**Political Groups of the European Parliament**

**Introduction:**

Within the European Union exists the European Parliament, which is directly elected by citizens of EU member states. As such, it is the most democratic institution in the EU. Each state is allocated a number of MEP’s proportional to its population, with a floor and a ceiling to ensure that no one country is over or underrepresented. Within Europe exist “Europarties” that operate transnationally and that are both regulated and funded by the EU. These parties can campaign in European Union elections and influence the actions of the European Council. According to the Lisbon Treaty, the Europarty that wins the European elections can nominate a candidate for President of the European Commission.

Within the European Parliament itself, action is coordinated not by parties, but by “political groups.” These political groups differ from parties, in that they are not allowed to campaign in elections, as this is the responsibility of parties. Rather, the political groups are more like “coalitions” of likeminded members with an ideology and set of core principles. In some cases, the political groups are drawn from the same membership as a European political party is, in others, they represent a coalition of multiple European or national political parties, or independent politicians. By working together in a coalition, Europarties can have more power than they otherwise would.

Political groups in the European Parliament receive financial subsidies and guaranteed seats on parliamentary committees. Each group appoints a leader to help it determine how its members should vote in the European Parliament, and the leaders of group meet approximately twice a month in the “Conference of Presidents” to help coordinate the actions of Parliament.

To be recognized as a group, there must be at least 25 MEP’s from at least seven different nations who agree to come together to form the group.

# Not including “Non-Inscrits” (non-aligned members), in the 8th European Parliament there are eight Political Groups:

# European People's Party (EPP): <http://www.eppgroup.eu/>

# Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D): <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/>

# European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR): <http://ecrgroup.eu/>

# Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE): <http://www.alde.eu/>

# European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL): <http://www.guengl.eu/>

# The Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens–EFA): <http://www.greens-efa.eu/>

# Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD): <http://www.efddgroup.eu/>

# Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENL): <http://www.enfgroup-ep.eu/>

**Procedure:**

The teacher should divide the class up into eight groups, one for each of the eight current political groups. These groups should be assigned one of the eight groups and asked to gather information contained on the “Political Group Background Guide” to then present back to the class.

**Political Group Background Guide**

How many MEP’s does your Political Group have?

How many nations are represented in your Political Group?

When was your Political Group founded?

What is the ideology of your Political Group (center-right, center-left, social democrat, etc).

How Europhile or Euroskeptic is your Political Group?

What are the major policy preferences of your Political Group?

What are the policy goals your Political Group is currently trying to accomplish?

Where does your Political Group stand on the following issues?

* Migration
* Social Welfare programs
* GMOs
* Strengthening the Eurozone
* Business regulation
* Global Warming
* EU Common Foreign/Military Policy
* EU expansion
* EU Reform