

# Ontario Model United Nations III



## European Union, Background Guide

April 7<sup>th</sup> to April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
[omun.ca](http://omun.ca)

## Letter from the Chairs

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Hello, and welcome to the European Union. We are very excited to present you all with the challenge of navigating the increasingly complex and important issues being faced by the EU. In the current era, there are a number of different topics to debate, however we could only choose two. We hope that these topics will provide a fun but challenging committee for both beginners and experienced delegates.

Hi I'm Campbell MacKinnon, and I'm one of the co-chairs of this committee. I have been involved with MUN throughout my 5 years at UCC, travelling with the team across North America to compete at conferences. This will be my third (and final) year chairing at OMUN, so I look forward to a fun weekend of debate. My advice to any delegates would be to research well, have fun and remember that at the end of the day, life is really just one big unmod.

My name is Henry Gage, and I will be co-chairing this committee. I have been involved in Model UN for 4 years, and have participated and won awards at conferences including BMUN, SSUNS, and CMUNCE. I am really looking forward to hearing all of your ideas and solutions to the topics we have chosen, and I hope this committee will provide a new outlook on some of the world's most prominent issues.

Our vice chair for this committee is Ernst Ma. He has participated in MUN for the past two years, and recently participated in the NAIMUN conference in Washington. He is excited to listen to the proposed solutions by all the attending delegates and looks forward to a weekend full of debate and resolutions.

About this committee: One position that will be tweaked for the purpose of the committee is the EU's stance on the Catalanian crisis. As mentioned below, the EU has taken no action to resolve the crisis. The official public statement states that the EU has deemed the crisis an internal matter, and will not take any further action to resolve it. For this committee, it will be assumed that the EU is open to any action that resolves the crisis and abides by the statement they released (as provided below). At this point, the crisis has escalated enough such that the international community must step in.

Should you feel that there is any confusion, contradiction, or questions regarding either your individual position or the committee and topics in general, please feel free to email us or talk to us during the conference.

Best of luck,

Campbell MacKinnon, Co-Chair, [eu@omun.ca](mailto:eu@omun.ca)

Henry Gage, Co-Chair

Ernst Ma, Vice-Chair

## Topic 1 - The Catalanian Crisis

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### **Part I: Topic Background**

Since the 1930s, Catalonia has remained an autonomous region within Spain.<sup>1</sup> Located in the eastern region of the country, Catalonia has a population of 7.45 million and has a €215.6 billion economy which accounts for one-sixth of the Spanish GDP.<sup>2</sup> Barcelona, the capital of the Catalan region, is largely responsible for maintaining the strength of the Spanish economy. The region has its own language, laws, and cultural practices which are separate from that of Spain.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, desire has been growing for Catalonia to separate from Spain, which has led to discontent from the Catalan population.

The unrest in Catalonia began to grow in 2010, when the Constitutional Court annulled part of the autonomy statute from 2006, which stated that there was no legal groundwork to recognize Catalonia as an independent nation.<sup>4</sup> Shortly after, Mariano Rajoy was elected in 2011 as the prime minister of Spain.<sup>5</sup> The demand for Catalan independence grew further during Spain's economic crisis. During this period (which is ongoing today), Barcelona, the Catalan capital, has greatly supported Spain's economy.<sup>6</sup> This exemplified the fact that Catalonia could realistically support itself as a nation, especially because of Barcelona's role in holding up the Spanish economy. The increasing presence of separatism was evident in 2015, when the separatist government won 72 out of 138 seats in regional parliament.<sup>7</sup> This provided the framework for the newly elected separatist government to begin work on a binding referendum. However, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy condemned the vote and declared its results illegal.

In October of 2017, the referendum was planned for the Catalan region. Driven by Rajoy's government, the Spain's highest court ruled the vote as illegal under the Spanish constitution.<sup>8</sup> Despite this ruling, the referendum was held on October 1. The government

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<sup>1</sup> Badcock, Harriet Alexander; James. "Why Does Catalonia Want Independence from Spain?" *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 5 Oct. 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/o/does-catalonia-want-independence-spain/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/o/does-catalonia-want-independence-spain/).

<sup>2</sup> Henley, Jon. "How Important Is Catalonia to Spain?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 2 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/02/catalonia-important-spain-economy-greater-role-size](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/02/catalonia-important-spain-economy-greater-role-size).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Catalonia Vote: Pro-Independence Parties Win Elections." *BBC News*, BBC News, 28 Sept. 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34372548](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34372548).

<sup>8</sup> Dewan, Angela. "Catalonia Referendum: What Just Happened?" *CNN*, Cable News Network, 2 Oct. 2017, [www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html).

disrupted the referendum, sending a Madrid-controlled police force to stop voting and remove ballots.<sup>9</sup> Hundreds were left injured as the national police attempted to stop 2.25 million voters from casting their votes using rubber bullets and batons<sup>10</sup>. The Madrid government began to retaliate by moving to seize control of the region's finances and policing.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, officials who were responsible for organizing the vote were arrested, and millions of ballots were impounded.<sup>12</sup>

Nine days after the failed referendum, Carles Puigdemont, the president of Catalonia, then signed a declaration of independence for the region.<sup>13</sup> Despite a two month suspension by Puigdemont to allow for discussion with Rajoy and the Spanish government, the declaration was condemned by Rajoy and discussion was refused.<sup>14</sup> Rajoy emphasized that there would be no negotiations until the independence declaration was ended, and threatened to impose article 155 of the Spanish constitution, which would allow direct government control of Catalonia.<sup>15</sup> On October 27, a group of separatist Catalan MPs voted to declare independence. In the hour following the declaration, the Spanish senate imposed article 155, seizing direct control over Catalonia.<sup>16</sup> Puigdemont and his government were removed. An election was held for the Catalan region in December 2017, in which 70 out of the 135 seats went to three different separatist parties.<sup>17</sup>

While the high-strung tensions and emotions have died down for now, the crisis still remains. Not only does the pro-independence mentality remain dominant in Catalonia, but a separatist government remains a possibility should the three separatist parties coordinate their efforts. Moving forward a harmonious solution must be found which favours the perspectives of both sides.

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<sup>9</sup> Dewan, Angela. "Catalonia Referendum: What Just Happened?" *CNN*, Cable News Network, 2 Oct. 2017,

[www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, Sam. "Crisis over Catalonia – an Explainer." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 4 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/crisis-over-catalonia-an-explainer](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/crisis-over-catalonia-an-explainer).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **Part II: Past Actions**

In the past, the European Union has not taken any direct action towards solving this crisis. However, their position on the crisis is clear. The following statement was released by the EU: “We also reiterate the legal position held by this Commission as well as by its predecessors. If a referendum were to be organised in line with the Spanish Constitution it would mean that the territory leaving would find itself outside of the European Union.

Beyond the purely legal aspects of this matter, the Commission believes that these are times for unity and stability, not divisiveness and fragmentation.

We call on all relevant players to now move very swiftly from confrontation to dialogue. Violence can never be an instrument in politics. We trust the leadership of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to manage this difficult process in full respect of the Spanish Constitution and of the fundamental rights of citizens enshrined therein.”

It was also mentioned that the crisis “has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain.”

As emphasized, the EU prioritizes a unified, peaceful, and immediate resolution to the crisis. However, the body has taken very little action to actually resolve the issue. The international community is calling upon the EU to step in and find a solution which can put an end to the violence and discontent occurring.

## **Part III: Further Research/Guiding Questions**

### **Guiding Questions**

1. How can a solution to this issue be found that benefits all parties involved?
2. What solutions can prevent further continuation of similar crises in Spain (continued pushback from Catalonia or from new autonomous regions)?
3. There are many facets to this crisis - political, social, economic. How can the situation be managed while maintaining stability in these areas in both Spain and Catalonia?

### **Further Research**

1. EU possible solutions to the crisis:  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/catalonia-mariano-rajoy-eu-needs-a-smarter-response-to-the-catalonia-crisis/>
2. A Timeline of the history of Catalonia and independence:  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20345073>
3. Catalonia's Role in Spain:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/02/catalonia-important-spain-economy-greater-role-size>

4. CNN analysis of the 2017 December election results:  
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/21/europe/catalonia-election-results-independence-spain-intl/index.html>

### **Works Cited**

Badcock, Harriet Alexander; James. "Why Does Catalonia Want Independence from Spain?" *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 5 Oct. 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/o/does-catalonia-want-independence-spain/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/o/does-catalonia-want-independence-spain/).

Henley, Jon. "How Important Is Catalonia to Spain?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 2 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/02/catalonia-important-spain-economy-greater-role-size](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/02/catalonia-important-spain-economy-greater-role-size).

"Catalonia Vote: Pro-Independence Parties Win Elections." *BBC News*, BBC News, 28 Sept. 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34372548](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34372548).

Dewan, Angela. "Catalonia Referendum: What Just Happened?" *CNN*, Cable News Network, 2 Oct. 2017, [www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/02/europe/catalonia-independence-referendum-explainer/index.html).

Jones, Sam. "Crisis over Catalonia – an Explainer." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 4 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/crisis-over-catalonia-an-explainer](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/04/crisis-over-catalonia-an-explainer).

## Topic Two - The Refugee Crisis

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### **Part I: Topic Background**

In 2011, war broke out in Syria. Since then, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates that there have been close to half a million casualties as a result of the Syrian Civil War<sup>18</sup>. The war has also displaced the citizens of Syria, and the UNHCR estimates that there are 5.5 million displaced Syrians scattered around the Middle East and Europe<sup>19</sup>. In 2015 and 2016, the European Union experienced an influx of refugees as a direct result of the Syrian Civil War. Estimates put the number of migrants seeking asylum in European countries at around 1 million, with most entering the EU from Turkey<sup>20</sup>. An official estimate puts the number of migrants in Turkey at 3.5, while countries like Lebanon and Jordan have taken in 950,000 and 650,000 respectively<sup>21</sup>. In 2015, the United Nations Development Programme announced the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in an effort to unilaterally help to solve the Syrian Refugee crisis. The plan utilizes the combines the forces of NGOs and countries to help with the refugee crisis. So far Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt have all been involved in 3RP, and since its launch in 2015, it has continued to operate through 2017 and into 2018<sup>22</sup>. While the EU was not directly involved in the plan, members of the EU like Germany, Norway, Spain and others provided financial aid to the UNDP to fund the program<sup>23</sup>. As it stands, the 3RP plan is still working to meet many of its funding goals, and continues to provide healthcare, food, education and protection for vulnerable Syrian refugees.

### **Part II: Past Actions**

While refugees continue to pour into Europe, the EU has been slow to adapt its immigration policy to suit the needs of the refugee crisis. In a direct response to the refugee crisis, the European Union put forward a 10 point plan to help in solving the crisis in April of 2015. The points are as follows:

1. The EU will reinforce the EU's maritime patrolling operations in the Mediterranean, called Triton and Poseidon, by giving them more money and equipment. The EU will also extend their scope to patrol a wider area of sea
2. The bloc will make a systematic effort to capture and destroy vessels used by the people smugglers, using the EU's counter-piracy "Atalanta" operation off Somalia as a model. EU officials said it would be a combined civilian and military operation but gave no more details

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=80436>

<sup>19</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/ourwork/SyriaCrisis/projects/3rp.html>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

3. The EU's law enforcement, border control, asylum and prosecutors' agencies will meet regularly and work closely to gather information on how the smugglers operate, to trace their funds and help investigate them.
4. The European Union's asylum support office will to deploy teams in Italy and Greece for joint processing of asylum applications
5. EU governments will fingerprint all migrants
6. The EU will consider options for an "emergency relocation mechanism" for migrants
7. The European Commission will launch a voluntary pilot project on resettling refugees across the EU
8. The EU will establish a new return program for rapid return of "irregular" migrants coordinated by EU agency Frontex from the EU's Mediterranean countries
9. The EU will engage with countries surrounding Libya through a joint effort between the Commission and the EU's diplomatic service
10. The EU will deploy immigration liaison officers abroad to gather intelligence on migratory flows and strengthen the role of the EU delegations<sup>24</sup>

While this plan was implemented quickly, it was largely criticized for lacking definitive action to solve the crisis. It also highlights a key problem in the EU regarding how requests for asylum are processed. The current regulations for processing asylum seekers in the EU is called the Dublin system. Member states reserve the right to deport a potential asylum seeker back to the country they first arrived in, putting a large amount of stress on countries like Greece and Italy, who bear the brunt of the oncoming flow of refugees. That being said, most migrants choose to travel north to countries like Germany and Sweden, which are seen as more desirable destinations struggling refugees. The result of this is that 72% of asylum seekers are dealt with by 5 member nations<sup>25</sup>.

The primary issue with many of the EU's rules and regulations regarding asylum is how they are applied. When applying for asylum, refugees have no say in where they will be relocated, and are often separated from extended family in the process. The idea of a quota system for resettling refugees has been proposed, but is controversial within the EU. Countries like the United Kingdom dispute such a system being put in place. While it is seen as an ideal way to reduce the strain on countries inundated with refugees, many western members of the EU are not keen to open their borders to refugees. As mentioned before, most refugees tend to flock towards countries like Germany and Sweden, leaving many of the western EU states like Hungary and Slovakia with few refugees. Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, has been an outspoken critic of the refugee resettlement process, calling refugees a "poison" and stating that Hungary did not want "a single migrant."<sup>26</sup> Countries like Hungary have also taken to fortifying

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<sup>24</sup><https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-factbox/factbox-eus-10-point-plan-to-tackle-mediterranean-crisis-idUSKBN0NB22J20150420>

<sup>25</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf)

<sup>26</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/26/hungarian-prime-minister-viktor-orban-praises-donald-trump>



their borders, flying in the face of the Schengen Area, the agreement which allows for passport-less travel throughout 22 member nations of the EU. This populist attitude towards refugees has slowly spread across Europe, and some countries like Germany, Italy and France have experienced a resurgence of far-right political parties campaigning on a platform of anti-refugee sentiment.

### **Part III: Further Research/Guiding Questions**

#### **Guiding Questions**

1. What alternatives to a quota system could be effective in resettling refugees?
2. How can the EU help to alleviate strain on struggling countries like Greece with regards to the settlement of refugees?
3. How should the EU deal with potential climate refugees in the near future? Should they be granted the same rights as someone fleeing from a war-torn country?

#### **Further Research**

1. <http://time.com/5068549/finding-home-crisis/> (a recent update to the situation in Europe)
2. <http://publications.europa.eu/webpub/com/factsheets/migration-crisis/en/#what-is-the-eu-doing> (a publication from the EU detailing the steps they have taken regarding the refugee crisis)
3. [https://europa.eu/european-union/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en) (official website of the European Union, useful for history and intricacies of the Union)