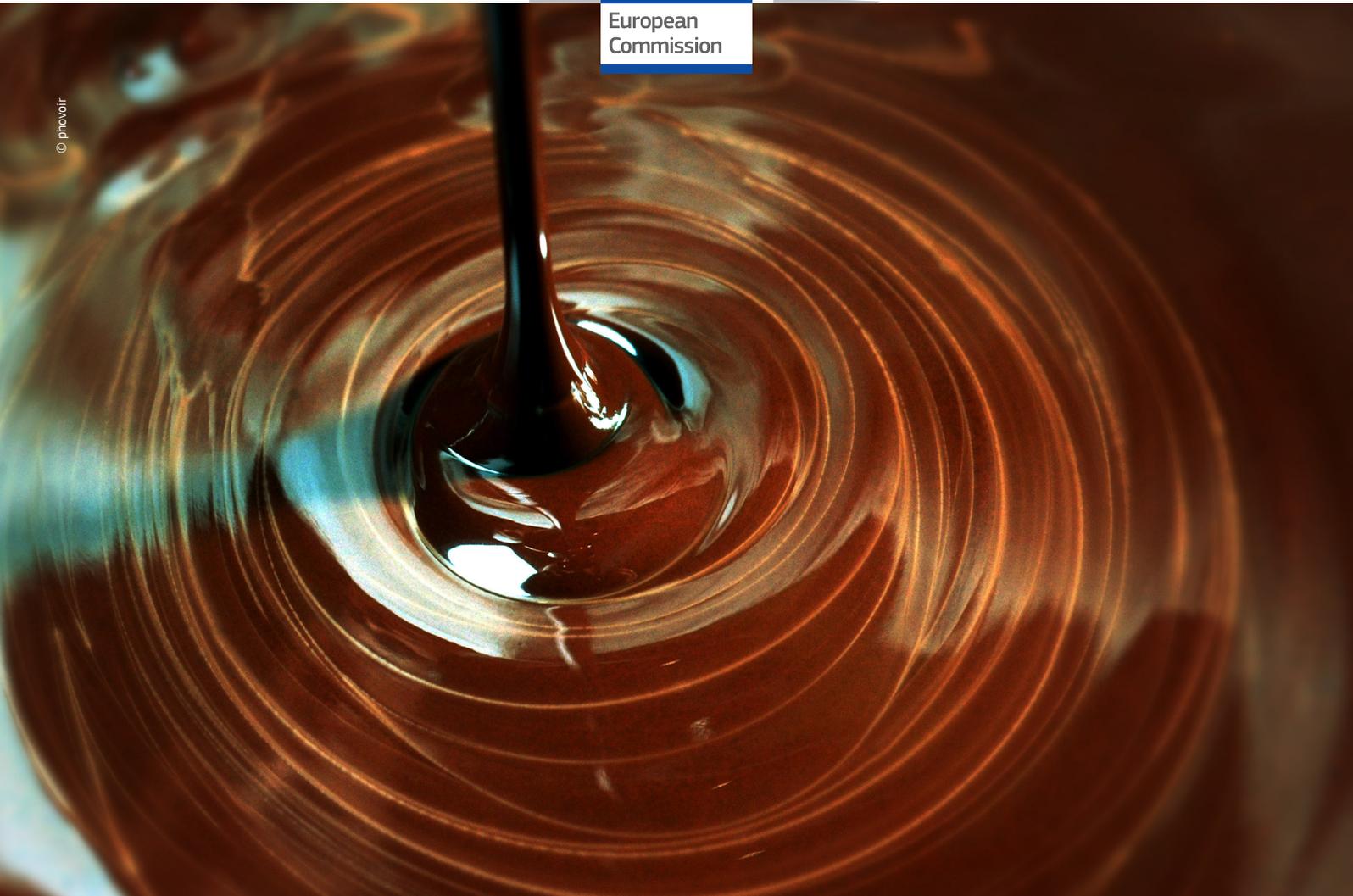




European
Commission

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Role-play EU decision-making

Teacher's Guide



European Parliament



Council of the
European Union

Role-play

EU decision-making:

Teacher's guide

Overview

Students act out a meeting of the Council of the European Union. The aim of the meeting is to reach a decision on the legislative proposal concerning the ingredients in chocolate. The proposal will only be adopted if both the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament agree on the definitive wording. During the meeting, the European Parliament informs the Council of its position regarding the Chocolate directive.

Students play the part of ministers from EU member states. On the one hand, they need to take their national interests into consideration. On the other, they should allow the European legislative process to run smoothly. Representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament also participate.

Case

In some member states, any product resembling chocolate may be sold under that name. In other member states, a product may only be labelled 'chocolate' if it contains cocoa butter. This is problematic, as it means that there are some countries where chocolate manufacturers are not able to sell their products. This hampers trade within the EU.

The European Commission ensures free movement of goods in the EU. For this reason, the Commission has drawn up a directive that is to apply to all member states. The proposal for this directive is as follows:

- Companies may replace cocoa butter with other vegetable oils and still call their products 'chocolate'.
- It is mandatory for all member states to permit the sale of such 'chocolate'.

Learning goal

The aim is to have students experience how European decision-making works and to understand that various national and other interests play a part.

Time required

The role-play takes 75 minutes, including the introduction.

Depending on the time you have available, you may allow students more or less time to prepare in groups. You may also shorten the discussion afterwards if necessary.

It is possible to divide the role-play over two lessons. Complete parts A and B in the first lesson, then devote the second lesson to the role-play (C) and the discussion afterwards (D).

Materials required

- Introductory video
- Optional: PowerPoint presentation, with an additional description of the European Union
- A briefing of the case
- Note paper for students
- An Excel sheet for entering votes (may be projected on the screen)

If you have any questions concerning this role-play, please contact the European Commission Representation in the Netherlands.
www.eu.nl / +31 70 313 53 00

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NB. The procedure has been simplified for the purpose of this role-play. It further reflects fewer countries than those that participated in the original directive.

Preparation

Arrange the chairs as for a meeting beforehand (i.e. a square). Ensure that there are enough seats for all participants

Running the role-play

Part A. Introductory video and explanation (10-15 minutes)

- Watch the introductory film as a class.
- Provide a short description of the European Union. Use the PowerPoint presentation to help, if desired.
- Write out the steps for the role-play on the board:
Round 1- Preliminary vote; Position of the European Parliament; Recess; Round 2- Final vote; Position of the European Parliament. Explain that during the recess, national ministers must try to bring other member states and the European Parliament around to their point of view. It is also possible during the recess to ask whether the European Commission is prepared to amend the proposal.
- Divide the class into fourteen groups.
 - Group 1*
European Parliament (1-2 students)
 - Group 2*
President of the Council of the European Union (1-2 students)
 - Group 3*
European Commission (1-2 students)
 - Groups 4- 14*
Ministers of the EU member states (1-2 students per member state)
If the class has more than 28 students, have some students form groups of three.
- Hand out the role descriptions.

NB: If there are not enough students, Portugal, Ireland and/or Czechia can be left out. However, it is important that these countries' votes still be counted! Announce these positions yourself during the meeting.

Part B: Preparation in groups (5-10 minutes)

Students decide how they will act, using the role descriptions. Will they vote for or against the European Commission's proposal? And why?

President	
France	Sweden
Czechia	Portugal
Poland	Germany
Belgium	The Netherlands
Spain	Ireland
European Parliament	Italy
European Commission	

Part C: Role-play-meeting of the Council of the European Union (45 minutes)

Round 1: 10 minutes

The president opens the meeting, and gives the floor to the European Commission. The Commission reads the proposal for the directive aloud.

The president then asks each country to formulate their position on the directive.

Encourage students to write down what each member state and what the Parliament have voted.

Preliminary vote: The president asks which countries wish to vote in favour of the directive, as formulated by the European Commission. You record the votes on a computer, using the Excel sheet. At the end of the vote, no majority will have been reached.

The president gives the floor to the European Parliament (EP). The proposal met with firm resistance in the European Parliament. It was voted down with an overwhelming majority.

The president calls for a 10-15-minute recess. During this time, the various countries try to rally support for their positions. It is also possible to submit amendment proposals to the European Commission during the recess.

Recess: 10-15 minutes

Negotiation: the ministers of the various member states seek support for their positions, or make compromises. It is permitted to ask the European Commission to amend the proposal. Walk around and remind the ministers and European Commission to talk and discuss the matter with the European Parliament. It is important that also the Parliament accepts the proposal.

Round 2: 20 minutes

The president opens the meeting and emphasises the common interest: internal trade within the EU.

The president asks the European Commission whether they have amended the proposal for the Chocolate directive.

If so, the Commission is given the floor in order to present the amended proposal to the meeting, and explain why it has been amended.

If not, the Commission re-reads the proposal as previously formulated.

The president asks the minister from each member state to explain what he/she thinks of the (possibly amended) proposal by the Commission. In the interest of time, the president can decide to only give some member states speaking time.

Final vote: The president asks who is in favour of the (amended) proposal, and who is against.

You record the votes on a computer, using the Excel sheet.

After the vote, the European Parliament explains its position on the (amended) proposal.

Part D: Discussion afterwards (10 minutes)

Afterwards, discuss the process and the arguments raised.

Reflect on the result. Was it reasonable to assume that the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union would reach agreement on the Chocolate directive? This is necessary in order to reach definitive decisions.

National interests can stand in the way of European decision-making.

Ideological differences can prevent that agreement is reached.

NB: The students' role descriptions are given on the following pages.

Tips:

Point your students in the right direction during the recess. Which countries can be convinced?

Tell your students that they can do whatever they like to produce a dazzling argument during round two. This will make for a lively debate!

European Parliament

The Case

In some member states, any product resembling chocolate may be sold under that name. In other member states, a product may only be labelled 'chocolate' if it contains cocoa butter. This is problematic, as it means that there are some countries where chocolate manufacturers are not able to sell their products. This hampers trade within the EU. Although the European Union has had an 'internal market' since 1993 that ensures free movement of goods in the EU, France and Belgium still refuse to sell chocolate from other European countries.



Function

The European Parliament is **the voice of the people** and represents the citizens of all member states of the EU. The European Parliament plays a decisive role in the decision-making process, because - together with the member states - it has to give its agreement to the legislative proposals initiated by the European Commission. There are 705 Members of the European Parliament and they are split into political groups.

What does the European Parliament think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

The proposal of the European Commission met with **firm resistance** in the European Parliament. It voted against with an overwhelming majority, arguing that 'chocolate' is something very different from what manufacturers in Sweden, Ireland and three other member states have been producing for decades.

As an elected body representing citizens in the EU member states, the Parliament takes consumer interests very seriously. Consumers benefit from clear and **correct information** on the food items they buy. In the current proposal, however, it is not clear what kind of chocolate lies on the shelves. Moreover, quite a number of Members of the European Parliament are worried that the unique taste of the **regional specialty** from their constituency would be at risk, if chocolate can be made from other ingredients. Finally, the European Parliament is against stimulating the deforestation that is stimulated by **palm oil** production.

Your role

The European Parliament has nominated you as their rapporteur to present their position on the European Commission's proposal for a 'Chocolate directive'. Your instructions are clear: the European Parliament expects you to speak out **against** the proposal.

What do you have to do?

- Once the member states have voted on the proposal a first time, the president will give you the floor to present the position of the European Parliament. Your speaking time is 1.5 minutes.
- If there's no majority in the Council in favour of the proposal, there will be a lobby session. You want that at least 2 of your 3 concerns will be taken away. You should therefore **actively** lobby along with the other parties! **So go and talk to them.**
- After the lobby session, the member states will vote a second time. Thereafter, the president will ask you to say what the position of the European Parliament now is. Based on the lobby session, you may change your vote.

Country	Opinion on the Chocolate Directive:	Population (million):	%
Ireland	For/Against	5	1
Portugal	For/Against	10	3
Sweden	For/Against	10	3
Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
Italy	For/Against	60	17
France	For/Against	66	18
Germany	For/Against	81	23
Total		357	

Council of the European Union: President

The Case

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Function

The Council of the European Union consists of the national ministers from each EU country. They meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies.

10 minutes

Round 1: Open and chair the meeting:

1. Open the meeting and welcome everybody. Say that the Chocolate directive is on the agenda today.
2. Explain that round 1 is for taking a poll in the form of a preliminary vote. After that there will be a 10 to 15-minute recess, and in round 2 you hope to reach a decision.
3. Give the floor to the **European Commission**, who will present its proposal.
4. Ask **each member state** to explain its position on the proposal. You can note down their positions in the table overleaf. Encourage member states to write down each position on their papers

Preliminary vote:

While the teacher shows the Excel sheet on the screen, you ask the ministers to vote. Using the Excel sheet, the teacher records which countries are in favour (f) of the proposal, and which are against (a). The Excel sheet makes it easy to see whether the directive has been accepted. In order to adopt a proposal, a qualified majority of at least 55% of the countries has to agree to the proposal and they have to represent at least 65% of the population in the EU.

Ask the **European Parliament** to explain its position.

Call a Recess

1. You conclude that there is no majority in favour of the Commission's proposal.
2. **Explain** the purpose of the recess:
 - a. During the recess, countries should attempt to reach compromises so that a majority may be reached.
 - b. Countries should try to convince the Commission to amend the proposal, so that they do feel able to vote in favour of it. This kind of discussion between the Commission, Parliament and member states is called a 'negotiation' or 'lobbying'.
3. Call a 10-15 minute recess.

10-15 minutes

Recess

As chair of the meeting you have no specific task during the recess, but do **keep track of time**. You have to announce when it's time for the meeting to start again.

20 minutes

Round 2: Opening:

Emphasise the importance of joint decision-making. Despite everybody's differences, the aim is to reach agreements in order to facilitate trade within the EU.

Chair the meeting:

1. Ask the Commission whether they have amended their proposal during the recess (i.e. as the result of lobbying) and after having heard the European Parliament's position.
2. Give the floor to the Commission, so that they can present their (possibly amended) proposal.
3. Ask whether anyone would like to respond to the (amended) proposal, or to one of the amendments. Encourage debate by asking questions.

Keep an eye on time – the final vote must be taken five minutes before the end of the meeting.

Final vote:

Ask the ministers to vote for or against the (amended) proposal of the European Commission. The teacher records the votes in the Excel sheet. Conclude whether the (amended) proposal has reached a majority using the Excel sheet.

4. After the vote, you ask the European Parliament to make its position known.

Voting procedure

Important!

A proposal can only be accepted if there is a qualified majority of at least 55% of the countries, representing 65% of the population in the EU.

Ministers in Council	For / against / unsure?	Population (millions)	%
Ireland	For/Against	5	1
Portugal	For/Against	10	3
Sweden	For/Against	10	3
Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
Italy	For/Against	60	17
France	For/Against	66	18
Germany	For/Against	81	23
Total	11 countries	358 million	100%
Number of countries in favour?		Million inhabitants in favour?	
% in favour?		% in favour?	
55% reached?	Yes / No	65% reached?	Yes / No

NB: This voting procedure has been simplified for the purposes of the role-play.

European Commission

The Case

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Take notes on what each country says, carefully monitoring who is in support of your proposal and who might be possible to convince (see table below). In order for a proposal to be accepted, a qualified majority of at least 55% of the countries has to agree and they have to represent at least 65% of the population in the EU

Function

You represent the **executive body** of the European Union. Like the ministers in the Netherlands, you take the initiative when it comes to legislation, and monitor whether European laws have been implemented.

Your proposal: the Chocolate directive

The European Commission ensures free movement of goods in the EU. For this reason, the Commission has drawn up a directive that is to apply to all member states. The proposal for this directive is as follows:

- a. Companies may replace cocoa butter with other vegetable oils and still call their products 'chocolate'.
- b. It is mandatory for all member states to permit the sale of such 'chocolate'.

What you need to do:

1. Present your proposal for the Chocolate directive. Write down the positions of each country.
2. During the recess, try to find a majority for the proposal. Try to **convince** countries who voted against the proposal to change their minds. You may also **amend** the proposal, so that more countries vote in favour of it.
3. Keep the wishes of the **European Parliament** in mind. Shortly before the recess, you will hear the position of the European Parliament.
4. After the recess, you present the (amended) proposal.

Country	Opinion on the Chocolate Directive:	Population (millions):	%
Ireland	For/Against	5	1
Portugal	For/Against	10	3
Sweden	For/Against	10	3
Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
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Belgium



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Case

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What does Belgium think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

You do **not agree** with the European Commission's proposal. Products can only be called 'chocolate' if they **contain cocoa butter!**

Belgian chocolate is one of your most important exports. The Belgians are extremely proud of their pralines. You are also very focused on developing a Fairtrade chocolate industry. The volume of Fairtrade chocolate imported in Belgium was 136.000 tonnes (source: retaildetail, 2018). It is crucial that more countries will follow you. You believe that local cocoa farmers deserve better working conditions, fair prices, improved environment and better terms of trade.

First round of votes

Belgium **votes against** the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You are prepared to search for a solution. Perhaps one idea could be to label products containing other vegetable oils as '**vegacacao**', or something similar. Then any product could still be sold in any country, yet it is still clear to consumers which products are real chocolate, and which are not. Further do not forget to advocate for **Fairtrade** chocolate among all members states and to collaborate with your potential allies.

Voting Procedure

In order for a proposal to be accepted, a qualified majority of at least **55%** of the countries has to agree to the proposal and they have to represent at least **65%** of the population in the EU. Do not forget to write down the opinion of each member state.

Country	Opinion on the Chocolate directive	Population (millions)	%
Ireland	For/Against	5	1
Portugal	For/Against	10	3
Sweden	For/Against	10	3
Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
Italy	For/Against	60	17
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Czechia



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The Case

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- b. It is mandatory for all member states to permit the sale of such 'chocolate'.

What does Czechia think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Czechia has made significant investments in producing chocolate that **contains cocoa butter**. You have conformed to the requirements of France, Belgium and Switzerland in every respect. You are therefore not happy with the European Commission's proposal. Even though you are a rather small country, this proposal could have a big impact. Your citizens are further fond on chocolate with less sugar and more cocoa. They would not even mind to pay more if needed.

First round of votes

Czechia **votes against** the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You try to convince countries who are in doubt to vote against the proposal. It is important for you to protect your own chocolate industry. You can also collaborate with potential allies to develop a strategy together. Consider how to make the **chocolate industry healthier**, perhaps you could convince other member states and the Parliament to have a quality mark. You are willing to meet halfway.

Voting Procedure

In order for a proposal to be accepted, a qualified majority of at least **55%** of the countries has to agree to the proposal and they have to represent at least **65%** of the population in the EU. Do not forget to mark below the opinion of each member state.

Country	Opinion on the Chocolate directive	Population (millions)	%
Ireland	For/Against	5	1
Portugal	For/Against	10	3
Sweden	For/Against	10	3
Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
Italy	For/Against	60	17
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Germany



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The Case

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What does Germany think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Germany supports free trade and the further development of the internal market and would therefore like to support the proposal of the European Commission.

At the same time, Germany is very conscious about the negative effects that the production of some vegetable oils, most notably **palm oil**, has on the environment. Even though there are perfectly fine alternatives available (shea butter, mango butter), the majority of 'fake' chocolate is still being made with palm oil. With the elections around the corner, Germany cannot take the risk of supporting a policy that promotes palm oil production and could thus be linked to deforestation.

First round of votes

You **vote against** the proposal in the first round, because you want to show clear opposition against the large scale production of palm oil.

Recess

You **listen** carefully to the proposals by the other countries. Furthermore, you talk to countries that are in favour of the directive. Perhaps they can help you find an environmentally friendly alternative for palm oil? You also want **transparency**, ensuring that consumers know what their chocolate is made of. **Only** if you are satisfied with the outcome of these negotiations you vote **in favour**.

Voting Procedure

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Sweden	For/Against	10	3
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Poland	For/Against	39	11
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Ireland



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The Case

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What does Ireland think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

According to a recent survey conducted by an independent research agency, consumers cannot taste whether chocolate contains real cocoa butter or not. You are therefore in **complete agreement** with the European Commission's directive. It is preposterous that Irish chocolate made from **alternative vegetable** oils cannot be sold in Belgium or France.

Ireland has a rather long tradition to produce and consume chocolate made from cocoa butter equivalents. Due to extreme conditions of poverty in Ireland and a severe drop of cocoa bean import – both Ireland and the UK were forced to find alternatives to cocoa butter. This has become part of their national history and that's why Ireland wants to protect its own chocolate traditions.

First round of votes

Ireland **votes in favour** of the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You wish to **convince** everyone of the importance of fair competition, and therefore also of the importance of this new directive. You are a relative small country. That is why it is important to convince other bigger countries and the European parliament that they should vote in favour. You are even prepared to support other countries in other areas if necessary. Reflect upon which arguments you can use.

Voting Procedure

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Belgium	For/Against	11	3
Czechia	For/Against	11	3
The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
Italy	For/Against	60	17
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Spain



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The Case

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What does Spain think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Although Spain does not produce much chocolate, you do feel it is important that chocolate be made of **cocoa butter**. The Spanish value **traditions**. The chocolate brand 'Valor' is world famous and Spanish churros, a fried-dough pastry, is dipped in hot chocolate. You want to be sure that these traditions are protected in the framework of the Commission proposal. Nonetheless, you do believe it is important for stable agreements to be made so that the same rules apply everywhere. You reluctantly support the initiative, but will take any opportunity to raise the issue of traditions.

First round of votes

Spain **votes in favour** of the European Commission's proposal, but inform the other countries that you would like to discuss the protection of traditions.

Recess

You could be **tempted to vote against** the European Commission's proposal, if other countries manage to convince you that this will safeguard the Spanish traditions.

You nonetheless actively try to find a solution. Perhaps it is an idea to create a label for 'real chocolate' that restaurants could put on their menu? Or do you think there should simply be an exception for the chocolate that is served with churros? *You have heard Italy is struggling with similar difficulties...*

Voting Procedure

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The Netherlands	For/Against	17	5
Poland	For/Against	39	11
Spain	For/Against	47	13
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France



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The Case

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- b. It is mandatory for all member states to permit the sale of such 'chocolate'.

What does France think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

You **disagree entirely** with the European Commission's proposal. Products can only be called 'chocolate' if they **contain cocoa butter!** The traditional French chocolate industry will collapse if competing 'fake' chocolate is allowed onto the market. Your answer is therefore a resounding 'non!'.

Real chocolate contains at least 35% of cocoa. As long as other countries comply with that number, they are allowed to sell their product as chocolate in France.

First round of votes

France **votes against** the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You are **not prepared** to change your position. It is important that you find enough allies to stop the EC's proposal from being accepted. Try to convince countries who are in doubt to vote against the proposal. You can also collaborate with potential allies.

If you notice that a majority of countries might nonetheless vote in favour of the directive, you try to convince them to include the maximum possible percentage of cocoa. Something is better than nothing in that case.

Voting Procedure

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Total		357	

Italy



The Case

In some member states, any product resembling chocolate may be sold under that name. In other member states, a product may only be labelled 'chocolate' if it contains cocoa butter. This is problematic, as it means that there are some countries where chocolate manufacturers are not able to sell their products. This hampers trade within the EU. Although the European Union has had an 'internal market' since 1993 that ensures free movement of goods in the EU, France and Belgium still refuse to sell chocolate from other European countries.



The European Commission has drawn up a directive that is to apply to all member states. The proposal for this directive is as follows:

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- b. It is mandatory for all member states to permit the sale of such 'chocolate'.

What does Italy think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Italy is **suffering** from a poor cocoa-bean harvest. The European Commission's proposal has come at a good time - it would now be **profitable to switch** to vegetable oils other than cocoa butter. This would mean cheaper production for Italian manufacturers, allowing them to compete with France and Belgium.

However, an **exception** must be made for 'Gianduia' (*Djiandoeja*), a traditional Italian specialty (composed by a total dried cocoa substance of at least 32% and hazelnuts). The directive must state that a product may only be called 'Gianduia' if it contains cocoa butter and hazelnuts.

First round of votes

Italy **votes against** the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

If the Commission **changes the proposal** to make an exception for '**Gianduia**' (that it can only be sold if it contains cocoa butter) then you vote **in favour**. You could talk to the Commission and gain support from other countries by proposing to support exceptions for their regional products as well.

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Netherlands



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What does The Netherlands think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

First round of votes

The Netherlands does not produce a lot of chocolate, but as a trading nation does attach a lot of importance to equal rules for products. This should go hand in hand with transparency for consumers. They must easily be able to understand what their food is made of.

The Netherlands **votes in favour** of the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You voted in favor of the new directive of the European Commission. However, you still have doubts that you would like to discuss with the other EU countries. You are not so sure that under the current proposal consumers will understand what products are used to produce their chocolate. You would like to propose an amendment that ensures that the Commission will research whether transparency for consumers is guaranteed under the new directive. *Talk about this idea with the European Parliament and the European Commission.*

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Poland



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What does Poland think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Poland has **no chocolate industry**; however it does have a tobacco industry. You are therefore more concerned with the Tobacco directive, which is scheduled to be discussed in the Council next week. If you must decide, you would prefer to vote against the Chocolate directive.

First round of votes

Poland **votes against** the European Commission's proposal. Do not mention your stance on the tobacco directive, but informally bring it up during the recess.

Recess

You could be **tempted to vote in favour** of the European Commission's proposal; however you would want something in return.

You will only vote in favour of the directive in return for support next week in the fight against the photo warnings on cigarette packaging. **Talk** to the other countries to gain their support for the directive of next week.

Voting Procedure

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Portugal



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The Case

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What does Portugal think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

You **agree** with the European Commission, and believe that the rules should be relaxed somewhat. After all, we don't have a European Union with an internal market for nothing. Portugal has been making chocolate using **vegetable oils** other than cocoa butter for a long time now, as the alternative oils are cheaper. The new proposal would allow Portugal to start selling much more chocolate all over Europe.

First round of votes

Portugal **votes in favour** of the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

You try to **convince** countries who are in doubt **to vote in favour** of the proposal. Think of arguments that can convince them to change their vote. You are even prepared to support other countries in other areas if necessary. Do not forget to convince the Parliament.

Voting Procedure

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Sweden



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What does the Sweden think of this 'chocolate' proposal?

Sweden has two major chocolate factories, of which one (Karlshamns) **uses other vegetable** oils than cacao butter to produce their chocolate. Currently, France and Belgium do not accept chocolate from this factory, unless those products containing other vegetable fats are labelled differently, without using the word 'chocolate'.

Sweden's industry went through a difficult period, particularly Karlshamns, which has suffered the full force of the collapse of the chocolate market in the former Soviet Union, the fall in cocoa prices at the end of the 1980s and the drop in consumption of cocoa-oil in the USA. They are already in a situation of over-production. This directive might be very good for the industry.

First round of votes

Sweden **votes in favour** of the European Commission's proposal.

Recess

As a relatively small Member State, you need to gather support from one or more larger Member States. You are willing to propose certain exceptions to Member States if that would convince them to support the new directive. Also **convince** the European Parliament to vote in favour.

Voting Procedure

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