



The European International Model United Nations 2016

European Council



Image source: *Sputnik International News, 2015.*

The Rise of Populist Politics in Europe

Welcome Letter

Distinguished delegates,

A warm welcome to the European Council (EC) of The European International Model United Nations (TEIMUN) of 2016! Whether you are an expert of European politics or a student from another discipline, we hope that each of you will leave TEIMUN with friends, memories, and a greater knowledge of the European Council. We hope you that throughout this week, we can strike a balance between diplomacy within sessions and fun on the dance floor.

In this background paper, we will discuss the complexities of European centralization and the opposing Eurosceptic movements. For both topics discussed within the EC during this conference, the Chairs encourage you to rely not only on the background papers, but also to actively undertake research about the issue and your country's position. Seeking additional information through other sources is encouraged, as we hope that each delegate will be able to bring their own unique contributions to the discussion.

We look forward to what will undoubtedly be intense and high-quality debates and to meeting all of you in July!

Diplomatically yours,

Elmer van der Vlugt & Daniel Gindis
EC@teimun.org

Introduction

The European Union

The European Union (EU) was founded as the European Coal and Steel Company after the Second World War, as a means to promote economic and political unity among European countries.¹ From the 1950s till now, the EU has grown both in Member States, from the original six (France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and the Netherlands) to 28 Member States, as well as in functions and roles in the context of global relations. The countries remain independent sovereign States, but forego aspects of their sovereignty in order to gain strength and influence that would be impossible to individually maintain. By relinquishing parts of their sovereignty, each member delegates some of the decision-making powers to shared institutions, so that decisions on specific matters can be made jointly on a regional level.² The three main institutions involved in the legislative procedure are the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

The European Council

The European Council must not be confused with the Council of the European Union, which also represents the individual Member States, but not necessarily by the Head of States, and which is part of the Ordinary Legislative Procedure together with the European Commission and the European Parliament.³ Different is also the Council of Europe, which is a Council independent of the EU, and therefore includes European countries which are not EU Member States, such as Norway and Russia. The European Council meanwhile represents the individual Member States of the EU and consists of the Heads of State or Government of these.⁴ It meets four times a year, potentially more often in times of crisis. The purpose of the Council is to have a permanent forum where the Member States can decide the overall political direction of the EU. It can't pass laws on its own, however, unless there are exceptional circumstances. All other decisions made by the Council require consensus unless the Treaties provide otherwise. Although the Council is not part of the EU's legislative bodies or the executive, their political decisions do influence the lawmaking and the execution of these in the EU-countries.⁵

The Issues of the Day

The European Union was created for the purpose of avoiding war. The logic behind this Union was that if interdependency was established between State economies, countries would face larger financial consequences of warfare and would therefore be dissuaded from militant actions. Despite these aims, a lack of economic union

¹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm

² <http://spectrezine.org/europe/Coughlan.htm>

³ http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-council/index_en.htm

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

was apparent after the First World War, when countries with trade independent of the European mainland expressed little initiative to establish a balanced status quo. However, the Coal and Steel agreement changed the trade dynamic, and for a time the EU was an example, not only of economic union, but also political cooperation and compromise.⁶ However, recent backlash of anti-EU sentiment has grown, causing both States and political parties to begin considering the benefits of this regional union. As a new type of resentment grows between debtor countries, who drain the resources of those in surplus, and immigrants from poorer countries move to richer ones, many have begun to question if this Union can provide more than it takes.

In the early days of the EU, the only opposition the EU faced was from far-right political parties. Despite these political movements sustaining little traction at the time, today the voice for separation grows stronger, as do their arguments for a

The European Union



divided Europe. To date, the European Council has mostly ignored the far-right, but that has only motivated frustrated voters to buy into these movements.⁷ The goal of this meeting is to construct policies which will solve and/or lessen the impact of Eurosceptic campaigns. Each delegate is expected to represent the interests of their respective EU Member State, while pursuing the European goal of an ever-closer union.

Figure 1: EU Member States. Delegation of the European Union to Australia.

Who are the Populist European Parties?

⁶ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm

⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/19/the-rise-of-the-far-right-in-europe-is-not-a-false-alarm/>

There are 7 major political parties in the European Parliament. These are cross-national and consist of members of national parties, but there are several criteria that must be fulfilled to establish a political party at European level.⁸ The elections are held nationally, and voters elect national parties to represent them in the European Parliament. The biggest EU parties are European People's Party (EPP) of center-right and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) of center-left, which although different, are both generally pro-EU. The biggest Eurosceptic parties are the European Conservatives and Reformists Groups (ECR) and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD).⁹ After the elections in spring 2014, the composition of the EU Parliament was thus:

Icon	Name	Percentage
	Group of the European People's Party (EPP, Christian Democrats)	Result: 221 MEPs Result as percentage: 29.43 %
	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)	Result: 191 MEPs Result as percentage: 25.43 %
	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Result: 70 MEPs Result as percentage: 9.32 %
	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	Result: 67 MEPs Result as percentage: 8.92 %
	European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	Result: 52 MEPs Result as percentage: 6.92 %
	The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	Result: 50 MEPs Result as percentage: 6.66 %
	Europe of freedom and direct democracy Group (EFDD)	Result: 48 MEPs Result as percentage: 6.39 %
	Non-attached Members – Members not belonging to any political group (NI)	Result: 52 MEPs Result as percentage: 6.92 %

The most influential populist Eurosceptic parties in the EC are the UK Independence Party (UKIP) led by Nigel Farage, the French Front National (FN) with Marine Le

⁸ <http://www.itsyourparliament.eu/groups/>

⁹ <http://fortune.com/2016/04/04/populist-parties-europe/>

Pen, and the Dutch Party of Freedom (PVV) led by Geert Wilder.¹⁰ Although they, at first glance, may seem to resemble each other, their policies and areas of focus vary. While UKIP is a part of EFDD, Le Pen and Wilder failed in founding a far-right bloc after having won the EU Parliamentary elections in the spring of 2014, when most of the changes took place¹¹.

Many of the parties' main points are however quite similar, promoting anti-EU, anti-common currency, anti-integration, anti-bureaucrat, anti-politician and anti-immigration rhetoric.¹² Le Pen and the FN has been said to be xenophobic and anti-Semitic, and Le Pen has made many negative public statements about French muslims¹³. The PVV and Wilders have taken a clear stance against Muslims and non-Western European immigration, threatening to ban the Koran and the construction of new mosques, and to enforce a headscarf tax on burqa carriers.¹⁴ Whilst certainly less radical, Farage and the UKIP have become famous for their policy of "Britain out of Europe, and immigrants out of Britain."¹⁵

Such parties can variously be classified as populist extremist parties (PEPs), and are often defined by their charismatic leaders. As populism is defined as, "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' vs. the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of *volonté generale* (general will) of the people," the European PEPs fit this description as they appeal to the people's dissatisfaction with the EU and its system.¹⁶ They are rebelling against status quo of economic stagnation, austerity, chronic unemployment (especially among the young) and unfettered immigration.

Although the European populist parties still do not have a majority in the EU Parliament, they form a strong opposition to the majority. This means that in order to pass legislation, most of the other parties have to agree in order to have a clear majority.¹⁷ The success of the European PEPs feeds off of the people's dissatisfaction with the EU, mainly within the areas of immigration, the joint economy and the role of Brussels within national legislation.¹⁸

¹⁰https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD000000000354812/A_profile_of_Europe%E2%80%99s_populist_parties%3A_Structures.PDF

¹¹Willsher, Kim (24th June 2014) The Guardian. *Marine Le Pen fails to form far-right bloc in European parliament.*

¹² Ibid.

¹³<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/france-how-far-right-leader-marine-le-pen-using-her-racism-trial-promote-fn-rethoric-1525049>

¹⁴ <https://www.rnw.org/archive/wilders-wants-headscarf-tax>

¹⁵<http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/665446/Nigel-Farage-Ukip-control-immigration-leave-EU-ref-erendum-June>

¹⁶ Schneider, Bill (27th May 2014) Reuters. *Meet the Tea Party – European edition*

¹⁷ Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

¹⁸ Ibid.

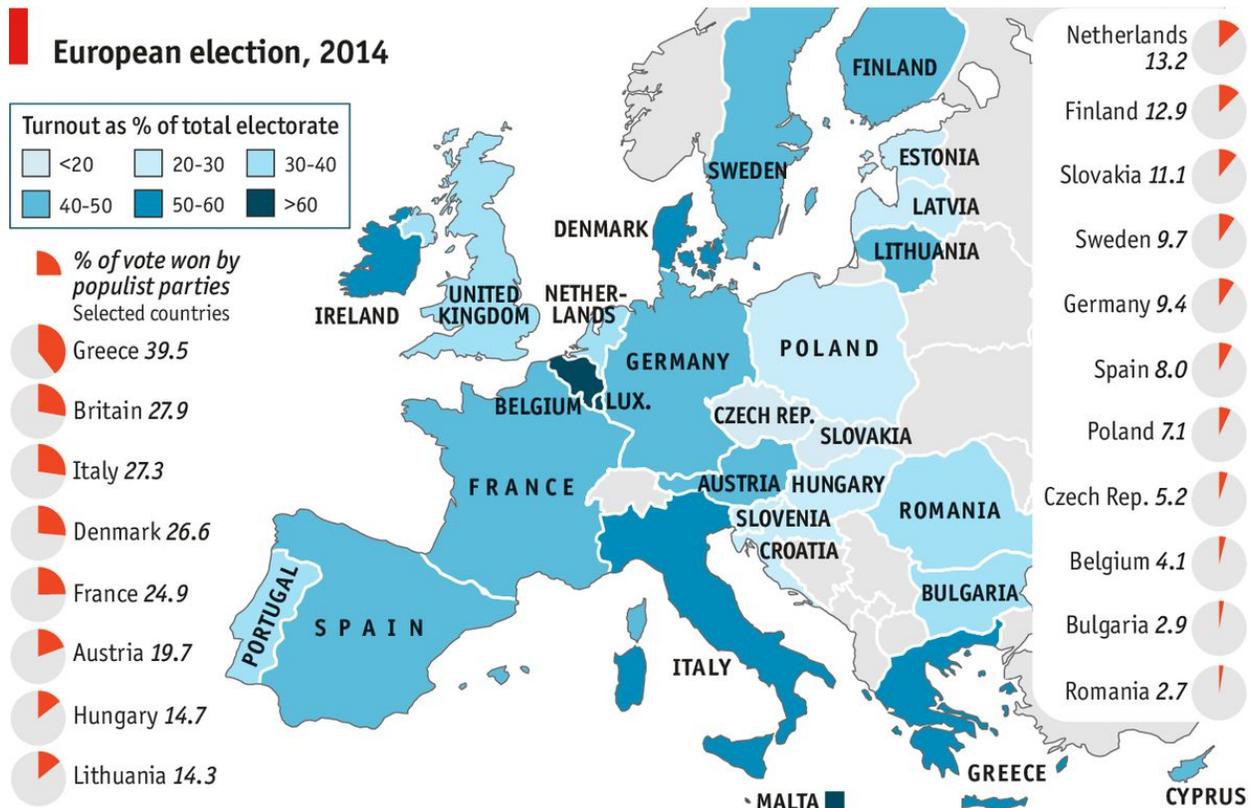


Figure 2: Turnout Figures and Vote Won by Populist Parties in 2014 Election. *The Economist*.

Contemporary Issues

Autonomy

For better or worse, Europe is now more intertwined than ever before. Eurocrats promote the idea of strengthening Europe using a “step-by-step” process. As a result, Eurosceptics accuse Brussels of slicing away national sovereignty, treaty by treaty.¹⁹ In truth, both opinions have validity since treaties are often experimental, yielding clear effects only years after they are implemented into policy.

The Lisbon treaty of 2009 was designed to increase EU efficiency and to “streamline” decision-making after the union's enlargement to 27 nations. In practice, the tradeoff will create a simpler and more reflective voting system, with more credit given to a nation's population size.²⁰ The changes are being phased in between 2014 and 2017, after which a majority vote in the Council of Ministers (which represents national governments) will be carried if 55% of nations

¹⁹<http://www.irishtimes.com/premium/loginpage?destination=http://www.irishtimes.com/news/republican-sf-argues-treaty-a-further-erosion-of-sovereignty-1.520445>

²⁰http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/division_of_powers/division_of_powers.pdf

representing 65% of the overall EU population vote yes.²¹ While in practice the EU rarely votes, generally preferring consensus, this change is one of many resulting in a change of the way members are represented in Brussels, as members with smaller populations will experience decreased representation.²²

Validity of mandates

The Charter of Fundamental Rights is given legal authority to enforce a catalogue of social and civil rights, though it is unknown how much of a difference it will make.²³ Things such as a right to strike, or a “right of access to preventive health care” are not in the EU’s official mandate with little power to regulate industrial disputes or national health services.²⁴ At the same time, the European Court of Justice is expected to have the final say—even in Britain, though Britain hopes a special protocol will make their laws immune to challenges based on the charter.²⁵

This change will also make the European Commission’s top layer of political leaders shrink. As of 2015, EU nations will lose the right to send one commissioner each to Brussels and the total number of commissioners will be capped at a rotating two-thirds of the number of Member States.²⁶ This may weaken the commission if big countries get upset about not having one of their own inside.

Another issue is how national parliaments will be allowed to protest if they deem a proposed EU law unnecessary. However, the bar is set high. If half of the 27 national parliaments want a law changed they can then insist a draft measure be scrapped.²⁷ This new clause may not hearten domestic opponents of moves dictated from Brussels but it could also have a reverse effect.

The Price of the Euro

Since 2010, and for some long before, many eurozone countries have faced extreme financial hardship. Furthermore, European leaders are not unified in a solution to these problems. While the European Union’s mandate is to promote growth, competitiveness and jobs (in that order), it is difficult to address because its leaders disagree on how growth could be rekindled.²⁸ The French want measures to protect industry, the British want more openness and competition, the Italians want a relaxation of fiscal rules, and the Germans still see the problem in terms of export competitiveness (principally due to wages rising faster than productivity).²⁹

²¹ <http://www.economist.com/node/10024471>

²² Ibid.

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/charter/index_en.htm

²⁴ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/charterpedia/article/35-health-care>

²⁵ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-factbox-idUKKCN0VS2SH>

²⁶ http://baobab.uc3m.es/monet/monnet/IMG/pdf/institutions_EU28_15r.pdf

²⁷ http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/897558214_05-Challenge%20Europe%207.pdf

²⁸ <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21603034-impact-rise-anti-establishment-parties-europe-and-abroad-eurosceptic-union>

²⁹ Ibid.

Because of these conflicting interests, combined with the desire to achieve results, a number of measures to maintain financial stability in the monetary union have been taken.

Initially, temporary mechanisms were implemented by the Eurogroup first agreeing to provide bilateral loans to Greece through the Greek Loan Facility (GLF).³⁰ Later, the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) was established, which eventually took over the support to Greece. Ireland and Portugal also receive assistance from the EFSF, as well as from the EU instrument European Financial Stabilization



Mechanism (EFSM).³¹ The permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM), inaugurated on the sidelines of the Eurogroup meeting on 8 October 2012, has since replaced these temporary crisis management mechanisms, currently covering support to Cyprus.³² The International Monetary Fund always participates at the technical level and in most cases provides a part of the financial assistance.

Figure 3: *The Price of the Euro. The Economist.*

Financial support is subject to strict conditions, outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding.³³ These are agreed between the country requesting the assistance and those who provide it. The conditions include policy requirements to help the Member States concerned to reform their economies, return to sustainable growth, and bring their public finances onto a sustainable path.

At the moment, a slow and fragile recovery is taking place in the EU and the eurozone. Europe's economic recovery, which began in the second quarter of 2013, is expected to spread across the region and gain strength while at the same time becoming more balanced across growth drivers.³⁴ As it is typical following deep financial crises, however, the recovery remains fragile. Nevertheless, recent positive economic news means that the forecasts for GDP growth this year and next have been raised slightly since the autumn. EU GDP, which rose 0.1% in 2013, is now expected to rise 1.5% this year and 2.0% next year, while growth in the euro

³⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/assistance_eu_ms/greek_loan_facility/index_en.htm

³¹ Ibid.

³² <http://www.esm.europa.eu/>

³³ Treaty of the European Union (1992)

³⁴ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/02/taking-europe-s-pulse>

area, which was -0.4% for 2013 as a whole, is expected to be 1.2% in 2014 and 1.8% in 2015.³⁵ After two years of contraction, domestic demand is gently firming, as the crisis' legacy of excessive debt, financial fragmentation, economic uncertainty and the need for adjustment and fiscal consolidation fades, and confidence is improving.³⁶ The fiscal stances of the EU and eurozone this year are expected to be broadly neutral. At the same time, rising import demand means that external trade's contribution to growth will become more muted. In line with these developments, unemployment should fall slightly from its peak, as the labor market turns the corner.³⁷

European Borders

According to the Amsterdam Treaty (1999) the EU commits to 'maintain and develop an area of freedom, security and justice.' EU policies on citizens' rights and internal security includes free movement of persons, immigration and asylum policies, cooperation on refugee policies and common policies towards third-country nationals, and police and judicial cooperation to combat illegal immigration among others.³⁸

France, Germany and the three Benelux countries signed the Schengen Accord in 1985 as an intergovernmental agreement, outside the EU treaty.³⁹ It meant a complete elimination of border controls between the signatory countries. In 1986, Member State governments set up an Ad Hoc Working Group on Immigration (AWGI), which resulted in the Dublin Convention on Asylum (1990) and the External Frontiers Convention (1991).⁴⁰ The Dublin Convention aimed to prevent multiple asylum applications by mutual recognition of all States' asylum regulation and ensuring that asylum applications would only be processed in the EU country where the asylum first arrived.⁴¹ The External Frontiers Convention provided for the mutual recognition of visas for non-EU nationals, and abolished the need for third-country nationals residing legally in one Member State to obtain a visa to travel to another EU State for a period of less than 3 months.

The Council of the European Union continued to propose and adopt measures in specific areas of asylum in the beginning of the 2000s. In July 2001 the Council adopted a directive setting out minimum standards for the temporary protection of persons displaced by economic, political or environmental disasters, and therefore not eligible for asylum status.⁴² The EU now defines to a large extent how Member States grant asylum, visas and temporary protection to third-country nationals,

³⁵ <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2014/October/02/pr142235.aspx>

³⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2014_winter/overview_en.pdf

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Treaty of Amsterdam (1997)

³⁹ The Schengen Agreement (1985)

⁴⁰ http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/95_ARCHIVE/Briefing_Papers/Briefing_Paper_12_UK.pdf

⁴¹ The Dublin Regulation (1990)

⁴² <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/08/22/the-eus-responsibility-to-protect-environmentally-displaced-people>

even as an ever larger influx of refugees come in from Syria. However, Member States still control most aspects of immigration policy, including who can be given citizenship and which third-country nationals have the right to reside permanently.⁴³

One of the main problems arising from the developed policies and as a direct result of the Dublin Convention is the issue of the asylum seekers.⁴⁴ In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the continuing conflicts in the Middle East, refugees cross the Mediterranean hoping for a better life in Europe. The countries that first receive these refugees are countries like Italy, Spain, Greece and Malta, countries who suffered badly from the economic crisis. And because of the Dublin Convention and integrated laws, it is these countries which have to process the asylum applications of these displaced peoples.⁴⁵ In 2007, Malta asked other EU Members for help, including resources and acceptance of persons, but many countries refused, fearing that they would be seen as too open to refugees.⁴⁶ The situation also means that too many people are cramped in poor conditions, and stuck waiting for the results of the applications for a long time.

In addition to the humanitarian considerations, terror attacks have become a pressing issue, most specifically the November 13, 2015 attack, which left 130 dead and 350 injured. The weapons were smuggled across the Schengen Area and opened the door to many questions about the security and safety of anyone living in the EU. Some PEPs have expressed concerns that terrorists might try to enter the EU alongside the incoming refugees, although evidence to support such fears is scant.

Contemporary Case Studies

Austrian Presidential Election

Alexander Van der Bellen, a left-wing, independent candidate, has narrowly prevented Austria from becoming the first EU country to elect Norbert Hofer, a far-right head of State after a knife-edge contest ended with his opponent conceding defeat.⁴⁷ The Green party defeated the anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic Freedom party, a day after polling closed and only when more than 700,000 postal ballots – about 10% of available votes – were taken into account. The final score was 49.7%, against 50.3%.⁴⁸

Rome Mayoral Election

Italy's anti-establishment Five Star Movement secured the mayorship of both Rome

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <http://www.access-info.org/european-union/6-european-union-key-problems>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isle-landers-what-happens-migrants-after-crossing-mediterranean-malta-photo-report-1500971>

⁴⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/far-right-candidate-defeated-austrian-presidential-election-norbert-hofer>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and Turin in mid-June. Virginia Raggi won 67% of the final-round vote in Rome, and in Turin, Chiara Appendino (rather unexpectedly) won 54%.⁴⁹ The Five Star Movement candidates had previously won 35.3% and 31% in Rome and Turin's first round voting respectively, whilst in Rome, Roberto Giachetti, the Democratic Party candidate, reached only 25%.⁵⁰ The victory comes as a blow to the center-left government of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, whose Democratic Party candidates struggled in many major Italian cities.

Brexit

The UK electorate addressed the questions of its membership of the European Union on June 23rd, 2016 in a referendum on the country's membership.⁵¹ Set in place by Prime Minister David Cameron, opinions on "Brexit" moved from a clear desire to remain February to extremely close polling on the eve of the vote. UKIP and other populist parties played a major part in forcing Prime Minister Cameron to promise the referendum in the first place by convincing many Britons that that the EU was a burden preventing it from maximizing its potential as an economic force in the world, although the Leave camp was ultimately led by senior Conservatives Boris Johnson and Michael Gove.

Please note: This background paper was written before the referendum on Thursday 23rd June.

Conclusion

While open immigration, a feeling of lack of national sovereignty and the euro-zone crisis, and its aftermath, goes some way to explaining the rise of the Eurosceptics, it is far from a complete answer. The populist right cannot be found in austerity-battered Spain and Portugal. At the same time they thrive in well-off Norway, Finland and Austria. A study by Cas Mudde, at the University of Georgia, between 2005 and 2016, shows that there are fewer examples of electoral loss for parties of the far and populist right (Italy, Belgium, Slovakia and others) as there are of gain (Britain, Hungary, France, Austria, the Netherlands and more).⁵²

For now, Europe is fertile terrain for the Eurosceptics. There is little sign of a serious drop in joblessness, nor decisive economic recovery. The election of Jean-Claude Juncker, a tried and tested traditional Eurocrat as president of the European Commission means a likely continuation in the direction the EU has been going, without an intervention.

⁴⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36569410>

⁵⁰ <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-06-20/italys-anti-establishment-5-star-movement-delivers-dramatic-victories-key-mayoral-ra>

⁵¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>

⁵² <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21592666-parties-nationalist-right-are-changing-terms-european-political-debate-does>

The members of the European Council must put together a bill which challenges one, or all, of the aforementioned issues to keep the benefits gained and try to save the European Union from the PEPs, and possibly from itself.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

1. Do populist extremist parties pose a threat to European Unity? If so, is directly combating the PEPs the solution?
2. Can the current electoral framework be trusted with the wellbeing of the European Member States?
3. What steps should be taken to facilitate dialogue between European institutions and Eurosceptic political parties?
4. What initiatives could be implemented to reassure public faith in European institutions of centralization?
5. What changes could be applied within the European System to help win back support without betraying the EU's staunchest supporters?