

## **Learning Inside the Black Box of EU Decision-Making: Trilogue Simulations as a Teaching Tool**

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This article examines the role and pedagogical effectiveness of trilogue simulations in EU studies programmes. Over recent decades, trilogues have emerged as the predominant arena for legislative negotiations at the EU level. At present, most EU legislation is subject to informal agreements concluded in trilogue prior to its formal adoption at first reading by the EU co-legislators. This evolution has fostered a distinctive decision-making culture at the UE level, which raises important normative questions concerning the transparency and accountability of EU decision-making.

For students in EU studies, familiarity with trilogues has become essential to comprehend the practical functioning of EU governance and law-making. This article argues that trilogue simulations constitute a highly promising teaching tool in this context, and explores the pedagogical relevance and effectiveness of such simulations within master-level courses on EU law and politics.

The article pursues a twofold objective: first, to provide empirical evidence on the pedagogical contribution of trilogue simulations as teaching tools in EU studies master programmes, critically assessing both their benefits and their limitations as a teaching method; and second, to offer a practical guide to the organisation of trilogue simulations.

The first part situates trilogue simulations within the broader scholarship on simulations and negotiation exercises as active learning methodologies, and within existing work on the use of simulations in EU studies in particular. It then presents empirical evidence on the pedagogical value and constraints of the exercise, drawing on evaluations from two student cohorts collected through focus groups. These evaluations address the simulation's contribution to consolidating key concepts and knowledge of EU law and politics, as well as its role in developing practical skills relevant to students' professional trajectories in EU affairs. The analysis is complemented by the authors' own reflections as lecturers in EU studies on the strengths and limitations of the simulation.

The second part of the article provides a systematic overview of the design, implementation, and evaluation protocols applied in the simulation. It also briefly outlines the background materials provided to students, the instructions used during the two-day simulation, and the outputs required both prior to and during the exercise (reproduced in full in the appendixes as "ready-made materials" for lecturers).

Overall, the article argues that the increasing relevance of trilogues in EU legislative practice and their combination of political and legal dimensions, make them exceptionally well suited cases for pedagogical use.