



Amendments Out, President Down

The second day of Venice Universities' Model European Union started off strong, with amendments, debates and the final vote. Both Parliament and Council had the chance to discuss them between all members, about the Regulation on Migration and Asylum and the Directive on Empowering the Green Transition respectively.

As the gavel fell and the murmurs of disappointment echoed through the chambers, the President of the European Parliament stood before the gathered MEPs, grappling with the outcome of the day's proceedings. Today's simulation of the European Parliament, while brimming with potential, had left many disheartened by the lack of progress on key amendments and substantive procedures.

In an exclusive interview following the simulation, the Parliament's President addressed the disappointment that tinged his remarks during the session. "Timing played a role," he explained, "with delays plaguing the morning session and post-coffee break discussions." Yet, beyond logistical challenges, the heart of his disappointment lay in the failure to effectively navigate substantive procedures. Despite a commendable quantity of proposed amendments (12 in total),

only a mere fraction found favor (only 4), with just one successfully passing through the rigorous scrutiny of legal advisors and parliamentary procedure, the amendment about "Vulnerability".

The core problems, as highlighted by the President, stemmed from various issues ranging from procedural errors to the lack of legal clarity.



Letter from the Editor

It's time to get on the third and the final day of the VeUMEU 2024. During the two turbulent days in the two chambers, we had the chance to hear the opinions and the arguments of the different political factions and states.

While the Parliament was definitely generous with the scope of the different perspectives from all over the political spectrum, likewise, it failed to provide us with the proper consensus due to the fiasco regarding the amendments.

In the Council, even though it ran on a much peaceful pace, we had the chance to see some intense clashes, such as the one between the ministers of Malta and Estonia. However, maybe the lack of caution or cooperation among the representatives prevented further substantial developments of the proposal.

While we encourage better collaboration and compromise among the participants, the press stays at your disposal to keep you updated about the developments taking place in these institutions.

*Editor in Chief,
Lizi Bukhrashvili*

Many amendments were rejected due to procedural inadequacies—some lacked clear authorship, while others stumbled over ambiguities in language that left legal experts scratching their heads. Furthermore, while intentions were noble, a failure to articulate these intentions within the confines of legal terminology proved detrimental to their success.

When asked whether the MEPs met his expectations, the President expressed a nuanced perspective. While substantive shortcomings left him wanting, he lauded the MEPs' grasp of procedural matters and their adeptness in fostering general debate. He remained hopeful for future engagements, encouraged by the prospect of collective learning and improvement.

Echoing the sentiments of the President, VeUMEU's Legal Advisor, Miss Sara Dal Monico, offered her insights on the day's events. Reflecting on the evolution of the simulation over the years, she marveled at the consistency of its challenges and the continuous process of improvement. Despite setbacks, she emphasized the importance of discourse preceding amendments, viewing it as integral to fostering meaningful change.



Addressing the dearth of successful amendments, the Legal Advisor refrained from labeling it a failure but rather as an opportunity for deeper reflection. Ms Dal Monico underscored the necessity for amendments to be not only persuasive but legally robust—a standard that few proposals managed to meet. However, amidst the disappointment, one glimmer of hope emerged—the introduction of vulnerability in discussions surrounding asylum and migration regulation. This inclusion, rooted in international human rights law, stood as a testament to the potential for substantive progress even in the face of adversity.

While the conference room was ablaze during the European's Parliament, events developing in the European Council weren't less engaging.

The Council's office in charge to evaluate the legality of the proposal promoted by the Member States expressed yesterday his opinion regarding the 7 amendments proposed by the Ministers at the Council of the European Union to amend the "Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through

better protection against unfair practices and better information". Unfortunately, only 2 out of 7 amendments were expressed according to the correct formulation, being able to be voted by the Council. We encountered the Legal Advisor, Ms Sara Dal Monico, in asking for a detailed explanation about the reasons for the rejection of so many amendments.

The Legal Advisor argued that: "Denmark's proposal has been rejected on substantial ground and this happened because the term -commercial speeches- used by the ministry is not considered a juridical term and therefore could not be used to amend a Directive. Moreover, the whole proposal was too vague and unclear. The Irish proposal contained a term, -penalties- which belongs to the criminal law and could not be used within a directive that does not belong to that area because it lacks the legal base. The Swedish proposal was rejected because of substantial grounds and this occurred because the ministry attempted to introduce a principle, the one of retroactivity, that is severely prohibited by the European Union law. Lastly, I have to say that the Finnish and Hungarian amendments fell on procedural ground because both were referring to the wrongful documents and therefore could not be accepted".

We also went asking the opinion of the Vice-President of the Council, which expressed his thoughts as follows: "Even though this was kind of expected, we are obviously unhappy about all those amendments being not adequate for usage, which was a consensus that was reached by our legal advisor, our Commissioners and the Council staff. Delegates need to be more careful when preparing their amendments because the risk of committing an error is high. Notwithstanding this, I hope delegates don't get discouraged but see this as an opportunity for growth and improvement".



Although the majority of the amendments flunk, 2 of them, both coming presented by the Minister of Finland Mister Alexander Kraut, passed the legal revision and the Council vote. The Minister's happiness was visible and commented: "we are very happy that our amendments got such great feedback. The acceptance of them is a big step into empowering consumers towards a green transition. We now hope the parliament accepts them too. Unfortunately, we could not vote on Finland's third amendment due to a formal error, therefore we passed that to the Parliament,

hoping for a reintroduction”.

Since we wanted to understand how Ministers reacted at the rejection of their proposals, we asked them directly. Minister of Denmark, Miss Laura Bravin replied saying that:” Kingdom of Denmark has always invested in transparency and consumer protection. It is crucial to specify that an oral type of commercial communication should be included, especially in a world becoming always more digitized. We delegated this task to the Parliament, hoping they could approve our amendment.

Ireland, represented by Miss Sara Cincotti, expressed regret, stating that:” We have been particularly deluded by the fact that our amendments have been rejected because now enterprises won’t be obliged to furnish information regarding their Commercial Guarantee of Durability”. Minister of Sweden, Mister Theo Hughes, reacted firmly, assuring that:” I thought the law was a necessary measure to reward those companies and countries who have already, and without need of government pressure, moved towards the product sustainability guidelines outlined in the proposal. The Swedish private sector has already been innovated in line with similar green regulations and given the outcome of this amendment will be disappointed that early adoption will be forgotten by the consumers”. Lastly, we interviewed the minister of Hungary, Miss Valeriia Cherednik, who replied affirming:” We are deluded by the rejection because we proposed to have a dialogue among traders and consumers in order to help blind people receiving oral information along with a written contract, something that won’t happen”.

Sadly to admit, amendments have to be presented according to the law’s terms as indicated by the strictly European procedures. We acknowledge the legal complications of formulating a proposal free from technicalities and, because of this, we express our gratitude to the Ministers and Members of the European Parliament that worked tirelessly to improve the legislation of the European Union.

In conclusion, the simulation of the European Parliament and Council provided valuable insights into the complexities of legislative processes. Despite setbacks and rejections, participants demonstrated resilience and dedication to the pursuit of meaningful change. As the simulation concludes, there is a sense of gratitude for the collective efforts and a renewed commitment to future engagements. It is through these experiences that growth and improvement are fostered, paving the way for a more effective and inclusive European Union.

Journalists - Rebecca Basso and Francesco Girardi

To Green or Not To Green

Apparently, amidst the many things that we have learnt during yesterday's debates, one is that the great majority of the parties want to take a green turn, except for the Greens, who only took steps back.

While the directive for the GREEN transition aims to create a circular economy and help citizens make the most sustainable choices when buying a product, the GREENS couldn’t bring themselves to properly advocate for what, as their name suggests, should matter the most for all members.

How can you fail to support a directive that represents what you believe in? By relying mostly on ideological rhetoric, rather than working on more pragmatic resolutions. In both the position paper and the opening speech of the debate, the party stated that one of our main concerns should be prioritising carbon reduction and energy efficiency, and that a great way to raise awareness about those topics is through comprehensive education and media channels, to reach as many citizens as possible and to teach them why it's important to make sustainable choices.



This useful proposal was unfortunately followed by a clearly non-backed statement about nuclear energy. The leader emphasised in her speech the party’s bold opposition to nuclear power, which is an incoherent stance for someone who should support low carbon emission industries, because nuclear power is largely supported in the broader scientific field.

How can they expect the Union to listen to their educational approach, when they are misinformed on a far too important matter? Unexpectedly, the leader of the party brought up an issue that was not mentioned in the discussed document: the food industry. She proceeded to defend protesting European farmers and attacking big companies and intensive farming practices, probably not being aware of the fact that extensive farming is still not sustainable for the planet, as the main issue with animal farming is the livestock industry, which causes up to 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Price of Transparency

Luckily, one of the party members, Ms. Cosoli, representative of Austria, mentioned the ever-growing issue of fast-fashion companies that are constantly polluting through the production of cheap quality products in countries that don't hold the same ecological standards for companies.

She stated that those companies should be held accountable for the damages they are causing to the environment, but the consumers should reduce their shopping habits to avoid overconsumption, and of course pay great attention to the labels, as they could be misleading and induce us to buy non-sustainable products through catchphrases like "conscious choice".

The party leader has expressed support for anti-greenwashing laws and other measures mentioned in the directive but has not made any relevant comments on how the Union could work on more practical solutions other than what the directive has already established.

Yesterday the party lacked pragmatic positions rather relying on a stubborn radical rhetoric, which during the previous debate about asylum and migration management had never animated one of their speeches. As most of my colleagues noticed the Green party has never really focused on environmental migrants: it seems that they find it quite difficult to balance their sustainability concerns with their agenda. Shocking!



When confronted about the poor performance showcased today, the only remaining member able to go through the confrontation, Ms. Cosoli, stated that she recognizes their mistakes and that they failed to support their ideas. She was open and honest about their inefficiency, owning up to the party's faults, even though the interview during the press conference actually wasn't meant for her, but for both the members missing during the last moments of today's event.

Journalist Giulia Ottaviani

"We approve, we approve, we approve," but concerns emerge from the right wing. All parties, from left to right, seem to agree on the importance of the Consumer Empowerment Directive for the green transition, which would definitively and clearly distinguish products that have a sustainable production process behind them from those that only present themselves as such.

If the proposal is approved, consumers will no longer have to worry about the misleading quotes about the environment and will no longer be misled by greenwashing practices. In addition, they will be able to have useful information about the durability and repair of purchased items. Some doubt is advanced about the costs companies will have to bear should they undertake the transition of their production system, but all in all there is little controversy. Were it not for some right-wing parties who during the debate tried to remind us that alongside the pros for the beneficiary there are also cons. In this sense, the most realistic negative impact the consumer could experience would be the increasing costs.

"The price of the product will increase based on what the company is doing to comply with European laws, all the necessary qualities to put on the product. To create a balance, the company must hinder someone else: the consumer," urges ECR leader Xhafa Dea. "Ask a homeless person or a family that has a lot of problems with the family budget to buy products with a sustainability label; they don't care, they will choose low-quality products because they are cheap." ID party leader Arianna Guida also confirms this: in case "the procedures are unclear or very difficult to implement, they could burden the producers, then the products and finally the price." NI leader Mario Mastrocola also agrees: "We won't deny that prices won't drop even a cent after laws like this are passed, but we believe that sometimes costs are worth incurring in the service of a greater good." Concluding the right-wing quartet is also the position of the EPP, whose leader, Danagul Alimova, makes explicit: "Changing towards the unattainable has a cost, we expect the price to rise, but nevertheless we will balance it by increasing incomes as well."



This can lead to the opposite of the desired result, as the citizen is put not in the position of contributing by purchasing sustainable products to support environmentally friendly companies, but of becoming a conscious, active and (in most cases) involuntary opponent of the transition in response to climate change. With the aggravation that this depends solely on its financial means.

Speaking cautiously about rising prices for these specific products is the Left Party. Leader Fausto Randazzo reiterates, "There may be a danger of premium increases, but while any increase in premiums would not be so devastating and could be offset by welfare measures, keeping the situation as it is now would not be good as the asymmetry of information is a disadvantage for the weaker sections of society and an obstacle to the EU's green transition."

Neutrality and impartiality on the part of the Greens, who, with leader Marija Mihajlovic's "there will be no negative impacts", place themselves at the center of the argument of opponents and supporters of price increases.

At the opposite pole we find the S&D party of Federico Claps, which says that "the directive is only about the information that is provided to the consumer" and adds that "although in the short term the expense might appear higher than before, the fact that the durability of the product is also guaranteed would dilute the expense, making the cost of the product lower in long term."



The Renew Europe party, whose leader Federico Campagnolo even believes that "the price will decrease," also takes sides. Referring to the theories of economics, which he underlines is not an exact science, explains that "if you have a product you have to produce it to meet a certain demand, so you increase the supply. But if the quantity of a certain good is low, then the premium increases. If we force companies to produce greener products, it means that being green is no longer a premium, but becomes a kind of norm. The supply of green products increases, and as they have to compete with each other, the premiums decrease. If no one sells because of its high set price, someone will lower the price and the other will try to do without." In conclusion, he stresses, "The directive is all about simple information, and I don't think the near expansion of information will lead to higher prices."

Let's Tax Them!

The new proposal for a Directive on the empowerment of consumers for the green transition presented by the European Commission aims to make consumers aware of the sustainability of the products they buy. It is therefore a directive that is in line with the European Union's objective towards a progressive reduction of the emissions. While focusing on the consumer side, there are consequences also for companies. They will in fact have to follow precise parameters set at European level in order to be able to guarantee their consumers that the products they manufacture are sustainable.

Therefore, during the debate in the Parliament, several MEPs (in particular among the EPP and ECR seats) claimed that, of course, the directive is primarily about the consumer side, but the supply side must not be forgotten as well as the need to defend a fair and competitive market. In fact, it seems that there are some risks inside this directive in this regard.

The biggest problem relates to small-medium scale companies that, due to this directive, "become less competitive because they are not able to achieve the same level of sustainability as big companies", says Candeago From EPP. Since they are not able to prove that they are eco-friendly, instead of choosing their products, consumers will instead choose the ones offered by biggest companies, which are able to guarantee that they respect sustainability standards. This is not the only relevant point: Paturzo from ECR also underlines that big companies, as opposed to the small and medium-sized ones, can afford a legal team to be able to initiate the procedures required by the directive.

So, what can be done to allow small companies to be more competitive with respect to the big ones, thus being able to survive in this more green market?

Longhi and De Marinis from S&D agree on the disadvantageous situation of small industries. In talking about possible solutions to this problem, however, the answer is not exactly what one might expect from representatives of left-wing MEPs. What their party is in fact thinking seems to be the introduction of a progressive taxation with respect to the level of emissions. "In this way you become aware of the impact your company is having by not regulating itself to European standards" says De Marinis from S&D. "You can't force them to close their activity because of not respecting the standards, but you have to make them aware of the impact of their company. This through taxation".

A colleague, Longhi, goes on talking about carbon compensation: those industries that are not yet able to reduce emissions can in this way demonstrate that they are trying to be "greener".

Taxation and carbon compensation: two strategies towards which - from what emerges from informal discussions - the amendments will be presented with initiative of the parties of the center, explains Paturzo (ECR).

In any case, both strategies seem to not satisfy any objective: neither to help small companies staying in the market, nor to reduce emissions. Taxation is supposed to induce companies to become more sustainable, but actually they act as a kind of non-compliance fine on companies that are already struggling to stay in business; carbon compensation is just 'hiding' emissions of companies: although offset through subsequent initiatives, the result is still not that of a final reduction of CO2.

To these strategies, however, a third one is added: "We have proposed amendments and the addition of a recital requiring the European Union and member states to publicize the process of obtaining eco-labels, which is totally free of charge and paid for by the Union" says Paturzo from ECR." This is with the aim of sponsoring especially small companies that manage to obtain this certification and to make them better known to consumers." Furthermore Candeago (EPP) mentioned incentives and economic support for small companies, even if very briefly and at the end of an argument in support of carbon compensation. S&D, on the other hand, says that at the moment their discussion is mostly about taxation and carbon compensation. It seems that nothing else has clearly emerged as a strategy. Nevertheless, Longhi and De Marinis also add that other solutions are being discussed. In short, it seems that the further we move to the right, the clearer ideas become and, ironically - at least, with regard to aid to small companies - the more we come across the stances of the traditional left.



Journalist Alice Fraglica

Two Leaders, One Party

The second day of VeUMEU has dawned with a change in the Parliament. It's the shift of leadership in Renew Europe. Of the many parties, only Renew Europe has two leaders. The reason for this choice was simple. Federico Campagnolo wanted to be a party leader, but he couldn't participate on the first day of the VeUMEU, therefore MEP Giorgia Sala accepted to be party leader for the first day. Campagnolo explained "I

had to ask the presidency whether or not this was an acceptable procedure and they gave me the go ahead. So we figured that we might as well do it since we can."

He mentioned that not participating on the first day allowed him to focus more on the topics of the second day. Nonetheless, he stated, "Although we ended up kind of splitting the work, I still try to read and participate on the regulation side of things today," indicating that he also researched the topics discussed on the first day, including Asylum and Migration Regulations.

In response to the question of whether having two leaders caused confusion, Campagnolo replied: "actually it has been even more comfortable because we can sort of divide the job of party leader between two people so we can cover more grounds and ask more people to sign our amendments."

With a changed leader, Renew Europe showed more vigorous participation on the second day. Campagnolo highlighted the urgent need for action on the climate crisis and the European Union's commitment to addressing it through initiatives like the European Climate Law and the European Green Deal, mentioned in the commissioner's speech. In addition, he emphasized the importance of making the Green Transition accessible to small and medium enterprises and consumers to ensure widespread support. "We find that merely increasing funding or tightening requirements and deadlines is not sufficient to implement the Green Transition. The Green Transition should be palatable to both small and medium enterprises and most importantly for consumers. Without the support from citizens, it's simply not possible to meet all the objectives."

Also MEPs of Renew Europe from Romania and Germany actively engaged in the general debate. "it is not only about industries' money, but it is about human lives. all of the citizens must live in a healthy environment", MEP Azzurra Zanirato from Germany said.

Giorgia Sala, the first day's leader of Renew Europe, spoke during the afternoon general debate. She emphasized: "We are sure that we are talking about the importance of having information clear for the consumer," underscoring the party's efforts to provide consumers with accurate and clear information.



Journalist Hyejeong Yoon

In Pledges We Trust

Nobody would like to be subjected to public condemnation for exercising crucial duties entrusted to the representative of a state. Such is the case of Romania who recklessly finished the first talks on her own will, having fled from the press conference right before being called on stage. She isn't the only one spotted for such misbehaviour; however, that's what turned out striking as she showed confusion in the overall conduct of the event. She also left the participants completely uninformed about the country's position regarding consumer rights protection since the minister failed to address the issue in her opening speech and opted for keeping silence during the further discussion.

Nevertheless, the second day draws quite an opposite picture. Now, the minister seems to provide exact clarifications on her position regarding the previously discussed directive referring to the education campaigns as the best way to enable consumers to make sustainable choices and contribute to a better environment. The official particularly emphasises this field in talking about the current legislation as well, stressing on the necessity for the improvements to be made, thus, despite the lack of any regulations on a national level, expressing firm commitment to achieving advancements in this regard. The substantiality of such a stance is doubtful since the possibility of any strict measures is not taken into consideration, and the essential character of punishment for underperformance is neglected. A similar suspicion arises concerning the inexistence of norms aimed at consumer rights protection, and so does the mistrust in the official's familiarity with her country's legal base. However, while the feasibility of ensuring poses questions, the readiness of Romania to actively work on a matter brings hope.

More difficulties emerge in discussing the second proposal. The country presents a specific interest due to its recent partial accession to the Schengen area, with all the responsibilities it entails. The complexity lies, though, in managing further integration into the country's society, pointed out by the Migrant Integration Policy Index, according to which Romania falls short of ensuring equal opportunities for this group of population. The minister acknowledges the problem but also stresses the potential way out, namely the enhanced cooperation with other EU member-states. It would be encouraging, though, to see this kind of dedication not only to the collective problem-solving practices but also to the individual steps to be made on the national level.

At the same time, a certain extent of preparedness to act on its own is demonstrated in the minister's recognition of such a sensitive downside as the recurring cases of pushback and police abuse cases.

The official draws attention to the systemic nature of the issue and the necessity of the overall restructuring of the law-enforcement agencies. "It's a lot of work but I'm confident we can do that" constitutes one of the well-promising pledges given. For now, we can do nothing but hope to witness them met, however, we in no way discourage Romania from engaging in further collaboration with other countries presented today and eagerly waiting to reach a common ground beneficial for the whole European community.

Journalist Aglaia Gulakova



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Racist of Them All?

Elisa Damaso, the Minister of Malta faltered when the presidency randomly chose her as the speaker for the GSL in the motion of Common Integration Framework in the European Union during the Council Debate. Stagger as she might be, she somehow sparked and initiated a debate worth considering among many that transpired on the second day of the Venice Universities Model European Union 2024. She referred to the arguments spoken by the Minister of Estonia, Michelle Anna D'Andrea, on the instances of integration approaches such as language courses as a possible act of racism. Here, she problematized the need for the Estonian Minister to make a prerequisite out of the language acquisition process through learning.



The latter, for the first time throughout the simulation, pitched a high voice, making sure that every syllable count in one breath, “How can we make sure that we can accommodate the migrants if they cannot use the language of our people to understand our law better; and how can the migrants feel included if they don’t speak the language of the people; and how ...” this time her fiery remarks had to come to a halt as the presidency reminded the two of the faulty debating procedures they did. The result of this was the ensuing informal debate the presidency advised them to do.

In this regard, Maltese Minister’s view on the racist potential of obligatory language courses within the larger EU integration framework only shows her forgetfulness of Malta’s complicity in taking unlawful and perilous measures in managing refugees and migrants. A report published by Amnesty International in 2020 exposed, “The Maltese government’s change in approach to arrivals in the central Mediterranean in 2020 has seen them take unlawful, and sometimes unprecedented, measures to avoid assisting refugees and migrants. This escalation of tactics included arranging unlawful pushbacks to Libya, diverting boats to Italy rather than rescuing people in distress, illegally detaining hundreds of people on ill-equipped ferries off Malta’s waters, and signing a new agreement with Libya to prevent people from reaching Malta.” Now, how can one begin a discussion under the premises of racism when they are the advocate of racism? Confronted with this question in our press conference, the minister acknowledged her complicity in jeopardizing the lives of those in need, seemingly playing the devil’s advocate amidst the pressures of a hundred eyes.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Estonia can be completely vindicated because of Malta’s position. Despite promoting inclusion as the tenet of her approach, Minister Anna was not even close to being critical in terms of the long-term continuity of the integration process that includes the native Estonians. Language classes, cultural enrichment and volunteering programs, these are still a one-sided approach between the progressive instructors who are well aware of the integrating migrants and the migrants themselves. If this integration process is not associated with a push for



a broader migration sensitivity and consciousness among the Estonians, acceptance is just a facade of a false promise; acceptance sought for by these migrants is therefore a work of fiction written with an erasable pen. For this part, the logic of the Maltese Minister regarding racism is finally nuanced.

On the whole, both the Minister of Malta and Minister of Estonia are deluded with fancy and possibly “short-sightedness”, and what they require is probably the evil witch’s magic mirror in the “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.” However, instead of asking, “Who is the fairest one of all?” they should chant, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who’s the Racist of Them All?”

Journalist Boy Ertanto

Echoes in the Council



What constitutes good political speaking? Is it the confidence and demeanor or the tonality and accent? Is it the content and the message or the passion and rigour? The vast spectrum of politicians throughout the centuries shows us that more than one way is possible. Confidence can be perceived as brave and tough or cocky and pompous, anxiety can be perceived as indecisive or more humane. Personalities affect political careers in various aspects of one’s public image, rhetoric and leadership style. This also applies to the ministers in our VeUMEU Council whose political lives have only just begun. Although we might not like to admit it, a politician’s communication style and characteristics play into our opinion of them. Also there is a generational aspect to this topic with anxiety ramping up in young people over the last few decades.

In the council it was clear who was genuinely excited to be there and who wasn’t, but I wanted to delve into the background of a couple of ministers who dealt with the pressure of conveying their arguments into the center of the room to their colleagues. The observations stated in this article are based on the insights from the interviews with several ministers. The confidence level between the four of them rose in identical degrees from one to another, yet all of them were influential. I could easily tell from the first session on Friday that the minister of France was nervous to speak but still very

eager to throw his hat in the ring. On the question of what keeps him speaking amid his anxiety, which he openly admitted to me, he says:



“I suffer from anxiety but I really believe in the things I say about politics so I want, even if I’m scared, to say what I believe to improve the lives of people”. It is still a part of this business and the minister conveyed to me that he works on it, no matter the delivery.. The minister of Germany shared the positive side of being nervous: “I think it makes you more prepared and ready for any kind of situation” and on self doubt “You create questions that you want to answer even though in a normal circumstance you wouldn't consider them”. He also raised quite an interesting point comparing speaking in parliament and the council, parliament is quicker and you share quite a narrower point of view, adrenaline kicks in, in the council you are representing the whole country therefore presenting your best and most articulate self. Funnily enough, after admitting to me that he is a nervous speaker, he rather potently attacked the Hungarian minister the next session.

Speaking of, the minister of Hungary is where we change the side of the confidence spectrum, positioned as the odd one out in a lot of situations in the last two days, she didn't shy away from the spotlight. Strong in her delivery, she ran the clock quite a few times and spoke almost the most, at first claiming that she's anxious before speaking, she said: "I don't like anxiety as the fuel for speaking, but everyone has anxiety because we all want to make a good impression, that we are well prepared and well read". Asking her does it matter how you speak she stated: "Absolutely yes, not only oral speaking but non verbal language as well".



A big factor of speaking is knowing the language, having a good command of English and a solid pronunciation gives you big points. With all of the people I spoke to today that was the easiest consensus. The minister of Italy, although she had great inputs and ideas, still you wonder if her British English just swayed me without me knowing. You associate it with Oxford and Cambridge which automatically grants you a better reputation. Once again I'd like to emphasize that she was great, this was just to highlight the questions asked in the introduction.

Today I polled all the ministers on who they think is the best speaker in the council. The ministers of Cyprus and Italy got one vote respectively, the ministers of Sweden, Austria and Hungary got three and the winner by a landslide was the minister of Finland with eleven votes. He relished at the opportunity to speak, you could see it. He was the fourth person I interviewed and it was refreshing to hear his answer to the question whether he considers himself confident: “In general, I would say very confident”, but what was interesting is that he didn't have that from the beginning “I think I learned in school, I had to a lot of presentations back in German school and now in university” which gives hope to those who aren't there yet. Due to the results and objective observations of the council I would say he was the star of the show.



This topic was a weird one to tackle head on, because it puts into question what we really observe when listening to politicians and I also didn't want to turn it into a self improvement article. I just wanted to convey that as the curtains draw on the VeUMEU event, behind every speech lies a journey of growth and a transformational power. Politics is a tough business and speaking publicly is hard, if you want to succeed you take it one speech at a time.

Journalist Jona Budanko

Reaching out our Event Coordinator

The second day VeUMEU 2024 left behind constructive debates and inflamed discussions, together with amendments that were passed out of it. As both legislative chambers are marked with inflammatory discourses, the press team proceeded to pose its question to the Event Coordinator amid the legislative turbulence within the simulation.

Mr Marroquin, as the Event Coordinator of this year's VeUMEU, was kind enough to accept our brief interview request and allowed us to catch-up with his thoughts and opinions regarding the progress made during the past two days. Mr Marroquin, together with the Director General Mr Gerrits and Deputy Director General Ms Kovacevic, is one of the organizers of this year's delightful event, his insights are worth their weight in gold.



What is the most challenging issue you've faced in these two days?

Well, I would say that it is making sure that everything is going as it should. It was a pleasure making sure that everything was going up to schedule. Also making sure that all the presentations were entertaining and were contributing to the community and spirit that we were having.

Did your experience here comply with your pre-event expectations?

Yes! Apparently, even exceeded it. I saw some truly amazing things in the Council. In the Parliament, after the words of encouragement from the president, we witnessed how much effort they were able to put in and I was particularly proud of the growth that the Parliament showed. Being able to present significantly more amendments on the second day than the first day.

On the second day, the press spotted you having a chat with the EPRS guest Ms Apap, what would you say in general about the contribution made by our honorable guests?

I would say that they are a part of our legitimacy as the VeUMEU because through them, we can actually see the real people who we are dressing up as. We can at least look at some of our features. Plus, as you mentioned, that's what I was talking to her about. Because I am generally curious about the avenues through which we can move within diplomacy, policy work and the European Union as a whole.

Breaking the rule

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a great opportunity to praise the application of the famous maxim: "It's not how you start that's important, but how you finish!"

A cold treatment has been received by the minister of France with his comments on the questions asked in preparation for the ongoing discussions. Nevertheless, behind the curtain of confusion and insecure mumbling, exemplary confidence and clarity of speech were hiding. The official has courageously stood for his country from the very first pronouncement to the last word, and hardly missed any possibility to speak up during debates. The paper with notes has often appeared to be of no use in the hands of the one driven by the unshakable enthusiasm, and the words have certainly reached the hearts of all those present.

France must be proud to enjoy a firm defender of its interests frequently attacked by the honorable press having agreed to participate in several interviews and taking an unflinching position when called at the conference. We are equally proud to see such a determination on his behalf.

But the most important is the honesty of the minister which is so necessary to create a climate of trust in the Council. Instead of throwing efforts into justifying the experienced flaws, he genuinely admits the shortcomings and weaknesses of the country.

The minister demonstrates his humanity in fervently inviting all the participants to take urgent action in addressing both consumer rights protection and migration and asylum issues since they affect the entire international community, and the negligence has a real potential to deteriorate the well-being of everyone. This solid persistence is what we expect from the countries as the only way to bring about changes, and France has become a proper role model in this regard.

The last day is expected to be as full of heat and potential disagreement, but we are convinced that the inspiration stemming from the minister and the presence of like-minded participants will allow us to celebrate a successful conclusion of deliberations.



Journalist Aglaia Gulakova

Don't Shoot the Messenger

After yesterday's press conference word has been going around that the journalists were on fire, grilling their five selected victims on the stage, seemingly trying to humiliate them publicly as much as possible. Especially Boy Ertantos pressing questions about human rights violations for Elisa Damaso, the minister of Malta, have been regarded as harsh. One might say it was mean, one might say it was too aggressive - Ertanto says: I was doing my job.



What is that job, being a jerk? Certainly, not. Firstly, the press has the duty to report to the public, which we do here with our daily editions of EUnow! Secondly, our function is to hold power accountable, in our case the Parliament and Council of the EU. We have to evaluate and criticise the workings of MEPs and ministers in order to uphold it to the EU's democratic standards.

Say, a child steals an extra cookie from the jar when no one is looking. What if it would be caught in the act by a bystander, who then shouts loudly: Hey everyone, look at this child, who has stolen a cookie! Next time, the child would think twice about taking that cookie. That is the role of the press: not only to be an observer, but also expose the wrongdoings of politicians in an investigative manner. Therefore the child is asked: why did you steal that cookie? "Because I was selfish" and "because I was hungry and starving" are two completely different reasons the child could give and be judged by. It is precisely that, what we want the child to understand: you have the chance to answer for yourself and explain your actions. MEPs and ministers should recognize the press conference as an opportunity, not a punishment, to elaborate their statements and to reflect on their actions. We are happy to say that some children were able to at least admit taking the cookie. The journalist will ask the child again and again, until he confesses to taking the cookie - for this child is a public figure, who has sworn to serve the public. During the VeUMEU days some were able to own up to their mistakes and move on, while some might never leave the cookie-denial stage.

What about the manner in which the child is to be questioned? For this, there is of course a certain standard of professionalism that has to be met, the same we expect to find in the answers of the MEPs and ministers. This was lost on Renata Nuranova (S&D Sweden) who stammered her way through yesterday's conference. During the debate she made well prepared arguments, so it was a pity to see her so stumped. MEPs must realise that they have to be ready to back up their statements and answer questions not only from each other, but also from the press and that they can't hide behind their leaders. Anyone can be and should be able to be questioned anytime. And in the same way that the one being questioned can answer how they want, journalists can express themselves. The freedom of the press and the freedom of expression by the press is guaranteed by Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

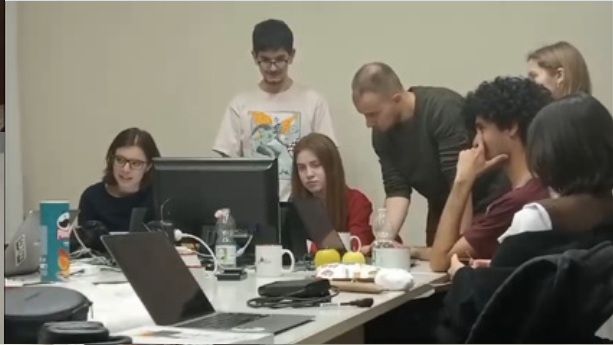


As an integral part of the European Union, we recognize our duties and responsibilities and it is our obligation, just as yours, dear MEPs and ministers, to fulfil them to our best ability. We think that since the first day our ability in conducting the press conference in an up-to-standard manner improved by asking critical questions, enforcing accountability among members for their statements and challenging their positions regarding the proposals. Likewise, we saw a good improvement of participation by MEPs and ministers on the second day, which we previously criticised.

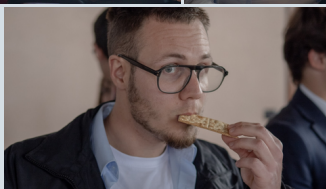
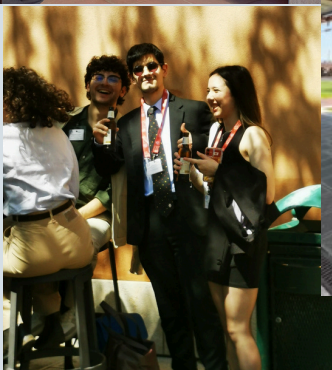
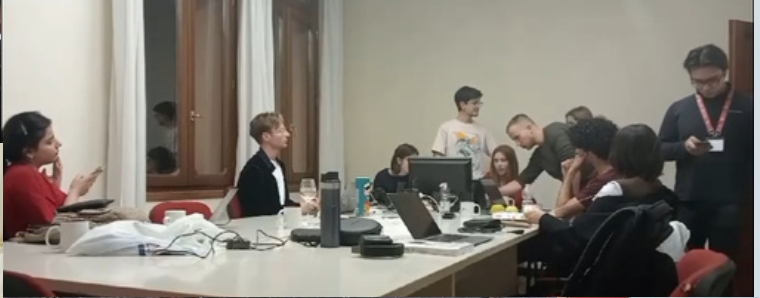
It was a shame that we couldn't see this change reflected in the press conference, considering some of the poor answers we have gotten. After making our position as press clear, we hope everyone at VeUMEU recognizes that journalism plays a crucial role in the EU by providing information for the public, holding power to account and fostering public debate. Let's meet each other on these terms at our next, and last press conference.



Moana Jomchai Hemsuthipan



Veumeu staff discusses finding a perfect synonym for asshole. Awaiting Boy's response



Thank you to all our readers!