

Press release

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STUDENTS TAKE ON EU COUNTRY ROLES

Students from 27 schools from England and Scotland put forward their proposals and debated how to advance the European Union's Digital Single Market and its Circular Economy during a mock meeting of the Council of the European Union. The 55 students – representing the EU Member States, the European Commission and the Council General Secretariat – convened in the Grand Locarno suite of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

In her welcoming remarks Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Minister for Intellectual Property, said: *"Issues like the Digital Single Market are key to competitiveness and impact us all. I am certain that today's debate offers a flavour of what kind of work the EU entails and how relevant it is for real life. Listening carefully, establishing trust, negotiating with a view to seek compromise and the use of languages are essential skills for jobs and beyond"*. The Baroness also encouraged students to pursue careers in the EU Institutions.

Also welcoming the students, Jacqueline Minor, Head of the European Commission Representation in the UK, remarked that *"the topics discussed today may contribute to an informed decision by those students who will vote in the forthcoming EU referendum, whilst the debating and drafting skills acquired will serve all the students throughout their lives"*.

Ruth Sinclair-Jones, Director of the Erasmus+ UK National Agency at the British Council, added that *"The EU Mock Council provides young people with a taste of international politics, tackling real-life issues. They have the opportunity to understand democratic processes, while showcasing their debating, negotiating and lobbying skills. The British Council hopes that this activity helps these young people along the way to becoming global citizens."*

The event provided an insight into how EU Member States work with each other and the European Commission in order to debate and shape policy that has an impact throughout the European Union. Students presented 'their' country's standpoint and made alliances with other Member States during working groups, before casting their final votes on the proposals in the closing plenary session.

Reflecting on the day, Ray Baquiran, a student from St Philip Howard Catholic High School in West Sussex, said: *"The debate really exceeded my initial expectations. It was a great opportunity to gain insight into how EU Member States engage and negotiate to reach decisions. I learned a lot about the positions of the various countries. I'd like to become a diplomat representing the UK abroad".*

Mr. Darren Woodford, an English teacher at Cheam High School, said: *"The Mock Council helped our students to get a better idea of how real life challenges are solved through EU decisions, and also contributed to developing the skills needed to excel in their exams."*

[eTwinning](#), which is managed in the UK by the British Council, was used to support schools and help them prepare for the event, using its safe, secure, online collaboration tools. The Mock Council builds upon a series of other similar successful events held by the British Council and the European Commission for schools across the UK in recent years.