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EU Resilience in 2035

A Policy Game for University Seminars

Guide for Instructors

This simulation game is adapted from the policy gaming exercise of the Horizon Europe project InvigoratEU. Two sessions of 90 minutes each, for political science and European studies from the third Bachelor's semester onwards. Students learn about different future paths for EU enlargement policy and resilience of the EU and its neighborhood. They get to know different policy instruments the EU has at its disposal to react to different kind of (geopolitical) shocks and have to reflect on the potential use and impact of these instruments in different imaginary but realistic scenarios.

1. The Basic Idea

A shock hits the EU in 2035. Two halves of a group respond to it – one from the perspective of a "Resilient Union", the other from the "Stagnating Union" – by each choosing three instrument cards and thinking through their impact. Because the Stagnating Union has fewer instruments at its disposal, it becomes visible how strongly institutional preconditions determine whether and how a crisis can be managed.

Learning Objectives. Students can name key instruments of EU enlargement and neighborhood policy, explain which decision rules and which degree of credibility an instrument requires, and distinguish the intended from the realistic impact of an instrument – including its side effects.

2. Materials

Material	Quantity
Reader (file 02)	to all participants before session 1, digital
Shock cards (file 03, part A)	1 per group
Instrument cards (file 03, part B)	1 set per half-group, cut out
Game sheet (file 03, part C)	1 per half-group, printed on A3

Central Information Material for Preparation of Instructor and Participants:

Burguete, Víctor / Ventura, Elena (2026): Reimagining Enlargement: Visions for EU Policy towards the Western Balkans and the Association Trio. InvigoratEU D9.1.

Presentation: Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership candidate countries' path to the EU: present and future –Horizon scanning for InvigoratEU's visioning process (part of the material)

3. Groups

In total, max. 30 participants can take part in the game. All participants are divided into groups of **eight to ten people**; each group splits into two halves: Resilient Union and Stagnating Union. Both halves work on the same shock card but do not talk to each other during the working phase.

In a seminar of 15-20 people, there are therefore two groups and two shocks. In larger seminars, several groups work on different shocks; in that case, choose shocks from different areas so that the debriefing gains breadth.

4. Session 1: Preparation (90 Minutes)

Preparation for Students:

- Read student reader
- Preparatory task for participants (see student reader)
- Read document "Reimagining Enlargement: Visions for EU Policy towards the Western Balkans and the Association Trio"

Time	Phase
0–10	Overview of the two sessions and the principle of the game
10–35	The three drivers and the two visions, based on the reader. Guiding question: What distinguishes the two worlds institutionally? Presentation by instructor and panel discussion based on students' answers to the preparatory questions
35–70	**Getting to know the instrument cards.** Pairs receive three instrument cards each and explain to the plenary in two minutes: What does the card do, what is its catch – and why is it available or blocked in the Stagnating Union?
70–90	Explaining the exact setup of the game, Q&A, forming groups

5. Session 2: The Game (90 Minutes)

Time	Phase	What happens
0–5	Arrival	Subgroups at separate tables; cards and game sheet are ready. The Stagnating Union puts the blocked cards aside. Each group receives their shock cards.
5-25	Screening the scenario	Each group discusses their shock cards and the instrument cards at their disposal
5–40	**Playing the cards**	Each subgroup agrees on exactly three cards. They think through the shock and their reactions along the specifications on the game sheet: intended impact, realistic impact, catch, missing card, impact traffic light.
40–70	**Side by side**	For each shock: brief presentation of the shock, then Resilient and Stagnating Union three minutes each, directly one after the other. The traffic lights go up on the board side by side. Then five minutes for questions.
70–90	**Debriefing**	Two questions, see below

On the Working Phase. Announce the switch between the different phases of the game. Otherwise groups discuss the selection until the end and never get to the impact – which is the actual learning step. Depending on the general progress of the groups, decide and announce whether the escalation on the shock cards apply.

On the Comparison. The traffic lights carry the comparison. Typically, more fields are green in the Resilient Union, but not all: whoever accelerates accession to secure stability, for instance, often gets yellow on credibility. And in the Stagnating Union, coalitions of the willing sometimes resolve the acute situation just as well – at the price that the EU does not remain united. These are exactly the shifts you should point out.

Debriefing Questions.

1. Which card made the biggest difference between the two worlds – and why this one in particular?
2. What would have had to happen politically between today and 2035 for the blocked cards to be available in the Stagnating Union?