

Decisions and Dilemmas – Exploring European Union history through the lens of contemporary issues

Strategic Meeting
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REPORT



Historiana

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Summary of the Project

Within the EUROCLIO project “*Decisions and Dilemmas: Exploring European Union history through the lens of contemporary issues*”, EUROCLIO and its partners will develop a series of learning resources that are ready to use in history and citizenship classes at secondary school level across Europe.

The focus of these learning resources will be on contemporary issues for the European Union. These issues include: Enlargement; globalisation; foreign relations - particularly with the USA, Russia and China. But also Energy supply; economic imbalance and the north-south divide within the EU; terrorism and border controls in a Schengen world; and the democratic deficit. All issues that are currently troubling the European Union.

The aim is that all these learning resources together, will help students to be aware of the complexity and interdependence of European/international decision-making and diplomatic processes. This will help students to see and understand the complexity of the EU and the dilemmas that policy makers face when they have to take multiple factors and stakeholders into account. All these people have their own perfect outcomes for dilemmas, but there is never one solution that will please all parties involved. This gives the students an understanding of contemporary issues in their historical context and lets them see how issues recur over time and how new challenges (can) result from solving other challenges.

Each of the issues will result in a learning activity based on active learning methods that are best suited to the nature of that particular issue. As a result the project will show various ways in which students can learn about the EU on an active and engaging way.

These learning resources will be developed, tested and implemented by an international group of experienced educators (who are currently teaching citizenship and/or history) with the support of Jean Monnet professors as academic advisors. The involvement of leading academics and school teachers and teacher trainers, will make sure that the learning resources are both academically sound and suited for use in diverse classroom settings

The key project activities are four development meetings and one international training seminar.

About the Meeting

This Strategic meeting was held with the aim to discuss how “Decisions and Dilemmas: Learning about the EU from a historical perspective”, would relate to this second project also named Decisions and Dilemmas but which focuses more on contemporary issues of the European Union.

Participants

The following participants were present at the meeting in Brussels:

Participants:

Academic Advisors:	Bob Stradling Léonce Bekemans Fernando Guirao
Historical Content Team:	Francesco Scatigna Chris Rowe
Team Coordinator:	Helen Snelson
EUROCLIO Staff:	Judith Geerling Steven Stegers Samantha Maat

Aims of the meeting:

- To discuss how “*Decisions and Dilemmas: Learning about the EU from a historical perspective*” and “*Decisions and Dilemmas: Exploring European Union history through the lens of contemporary issues*” relate to each other and agree on how the materials resulting from these projects can best be presented online in a way that makes sense for educators and students.
- To agree on the development process and role of the team members (including project advisors).
- To agree on the selection criteria for the development team and recruitment procedure.
- To make preliminary outlines of the learning activities described in the project, including suggestions for the method and a first wish-list of content.

Outputs:

- Timeplan for the project.
- Profile of team members of the development team.
- Description of the recruitment procedure.
- Aims for the next meeting.
- Initial ideas for the learning activities.

Executive summary of the Meeting

The meeting started with a presentation of the project outline and an explanation of the relationship between this project, and the first project that focused more on the history of the coming into existence of the European Union (EU). This new project will build on the work done in the first project and instead look more into EU history using contemporary issues. The key issues that form the basis for educational materials developed in this project were indicated in the project outline, and during this strategic meeting further specified to be:

1. Economic imbalances in Europe
2. Energy dependency
3. Trade in a global context
4. Europe as a potential global power
5. ‘Opening Europe’s borders for people’ (terrorism) and border controls in a Schengen world.

It is important with these key issues to keep in mind that the EU seems very fragmented even though it has many inter-connections. There is a tension between EU solidarity and national egoism. Despite these often being portrayed as mutually exclusive, there are overlapping identities at stake here. The challenge of this project will be to make these inter-connections visible.

Another point raised to keep in mind throughout this project is that for ordinary citizens, the EU is often perceived as a bureaucracy trying to make decisions that do not benefit ordinary people. This project attempts to break through this stereotype by communicating that the EU operates in- and reacts to the world as it is.

Finally all activities that will be developed should bear in mind that the EU tends to be more quickly changed by external factors, rather than internal consensual developments.

Concluding these general ideas, it was decided that each activity needs to contain materials to illustrate the EU in a global world, its institutions in action and EU values. These activities will in part be living the values. The project will take contemporary dilemmas and draw up their historical context in order to inform students understanding of why we are where we are and why different parties act the way they do.



Project advisors and coordinators brainstorm in Brussels.

Key Issues: the thematic focus of the educational materials

The meeting started with a general presentation of the project, including an overview of what will be developed in the project. This also included information on how this project builds on the first project in the Decisions and Dilemmas series, with materials focusing on the EU from a historical perspective.

The main learning outcomes for this project were agreed to be:

- Be aware of the complexity and interdependence of decision-making / diplomacy on a European and international level.
- Understand the dilemmas that policy makers face when they have to take into account multiple factors and stakeholders ranging from the domestic to the global.
- Understand contemporary issues in their historical context, seeing how dilemmas recur over time and how new challenges (can) result from solving other challenges.

This general session was followed by a brainstorm to establish more focus within the key issues identified and to collect development ideas for learning activities on the key issues. In this brainstorm it was agreed that we will look at (shared) values for all key issues. There will be educational material developed for each key issue.

1. Economic Imbalances in Europe and regional divisions (centre-periphery) within the EU

The brainstorm on the first section included a discussion on the topic of how the North-South division is visible and noticeable in the EU, and why. Does the North think they have one model that fits for the whole EU or is it clear that there are many differences between EU countries? Is there far less concern about the implications for ordinary people if we have a more open trading relationship with all countries? These questions are not only relevant in the context of the EU, but also in parallel situations in modern European history such as colonialism or the global North-South division. The question rises whether these things are connected, and if yes in what ways? One specific topic mentioned to be covered in this issue is the Economic Crisis of 2008.



2. Energy dependency

This second key issue should not only cover the energy supply within Europe, but also the dependence and the implications of this dependency for European countries, plus the security issues relating to this. Europe imports around 65% of its natural gasses, 39% of this comes from Russia. 90% of European oil is imported, 40% of this also from Russia. These numbers indicate that Europe is highly dependent on other parts of the world for its energy needs. In this case, is self-sufficiency for the EU an option? Genuinely integrated policies on energy and supply do not exist within the EU, are there specific reasons for this?

The main focus in this activity will be on U-turns within recent history, including the situation of the European Coals and Steel Community, the 1973 Oil crisis, the 1979-88 Iran-Iraq War and China’s growing demand (and supply) from the 1990s onwards.

One suggestion mentioned was to make this key issue in an activity framed as a project work in which students need to connect these moments to geographical and physical problems. For instance looking at shared electrical energy: what are the scientific challenges around sharing energy?

Questions for each learning activity

1. What are the key concepts of each topic?
2. What is the challenge of the issue for the EU? [in introduction paragraph]
3. What are the preconceptions out there that we need to challenge?
4. Where are the human stories in this?

3. Trade in a global context

The clash between calls for greater liberalisation of trade and calls for greater protectionism for domestic industry has been with us for at least 200 years. Historically periods of free trade have been followed by periods of protectionism and vice versa. Examples of this are the Napoleonic blockade of Britain and the British Corn Laws (protectionism). After this period, when industrialisation set in, a period of free trade was present in the second half of the 19th century. Followed by hyper-inflation, depression and devaluation after World War One resulting in protectionism in world economics leading up to World War Two.

This section will cover the EU as a global trading power, implying that the EU does not operate in a vacuum and stressing the importance of the global context on the manoeuvre space of the EU. And within the context of trade, how Europe is trying to push universal values, which are actually contested, on other partners.

4. Europe as a potential global power

The fourth key issue focuses on foreign relations. It was discussed that this section should have a strong emphasis on international relations broader than just economics, since trade and economic relations are already covered within issues 2 and 3. An interesting parallel here might be based on the question: “Does trading interdependence prevent armed conflict between partners?” This was clearly the shared belief when the ECSC and EEC were formed. Yet, if we look at the relations between the United Kingdom and Germany before World War 1, this was not the case. By contrary, both countries were highly dependent on each other before WWI and still they went to war with each other.

After the Cold War, Europe becomes a world player, where does this growing political power come from? What are the pull and push factors for a country wanting to cooperate EU-wide or act alone? Eventually it was suggested that this key issue should cover several case studies activities:

- The 2nd Iraq war in 2003 as a case study of what can cause splits over specific conflicts.
- Focus on the defence of human rights with China and the arms embargo as a case study on policy.
- Ukraine – The NATO membership and European borders.

5. ‘Opening Europe’s borders for People’ (Terrorism) and border controls in a Schengen World.

In our current world with open European borders and a working Schengen agreement, there are several threats and problems associated with these open borders. The participants of the meeting finally agreed that there are three main dimensions at present (although the EU tends to add a fourth related to international crimes):

- The refugees from Syria and other conflict zones in the Middle East.
- The international mobility of terrorists and terrorism.
- Radicalised Jihadis returning from Syria to their homelands in the EU.
- Cross-border mobility of crime and criminals.

The idea would be to deconstruct existing stereotypes and preconceptions, and look at what the role of the EU could be in these specific problems.

In general it was decided that the starting point for each activity will be the contemporary time, from which the activity will look back. How far back the activity goes, differs from topic to topic. Moreover, it was decided to divide the key issues in two sub sections: the first three questions will cover the EU as a *trading power* where the last two will cover the EU as a *political power*. In addition each of the activities should look into the following four questions.



Development Team: involving a team in the process

The development team will design content material and learning activities for each of the key-issues. The team will consist of 5 people, coordinated by Helen Snelson, who was also involved in the first project in the Decisions and Dilemmas series and is Learning Editor for the Historiana website where the activities will eventually be featured.

The project proposal speaks of innovative teaching methods, but specifies amongst them scripted drama. For this reason Kate Brennan from Act the Facts will be included in the team to work on a scripted drama on the ‘coming into existence of the European Community’. The additional 4 team members will work in pairs on the other key issues.

The four remaining team members will be recruited via an open call and selected by Helen Snelson and EUROCLIO coordinators based on motivation, background, and geographical spread.

The responsibilities of the team-member are:

- Research content and design content material and a learning activity for each of the 5 project areas;
- Take part in face-to-face and online working meetings;
- Research and work in between meetings to prepare material and activities for discussion, trial and further development at meetings. Then to take on follow-up work after meetings;
- Piloting and peer reviewing of the material with colleagues and at EUROCLIO events;
- Provide training in the completed material.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The strategic meeting with the academic advisers was very useful to get better insights in how the key issues can be approached for concrete educational materials. The conceptual debates greatly contributed to a better understanding of what we want to develop with these specific key issues.

The advisors and coordinators agreed on a timetable for the next meetings. The next meeting will be the First Development Workshop in York, United Kingdom in January 2016. Before that time the development team will be constructed via the open call.



The project advisors, Historical Content team members, Development team coordinator and EUROCLIO Coordinators in Brussels.