



European Council
Background Guide

Hello Delegates!

My name is Drew Niccum and I'll be your Crisis Director for the European Council committee. I'm from Newark, Ohio and I'm a senior at Ohio State. I'm majoring in history and political science and minoring in city and regional planning. I joined CCWA as a sophomore and currently serve as the creator of our weekly jeopardy quizzes (such a high-ranking and important job, I know). This is the second OSUMUN committee I have had the pleasure to direct and I'm excited for you to be joining us for OSUMUN 2019. I've always been fascinated by the European Union and I'm looking forward to applying this interest to the committee. I'm looking forward to a great weekend of European politicking and I hope you are too. If you have any questions at all, feel free to contact me at niccum.4@osu.edu.



History

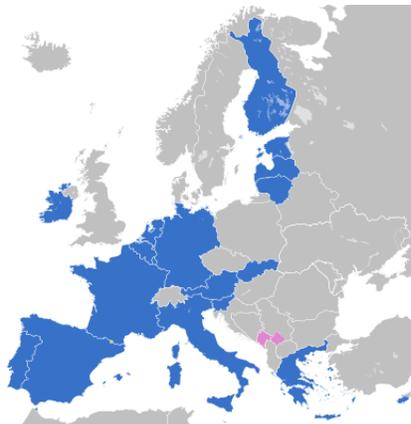


Formation of the European Union

European Union Member States (and the United Kingdom)

The European Union (EU) officially came into being in 1993, but had its roots in numerous treaties, organizations, and events from the previous decades. In 1957, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany signed the Treaty of Rome, creating the European Economic Community (EEC) and establishing a customs union. The EEC was headed by Walter Hallstein and set about developing the customs union among its members. In 1973, the EEC was enlarged to include Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Norway had negotiated to join at the same time, but Norwegian voters rejected membership in a referendum. In 1979, the first direct elections to the European Parliament were held. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Portugal and Spain in 1986. In 1985, the Schengen Agreement paved the way for the creation of open borders without passport controls between most member states and some non-member states. In 1986, the European flag began to be used by the EEC and the Single European Act was signed, with the intention of establishing a single market and unified common foreign and domestic policy. In 1990, after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, the former East Germany became part of the EEC as part of a reunified Germany.

A New Age and the New Millennium



Eurozone Member States

The European Union was formally established when the Maastricht Treaty—whose main architects were Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand—came into force on November 1, 1993. With further enlargement planned to include the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Cyprus and Malta, criteria for candidate members to join the EU was agreed upon in June 1993. The expansion of the EU introduced a new level of complexity and discord. In 1995, Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined the EU. The EU prepared to enter the 2000s by launching the Euro, a shared currency to be used by the member states. In 2002, euro banknotes and coins replaced national currencies in 12 of the member states. Since then, the eurozone has increased to encompass 19 countries. The euro currency became the second largest reserve currency in the world. In 2004, the EU saw its biggest enlargement to date when Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the Union.

The Treaty of Lisbon



Schengen Area and Future Expansion

In 2007, Germany took over the rotating presidency of the EU and reenergized the efforts to reform the European treaties. After long, painstaking negotiations, on December 1, 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force and reformed many aspects of the EU. In particular, it changed the legal structure of the European Union and the European Council officially gained the status of an EU institution, after existing only informally for decades. The Treaty also created a permanent President of the European Council, the first of which was Herman Van Rompuy, and strengthened the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Expansion continued during this time with Bulgaria and Romania becoming EU members in 2007 and Croatia ascending in 2013. The Eurozone also continued to expand with Slovenia adopting the Euro in 2007, followed by Cyprus and Malta in 2008, Slovakia in 2009, Estonia in 2011, Latvia in 2014, and Lithuania in 2015. In 2012, the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize for having “contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe.”

Issues Facing the European Union



Potential Candidates for EU Accession

It could be said that the EU has never been more at risk of institutional collapse. Brexit has created unprecedented uncertainty and emboldened the far-right and the Eurosceptics. The migrant crisis has tested the EU's dedication to open borders and free movement, and increased terrorist activity has brought up numerous security questions. Meanwhile, Russia remains a looming threat along the frontier and agents who would seek to erode democratic norms and values continue to gain power in numerous member states. Many member states still struggle from austerity measures imposed following the financial crisis and international trade has become even harder to navigate due to US President Donald Trump. These are just a few of the issues that the European Union must face in the coming months and years. As Europe continues on its path to ever-closer union, it must weather many challenges that could weaken its basic foundations.

Committee

This committee will focus on the European Council (not to be confused with the Council of Europe), the body that constitutes the heads of state or government of the European Union's member states. Delegates will be tasked with representing a member state as their duly elected leader and are expected to follow their character's political allegiances, regardless of personal disagreements. This committee will address a wide range of issues that may be controversial, such as Brexit, the migrant crisis, terrorism and security, the erosion of democratic norms, and much, much more. Delegates are asked to treat each other with respect and to remember that opinions expressed in committee may not represent the real life opinions of the individual delegate. It must also be noted that everyone is equal when it comes to voting, regardless of the represented nation's stature in the European Union. Unlike the actual European Council, the Council President, Commission President, and High Representative will be granted voting rights during these committee sessions.

Positions

Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

Donald Tusk of Poland currently serves as the President of the European Council. He served in elected office almost continuously since 1991, founding numerous political parties along the way. He was elected Prime Minister of Poland in 2007 and became the first Prime Minister to be

re-elected after his party's victory in the 2011 elections. In 2014, Tusk was elected President of the European Council and resigned as Prime Minister to take the position. He was re-elected President in 2017, with most notably the new Polish government being the only member to vote against him. Despite his center-right leanings, Tusk is opposed by Poland's governing right-wing Law and Justice Party and has an ongoing feud with its leaders. Tusk is a member of the Civic Platform Party of Poland and the European People's Party (EPP) at the EU level. While in office, Tusk has mainly focused on unifying the foreign policy of the EU and its member states and has consistently warned that Brexit will gravely damage both the EU and Great Britain.

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg currently serves as the President of the European Commission, effectively serving as the executive branch of the European Union. He served as Prime Minister of Luxembourg from 1995 to 2013, one of the longest tenures of office in the democratic world and served as Finance Minister from 1989 to 2009 as a member of the Christian Social People's Party. From 2005 to 2013, he also served as President of the Eurogroup, an informal group of European finance ministers whose countries use the Euro as currency. During the 2014 European elections, Juncker was selected as the European People's Party's candidate for Commission President. The EPP won the most seats and the European Parliament duly elected Juncker as Commission President. Juncker's time in office has been tumultuous as Europe has dealt with the migrant crisis, the growing threat from Russia, and the United Kingdom voting to leave the EU. Juncker often speaks his mind and is no stranger to controversy over his statements or actions. He is also well-known for still using a Nokia flip phone. Juncker has publicly stated that he does not plan to run for a second term in office during the 2019 elections.

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Federica Mogherini of Italy currently serves as the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, effectively making her the foreign minister of Europe. She first served in elected office in 2008 after being elected to the Italian Chamber of Deputies as a member of the center-left Democratic Party. In 2014, then Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi asked Mogherini to join his cabinet as Minister of Foreign Affairs. She would only briefly serve in the role however, as later that year she was nominated as Italy's candidate to serve as an EU Commissioner as a member of the Party of European Socialists (PES). She immediately became heavily involved in the negotiations of the Iran Nuclear Deal and in 2015 announced the agreement along with the Iranian Foreign Minister. Mogherini has not been hard on Russia as other EU politicians but opposes sanction relief and has pushed Russia to cooperate in Ukraine and to back off on its homophobic policies. She can also be noted for her harsh criticism of Turkey and President Erdogan and her belief that Islam is important to Europe's past, present, and future.

Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic

Emmanuel Macron was elected President in 2017 as a member of the centrist political movement En Marche, which he founded the year previously. Elected at the age of 39, he is the youngest French President in history and the youngest French head of state since Napoleon Bonaparte. Macron is a former member of the Socialist Party and, starting in 2012, served in the office of President François Hollande. In 2014, under Prime Minister Manuel Valls, he was appointed Minister of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs. Macron resigned in 2016 to launch his presidential campaign. Despite his original membership in the Socialist Party, Macron quickly formed his centrist movement and appealed to those seeking alternatives to the traditional parties and those who were not willing to vote for Marine Le Pen, the National Front candidate. Macron received 24 percent of the vote in the first round, qualifying him for the runoff in which he beat Le Pen with 66 percent of the vote. His party and its allies were able to secure a parliamentary majority the following month. Macron is known for his ambition and his policies reflect that. He has looked to reform the French labor and tax systems and has worked to enact stricter anti-terror laws. At the European level, he is looking for a strong reformation of the Eurozone and has been working with German Chancellor Angela Merkel to accomplish his goals.

Angela Merkel, Federal Chancellor of Germany

Angela Merkel is a member of the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and has served as Chancellor since 2005. She was elected to her fourth term as Chancellor in 2017, keeping her in office likely until 2021 when she will have served sixteen years in office. Merkel, who was born in East Germany, entered politics following the Fall of Communism, being elected to the Bundestag in 1990 and remaining ever since. She served in the government of Helmut Kohl and was regarded highly by him and the party. In 2000, she became the CDU's first female leader and in 2005, she was elected as the first female Chancellor of Germany at the head of a grand coalition between the CDU and the rival Social Democratic Party (SPD). She was reelected in 2009, 2013, and 2017 and two of these governments were once again grand coalitions. Merkel is often described as the unofficial leader of the European Union and regarded as the leader of the Free World. She played a key role in the drafting of the Treaty of Lisbon when she was President of the European Council and was regarded as one of the main decisionmakers in Europe's response to the financial crisis. Merkel is now the longest-serving head of government in the EU and has been involved in nearly every major European decision since she took office.

Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of Italy

Giuseppe Conte is an independent heading the coalition between the populist Five Star Movement and the right-wing League which was brought into power in June 2018. Conte has no previous government experience and was chosen as a compromise candidate between the coalition partners. Before entering government, Conte was an academic and jurist. He was originally proposed as the Minister of Public Administration, but this changed over the course of coalition negotiations. Conte nearly renounced his appointment as Prime Minister over disagreements with the Italian President relating to the Minister of Economy and Finance, but he

eventually gave in and was able to bring in his administration. Conte leads a populist government that advocates tax reform, strict controls on immigration and increased cooperation with Russia. He supported the readmission of Russia to the G7 along with President Donald Trump and has been praised for his populist politics and views on immigration by the US President.

Sebastian Kurz, Federal Chancellor of Austria

Sebastian Kurz, a member of the center-right Austrian People's Party, was elected Chancellor of Austria in 2017. He is the first millennial to serve as a world leader and, at the age of 31, is the second youngest head of government in the world. Kurz was first elected to parliament in 2013 after serving on the Vienna city council. He was quickly appointed Foreign Minister, becoming the youngest in Austrian history and the youngest in the world. During his time as Foreign Minister, he hosted negotiations for the Iran Nuclear Deal in Vienna and continued to leverage Austria's position as a relatively neutral place for negotiations. Kurz was elected chairman of his party in 2017 and he led the party to victory in elections later that year. A member of the European People's Party, Kurz has sought to put further restrictions on immigration into Austria and the EU and has aligned his party with more right-wing organizations in Austria including the Freedom Party. He has also moved to align Austria more with the Eurosceptic and right-wing governments of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

Pedro Sánchez, President of the Government of Spain

Pedro Sánchez is the Secretary-General of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and has served as President of the Government of Spain (Prime Minister) since June 2018. Sánchez started his political career on the Madrid City Council where he served from 2004 until 2009. In 2009, he was elected to parliament, but lost reelection in 2011. He remained out of office until 2013, and spent this time completing his Doctorate in Economics. Upon his return to parliament in 2013, he quickly became popular in the PSOE and was made Secretary-General in 2014. He was the party's candidate in the 2015 and 2016 elections that both resulted in hung parliaments with the PSOE in second. Sánchez was vehemently opposed to allowing a conservative minority government under Mariano Rajoy to assume office, which almost resulted in Spain holding a third election. To avoid this, Sánchez was forced to resign in a party struggle and the party allowed Rajoy to resume his duties as Prime Minister. Despite being ousted by the party, Sánchez managed to regain his leadership role and launched a vote of no-confidence against Rajoy's government. With the support of smaller parties, Rajoy was ousted and Sánchez became Prime Minister. Sánchez, a member of the Party of European Socialists, is in favor of a European-wide response to immigration and the migrant crisis. He also strongly opposes Catalan independence and supported Rajoy's crackdown on the Catalan government.

Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece

Alexis Tsipras, leader of the left-wing Syriza, has served as the Prime Minister of Greece since 2015. He also currently serves Minister for Foreign Affairs, a role he has held since October 2018. Tsipras is the fourth Prime Minister who has governed in the course of the 2010s Greek

government-debt crisis. Originally an outspoken critic of the austerity policies implemented during the crisis, his tenure in office has been marked by intense austerity policy, in large part thanks to negotiations with the European institutions that control Greece's debt. Prior to entering politics, Tsipras joined the Communist Youth of Greece in the late 1980s and in the 1990s was politically active in student protests. In 2006, he ran as Syriza's candidate for Mayor of Athens, winning only 10.5%. In 2008, he was elected as leader of Syriza and was elected to the parliament in the 2009 election and was re-elected in 2012, and became Leader of the Opposition. In January 2015, Tsipras led Syriza to victory in a snap election, winning 149 out of 300 seats. In August 2015, seven months into his term as Prime Minister he lost his government due to defections and called a snap election. Tsipras led Syriza to another victory, winning 145 out of 300 seats. During his tenure, he has overseen negotiations regarding the Greek government-debt crisis, initiated the Greek bailout referendum, and responded to the European migrant crisis. He is a member of the Party of the European Left.

Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary

Viktor Orbán, leader of the conservative Fidesz Party, has served as Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010 and previously served in the role from 1998 to 2002. He has served as Fidesz party leader for most of this period. Orbán became a nationally known politician after giving an address at the 1989 reburial of Imre Nagy and other martyrs of the 1956 revolution, and openly called for the removal of Soviet troops. After the transition to democracy in 1990, he was elected to parliament. After Fidesz won a plurality of seats in the 1998 elections, Orbán became prime minister for four years at the head of a right-wing coalition government. Fidesz narrowly lost the 2002 and 2006 elections to the Socialist Party, and Orbán spent eight years as the leader of the opposition. The Socialists' rising unpopularity led to Orbán's reelection in 2010 in a landslide victory. At the helm of a parliamentary supermajority, Orbán's cabinet spearheaded major constitutional and legislative reforms. Fidesz retained its supermajority in the 2014 and 2018 elections. Orbán's social conservatism, national conservatism, soft Euroscepticism, and advocacy of what he describes as an "illiberal state" have attracted significant international attention. Many describe his government as authoritarian and there have been efforts to remove him and Fidesz from the European People's Party.

Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland

Mateusz Morawiecki, a member of the right-wing Law and Justice Party, has served as Prime Minister of Poland since December 2017, when he replaced Beata Szydło, after she fell out with party leader Jarosław Kaczyński. Morawiecki previously served in Szydło's cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Development, and Minister of Finance. In 1998, he oversaw and participated in numerous areas of the negotiations for Polish accession to the European Union. Morawiecki remained a political independent until 2016, when he joined Law and Justice. He was quickly appointed Minister of Finance and represented Poland at the G-20. Despite now serving as prime minister of one of the EU's larger member states, Morawiecki is not seen as the man with power in Poland. Law and Justice party leader Kaczyński, despite being neither

president or prime minister, is seen as the man behind the scenes with great influence over the government of Poland and the European Union. Despite his lack of power, Morawiecki still serves as the Polish representative and is a member of the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe.

Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Andrej Babiš, leader of the centrist and populist ANO 2011 party, has served as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic since 2017. Babiš is the second-richest person in the Czech Republic and was a businessman/entrepreneur before entering politics. He is originally of Slovak origin, being born in Bratislava, Slovakia. He moved to the Czech Republic following the Velvet Revolution. He is a former CEO and sole owner of the Agrofert group. Babiš has led ANO 2011 since founding it in 2012 as a protest movement against established politics. He has been a member of parliament since 2013 and served as Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy from 2014 to 2017. Babiš was sacked from the government by Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka in May 2017 after a month-long coalition crisis triggered by allegations that Babiš avoided paying taxes as CEO of Agrofert in 2012. Following the 2017 election, which resulted in a hung parliament, Babiš was appointed Prime Minister. He became the oldest and wealthiest person ever to assume the office. In January 2018, his government lost a motion of confidence vote and he resigned. However, he was able to re-form his government in July 2018, thanks to support from the Communist Party. Babiš had been under investigation by both Czech Police and OLAF from 2015 to 2017 amid fraud allegations. He is also the subject of sustained criticism regarding a number of issues, including conflict of interest, his past role in the communist secret police, and allegations of intimidation of opponents. Despite this, he remains quite popular. He is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Leo Varadkar, Taoiseach of Ireland

Leo Varadkar, leader of the center-right Fine Gael, has served as Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and Defense Minister of Ireland since 2017, following the resignation of long-serving leader Enda Kenny. Varadkar has served in parliament since 2007, representing Dublin West. He was born in Dublin and studied medicine at Trinity College Dublin and worked as a hospital doctor for several years. He served on the Fingal County Council from 2004 to 2007. He previously served as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport from 2011 to 2014, as Minister for Health from 2014 to 2016, and as Minister for Social Protection from 2016 to 2017. Varadkar was 38 years old when he became prime minister, the youngest person to hold the office. During the 2015 same-sex marriage referendum, he came out as gay, the first Irish government minister to do so. He is Ireland's first openly gay head of government and was supportive of efforts to liberalize Ireland's abortion laws during the referendum in 2018. He has been deeply involved in Brexit negotiations, in an effort to maintain the current relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland. He is a member of the European People's Party.

António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal

António Costa, leader of the center-left Socialist Party, has served as Prime Minister of Portugal since 2015. Previously, he was Minister of Parliamentary Affairs from 1997 to 1999, Minister of Justice from 1999 to 2002, and Minister of State and Internal Administration from 2005 to 2007. He also briefly served as a member of the European Parliament (Party of European Socialists) from 2004 to 2005. Costa was elected mayor of Lisbon in 2007 and was reelected in 2009 and 2013, with a bigger majority each time. He was elected Secretary-General of the Socialist Party in 2014 and was the party's candidate for prime minister in the 2015 election. In October 2015, the conservative Portugal Ahead coalition that had ruled the country since 2011 came first in the elections, while the Socialist Party came second. Passos Coelho was reappointed Prime Minister the following days, but António Costa formed an alliance with the other parties on the left, a majority in parliament, and toppled the government in November. Costa was chosen as the new Prime Minister. Since coming to power, Costa's government has managed to combine fiscal discipline with measures to support growth, while reversing most of the austerity policies imposed by the previous center-right administration during the 2010-2013 debt crisis. During his tenure, Portugal experienced its deadliest wildfires ever in the summer of 2017. In October 2017, the opposition launched a motion of no-confidence in Costa's government over its failure to prevent the loss of human lives in the lethal Iberian wildfires, but the motion failed.

Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

Nicos Anastasiades, a member of the center-right Democratic Rally Party, has served as President of Cyprus since 2013. In February 2018, he was re-elected for a second five-year term. Anastasiades was first elected to the Cypriot House of Representatives in 1981 and was leader of Democratic Rally from 1997 until 2013. Anastasiades won the presidential election in 2013 in the second round against with over 57 percent. Despite his relative popularity, he has had to break numerous campaign promises, particularly in relation to management of Cypriot debt and securing a bailout from international lenders. He has also looked to ease military conscription in an effort to promote peace between Cyprus and the Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus. Peace negotiations between Nicos Anastasiades and his Turkish Cypriot counterpart began in October 2013, but all plans to this point have either failed at the national level or have been voted down in referendums. Anastasiades is a member of the European People's Party and has worked closely with the EU to secure economic relief for Cyprus over the last decade.

Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Mark Rutte, leader of the center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), has served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands since 2010. He previously served as State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment from 2002 to 2004 and as State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science from 2004 until 2006. He was then elected leader of the VVD heading into the 2006 general election. The party failed to make gains in the election and Rutte became Leader of the Opposition. In the 2010 general election, the VVD received the most votes and won 31 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives. Rutte formed a cabinet following lengthy negotiations. His government resigned in 2012, after talks on austerity, leading to a general

election in which the VVD won its highest number of seats ever. In the 2017 general election, nationalist sentiment led by Geert Wilders led to the VVD losing seats. They remained the largest party, but their coalition partner, the Labour Party, saw a massive loss, leading to the creation of a new, much-larger coalition. The coalition negotiations set a record for the longest in Dutch history. Rutte has been at the center of debates on the migrant crisis in an effort to stymie political efforts by Wilders and his Party for Freedom. Rutte is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

Dalia Grybauskaitė, the first female President of Lithuania, has been in office since 2009. She is legally obligated to remain politically independent as president, but was a member of the Communist parties of the Soviet Union and Lithuania prior to 1990. Before becoming president, Grybauskaitė was Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance. She also briefly served as European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth before being appointed Commissioner for Financial Programming and the Budget. She served in the Commission of José Manuel Barroso from 2004 to 2009 and was voted Commissioner of the Year in 2005. Despite being politically neutral, Grybauskaitė was supported by the Conservative Party during the 2009 presidential election. She received nearly 70 percent of the vote at 51 percent turnout in that election and became the first Lithuanian President to be reelected in 2014. She is often referred to as the “Iron Lady” or the “Steel Magnolia.”

Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania

Klaus Iohannis, a member of the European People’s Party, has served as President of Romania since 2014. While he is technically a member of the National Liberal Party of Romania, the Romanian constitution requires him to be an independent while in office. Iohannis entered politics when he was elected mayor of the city of Sibiu in 2000 as a member of the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania. He won landslide reelection victories in 2004, 2008, and 2012. Iohannis’ tenure as mayor was so successful that Sibiu was declared the European Capital of Culture in 2007. He was proposed as a unity candidate for Prime Minister in 2009 but was blocked by then President Traian Băsescu. Iohannis was elected leader of the National Liberal Party in 2014 and was subsequently elected President of Romania. He is the first president to come from an ethnic minority, being a member of the German minority of Transylvania. Iohannis has supported the unification of Romania and Moldova during his political career and has cautioned against regional autonomy in the country. He has also been a strong force for anti-corruption laws, supporting prosecutors even when they have investigated high-level politicians.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark

Lars Løkke Rasmussen, a member of the center-right Venstre Party, has served as Prime Minister of Denmark since 2015 and previously held the job from 2009 to 2011. Rasmussen has been a member of the Folketing, the Danish parliament, since 1994. He also served as Mayor of

Frederiksborg County from 1998 to 2001, while serving in parliament. He was appointed Interior and Health Minister as part of Anders Fogh Rasmussen's (no relation) cabinet from 2001 to 2007, and later was Minister of Finance from 2007 to 2009. Lars Løkke became Prime Minister in 2009 following the appointment of Anders Fogh as Secretary General of NATO. The government lost its majority in the 2011 elections and Rasmussen was succeeded by Helle Thorning-Schmidt of the Social Democrats. In the 2015 general election, the right-wing parties regained their majority. Rasmussen became Prime Minister again with a cabinet made up exclusively of Venstre members. In November 2016 he was pressured to include members of other coalition parties and formed a new cabinet. He is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta

Joseph Muscat, a member of the center-left Labour Party, has served as Prime Minister of Malta since 2013. He was a Member of the European Parliament (Party of European Socialists) from 2004 to 2008 and was Leader of the Opposition in the Maltese parliament from October 2008 to March 2013. He became a member of parliament in 2008 and succeeded Alfred Sant as party leader. Muscat rebranded the Labour Party and embraced a socially liberal position. Muscat has presided over the rise of the Labour party and its dominance in Maltese politics, and the relative decline of the Nationalist Party. He has been praised for eliminating Malta's national deficit, decreasing unemployment, and presiding over economic growth. But he has also been accused of political opportunism, broken promises, as well as corruption allegations that were outlined in the Panama Papers. These allegations were the focus of the 2017 general election, but he was returned to power with a larger majority.

Charles Michel, Prime Minister of Belgium

Charles Michel, a member of the center-right, French-speaking Reformist Movement, has served as Prime Minister of Belgium since 2014. He was first elected to the Belgian federal parliament in 1999 as a member from Wallonia. He became both Home Affairs Minister of the Walloon Government and a city councilor for Wavre in 2000. He continued to serve in a variety of local and ministerial roles until he was elected leader of the Reform Movement in 2011, following disastrous elections for the party. Following the 2014 elections, Michel was made Prime Minister. Upon his swearing-in, Michel became the youngest Prime Minister in Belgian history and the first French Prime Minister in over 50 years. Michel is a strong supporter of the rights of French-speaking Belgians, which has caused conflict with other members of the government. He is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister of Luxembourg

Xavier Bettel, leader of the Democratic Party of Luxembourg, succeeded Jean-Claude Juncker as Prime Minister in 2013. Bettel started his political career in 1999 serving on both the Luxembourg City council and as a member of parliament. In 2011, he was elected mayor of Luxembourg City and served until 2013 when he was elected leader of the Democratic Party.

Following the resignation of Prime Minister Juncker, Bettel won the 2013 elections and assumed the roles of Prime Minister and Minister of Communications. Notably, Bettel is openly gay and, at the time, was only the third gay head of government. He is currently one of three openly gay world leaders in office, alongside the Irish and Serbian Prime Ministers. His time in office has been marked by reforms on same-sex marriage and decreases in spending to maintain Luxembourg's high credit rating. He is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of Estonia

Jüri Ratas, leader of the center-left Centre Party, has been Prime Minister of Estonia since 2016. Ratas, at the age of 40, is one of the younger leaders in Europe. He first entered elected office when he became mayor of Tallinn in 2005. During his two years as mayor, Ratas helped initiate the European Green Capital program. He became vice president of the Estonian parliament in 2007 and served in this role until 2016. After internal struggles in the incumbent Prime Minister's cabinet, the governing coalition partners selected Ratas to succeed Taavi Rõivas. Ratas is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Krišjānis Kariņš, Prime Minister of Latvia

Krišjānis Kariņš, leader of the center-right Unity Party, was sworn in as Prime Minister of Latvia on January 23, 2019 following elections in October 2018. Kariņš was born in Wilmington, Delaware to a Latvian-American family. In 1996, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Ph.D. in linguistics. He then moved to Latvia, where he founded a company that produced and distributed ice and frozen foods. He was elected to the Saeima, the Latvian parliament, in October 2002. Kariņš served as the Minister for Economics in the cabinet from December 2004 to April 2006. In March 2007, he became co-leader of New Era Party. He was elected as a member of the European Parliament in 2009 as a member of the European People's Party and was reelected in 2014. He was a Member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and was also a member of the Reconciliation of European Histories Group. His New Era Party merged into the centre-right Unity party in August 2011. He leads a center-right coalition of five parties in the new Latvian government.

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden

Stefan Löfven, leader of the center-left Social Democrats, has served as Prime Minister of Sweden since 2014. He is a welder by trade and was an active trade unionist, becoming Chairman of the IF Metall trade union, before entering politics. Löfven became a member of the executive board of the Social Democrats in 2006 and was made leader in 2012 upon the resignation of Håkan Juholt. As a member of the Party of European Socialists, Löfven led his party through the 2014 European elections, retaining the party's position as the largest from Sweden. In the 2014 national elections, the Social Democrats garnered 31% of the vote and a hung parliament resulted. Löfven formed a minority coalition government with the Green Party. His government has struggled with a number of crises including threats to the government's

budget, the migrant crisis, and threats to national security. The Swedish government imposed new border restrictions following the migrant crisis, despite Sweden being a member of the Nordic Passport Union. Löfven's government has also had to contend with continued threats from Russia. Following inconclusive election results in September 2018, Löfven remained as caretaker prime minister until he was able to form a government in January 2019.

Juha Sipilä, Prime Minister of Finland

Juha Sipilä was elected Prime Minister of Finland in 2015 as leader of the Centre Party at the head of a center-right coalition. A former businessman and Captain in the Finnish Army, Sipilä entered politics in 2011 when he was elected to the Finnish parliament. Despite being new to politics, he was elected Chairman of the Centre Party in 2012 and led them to victory in the 2015 elections. He entered into coalition with the center-right National Coalition Party and the nationalist Finns Party. Sipilä has spent most of his time as Prime Minister focused on the Finnish economy as it has struggled under the fall of certain industries, the debt crisis, and Finland's Eurozone membership. Sipilä's government has continued to enact unpopular austerity measures as proposed by the European Commission. In 2016, Sipilä was involved in a conflict of interest and mining scandal, but was ruled to have not been involved. Sipilä is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe party.

Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia

Andrej Plenković has served as Prime Minister since 2016. A member of the Croatian Democratic Union, Plenković previously served as a diplomat, joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994. His diplomatic career culminated in his appointment as State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010. He was elected to parliament in 2011 and in 2012 was selected to serve as an observer in the European Parliament as Croatia completed its accession to the EU. Upon Croatia's accession in July 2013, Plenković was elected to serve as one of his country's first members of the European Parliament as a member of the European People's Party. In 2016, Plenković was selected as the leader of the Croatian Democratic Union in an effort to distance the party from its more conservative roots. His time as Prime Minister has been marked by disagreements within his coalition and at least one cabinet reshuffle. Plenković has emphasized the need for better relations with Serbia and has laid out conditions that must be met for Bosnia and Herzegovina to gain Croatia's support for EU accession.

Boyko Borisov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria

Boyko Borisov has been Prime Minister of Bulgaria since May 2017 and has held the office on two other occasions. Borisov is the chairman and founder of the conservative GERB party, but has previously been a member of the Communist Party and the National Movement Simeon II. Before entering politics, Borisov worked at the Ministry of the Interior. In 2005, Borisov was elected Mayor of Sofia and served until 2009. In that year, he was elected Prime Minister for the first time and would serve until 2013 when he resigned amid nationwide protests over energy costs and corruption. He was reappointed Prime Minister in 2014 and served again until 2017.

After elections, he was once again remade Prime Minister after only a few months removed from office. Borisov has been a resilient, yet controversial, political figure. He has often been accused of corruption and connections to organized crime, threatening journalists, and blatant racism and xenophobia. He is a member of the European People's Party and supports strict immigration policies.

Peter Pellegrini, Prime Minister of Slovakia

Peter Pellegrini assumed the office of Prime Minister in March 2018, following the resignation of Robert Fico in the political crisis sparked by the murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak. As a member of the center-left Direction – Social Democracy party, Pellegrini has served in a number of ministerial roles. He was first elected to parliament in 2006 and in 2012 was made State Secretary for Finance. In 2014, he was elected Speaker of the National Council, leaving the position to become Deputy Prime Minister for Investments in 2016. Pellegrini served under Prime Minister Fico in multiple permanent and acting positions and was Fico's preferred choice for Prime Minister upon his resignation. At the European level, Pellegrini is a member of the Party of European Socialists.

Marjan Šarec, Prime Minister of Slovenia

Marjan Šarec, President of the political party List of Marjan Šarec, was elected Prime Minister in August 2018. Šarec has had a relatively short career in politics, having previously been a comedian, political satirist, and journalist. He ran for mayor of the city of Kamnik in 2010 as a member of the Positive Slovenia party. He won the election and was reelected in 2014, this time as a member of his own political party. He ran for President of Slovenia in 2017 and narrowly lost in the runoff to incumbent Borut Pahor. In the June 2018 parliamentary elections, Šarec brought his party to the national level and won 12.6% of the vote. This resulted in List of Marjan Šarec winning 13 seats and becoming the second largest party in parliament. Šarec is largely still a political unknown and his center-left party has no seats or affiliations in the European Parliament.

Research and Additional Sources

This committee will cover a wide range of topics related to the European Union and its member states, so it is important that you conduct diligent research beforehand. You will need to be well-versed in your character's stances on current political issues and their likely actions in certain policy areas. I recommend starting your research by reading the basic summaries of your character and nation on websites such as Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica. While they are not inherently the most reliable, they will provide you with basic information to help start your research and their references and citations can be used to take you to more reliable sources. It might also be useful to visit the European Union's website at Europa.eu to gather information on the institutions of the Union, recent press releases, and legislation or actions taken by the

Parliament, Commission, or Council. Each member state also has its own government websites and would be good resources for finding national issues and government stances. I also recommend reading a few news articles on current major issues affecting the EU. The BBC, Reuters, The New York Times, and Politico EU are all great sources for current European events.