an equal opportunity to speak. The Chair is assisted by the Secretary in keeping track of the proceedings including the fair administration of the right to speak. The **length of speaking time** will be set by Chair. The proceedings correspond roughly to a "moderated caucus" at Model United Nations. **Participants need not address each other through the Chair. The Chair, however, may comment on statements and express the view of the Presidency like all other delegates.** Participants may **yield the remaining speaking time** to a fellow member state by indicating so at the end of their speech. If not, the Chair may call upon another participant. **When time is yielded, only the time remaining to the original speaker is granted to the new speaker.** However, the Chair may expand this allotment if the Chair feels that it is necessary.

Temporary Adjournment (note there is no "caucus"):

A Chair or a delegate may call for a temporary adjournment of a meeting for a specified time (often around 10-15 minutes), and (if necessary) be given a maximum of one minute to explain their rationale (e.g., for the purpose of an Informal Consultation): **If at least two other delegates second the motion**, it will immediately be put to a vote, and requires the **support of at least a simple majority (normally 15 delegates)** to succeed. The Chair determines the length and will allow no more than TWO temporary adjournments within a 60-minute period. A delegate would say: *"<country> moves to have a temporary adjournment for the purpose of an informal consultation."* At each full hour there will be a mandatory **Temporary Adjournment** for no fewer than five and no more than 15 minutes. At the appropriate moment the Chair will simply announce that the meeting is adjourned until <time>. Mandatory **Temporary Adjournments** may be used for the delegates in the HoG session and their political attachés to exchange views and to report on the progress of negotiations.

Points and Motions:

Delegates may rise to **points of order** (always permitted, except during a speech and actual voting), **points of information** (after a speech is completed, whenever the Chair asks "are there any points and motions at this time), and points of **personal privilege** (extremely rare, always permissible). **Motions** may also be used to combine or divide agenda items or to table an issue. Motions are also in order (determined always by the Chair) to "close debate on an issue" and bring it to a vote. Motions are always subject to a "second" by two delegates and are brought to a vote immediately.

Point of Order. If, during a meeting, a delegate feels that the meeting is running in a manner contrary to these Rules, they may rise to a point of order. The Chair may overrule or accept the appeal. If accepted, the Chair may make an immediate ruling, or ask the delegate to speak on the point of order for a maximum of one minute (but they may not speak on the subject of the debate). The Chair will then immediately rule on the point of order.

Point of Information. If a delegate wishes to obtain a clarification of procedure or of any other matter, they may rise to a point of information and receive clarification from the Chair or anyone else designated by the Chair.

Point of Personal Privilege. If a delegate wishes to raise a question, leave the room for an extended time, or make a request relating to personal comfort or their treatment by other delegates, they may rise to a point of personal privilege and receive an immediate ruling by the Chair. There is NO vote on this point.

RULE: ALL MOTIONS BY ANY PARTICIPANTS (OTHER THAN THE CHAIR) ARE ALWAYS SUBJECT TO A SECOND BY TWO DELEGATES. THESE MAY BE ASKED TO GIVE AN EXPLANATION OF THE RATIONALE (NO MORE THAN 1 MINUTE). IF SUCCESSFUL THEY WILL BE BROUGHT TO A VOTE IMMEDIATELY.

Tour de Table

A device known as a *tour de table* may also be used, at the discretion of the Chair. The Chair asks each head of government in turn to give a short summary (up to 2 minutes) of their thinking on the matter under discussion, thus ensuring that every member state is able to outline its position, and allowing the Chair to determine whether a compromise is possible.

Resolution:

Resolutions represent the fundamental policy-making power of the European Council. It is through resolutions that Heads of Government impact the actual process of European integration. Resolutions should be designed with the following goals in mind: 1) They should have some impact on the actual policy questions/crises that are driving the discussion; 2) They should represent a broad coalition of European interests, as all resolutions require **CONSENSUS**; 3) They should be clear, straightforward, and only as detailed as necessary to deal with the broad outlines of an issue (Heads of Government are big picture-oriented!); and 4) They should directly respond to the policy considerations outlined in the Commission Proposal (i.e., the Model EU Agenda). In general, unless policies are linked in order to ensure the support of one or more HoGs, smaller, more focused resolutions will be more successful. Once a resolution has been successfully passed by the European Council, it will greatly impact the work of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the relevant Council(s) of the European Union.

Resolution Submission:

A resolution on an agenda item, essentially a brief paragraph prefaced with the following operative phrases – **"recommends," "emphasizes," "insists on," "notes," "is particularly pleased," "undertakes," "encourages,"** or **"welcomes"** – must be handed to the Secretary. A proposed resolution must have **five signatures** from **five participants**. There is no distinction between signatories, sponsors, or authors.

Resolution Example:

Resolution title: Emphasizing the needs of EU member-states to play a role in refugee selection
Agenda Topic: I. Migration Crisis/C. Proposed Solutions/ii. Resettlement Signatories:
Signatories: (Must have five in order to introduce to chair)

In order to ensure the democratically-elected leaders of the EU member-states are given room to respond to the refugee crisis and the problem of resettlement, we recommend the following additions to the Commission's draft resolution under I.C.ii.: ii. In full awareness of the gravity of the crisis and the situation faced daily by refugees, we must be mindful of the fact that democracies require open and healthy domestic debate about issues of great importance. Refugee resettlement formulae and other approaches that attempt to formalize refugee resettlement are not compatible with these democratic norms. Any large-scale refugee resettlement within EU member-states needs to happen with the explicit support and input of these member-states.

Resolution Withdrawal:

If all signatories to a resolution agree to withdraw a resolution, it will be removed from consideration. This request would be made to the Secretary in the same manner as the initial resolution submission.

Resolution Amendment:

There is no separate amendment process. If all signatories support an amended resolution, the original resolution will be withdrawn and the amended resolution will be added as a new resolution. Otherwise, the amended resolution will be treated as a separate resolution to be considered alongside the original draft. In the latter case, there would still need to be five total signatories.

Question and Answer:

After a resolution has been submitted, the Chair may call a special Question and Answer session, so that signatories can explain their resolution to the rest of the European Council. Signatories may choose one or more Heads of Government to represent their resolution, and other Heads of Government are encouraged to ask questions about the resolution. This session operates by the same rules as the rest of the summit meeting. The Chair has considerable discretion in organizing, calling, and ending Question and Answer sessions.

Closure of Debate:

The Chair will normally decide on the closure of a debate, but a delegate may move for closure, and (if necessary) be given a maximum of one minute to explain their rationale. If at least two other delegates second the motion, it will immediately be put to a vote and requires the support of at least a simple majority to be successful. The Chair will declare the debate closed if the vote is successful. Once debate is closed, voting will commence immediately on the agenda items.

Voting Procedure:

Where votes are taken, they should normally be open and made by roll call in alphabetical order by member state, and recorded by the Secretary. Voting will be verbal and expressed as "Yes," "No," or "Abstain." Once a vote has been declared open, no one will be allowed to speak other than to cast their vote. Once all votes have been cast, the Secretary will tally the vote and immediately announce the result. The decision of the Secretary on a tally will be final.

Resolutions are voted on in the order received by the Secretary of the session.

Voting on procedural issues (e.g., adjournments) requires a **simple majority** of the delegates **present** in the session including the Commission President. **One member = one vote!**

Voting on matters of the agenda (sequence, division, combination of agenda items, tabling, and delegating the agenda, as well as opening and closing debate) requires a simple majority. **One member, one vote!**

Voting on substantive issues, such as resolutions, requires **CONSENSUS** by the **Member States ONLY.**

Note: there is no "present and voting" or "present" rule in the EU!

Following the resolution of all agenda items, the Presidency will issue a comprehensive report summarizing the individual resolutions.

Presidential Statement:

In order to facilitate progress in the simulation, as well as to reiterate important points already made, the Presidency may deliver a Presidential Statement. The statement would serve to review the movement of the conference or to encourage further discussion on agenda topics.

The Closing Plenary Session

At the end of the conference, there will be a closing plenary session. Its purpose is twofold**:**

- **To bring any unfinished business to a conclusion** (decision and resolution).

- **To vote on the total package of resolutions negotiated and decided**-- The HoG must endorse the total package by an affirmative vote. In short, as in the real EU, **it must be adopted by CONSENSUS**. If there is a last-minute objection or a change in position on an agenda item already agreed to in negotiations, the HoG must indicate this to the Chair. The agenda item will then be bracketed out and opened up for further action (debate, new resolution, and vote).

Crisis

During a session of the European Council, a crisis may arise that will require European Heads of Government to respond. These crises could arise at any point during the European Council. While they will likely involve the pre-determined policy issue areas, the crisis could considerably impact the context in which this discussion takes place. Heads of Government should be prepared to be flexible, as necessary, and to take their perspective into new policy domains as circumstances demand.

Differences from Model UN

For students coming in from a background in Model UN, there are a few notable differences in terminology and rules:
- Standard parliamentary procedure in the Model EU context is roughly comparable to a "moderated caucus" in Model UN.
- Temporary adjournments are similar in effect to "unmoderated caucuses" in Model UN.
- Unlike Model UN, there is no speakers' list.
- There is no distinct amendment process. Unfriendly amendments are treated as new bills. Friendly amendments withdraw the original bill and replace it with a new one.
- Substantive issues require consensus by member states.

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

What is it?	How do you phrase it?	What does it mean?	Does it need a second?	Can it be amended?	Is it debatable?	Is a vote needed for it to pass?
Main Motion	"I move that…"	We should do this.	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes	50% + 1 (majority)
Amendment	"I move to amend the motion by…"	I have an idea to make this motion better.	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes	50% + 1 (majority)
Close Debate	"I move the question…"	I think that we should vote.	Yes (2)	No	No	50% + 1 (majority)
Unanimously Close Debate	"I call the question…"	Let's vote – we've all had enough discussion.	No	No	No	100% (consensus)
Correction	"Point of information…"	There's something we should all know about.	No	No	No	No Vote
Personal Privilege	"I raise a point of personal privilege."	I need to make a request relating to personal comfort or to leave the room.	No	No	No	No Vote
Table	"I move to table this motion until…"	For now, let's move on to the next agenda topic.	Yes (2)	No	No	50% + 1 (majority)
Order (!)	"I raise a point of order."	I protest that we're doing something wrong here.	No	No	No	No Vote (Chair Rules)
Remove from the Table	"I move to take up from the table…"	Let's return to a prior agenda topic.	Yes (2)	No	No	50% + 1 (majority)
Temporary Adjournment	"I move for a temporary adjournment on [topic] for X minutes"	The delegates will talk without moderation—usually to try to write a resolution	Yes (2)	No	No	50% + 1 (majority)