



# BACKGROUND GUIDE

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

HEC  
PARIS

# WELCOME LETTERS

Hello everyone and welcome to the first Diplomacy Week event ever organized on the HEC Paris campus! This event will give you the opportunity to develop your negotiating skills, to make a critical analysis of the main topics of today's world, and, most importantly, to take part in a two-day-long Model United Nation (MUN), where you will act as diplomats trying to reach a common solution to burning international issues, feeling like the world's destiny lies in your hands.

Although MUNs manage to attract hundreds of participants in English-speaking countries, where the Harvard MUN is a worldwide event, and in Asia, their scale has not reached such heights in France yet. The MUNHEC association was born out of the dream that such an international event was possible on the campus of HEC Paris.

A year and a half after MUNHEC's creation, it appears that this dream has come true, step by step. In September, the association organized the first MUN ever on our campus, under the theme of "International Cooperation: Past, Present and Future". The event you will attend is even more ambitious, because it will involve students from all nationalities, thus encouraging even more open-mindedness, which is necessary when dealing with the global challenges of development of the 21st century.

This committee will undoubtedly prove particularly interesting regarding the possibilities offered by international cooperation. Never before had an international organization integrated its member countries as well as the EU. The Union's formation is considered to have given a severe blow to the "neorealist" theories of international relations, according to which interstate matters are only driven by pure security issues and mistrust.

However, the EU faces nowadays constant criticism. Eurosceptic analysts and politicians see their popularity constantly increasing, and Brexit's victory at the UK referendum gave the image of a declining EU. You, as delegates, have the power of changing things. You will have the opportunity to discover that the Union faces numerous challenges, but that, thanks to your energy, it can find a second wind. Will the EU be stuck in the bureaucratic complications its critics like to mock? Or will it become, once again, the flagbearer of international cooperation thanks to its success? The answer is up to you.

Best regards,

**Thomas Derrien**

Committee Chair

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Dear delegates,

I am really happy to welcome you to this Model United Nations and to this wonderful committee dealing with the challenges facing modern Europe.

As a convinced Europeanist, I am particularly interested in institutional questions and the whole concept of "European identity" that are at the heart of the European project. Indeed, isn't it a bit surprising that the very continent that invented the modern ideas of nation-state and national identity on the occasion of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) is also at the origin of the only real initiative of democratic continental unification? I think it is (of course!) and that is why I believe this conference will be a good occasion to think about the whys and wherefores of Europeanness and the influence it can have all over the world.

The history of the European Union is definitely not a linear one. It is rather a succession of more or less consistent crises that have progressively, and through very complex multilateral negotiations, enabled the European Construction to get to its current form. This mechanism of "destructive creation" - more endured than desired - is largely misunderstood by European citizens and results in a feeling of administrative complexity, inefficiency and remoteness from concrete preoccupations. These defects are brought to the forefront in an era of economic crisis combined with a rise of nationalism and local particularities, but we must remember that despite its flaws, the European construction has been quite effective in a great number of areas and is still considered as the most complex and most successful supranational organization ever created.

Once again, the future of the European Union belongs to the leaders of the European council, a body which, in spite of not being the most famous one, is the only one with enough power to take radical initiatives that can shape the fate of Europe. But this time, you will be in charge of these choices. Will the EU keep moving at its current pace, alternating between steps forward and steps backward? Or will you take disruptive initiatives resulting in a significant change for European perspectives? It is now completely up to you!

I really look forward to meeting you and I hope that we will have a constructive debate.

Yours sincerely,

**Romain Laurent**  
Committee Chair  
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# INTRODUCTION

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## PRESENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE

During this conference, you will simulate a meeting of the highest decision-making body of the European Union: the European Council. You will have the opportunity to be part of the diplomatic representation of one of the fifteen countries that are selected.

A list of all committee members for this MUN can be found below, under the section “Committee expectations – Decision-Making Modalities for this Conference”. We have tried to select the most significant and interesting countries you could represent.



# COMMITTEE EXPECTATIONS

## Decision-Making Modalities for this Conference

The committee you will take part in as delegates will involve 15 countries, listed below. Thus, the quorum is set at 8 countries. The voting procedures at the Council of the European Union are rather complex, so we, as Chairs, had to work on a simplified version, that would encompass the political implications of this system without being too complicated.

Here is the way it functions. Motions are not affected by any special rule, and continue to work on a "50%+1" basis, i.e. 8 countries if all are present and voting. However, Draft Resolutions have to satisfy two conditions in order to pass:

First, like in the real Council of the European Union, they need to be approved by at least 55% of the present and voting countries, i.e. 9 countries here if all the participants are present and voting.

Second, each Draft Resolution has to be approved by enough countries to reach at least 65 "points" to pass. Such points are awarded according to the table next to this text. This prevents "minor" EU countries from bypassing the mightiest powers of the EU in votes. The only difference between voting procedures in this committee and in the "real" one is that we have simplified the "points" system so that the total makes 100 and calculations are easier for you.

Germany	11	Spain	10		Portugal	5	Ireland	3
France	11	Poland	10		Greece	5	Estonia	2
Italy	11	Romania	6		Hungary	5	Luxembourg	2
UK	11	Belgium	5		Denmark	3	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## What is Expected from Delegates

Delegates are expected to have a solid knowledge of the political and economic situation of the country they are representing and a good understanding of the respective points of view of the different actors involved in the subtopics of the committee, which are described below. Of course, delegates are requested to respect the thoughts and views of others and to behave accordingly to diplomatic protocol and etiquette.

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The history of the European Construction really started in 1951 with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). In a context of post-war reconstruction, the idea was to share skills, optimize production, ensure prosperity for miners but even more importantly to make the war materially impossible. Despite the success of this first initiative, two treaties that aimed at establishing a political and defense community in Europe were refused by the French Parliament which feared a loss of national sovereignty and the remilitarization of West Germany. Aware of the effects of these two consecutive failures on continental relations, a handful of leaders led by Jean Monnet and Paul-Henri Spaak started to think about reinforcing the single market by expanding it to other goods and ultimately to services. If political integration was impossible at that time, the continent would build itself through economic interconnexion that would ultimately lead to a federal union.

The result was the European Economic Community founded by 6 countries in 1957. Driven by 1960's growth, the community proved to be a great success, thus expanding both quantitatively and qualitatively. Indeed, besides the common external tariff, common policies to reduce inequalities and increase solidarity were implemented after complex negotiations like the Common Agricultural Policy (1962) or the European Regional Development Fund (1975), thus making the EEC the most complete supranational initiative ever created.

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of two major oil shocks and in a new context of economic depression and warming diplomatic relations between the West and the East, the European Construction needed a fresh boost. Under the influence of Jacques Delors, a massive revision of initial treaties was undergone. This ended up with the Single European Act of 1986 that fixed 1992 as the deadline for the completion of the global single market with no internal barriers, enabling European institutions to emerge as the "normative empire". Once this project completed, the Maastricht treaty of 1992 established the European Union and its institutions in their current form and extended collaboration to Foreign policy (still limited though) and Justice. Nevertheless, the most disruptive provision of this treaty was the project of establishing a common and centrally-based new currency by the beginning of the next millennium, a currency that will finally be named euro.

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<sup>1</sup> HOUTEER Christine, *La construction européenne: Etapes, objectifs, réalisations*  
GAUCHON P., "Union Européenne" in *Dictionnaire de géopolitique et de géoéconomie*, PUF

# CURRENT SITUATION

## FINANCIAL CRISIS

The Euro-zone crisis starting in 2009 is probably the best example showing how Europe is an unequal continent regarding debt, risk management, and budget discipline. The lack of political willingness of Southern countries to carry important reforms regarding the job market and the collection of taxes has resulted in a rise of unemployment and a deteriorating competitiveness. In this context, several countries including Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain (PIIGS) had more and more trouble maintaining the equilibrium of their trade balance, which was not a disaster per se but appeared to be incredibly dangerous in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. Indeed, numerous financial actors started to question the sustainability of their debt, leaving these countries with the necessity to deal with increasing interest rates without being able to devalue considering the independency of the ECB. Thus, these countries had to make a choice between an imposed budgetary discipline to obtain the support of other countries and institutions (ECB, IMF and EU) or a direct confrontation with rich countries and creditors.

With the notable exception of Portugal which succeeded in its project of recovery through consumption, all the other countries applied more or less radically the requirements of Brussels in order for their endangered institutions (banks and national companies) to benefit from rescue plans. These rescue plans enabled a progressive decrease in deficit, but at a very high social cost. Thereby, despite their effectiveness, these harsh reforms, combined with very strong national identities, durably damaged relations between European national communities. On one side, the creditors had the impression of paying for someone's else mistakes, while on the other side, the debtors felt vassalized. For all that, a great number of changes have been made in the way this kind of problems is handled since the beginning of the crisis: the introduction of a "golden rule" in 2012 to limit deficits is a massive advance but we are still very far from a real banking union in spite of the implementation of the Single Supervisory Mechanism to monitor every European bank.



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## INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS<sup>2</sup>

With the massive impact of the end of the Cold War over Eastern Europe, the European Construction had the opportunity to extend to the Russian borders, at the expense of consequent evolutions. Indeed, by increasing the number of member countries from 12 in 1992 to 28 in 2013, European leaders have accepted a new challenge: maintaining economic, political, societal and territorial cohesion in a more and more heterogeneous environment. To this end, successive treaties have tried to adapt internal processes to this new reality. The Maastricht treaty (1992) established intergovernmental cooperation as the standard rule in the administration of the EU but with limited power for supranational institutions in some areas of focus. On the contrary, the treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and of Nice (2001) increased the powers of the European Parliament, especially regarding security, and set up the rule of double majority in the European Council for a great number of areas, despite disagreements from major countries like Germany, which wanted a more equitable representativeness considering the size of their populations.

Despite these efforts, the European Union is still very far from a smooth functioning: the willingness to convince every member to get involved in Community affairs has resulted in useless duplications that most people do not understand. For example, even though the Commission does not need 28 main commissioners, this established fact has been maintained. The European Parliament was reinforced to give the impression of an ever-closer union but the turnout for European elections is lower year over year and its powers are still far more limited than any other parliament (it does not even have a full control over the common budget). In fact, the Parliament is considered as a "slowing institution" since it cannot take any real initiative but can block any step forward. Lastly, the Community does not have a real leader to show to the rest of the world: neither the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker nor the President of the European Council Donald Tusk succeed in incarnating the European identity.

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<sup>2</sup> HOUTEER Christine, *La construction européenne: Etapes, objectifs, réalisations*  
GAUCHON P., "Union Européenne" in *Dictionnaire de géopolitique et de géoéconomie*, PUF

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## MIGRANT CRISIS

In 2015, an exceptional combination of bloody conflicts and geopolitical events at the frontier of the European continent (mostly in Syria but also in Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Nigeria...) resulted in a massive influx of refugees converging towards Europe in conjunction with the steady flow of economic migrants. Indeed, in addition to being the most prosperous continent in the world with the highest living standards and a long-lasting peace, the very functioning of the Schengen area is an encouraging factor for economic migrants and refugees. Even if the rules are very clear that migrants are supposed to stay in the country by which they enter the area, the *de facto* absence of physical borders gives them the opportunity to cross an "easy border" of a completely overwhelmed country like Greece or Spain and then to go to richer countries like Germany, France or the UK (although not in Schengen).

For a certain number of European leaders and people, the hosting of refugees is a moral duty and is part of the European tradition of humanism, and can also be considered as an opportunity in a continent where fertility is low. This explains positions like that of Angela Merkel, who agreed to host a million refugees in Germany, more than all the other Western nations combined. On the contrary, nationalist leaders like Viktor Orban feared that this massive influx could result in an endangerment of the European culture, especially for religious reasons. This colossal gap between European leaders resulted in a particularly messy situation, with the European Commission proposing a system of compulsory quotas supported by the richest nations to ease the burden on external countries, and countries that unilaterally close their borders to express their dissatisfaction in spite of potential sanctions. In fact, even the German government, under the pressure of conservative voters, recognized that it underestimated the challenge of integrating so many different people and ended up closing its borders, thus increasing pressure on border countries like Greece which do not have enough resources to treat the refugees decently.

Considering the impossibility of Europe to fail on such an important matter, many initiatives have been taken like the reinforcement of Frontex, the perpetual targeting of smugglers who take advantage of refugees, and the implementation of communally funded "hot-spots" to address the requests of families and individuals while offering them a more decent treatment. In the end, this crisis reflected a terrible image of the European Union, often very distant from the reality of European people, and a good indication of the impossibility of securing any unanimity on such complicated cultural subjects.

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## GEOPOLITICAL CRISIS

The complex relationships of the European Union with Russia are at the core of a geopolitical crisis which challenges the cohesion of the Union. For instance, Germany is traditionally seen as a friend of Russia, from which it imports an important quantity of gas. On the contrary, former members of the Eastern Bloc like Poland or the Baltic countries, want at all costs to protect themselves from the influence of an increasingly aggressive power.

The Ukrainian crisis quickly became a symbol of these tensions. The 2014 pro-Russian protests in Crimea led to the annexation of this peninsula by Russia, against international law. After first denying it, Vladimir Putin finally admitted that Russian soldiers without insignia were present in Crimea to launch the annexation. This was a consequence of the 2014 Euromaidan unrests in Ukraine, which led to the ousting of the pro-Russian President Yanukovych, who had been heavily criticized for abandoning relationships with the EU to avoid vexing Russia. Moreover, pro-Russian separatists, helped, according to Ukraine, by Russian troops artillery, took control of significant areas in Donbass. The Minsk Protocol, reached partially thanks to an European diplomatic intervention, helped to cool down the conflict, but the situation in a now divided Ukraine remains critical<sup>3</sup>.

In 2018, Vladimir Putin further heightened the tensions by deploying nuclear-capable missiles in its Kaliningrad enclave<sup>4</sup>. These missiles could strike Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania or Poland. He described it as a normal response to the deployment of many NATO missiles – made by the US – in Poland recently. A few years ago, the presence of NATO missiles in the Baltic countries was at the center of a diplomatic incident. This recent action from Russia seems to justify the distrustful attitude of its bordering countries. Will the EU leave NATO face this crisis alone or will it try to act, either as a protector or as a mediator, to avoid war?

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<sup>3</sup> KARMANAU Yuras and ISACHENKOV Vladimir, "Vladimir Putin admits for the first time Russian troops in Crimea, refuses to rule out intervention in Donetsk", National Post, 17/04/2014

<sup>4</sup> OSBORNE Samuel, "Russia deploys nuclear-capable missiles to border with Poland and Lithuania", The Independent, 07/02/2018

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## REGIONAL CRISIS

The independence movements in Scotland, where the referendum was lost by a tiny margin, and Catalonia, where Carles Puigdemont's independence movement claimed victory in what Madrid considers as an unconstitutional referendum, are the two most well-known examples of strong regional revendication within the EU. However, other countries are not spared. The Northern regions of Italy are traditionally associated with strong tendencies towards independence, since they are reluctant to share the burden of other, poorer regions. Corsica is also becoming a burning topic in France.

The European Union has never supported any of these movements so far. The question will probably be more intricate regarding Scotland, since Scottish indepentists now highlight the fact they want to stay in the EU. More generally, some political scientists<sup>5</sup> consider the rise of regions as a necessary consequence of the weakening of States in an era of globalization. According to them, this could be a solution to create a more powerful and more balanced European Union. This seems to be an utopy now, but who knows what the future holds?

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<sup>5</sup> GUÉROT Ulrike, *Warum Europa eine Republik werden muss!*

# BLOCK POSITIONS

During this conference, you will simulate a meeting of the highest decision-making body of the European Union: the European Council. You will have the opportunity to be part of the diplomatic representation of one of the twelve countries that are selected. They are divided in 4 blocks representing different points of view at the beginning of the conference:

## THE FOUNDING COUNTRIES

*Including: Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg.*

These countries are the oldest members of the EU and still the “leaders” of the European construction. Since the second half of the 20th century, their leaders, like Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Jacques Delors or, more recently, Jean-Claude Juncker, have enabled the European construction to make significant progress. In particular, the Franco-German couple has always been at the avant-garde of the European integration, proving it could help former foes to build a stable peace and to develop together. More generally speaking, all the former members of the Group of Six still have a lot of influence within the European institutions. However, each of these countries has to face its own challenges.

**Germany** must find a new cohesion after an extremely difficult coalition building, all the more so as Angela Merkel’s migrant policies face widespread criticism, and as no traditional party manages to be a credible alternative, leaving space for extremist parties such as the AfD.

After having raised optimism thanks to its new President, **France** is trying to assume the leadership of Europe alongside Germany. However, France is unlikely to succeed unless its economic stability improves: only then will it gain Germany’s trust as a credible partner.

**Italy** managed to improve its economic situation after a hard crisis, but its recovery is still fragile, and its politicians have to fear the threat of new political parties which are becoming more and more popular, such as the “Five Stars” movement.

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**Belgium** is traditionally a major European actor. Paul-Henri Spaak is one of the EEC's "Founding Fathers", and Brussels is often defined as the capital of EU institutions. However, its legendary political instability, symbolized by its 18-month period without government from 2010 to 2011, and its regional tensions, worsen the picture of this country, otherwise quite stable economically.

Despite its small size, **Luxembourg** has always managed to be an influential driver of European processes, but faces harsh criticism because of its fiscal system.

## THE "EUROSCEPTIC" COUNTRIES

*Including: United Kingdom, Poland, Hungary.*

For different reasons, these countries see the European Union as a possible threat, and focus on keeping their independence. They can set hurdles to the European construction, but will it really be possible to work without them?

**The United Kingdom's** people have chosen to leave the EU, creating one of the biggest political challenges both the EU and the UK have had to face in the recent years. David Davis, the UK's main negotiator, is trying to implement a "transition period" which would enable the British economy to adapt to these significant changes, but EU-negotiator Michel Barnier has not accepted it yet<sup>6</sup>. His hard line seems to give him an advantage in these negotiations, all the more so as Prime Minister Theresa May faces harsh criticism from the Left and from her own camp. Of course, Brexit is not the main topic of this committee, but, even in these troubled times, the UK is still determined to make its voice heard.

**Poland and Hungary** are, alongside the Czech Republic and Slovakia, both members of the Visegrad Group. While these countries claim they advocate the preservation of the EU's "cohesion policy", they fear losing sovereignty for the benefit of the EU. This, along with their quite restrictive view of the European identity, is one of the reasons why they firmly rejected the project of a EU-wide migrant relocation policy, which was considered a valuable solution by many western European countries. They also refuse the idea of a common European military force, because they fear it could weaken NATO, which they have always trusted more than the EU to defend them against their main foe - Russia. Earning a lot more from the EU than they spend for it, they consider it as a major growth tool but are opposed to any attempt to further the European economic integration by establishing common laws, e.g. regarding social norms and minimum wages, because it would reduce their competitive advantage against other European countries. What is more, they want to keep their noteworthy influence regarding the shaping of the EU's future, and thus reject the project of a two-speed Europe. To finish with, it is not to be forgotten the Poland and Hungary are the two "hard" members of the Visegrad Group, compared to the "moderate" Czech Republic and Slovakia<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> BBC NEWS, "Brexit: Transition period "not a given", says Barnier", 02/2018

<sup>7</sup> GOTEV Georgi, "Visegrad Group spells out its vision of EU's future", [euractiv.com](http://euractiv.com)



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## THE CRISIS COUNTRIES

*Including: Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Spain.*

These unfortunate representatives of the “PIIGS” group have been hit hard by the economic crisis. While they try to benefit from an undeniable, but slow economic recovery, they want to make their voices heard in the EU’s debates.

**Portugal** is often cited as an example of the positive effect of austerity policies. Thanks to the many sacrifices its population had to endure, this country now enjoys a noteworthy economic recovery. Its very liberal Prime Minister from 2011 to 2015, Pedro Passos Coelho, has been credited with pursuing such policies without hesitating, but he is heavily criticized by some parts of the population for having betrayed his own promise, according to which the government’s policy would be directed in priority towards the protection of citizens. His defeat against a left-wing coalition in 2015 did not change much to the Portuguese economic situation. The coming elections will be decisive. The recovery is real, but still fragile, according to the BCG. And, wanting to secure his position, Prime Minister Antonio Costa might not want to accept EU proposition with as much good will as before<sup>8</sup>.

**Italy** has already been described above, in the section “Founding Countries”. Managing to be coherent with both blocks it belongs to will be a challenge for this country.

**Ireland**, though having been hit hard by the financial crisis, has experienced, during the past few months, an impressive recovery, reaching GDP growth rates three times higher than the Euro area. Even if this growth is to diminish in 2018 and 2019, it has raised optimism, and challenges Ireland’s position as a member of the PIIGS. What is more, the election of Leo Varadkar as Prime Minister illustrates a switch in the public opinion, which is becoming less and less conservative<sup>9</sup>.

**Greece** has become the main symbol of the negative effect the 2007/2008 financial crisis had on Southern European countries. The crisis revealed structural weaknesses in the Greek economy, which had previously been hidden. Controversial austerity programmes were implemented to improve this dramatic situation. A rise in unemployment and protests against the government ensued. In 2011, the government managed to negotiate a 50% reduction of its private debt. Despite this, in 2015, the Greek debt still amounted to approximately 30,000€ per capita!<sup>10</sup> During the same year, Alexis Tsipras was elected prime minister. However, his opposition to austerity programmes did not create significant change for the Greek population.

Hit by a complex regional crisis, **Spain** does not have the image of a particularly stable country. Its main political party, Mariano Rajoy’s People Party is at the heart of a corruption scandal, while the Socialist Party struggles to become a credible challenger. Could two new parties, the progressivist Ciudadanos and the extreme-left-wing Podemos, become the future main parties of Spain? Until then, despite a general recovery after its economic crisis, Spain still has to solve the problem of youth unemployment, one of the biggest threats this country faces, and to make its voice heard in an EU where they have never been amongst the leaders.

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<sup>8</sup> AMARO Silvia, “How Portugal came back from the brink – and why austerity could have played a key role”, *CNBC*, 02/08/2017

<sup>9</sup> HAMILTON Peter, “Irish economy growing three times faster than any European country”, *The Irish Times*, 07/02/2018

<sup>10</sup> BBC NEWS, “Greece debt crisis: Eurozone rejects bailout appeal”, 30/06/2015

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## LEFTOVER COUNTRIES

*Including: Romania, Denmark, Estonia.*

This quite heterogeneous block represent various countries with different goals, which do not clearly belong to any of the groups above. This implies they have a sort of freedom, but finding allies will be a necessary condition for them to make their voices heard.

**Romania** is often considered as “the poor man of Europe”, a country most known for the amount of its citizens wanting to leave it. This picture hides the remarkable economic growth reached by this country since it was allowed to become an EU member in 2007, with, for instance, a GDP growth of 4.8% in 2016. Of course, low-wage jobs in industrial sectors are the biggest driving force of the Romanian economy, symbolized by the extremely successful brand Dacia, but this country also benefits from the – quite good – scientific education inherited from its communist era. However, Romania remains one of the most corrupt European countries, and the lack of good infrastructures is a major problem for its development<sup>11</sup>.

The Scandinavian countries, represented by **Denmark**, have amongst the highest living standards of the EU. The Scandinavian system consists, to sum it up, in high taxes funding high social benefits regarding for instance public health and education, and a significant power given to trade unions to enable balanced relationships between employers and employees. And a lot of snow, too. The Scandinavian countries rarely set hurdles to the EU’s progress, but they are most often not amongst its leaders. As a matter of fact, Denmark has always refused to abandon its currency, the Danish Krone, because it values highly its role as part of its economic sovereignty.

The Baltic countries, represented by **Estonia**, have, in the past few years, benefited from the highest growth rates of all EU countries. This enabled them to be granted access to the Euro currency only a few years after their entry in the European community. The EU wants to make them the flag-bearers of a new European economic dynamism, and has proven reluctant to tarnish the Baltic countries’ image, e.g. by refusing to reprimand them for their low social standards. Even years after the USSR’s fall, the Baltic countries still fear a possible annexation by Russia, and trust NATO far more than the EU to protect them against it.

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<sup>11</sup> GILLET Kit, “Romania shrugs off label of Europe’s poor man as economy booms”, *The Guardian*, 14/10/2017

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

As you have seen all along your reading, the topic of the European Construction is very complex and broad. Indeed, to get to this point, European leaders had to solve an impressive number of issues regarding the economy, internal processes or the position of the EU in the world.

Nevertheless, the current existential crisis of the EU shows that numerous problems still have to be tackled and that it is more and more critical to act fast and to deliver a clear vision for the continent in order to convince the general public.

Here are, in our opinion, the main subjects that should be discussed:

- First of all, **how should European institutions be reorganized?** Any major step must be accepted by every member country which explains why people tend to consider Europe as very inefficient. Every attempt of reaching consensus becomes a pretext for bargaining for new economic aids or counterpart policies. The Commission has always to deal with national pride and specificities, which making its job much more difficult, and the European Parliament cannot take any initiative. Should we move to a new model where qualified majority voting becomes the new standard instead of unanimity, paving the way to a more federal functioning? How can we ensure that the three main institutions of the European Union work together and to a common goal? Even more importantly, how can we make European institutions more readable and understandable by citizens so that they get involved again, regardless of their nationality?
- Secondly, **how can we resurrect the feeling of intra-European solidarity that was the main building block of the Founding Fathers' project?** Whereas the single market has been achieved for decades, the social aspect of the European project seems to lag behind. The idea was that the single market would create de facto solidarities but the reality (Eurozone crisis, migratory questions, regionalisms) shows that nation-states do not share the same vision and that they are still often more in competition than in collaboration on this topic. How can we manage such diversity? Can the main actors of the European Construction impose a new social agenda to very diverse and different nation-states and people? If not, can a multi-speed EU be the solution to these problems?
- Thirdly, **how can the European Union identity be defined and what are the boundaries of the European project?** Even if Europe has more or less a geographical and historical definition, the Copenhagen criteria before the 1995-extension mostly defined eligible countries as nations that share the common values of the Union (Human Rights, democracy, free-market economy). In the current context of nationalistic shifts inside and outside Europe, is this definition still adapted to the reality? Should the EU choose to keep enlarging as much as possible or to stabilize and try to further its integration? Is it possible to achieve an "ever closer Union" in the new political and geopolitical context (regionalism, external threats ...)?

That being said, we wish you an interesting and successful debate!

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