



## **EUROSIM 2025 – Reflection Paper**

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## **General Thoughts**

I would like to start my reflection by giving some general impressions and thoughts about the whole undertaking, in no particular order. To me, democracy needs not only to be taught but also to be experienced. I believe EUROSIM embodied this concept exceptionally well. Although through my bachelor's I already had a good knowledge of the EU legislative process, experiencing it myself made it gain a lot more transparency and it started feeling natural to me as I grew into my role. It was also refreshing to hear an American perspective on European politics as this helped move beyond Eurocentric narratives inherent in studying Europe in the past and now its laws. Also the topic microplastic pallet pollution was, though rarely discussed in the current political climate, both interesting and multifaceted. It ranged from very practical questions about packaging, transportation, and storage to more ethical issues such as social responsibility and political matters, including balancing the power of the EU's institutions with respect to their competencies.

## **Preparation Sessions**

At first the task seemed relatively daunting, as I struggled with obtaining an acute understanding of microplastics pallet pollution in many of its aspects, in order to bolster my arguments. However, the first sessions quickly revealed that such a degree of expertise was not the goal. Instead, I focused on ascertaining a comprehensive overview of the topic and how to harness my findings in manner suited for political discussions. The preparation at home required me to switch from one party to another, which I am really glad about, as it enriched my long-term learning, even benefiting my later performance in Antwerp. In some cases, it proved more effective to begin by considering the manner of presentation and the expected behavior of my alter ego, rather than diving straight into research. This point was reinforced as it became evident that the aim is not to present a scientifically complex issue in all its aspects with perfectly detailed knowledge, but rather to make a good point and case for one's self. Consequently, the guiding principle changed from providing information to presenting and even instrumentalizing it. It was no longer a matter of "what am I going to say?" but rather "how am I going to say it in order to win arguments?". I particularly appreciated this shift from the regular study routine, as it aligned well with my love of acting and theater. Even acting techniques I learned back in my school days proved valuable. Political banter with my fellow students quickly became the highlight of the sessions. In some instances, wide grins could be spotted all around, myself included, once the speech of a student concluded and the QnA part commenced. The final session sadly didn't reach such heights, as here we mostly focused on practicing the process of amending the Regulation awaiting us in Antwerp. Perhaps it was misguided perfectionism on the part of the students or the realization that this was the last preparation we would have as a group, but the overall liveliness of the discussion seemed somewhat diminished.

I particularly enjoyed the role-switching exercises during the preparation sessions. This not only required me to assume new positions, but it also allowed me to observe and learn from my colleagues, new information, public speaking skills, gestures, and stylistic devices, all of which enriched my own rhetorical toolkit in certain political fields or belief systems. Individual adaptability was essential and fostered during these sessions. I will keep the preparation sessions in especially good memories, as the general group climate was welcoming, encouraging students to express themselves freely and experiment. The environment was ideal for discussions, as it was always respectful, with no hostilities arising. Nora, Dennis, and Regi

rarely intervened, which gave me confidence in my own performance and allowed discussions to unfold naturally.

## **During Antwerp**

Firstly, I would like to go over my preparations for EUROSIM 2025. I spent part of the Christmas break revisiting the materials provided, getting in touch with the topic via scientific Video Essays and also identify myself with Jonas Sjöstedt more through Twitter Posts my alter Ego made or the speeches he gave, such as the one at the UN Climate Change Conference<sup>1</sup>. Other methods, such as reading the rather left leaning newspaper TAZ further helped me assume my role. Knowing that meeting so many new people and having to engage with them in direct discussions, may potentially be overwhelming at first, I also noted down some bullet points beforehand containing “red lines” and “maxims”. This was meant to serve as a kind of ideological compass for me to ensure, I stayed true to the role and didn't accidentally agree to something that Sjöstedt and the Left would never support - though I ended up not needing these notes.

I expected EUROSIM to be a lot more “bare bones”. I feared we might be confined to a chair in a large room and not get to play our roles to the full extent. But luckily, I quickly realized that my concerns were utterly unfounded. Apart from this my expectations were fully met.

The group synergy was a highlight, though we had one less participant, we maintained optimism and good spirits during our party group meetings and throughout the four days at EUROSIM. While the ENVI I sessions started off somewhat slowly, the latter sessions really picked up pace and became more engaging. Once the whole parliament convened, due to the larger group, the simulation felt the most real and exciting with large and vivid discussions throughout. I really enjoyed the role I was given. As a member of Parliament, having the opportunity to take a less austere and instead more spirited approach really suited me and my style of presenting. Playing Jonas Sjöstedt was an approachable role that allowed me to use a more unique rhetorical repertoire.

While pushing through one's own political agenda and ambitions according to role wasn't always easy, due to the small size of my faction, it required us to utilize ulterior means of gaining political ground. By capitalizing on the sharp rhetoric my party typically favors, we managed to position ourselves as a visible and discourse-driven political force. This made us valuable allies to other parties to promote their goals and amendments during the debates in the Environmental Council meetings. Naturally we didn't pursue their aims for free. First, their amendments needed to be compatible with our own vision for the proposal and secondly, we requested them to vote in favour of some of our amendments in return. While this anecdote may seem somewhat misplaced, it entails important insight into the political realities of smaller but ardent fringe parties. The personal encounters during the unmoderated caucuses were particularly memorable, as here we engaged in direct discourse with political opponents and potential allies. This opened the possibility to speak more openly and gain valuable insight into their aims.

Personally, I would probably tone down some of the ardour and fervor of my orations. Though they felt natural to my role and were a boon in the preparation sessions back at the Institute, at times it felt a bit too intense for Antwerp. After the plenary sessions of the parliament were

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<sup>1</sup> see: *Jonas Sjöstedt criticizes EU climate positions for a global unambiguous signal at COP29 Summit* <https://youtu.be/Ld3NQdrLuDg?si=LcYZnM3ew5dGxc2B> [accessed: 12.25.2024].

concluded, it was disappointing to not to actively participate anymore and to become a silent observer. In the end, however, we all were rewarded with a consensus on the final form of the Regulation, achieved in due time.

### **Personal benefits**

Meeting people from diverse backgrounds is always a valuable experience, but the unique aspect of switching between my own identity and a completely different person made the experience even more memorable. The most valuable personal benefit, aside from meeting new people - some of whom I have still have occasional contact with - however, was developing my public speaking skills. Although I spent most of the time portraying someone else, it was a one-of-a-kind opportunity to express myself, experiment with language, play with intonation, and utilize stylistic devices. Overall, I was able to sharpen and refine my rhetoric by incorporating different and sometimes new forms of expression in political discourse.

I am glad to have made this experience. It really was a pleasant change from the usual routine of the Study Program. The Timing, however, was a bit unfortunate, as it took place during the much-anticipated Christmas break and very early in the new year. Other than this, I am generally very happy with the planning, the program itself, and the free time we had after the sessions in the city of Antwerp.