



# Venice Universities' Model European Union 2020

## RULES OF PROCEDURE

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## **Rule 1 - The Presidency and its rights and obligations**

1.1 The Council of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”) shall be chaired by a President and Vice-President, and the European Parliament (hereinafter referred to as “the Parliament”) shall be chaired by a President and a Vice-President. The term “Presidency” used in this document shall refer to either the President, the Vice-President, or both jointly.

1.2. The Presidency shall be responsible for all issues pertaining to the conduct of the debate and the course of the legislative procedures and, in that role shall, among other things: open, suspend and close sittings, moderate all debates, ensure observance of the rules of procedure, maintain order and put questions to a vote.

1.3. If questions arise over the interpretation of these Rules of Procedure, the Presidency shall rule on the correct interpretation.

1.4. The Presidency may take any reasonable and appropriate action to ensure the maintenance of order during debates. These actions may include, but do not have to be limited to calling the offenders to order, refusing them the right to speak or vote, requiring them to apologize or removing them from the chamber.

1.5. During the debates, the Presidency may invite the attendance and participation of non-members of the body (e.g. representatives of the European Commission and Journalists) in the proceedings. They may be permitted to make presentations and/or answer questions posed by Members of the body.

1.6. The Presidency shall not vote on any issue on the agenda.

## **Rule 2 - The Secretaries, the Legal Advisor and the Directorate**

2.1. Both the Council’s and the Parliament’s Presidencies shall be supported by up to two Secretaries. The Secretaries shall act under the responsibility and guidance of the Presidency and assist it in all matters. At the discretion of the Presidency, the Secretaries may take any measures needed to ensure the smooth running of debates.

2.2. The organisers shall be led by the Director General and the Deputy Director General. Under the responsibility and guidance of the Director General and Deputy Director General, the organizers shall be involved in organising and coordinating the work of the Council and the Parliament.

2.3. The Legal Advisor shall assist the Members of the Council and the Parliament, the Presidency and the Directorate in order to ensure that the legislative proposals and any amendments thereof are lawful and drafted in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. It has the right to advise the Presidency on any matters pertaining to the legislative procedure, the Rules of Procedure, or any other legal matters.



2.3.1. The Legal Advisor can be consulted outside the formal meetings to make sure that amendments are phrased in a way that they accomplish their goal and that they conform with the Treaties and other existing legislations.

2.3.2. All amendments will be proofread by the Legal Advisor and those that are not admissible on legal or formal grounds will be dismissed by the Chairs on the advice of the Legal Advisor.

2.4. The presence of the Secretaries, the Legal Advisor and the Directorate in the chamber is permitted at all times unless otherwise regulated.

### **Rule 3 - Conduct and Maintenance of Order**

3.1. Words, expressions, or other actions which affront human dignity or constitute malicious attacks or discrimination against any other person are forbidden.

3.2. Any words, expressions or other actions that disrupt the orderly conduct of the debates or are dilatory in nature shall not be permitted.

3.3. All MEPs and Ministers shall maintain appropriate standards of decorum at all points during the proceedings of the conference.

3.4. In case of violations of Rule 3, the Presidency may take any appropriate disciplinary action.

### **Rule 4 - Language**

4.1. English is the official and working language for all bodies of the Venice Universities' Model European Union.

### **Rule 5 - Political Groups or factions (Parliament only)**

5.1. All Members of the Parliament shall be a member of one of the political groups of the Parliament.

5.2. Each group must have a leadership that shall be comprised of a single group leader and of up to two group secretaries. A group may make changes to its leadership if necessary and shall inform the Presidency of the Parliament of all changes to its leadership immediately.

5.3. A Member of the Parliament may choose to change their group during the conference by submitting a reasoned request to the Presidency accompanied by a signed letter from the leadership of the new group accepting the Member into their group. Taking into account the request, the Presidency will rule on whether to permit the change.



## **Rule 6 - Ordinary Legislative Procedure for the Council and the Parliament**

6.1. The legislative proposals at VeUMEU shall be discussed according to a modified Ordinary Legislative Procedure (hereinafter referred to as “OLP”)

6.2. The European Commission shall submit one proposal to the Council and the other to the Parliament in order to start the OLP. After submission of the proposals, both Institutions shall enter into the first reading of the respective proposals in accordance with the course of the OLP outlined hereinafter.

### ***First reading***

6.3. The Commissioner shall be invited to the respective institution to introduce the proposal. A question and answer session shall follow.

6.4. The introduction of the proposal by the Commissioner shall be followed in the Council by the opening statements of the Ministers of the Council, and in the Parliament by the opening statement of a representative of each faction. The time for opening statements is limited to 3 minutes per statement.

6.5. The opening statements shall be followed by a general debate on the proposal in accordance with Rule 7. During the general debate, members of the respective body may submit amendments to the original proposal until the amendment deadline.

6.6. The general debate shall be followed by a debate on amendments and the voting on amendments. The amendments shall be debated in accordance with Rules 7 and 8 respectively. Any amendments accepted during a substantive vote immediately become a part of the legislative proposal.

6.7. Once the voting on amendments is concluded, the proposal as amended by the respective institution shall be sent for deliberations for the second reading in the other institution.

### ***Second reading***

6.8. The second Commissioner shall be invited to outline the amended proposal. A question and answer session shall follow.

6.9. A presentation by the rapporteurs of the other institution shall follow to outline the amendments and their purpose. The presentation shall be followed by a question and answer session.

6.10. The rapporteurs' presentations shall be followed by an ordinary course of the reading in compliance with Rules 6.4 and 6.5.



6.11. Once the voting on amendments is concluded, the proposal as amended by the respective institution shall be submitted for deliberations for the third reading in both institutions.

### ***Third reading***

6.12. The Commissioner shall be invited to outline the amended proposal prior to the final votes. A question and answer session may be held.

6.13. Both institutions shall then hold a short debate on the final version of the proposal. No amendments shall be accepted for discussion during the third reading.

6.14. A final vote shall be taken on the entire amended texts in both institutions, with each institution first voting on the proposal it deliberated during the first reading. A proposal is only considered adopted if both institutions approve it.

## **Rule 7 - Conduct of the debate**

7.1. During the three readings, the discussions may take place in four different types of debates: The General Speakers' List, Moderated Discussion, Informal Discussion, and the Catch-the-Eye debate.

### ***7.2. General Speakers' List***

7.2.1. Any Member wishing to speak shall raise their placard or pass a note to the Presidency to be added to the General Speakers' List. The speaking time is limited to 1 minute, unless otherwise altered in compliance with Rule 11.1.1.

7.2.2. After the conclusion of a speech, points of information may be raised. A point of information may only be raised in case the previous speaker accepts it and must take the form of a question. The Presidency may limit the number of points. The time limit for a point of information shall be thirty seconds and may be followed by an equally long reply. The Presidency may decide to refuse the original speaker the right to answer at its discretion.

7.2.3. The Presidency may limit the number of speakers permitted on the General Speakers' List or suspend the list.

7.2.4. The general debate ends when there are no more speakers on the General Speakers' List for the general debate or when a motion for a closure of general debate has been granted and voted upon. The Presidency may close the General Speakers' List on their own accord if the circumstances so warrant.

7.2.5. Any speaker whose name has been added to the General Speakers' List but who was unable to speak due to the lack of time, has the right to hand in a text of the speech to the President in



writing, provided that it does not exceed the speaking time they would have been allowed (a 1-minute speech is equal to 1/2 A4 page). The President may make a summary of those speeches before closing the debate.

### *7.3. Moderated Discussion (the Council only)*

7.3.1. Moderated Discussion is only entertained in the Council.

7.3.2. A Moderated Discussion can be proposed by any Member of the Council by raising a motion in accordance with Rule 11.1.3. Additionally, a Moderated Discussion can be announced at the discretion of the Presidency.

7.3.3. A Moderated Discussion is moderated by the Presidency. Anyone who wishes to speak shall raise their placard in order to express their wish to do so. The order of speakers shall be determined at the discretion of the Presidency.

7.3.4. Each speaker may speak according to the time limit and on the topic set out in the motion.

7.3.5. Upon entering into a Moderated Discussion, the speakers' list shall be suspended and shall be returned to after the conclusion of the Discussion.

7.3.6. The total duration of the Moderated Discussion may not exceed 20 minutes and the Presidency shall alert the Members when the Discussion is reaching its time limit.

7.3.7. The Discussion may be closed or suspended before its natural conclusion at the discretion of the Presidency, if the circumstances so warrant.

7.3.8. Only Point of Personal Privilege, Point of Order or the Motion to extend the duration of the Moderated Discussion shall be entertained during the Discussion.

7.3.9. No member may leave the room during a Moderated Discussion, unless permitted by the Presidency.

### *7.4. Informal discussion*

7.4.1. An Informal Discussion can be proposed by any Member of the Council or the Parliament by raising a motion in accordance with Rule 11.1.2. Additionally, an Informal Discussion can be announced at the Presidency's discretion.

7.4.2. On entering into an Informal Discussion, the speakers' list shall be suspended and shall be returned to after the conclusion of the discussion.

7.4.3. The total duration of the Informal Discussion may not exceed 20 minutes and the Presidency shall alert the Members when the Informal Discussion is reaching its time limit.

7.4.4. No points or motions shall be entertained during the Informal Discussion.



7.4.5. No member may leave the room during the Informal Discussion, unless otherwise permitted by the Presidency.

#### 7.5. *Catch-the-Eye debate* (the Parliament only)

7.5.1. A Catch-the-Eye debate can be proposed by any Member of the Parliament at any time by raising a motion in accordance with Rule 11.1.5.

7.5.2. A Catch-the-Eye debate is moderated by the Presidency. Anyone who wishes to speak shall raise their placard in order to express themselves.

#### 7.6. *Debate on amendments* (First and Second reading only).

7.6.1. Amendments are debated in the order in which they appear in the text. If two or more contradictory amendments relate to the same paragraph, the amendment which differs most from the original text shall have priority over the others and shall be discussed first. Furthermore, the Presidency may decide to discuss amendments relating to the same matter together.

7.6.2. During the debate of an amendment, the author of the amendment shall be invited to introduce the amendment to the respective institution. After the introduction, the Presidency shall give the floor to Members who wish to speak in favour and against it. The proportion of speeches in favour and against shall be equal.

### **Rule 8 - Amendments**

8.1 Amendments may be proposed by any MEP or Minister to make changes to the legislative proposal under discussion. An amendment may delete, alter, or add any substantive part of the legislative proposal.

8.2 Amendments may only be submitted during the First or Second Reading of the legislative procedure.

8.3 The Presidency shall set a deadline for submitting amendments, after which no amendments shall be accepted. In exceptional circumstances, the Presidency may decide to accept late amendments or to change the amendment deadline.

8.4 The Presidency shall inform the Members on the form to be used for submitting amendments.

8.5 All amendments must be signed by at least 3 members of the Council (1 proponent and 2 supporters) or at least 3 members of the Parliament (1 proponent and 2 supporters).

8.6 Any signatory of an amendment may remove their support from an amendment at any point prior to the commencement of its voting procedure.



8.6.1 After the removal of a signature the Presidency shall evaluate whether the amendment still fulfils the criteria of Rule 8.5 and if it does not the amendment shall be dismissed.

8.6.2 If the proponent of the amendment removes their support from the amendment and the criteria in Rule 8.5 is still fulfilled, the Presidency shall ask for another signatory to take up proposing the amendment. If no signatory wishes to do so, the amendment shall be dismissed.

8.7 An amendment may only make changes to one article of the proposal. Exceptions to this are permitted only if the changes to the proposal are intrinsically linked and splitting them would be unreasonable. The decision on whether an amendment to multiple clauses is acceptable shall be made by the Presidency.

8.8 Friendly amendments are amendments that pertain to the language or style of another proposed amendment and may not substantially alter the original amendment. They may be made by the Presidency, or any MEP or Minister. A friendly amendment must be accepted by the proponent of the original amendment.

8.9 Prior to them being accepted for debate, all amendments shall be evaluated with regards to the procedural requirements and their adherence to the Treaties of the European Union and general principles of EU and international law.

8.9.1 Any amendment that violates EU or international law shall not be accepted for debate.

8.9.2 Any amendment violating the procedural requirements may be accepted for debate only on the express authorisation of the Presidency.

## **Rule 9 - Voting arrangements and quorum**

9.1. There are three types of votes:

9.1.1. Substantive votes pertain to the subject matter of the proposal and include any votes on the acceptance of amendments or the votes on the amended proposals. Other votes may be classed as substantive votes at the discretion of the Presidency. Abstaining is permitted during substantive votes.

9.1.1.1. In the Council, a substantive vote must fulfil the requirements of Qualified Majority voting, i.e. at least 55% of the Member States present representing at least 65% of the population of Member States present is required for a "Pass" vote. In order to form a blocking minority, at least four member states representing at least 35% of the population present voting against or abstaining is required. If the requirements for a blocking minority are not fulfilled, the Council will be considered to have rendered a majority.

9.1.1.2. In the Parliament, a substantive vote requires a simple majority, i.e. more votes in favour than against.



9.1.2. Procedural votes are any votes that are not classed as substantive votes or elections according to these Rules or a decision of the Presidency. Abstaining is not permitted during procedural votes. A procedural vote requires a simple majority, i.e. more votes in favour than against.

9.1.3. Elections are used whenever the Institution needs to choose representatives of itself, e.g. Rapporteurs. Prior to the commencement of the election the Presidency will specify the procedure to be used for the elections in question. Every member may nominate themselves or another MEP or Minister as a candidate for elections. A nomination will only be accepted if the candidate accepts it. If possible, the Presidency may permit each candidate to have a short speech introducing their candidacy.

9.2. Votes shall be taken either by a roll call, by raising of the placards or electronically. If a vote by raising of placards is unclear, the Presidency may decide to hold a subsidiary roll call or electronic vote.

9.3. During substantive voting no one but the MEPs or Ministers, the Presidency, the Legal Advisor and the Secretaries are permitted to be in the room. The Presidency may also permit specific members of the organizing team to be in the room. No one may enter, exit or move around the room unless they receive the express prior authorisation of the Presidency.

9.4. All note passing is suspended during substantive voting. No points or motions other than a Point of Personal Privilege, a Point of Order or a Point of Procedural Inquiry may be raised.

9.5. Quorum is the amount of MEPs or Ministers required to be present for the Institution to be permitted to undertake any substantive votes.

9.6. In the Parliament 1/3 of all members must be present for quorum.

9.7. In the Council more than half of all members must be present for quorum.

9.8. Quorum should be verified at the beginning of every day of debate, immediately prior to entering the voting procedure of any substantive votes and whenever a request for a verification of quorum is accepted in accordance with Rule 10.1.6.

## **Rule 10 - Points**

10.1. Members may raise any of the following points during the process, where not expressly limited by other measures in these Rules, by raising their placards and stating their point. No point other than the Point of Personal Privilege may interrupt another speaker.

10.1.1. Point of Personal Privilege may be raised if the proponent is in direct physical discomfort (e.g. unable to hear the speaker) and is unable to take part in the proceedings as a result of said discomfort. Points of Personal Privilege may be raised at any point during the proceedings, other than informal discussion, and may interrupt a speaker.



10.1.2. Point of Order may be raised if the proponent believes that an error in following the Rules of Procedure has taken place. The Presidency will rule on the point's admissibility, and if necessary, take remedial action as soon as possible. Points of Order may be raised at any point during the proceedings other than informal discussion.

10.1.3. Right of Reply may be raised if the proponent feels that they or their national honour have been insulted. The Presidency shall request the proponent to concisely explain their request, and if the point admissible, will grant the proponent a short remark to reply to the comment. The Presidency may also require for the original speaker to apologise.

10.1.4. Point of Procedural Inquiry may be raised if the proponent has a question or a request of clarification about the rules of Procedure to the Presidency. This point may also be used to seek clarification on any logistical or administrative issue pertaining to the Conference. Points of Procedural Inquiry may be raised at any point during the proceedings, other than informal discussion.

10.1.5. Point of Information may be raised during the General Speakers' List and must take the form of a question related to the subject matter of the speech by the previous speaker. The point may only be stated if the Presidency permits it and the previous speaker accepts it. The Presidency may decide to limit the amount of time available for the point or the reply. The point may only be raised during the General Speakers' List.

10.1.6. Verification of Quorum may be raised if the proponent believes that the amount of members present does not satisfy the quorum required under Rule 8. If the point is accepted by the Presidency, quorum shall be immediately verified. Verification of quorum may be raised at any point during the proceedings, other than informal discussion or during substantive voting.

10.2. The Presidency shall rule on the admissibility and appropriateness of any points raised. If the point is not accepted, the Presidency must give their reason for the refusal.

10.3. If multiple points and/or motions are raised simultaneously, they will be resolved in the order in which they appear in Annex I. If two points or motions of the same type are raised, the Presidency will decide on the order in which they are resolved.

## **Rule 11 - Motions**

11.1. Members may raise any of the following motions during the General Speakers' List, where not expressly stated otherwise:

11.1.1. Motion to limit/extend speaking time may be raised if the proponent wishes to alter the speaking time of the speakers' list. The proponent must specify the requested new speaking time.

11.1.2. Motion for an Informal Discussion may be raised to have the Institution move into informal discussion for a proposed amount of time. The proposer must specify the requested duration of the discussion that may not exceed 20 minutes.



11.1.3. Motion for a Moderated Discussion (in the Council only) may be raised to have the Institution move into Moderated Discussion for a proposed amount of time. The proposer must specify the requested duration of the Discussion, the speaking time and the topic of the Discussion. The total duration of the Discussion may not exceed 20 minutes.

11.1.4. Motion to extend the Moderated Discussion may only be raised during a moderated Discussion to extend its total duration. The final total duration of the Discussion may not exceed 20 minutes.

11.1.5. Motion for a Catch-the-Eye debate (in the Parliament only) may be raised to have the Parliament move into a Catch-the-Eye debate when a Member of the Parliament feels that a certain provision needs further discussion immediately prior to voting. The Presidency shall state the maximum permissible duration of the debate prior to the vote on the motion.

11.1.6. Motion to close the Debate may be raised to close the general debate or the debate on amendments. Once a motion to close the debate has passed, the debate shall be closed immediately and none of the speakers still on the list of speakers shall have the possibility to give their speech. In the case of the General Speakers' List, any speaker whose name has been added to the list but who was unable to speak, has the right to hand in a text of the speech in accordance with rule 7.2.5.

11.2. For a motion to be accepted it needs to pass a procedural vote. For a motion to close the debate to pass, it needs 2/3 majority in favour.

11.3. The Presidency may request for any motion to be seconded by another member for it to be voted upon.

11.4. The Presidency may call for objections to the motion and if no objections are made, may consider the motion to be accepted unanimously.

11.5. The Presidency may refuse to entertain a motion at their discretion but must give a reason for doing so.



## **Annex I - Order of precedence for points and motions**

The order of precedence of points and motions as referenced to in Rules 10 and 11 is as follows (highest to lowest):

- Point of Personal Privilege
- Point of Order
- Right of Reply
- Point of Procedural Inquiry
- Point of Information
- Verification of Quorum
- Motion to limit/extend Speaking Time
- Motion to extend the duration of the Moderated Discussion
- Motion for an informal discussion
- Motion for a Moderated Discussion
- Motion for a Catch-the-Eye debate
- Motion to close the debate

## **Annex II – Qualified majority voting in the Council and voting calculator**

Qualified majority is the most widely used voting method in the Council. It is used when the Council takes decisions during the ordinary legislative procedure, also known as co-decision. About 80% of all EU legislation is adopted with this procedure. When the Council votes on a proposal by the Commission or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a qualified majority is reached if two conditions are met:

1. 55% of member states vote in favour - in practice this means 15 out of 27;
2. the proposal is supported by member states representing at least 65% of the total EU population.

This procedure is also known as the 'double majority' rule.

### *Blocking minority*

The blocking minority must include at least four Council members representing more than 35% of the EU population.

### *Special cases*



When not all Council members participate in the vote, for example due to an opt out in certain policy areas, a decision is adopted if 55% of the participating Council members, representing at least 65% of the population of the participating member states, vote in favour.

When the Council votes on a proposal not coming from the Commission or the high representative a decision is adopted if:

- at least 72% of Council members vote in favour
- they represent at least 65% of the EU population.

### *Abstentions*

An abstention under qualified majority voting counts as a vote against. Abstention is not the same as not participating in the vote. Any member can abstain at any time.

### *Voting calculator*

Use this link to calculate your country's weight within the qualified majority  
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/voting-system/voting-calculator>