Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2017
~ fresh ideas, new solutions ~

Forum: *European Council*
Issue: *Expanding visibility and promotion of the work of the European Union*

Position: *President*

Introduction

With the year of 2017 almost coming to an end, European leaders ought to feel relieved for what these years' national elections in member states such as France, the Netherlands and Germany have resulted in. Despite the notable growth of populist- and eurosceptic political parties, their uprising has not won of that much influence as was initially expected. The Front National, Partij voor de Vrijheid and Alternative für Deutschland will remain out of government, although they do have taken major opposition positions in parliament.

As a defining period for the EU has inaugurated, it is of utmost importance that the European Union acknowledges the dissatisfactions of these European citizens that seem to have lost faith in the organisation. Fear, often being the incitement for their believes, was stimulated by tragic events such as the migration crisis, the Greek economic crisis and the gargantuan number of terrorist attacks since 2015. These disgruntling matters contributed to the rise of euroscepticism, which struck at its hardest in United Kingdom's EU-referendum in 2016, that still is to be followed by the so-called 'Brexit'.

Subsequently, Europeans are starting to overlook the advantages of the EU-membership, while even more and more people tend to favour national sovereignty over international cooperation. Therefore, it is up to the European Council, the EU body that is charged with giving political direction to the union, to expand the visibility whilst simultaneously promoting the work as well as successes of the European Union.

Definition of Key Terms

European Union
The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in the continent of Europe. The EU has developed an internal single market through a standardised system of laws that apply in all member states. EU policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods and services within this internal market, enact legislation in justice, and maintain common policies on trade and regional development. Furthermore, a monetary union was established and came into full force in 2002, and is composed of 19 EU member states which use the euro currency.

European Council
The European Council, being one of the seven prominent EU bodies, is charged with defining the European Union's overall political direction and priorities, is the institution of the EU that comprises the head of state or government of the 28 member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, presently performed by Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker respectively.

European Commission
The European Commission (EC), also being one of the seven prominent EU bodies, is charged with the responsibility for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU. Moreover, it is the executive institution of the EU. The commission is presided by the President of the commission, Jean-Claude Juncker.

European Parliament
The European Parliament (EP), another one of the seven prominent EU bodies, is charged with the legislative function of the EU, together with the EC and the Council. The EP is the only directly elected parliamentary institution. Composed of 751 members, it represents the second-largest democratic electorate in the world (after the Parliament of India) with 375 million eligible voters in 2009. Since 1979, the EP elections take place in all 28 member states every five years

The Council of the European Union ***(Not to be confused with the European Council)***
The Council of the European Union, often referred to as the Council of Ministers ('the Council'), is the fourth and last of the seven prominent EU institutions that will be mentioned here. The council is charged with the legislative function of the EU, together with the EP and the EC. The council meets in 10 different configurations of 28 national ministers. The precise membership of these configurations varies according to the topic that is to be discussed, as only the 28 ministers whose portfolio include this policy area are called upon. The presidency of the Council rotates every six months among the governments of EU member states.

General Overview

In order to win back the trust of its circa 510 million citizens, the EU has got to highlight its advantages and make sure it works hard to enlarge those. Secondly, it is essential it sets out the concerns Europeans have and, after that, doing its upmost best to diminish these issues.

The advantages of EU membership

First and foremost: the predecessor of the European Union, the Coal and Steel committee, was initially established for *peace* on the European continent. The committee decided that countries, most notably France and Germany which have had their number of conflicts over multiple centuries, should become so closely connected that war would become both impractical and unthinkable. And it worked: the committee expanded, transformed into the European Union, and has created over 70 years of peace between its members.

Secondly, the European Union ensures *freedom* for its citizens. The freedom to live, study, travel, work and retire in all 28 member states is known as one of its biggest accomplishments. Study costs for international students have declined enormously, while the Schengen treaty enables citizens of 23 of the 28 EU member states, plus Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Switzerland, to travel between these countries without having to cross difficult and time-wasting border controls.

Third of all, the EU member states profit from its *economic welfare*. Studies have revealed that when a new member state gains access to the EU internal market, it entertains an incredible GDP growth of, on an average, 12%. This is due to, for example, the various trade agreements that adjust the different economies to one another, in order to simplify international trade. This creates opportunities for companies to extend their businesses.

Furthermore, according to one study, over ten years (1993-2003) the single market has boosted the EU's GDP by €877 billion, representing €5.700 of extra income per household

Moreover, lesser economically developed member states receive EU funds that are to be invested in better infrastructure, higher education and the modernisation of their agriculture. Take for example member state Lithuania, whose GDP growth has increased tremendously (graphic).

Lastly, as this list encompasses further gains for *educational and scientific purposes*, improved communication possibilities because of the *abolishment of roaming charges* in the EU as of last summer, and improvements on *environmental issues*, the European Union is of extremely value as it makes sure the European nations have *a stronger voice* as one strong European block in the international world politics.

Since the EU wants to protect the values they are proud of, a strong EU is the best way to make sure their voice is heard in the world. Alone, as small states, they hardly stand a chance in a world of shifting superpowers. But together, the EU is strong enough even to compete with the USA or China, or major multinational companies such as Microsoft, Apple or Facebook.

The concerns about the European Union most certainly do vary and of course do not count for all 510 million citizens, however the following three statements belong to the most heard complaints.

The European citizens are often displeased by the whole system of the European Union, as it is way too *complicated*. With seven prominent bodies, all characterised by its different tasks that even sometimes overlap with the duties of other institutions, three different 'presidents' and no clear administrative centre (Brussels, Strasbourg or Luxembourg?), it is understandable the commoner does not feel familiar and connected to the EU.

Secondly and subsequently, because of its complex structure, it is not clear for the European citizen who the de facto leader of the European Union is and who can be taken responsible for its successes and failures. This can also be seen an advantage, as the union finds itself is as far from a dictatorship as it can be, however it still *does lack of a point of communication* from the EU to its citizens.

Lastly, the leaders of the European Union are often accused of not standing up against unwilling or disobedient member states. Take for example Poland that currently is on a collision course with the EU, or Hungary not accepting the agreement on dividing migrants, Bulgaria still not living up to the EU criteria and Greece not dealing well with the EU concerning its economic crises. The EU lacks of laws on the possibility of kicking EU member states and has to limit itself to economic sanctions. People feel like the EU *should be able to act stricter* upon those nations that are unwilling to fulfil their duties as a member state.

Major Parties Involved

The 28 EU member states
Austria (1995), Belgium (1958), Bulgaria (2007), Croatia (2013), Cyprus (2004), Czech Republic (2004), Denmark (1973), Estonia (2004), Finland (1995), France (1958), Germany (1958), Greece (1981) , Hungary (2004), Ireland (1973), Italy (1958), Latvia (2004), Lithuania (2004), Luxembourg (1958), Malta (2004), Netherlands (1958), Poland (2004), Portugal (1986), Romania (2007), Slovakia (2004), Slovenia (2004), Spain (1986), Sweden (1995), United Kingdom (1973)

The EU presidents
Jean-Claude Juncker (EC), Antonio Tajani (EP), Donald Tusk (European Council)

All 28 heads of states and their ministers

Timeline of Events

1945	The end of World War II
1951	Formation of the Coal and Steel Community in Paris, France
1957	Formation of the EEC in Rome, Italy
1967	ECSC, EEC, and Euratom merged
1973	Accession of Denmark, Ireland, and the UK
1981	Accession of Greece
1986	Accession of Portugal and Spain. Adoption of the flag
1989	The fall of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe
1992	The formation of the European Union in Maastricht, the Netherlands
1995	Accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden
2002	The euro replaces twelve national currencies
2004	Accession of ten (!) countries
2007	Accession of Bulgaria and Romania
2009	Lisbon Treaty
2013	Accession of Croatia
2016	United Kingdom EU-referendum

Possible Solutions

To summarise, the European Union has got to win back the faith of its citizens by highlighting its advantages and listening to the concerns of its people.

Therefore, the EU should start trying to simplify its system. First of all should be determined what is to be the administrative centre of the European Union. This would also prevent the whole parliament constantly travelling between Brussels and Strasbourg, known as a waste of time and energy. In addition, the European Council could set out plans to educate all European students on the EU in their mandatory sociology classes.

Secondly, the European Council could decide on creating one media platform in order to communicate to its citizens in a convenient and clear way, whilst presenting their latest developments, goals, the issues Europe is facing, and their achievements. Additionally, the European Council could decide to implement measures in order to keep all member states on the same right track, whilst remaining united in their diversity and keep striving for a better future. The citizen should be made aware that the European Union has given them peace, security and a sense of shared identity. And something we all crave in these turbulent times: stability.

Useful documents

A useful video on the European Union by Kurzgesagt:
https://youtu.be/XxutY7ss1v4

Appendix/Appendices

http://voxeu.org/article/how-poorer-nations-benefit-eu-membership

http://econ.economicshelp.org/2007/03/benefits-of-european-union.html

http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/organization/european-union-eu-history-members-aims-and-achievements-of-eec/23544/

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-what-has-european-union-done-for-us-david-cameron-brexit-a6850626.html

http://www.cbi.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/our-global-future/factsheets/factsheet-2-benefits-of-eu-membership-outweigh-costs/

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11686488/The-true-costs-and-benefits-of-staying-in-the-EU-or-leaving.html