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UNDERSTANDING
THE EUROPEAN UNION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

2025



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INTRODUCTION

We would not like this textbook to be full of definitions, dates and graphs. Such textbooks, although they contain valuable knowledge, often do not convey the essence of the issues discussed. Meanwhile, we want every teacher who takes this book in their hands to find answers to the question of what it really means to be a European. Is it just a matter of living on this small continent, or is there something more? We would like you to treat what you are holding in your hands not as a textbook, but as a map that will lead you along a path through the world of certain values. You can use it during lessons in all subjects in which the topics contained in this book will be discussed.

If your school decides that it is possible to introduce the subject Understanding the European Union, we propose a ready-made program. We have prepared it taking into account the standards of active learning methods and student-centered methodology.

The textbook is divided into 12 chapters - the same number as the number of golden stars on the flag of the European Union. The circle of stars is a symbol of the unity and solidarity of the European Union countries and does not depend on the number of member states.

In this textbook, we use elements of the design thinking methodology, the Oxford-style debate, the 4Cs methodology (i.e. supporting the development of creativity, cooperation, communication and critical thinking). At the same time, we would like our readers, i.e. teachers of various school subjects, to treat this book as a buffet of topics, which you can freely choose and mix the tools we propose according to your own needs and conditions.

We are not in favor of multiplying school subjects in order to educate young people in order to foster the of European values, which is why we rather suggest including the topics or issues described here in the school framework or annual school work plan. We suggest to celebrate specific days that are worth promoting within the school community. Some time ago, the Council of Europe proposed a calendar of days important for cultivating European values. Below is a list of these days:

- September, 15th - International Day of Democracy
- ca. September, 15th - European Heritage Days
- September, 26th - European Day of Languages
- October, 10th - World Day against Death Penalty
- October, 17th - International Day against Extreme Poverty
- October, 25th - European Day of Justice
- November, 18th - Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- November, 25th - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- December, 10th - Human Rights Day
- December, 18th - International Migrants Day
- January, 27th - Holocaust Remembrance Day
- January, 28th - Data Protection Day
- March, 8th - International Women Day
- May, 3rd - World Press Freedom Day
- May, 9th - Europe Day,
- May, 17th - International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

We have organized our school educational activities around this list. They are a pretext for discussions about the benefits that the European Union member state receives from its membership in the EU, as well as for promoting the values that the European community is guided by in its actions.

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DEMOCRACY

*Democracy means government
of the people, by the people
and for the people.*
Abraham Lincoln

“Democracy is one of the fundamental values which the European Union is based on. It means their citizens decide, through elections, who will exercise power and shape the law. Key elements of democracy are freedom of speech, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the possibility of influencing political decisions through elections. In the European Union, citizens have the right to vote in both national and European elections. This underlines the importance of democracy as a value at a supranational level”.

WHAT DAY CAN WE CELEBRATE?

September, 15th - International Day of Democracy

International Day of Democracy is celebrated to promote awareness of the value of democracy and its importance in social and political life. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. This date is intended to remind us that democracy is the foundation for the development of societies, the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Celebrating this day encourages reflection on the challenges faced by democracy in different parts of the world. It also encourages action to strengthen it. Various organizations, governments and communities take initiatives to raise awareness of citizens about their rights and encourage them to actively participate in democratic processes. Perversely, this day can also be a pretext for talking about the fact that democracy is also an integral part of the everyday life of a citizen of the free world, because we experience it in social life, for example, when we put the decision about which film to watch in the evening or what to eat for dinner tonight to a vote and the majority wins. How would you feel if you were always in a losing position and never belonged to the majority? With these questions, we invite you to the first stage of this issue - empathy.





INTRODUCTION

The teacher divides the students into teams of 3-5. He invites them to look at the following websites:

[European Parliament](#)

[International Day of Democracy](#)

As a result of browsing these websites, students are expected to find interesting information, which they will share with the rest of the class and report what they can learn from these websites.

IS DEMOCRACY IMPORTANT IN EVERYDAY LIFE? WHY?

Possible arguments for democracy that students can raise:

Influence on political decisions

- Citizens can directly decide who will represent them and what laws will be introduced. This privilege gives them a sense of influence on the future of the country and Europe.

Protection of human rights

- A democratic society functions on the basis of dialogue and consensus, not authoritarian decisions or coercion.

Equality

- In a democracy, every citizen, regardless of origin or social status, has equal voting rights and can actively participate in political life.

Possible disadvantages that students can notice:

Recall the example from the introductory text: "How would you feel if you were always in a losing position and never belonged to the majority?" - this question concerns probably the most important disadvantage that democracy has compared to other systems.

Imagine a situation where there are three people in a family - two meat eaters and one vegetarian. When voting on what to eat for dinner today, the third person will always go hungry or will be forced to eat what they do not want to eat - meat. This flaw of democracy is a defeat in the style of: "well, unfortunately, this is how it has to be, the majority has chosen."

Of course, at a later stage of this lesson, the teacher can point out that there is also protection of minorities in a democratic society and this is achieved by negotiating rights for them.



Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



DEMOCRACY RIGHTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

As an activity, students can consider the following rights and then discuss their importance together:

1. The right to vote and stand as a candidate:

- EU citizens have the right to vote and stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament, even if they live in a Member State other than their own.

Question to students:

What is the importance of the right to vote in European elections?

2. The right to freedom of expression and assembly:

- EU citizens have the right to freely express their opinions and to participate in public meetings, strikes and protests.

Question to students:

Why is freedom of speech an essential element of democracy? What might be the threats to this freedom?

3. The right to access information:

- In a democracy, citizens must have access to independent and reliable information in order to make informed decisions. In the EU, access to the media and public information is protected by law.

Question to students:

How does access to information affect the quality of democracy?

4. The right to petition and the citizens' initiative:

- Every EU citizen has the right to submit a petition to the European Parliament or the European Commission.
- A citizens' initiative allows you to collect signatures on an issue that is important to citizens, which can force the Commission to take action.

Question for students:

Can citizens' initiatives influence politics? What are their advantages and disadvantages?



Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



DEFINE

TEAM TASK:

Read the following quotes and think about the advantages and disadvantages of democracy. The task for students is to determine whether they agree with the statement that democracy is the only right/fair system?

Many systems of government have been tried and many will be tried in this world of sin and misery. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or omniscient. In fact, it must be said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Author: Winston Churchill

Source: speech in the House of Commons, November 11, 1947

Democracy is a tool that channels conflicts between people and enables them to be resolved - sometimes even eliminated, sometimes weakened - without the use of violence.

Author: Leszek Kołakowski

Democracy ends when the government realizes that it can bribe people with their own money.

Author: Alexis de Tocqueville

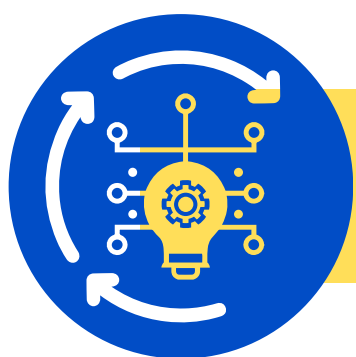
Our system is not an imitation of foreign laws, and we ourselves are rather a model for others than others are for us. This system is called democracy because it is based on a majority of citizens, not a minority.

In private disputes, every citizen is equal before the law; as for importance, the individual is valued not because of his membership in a certain group, but because of the personal talent with which he stands out; and no one who is capable of serving the fatherland is prevented from achieving honors by poverty or unknown origin. In our public life, we are guided by the principle of freedom. In private life, we do not look with suspicious curiosity at the behavior of our fellow citizens, we do not dislike our neighbor if he is engaged in what pleases him, and we do not cast in his direction those contemptuous glances

which, although they do no harm, do hurt. Guided by indulgence in private life, we respect the rights in public life; we are obedient to all contemporary authorities and laws, especially the unwritten ones, which defend the wronged and whose transgression brings universal disgrace.

Author: Pericles – Athenian politician

Source: Tadeusz Mosiek, Historia. Antiquity and the Middle Ages., Poznań 2001, p. 11.



IDEATE

If at the stage of defining the problem, students noticed the flaws of the democratic system, then encourage them to work as a team. At this stage, we move on to Brainstorming:

How can we transform the noticed flaws into advantages?

The ideas gathered by the team are written down on sticky notes (stick them on the board). Then, ask them to assess which of the ideas gathered could be implemented most easily and quickly in a democracy and why.



SIMULATION OF A DEBATE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Students will take part in a simulated debate representing different EU member states. The topic of the debate will be:

“Democracy in Europe is under threat.”

PREPARING FOR THE SIMULATION:

1. Division of roles:

Each student represents an EU country, which will allow them to look at how different countries perceive the issue of democracy and what challenges they face. Countries such as Poland, Hungary, Germany, France, Spain or Sweden may have different perspectives on the issue.

Students should prepare themselves using information about democracy in their country. They should think about current issues, such as restrictions on media freedom, changes to the judiciary, levels of civic participation, populism, the influence of social media or corruption.

2. Tasks for teams:

A. Euroenthusiasts – students who believe that democracy in Europe is doing well and is not under threat, prepare arguments about strong institutions, the system for protecting citizens' rights and the actions of the European Union in the field of defending democracy.

B. Eurosceptics – students who claim that democracy is under threat, focus on problems such as: growing populism, erosion of media independence, threats to the rule of law in some member states (e.g. Poland, Hungary).

COURSE OF THE SIMULATION:

Moderation:

The teacher or a selected student acts as the moderator of the debate, allocating time for statements and taking care of the order of the discussion.

Structure of the Debate

Opening statements (3–5 minutes per team): Each team presents a position and presents conclusions.

1. Is the independence of the judiciary and media under threat in Europe?
2. How does populism affect the quality of democracy in the member states?
3. What actions can the European Union take to defend democracy in its countries?





DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Socrates was considered one of the greatest philosophers in ancient Greece. He lived in Athens. He was known for his slogan: "I know that I know nothing."

Unfortunately, the poet Meletos accused him of not worshipping the gods and corrupting the youth.

The case was heard by the Athenian People's Court.

In the first vote on the defendant's guilt, the guilty/not guilty vote ratio was probably 280:220. The philosopher could have proposed a sentence for him. Socrates mocking the first result, proposed living at the state's expense.

In the second vote, the judges were to decide between the sentence proposed by the prosecutor and the defendant. By a vote of 361 to 140, they chose the death penalty proposed by Meletos.

Despite the proposals of his students who wanted to help him, the philosopher did not escape from prison. He died, in accordance with the court's verdict, by drinking poison - hemlock. This is how Athenian democracy contributed to the death of its exceptional citizen.



Picture: Socrates enumerating the arguments, fragment of The School of Athens by Raphael

Source: [Wikipedia](#)



Source: [Wikipedia](#).

The European Parliament is a democratic institution of the European Union.

It is an equivalent of a unicameral parliament. The members to the European Parliament are elected by the citizens of the European Union countries for a five-year term.



DIVERSITY

Diversity is a force that drives Europe's social, cultural and economic development.

European Union Declaration
on Cultural Diversity

“The European Union is a unique community of states that unites countries with different traditions, languages and cultures. Diversity is seen as an added value that enriches society and is the basis for European integration. It is reflected in many aspects of everyday life - from culture, through language, to traditions and customs. The EU promotes tolerance, openness and intercultural dialogue, which makes diversity the foundation of its functioning.”

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

ca. September, 15th - European Heritage Days

September, 26th - European Day of Languages

European Heritage Days is an annual initiative to promote cultural diversity and heritage protection in Europe held in September. It is a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Union launched in 1991. The event includes various activities such as open days at monuments, exhibitions, workshops, lectures and festivals. The aim is not only to raise awareness of the value of cultural heritage, but also to encourage local communities to protect and appreciate it.

The organizers choose a different theme, which allows for a variety of interpretations and activities related to cultural heritage each year. European Heritage Days are a great opportunity to discover local treasures and understand their significance in a wider European context.

The European Day of Languages, on the other hand, aims to promote linguistic diversity and language learning in Europe. The initiative was launched by the Council of Europe in 2001.

This day serves not only to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of using different languages in everyday life, but also to celebrate the cultural richness that multilingualism brings.





“United in diversity” is the motto of the European Union, first used in 2000. It means that Europeans should work together to ensure peace and prosperity and to protect the richness of European cultures, traditions and languages. Promoting the value of diversity aims to combat discrimination. Every citizen of the European Union, no matter who they are or what obstacles they face in life, should be treated equally.

Visit the following websites:

[European Day of Languages](#)

[European Heritage Days](#)

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS IN EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

The aim of the activity:

Students will learn about cultural diversity in the EU by presenting selected traditions and customs from different countries.

1. Division into teams:

Students are divided into teams, and each team chooses or is assigned a member state of the EU.

2. Task for the teams:

Each team is to collect information and prepare a short presentation on the traditions or cultural customs of a given country. This may be related to:

- National or religious holidays,
- Cultural festivals (e.g. Oktoberfest in Germany, Cannes Film Festival),
- Culinary customs (e.g. Christmas Eve dishes in Poland, tapas in Spain),
- Linguistic or artistic traditions (e.g. a small country - Belgium is trilingual, Ireland cultivates its Celtic roots, the art of icons in Greece, Portugal is famous for Fado).

3. Presentation of traditions:

Each group presents their presentation to the class. They can use photos, short videos or objects related to the customs they are discussing. This is followed by a discussion about what makes each tradition unique and how it affects the culture of the country.



DEFINE - CULTURAL DIVERSITY

After the presentations are finished, students can be asked to solve a problem:

How can we help the member states of the European Union maintain their cultural uniqueness while also preserving the identity of this community?

Key issues to address:

- How can diverse traditions and cultures influence mutual understanding and cooperation in the EU?
- What are the challenges of integrating so many different cultures into one political and economic community?
- How does the European Union promote the protection of diversity, for example through programs such as Erasmus+ or the European Capitals of Culture?



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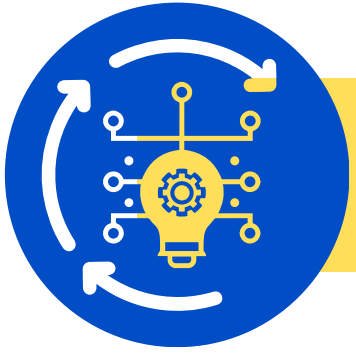
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In order to stimulate interest in the issue of cultural heritage of different European Union countries, we encourage you to watch a short film from the #EUropeans series, which is available [here](#). You can find there very interesting portraits of Europeans from different countries of the EU. On the subject of cultural heritage, we recommend Maltese Colors available in English. The images below are scenes from this short film.



Source: Newsroom, Consilium Europe





IDEATE

Students in teams use the 365 method to generate ideas and then present their ideas to the class.

For more information on using the 365 method in class, you can check [Teaching supplement](#).



After summarizing the work of the teams, it is worth helping the students to extract the general significance of diversity for the development of the European Union.

The diversity of culture, language and traditions influences various aspects of life in Europe:

1. Social development: Thanks to the diversity of culture and traditions, Europeans learn to be tolerant and understand each other. International exchange, intercultural dialogue and educational programmes help to build an open society that can better cope with global challenges.
2. Economic development: Linguistic and cultural diversity can stimulate innovation and economic development. Companies can benefit from diversity, for example by employing people with different linguistic and cultural competences, which facilitates international trade and cooperation.
3. Cultural development: Many traditions, festivals and works of art from different countries become a common European heritage. Each member state brings its own unique values to this community, which enrich the culture of the entire continent. An example of a traditional event that attracts crowds of tourists is the farewell to winter in Mohács, Hungary, called busójárás. In 2009, the event was included on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (pictured below)



Source: [Wikipedia](#)



EMPATHIZE - LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY:

There are 24 official languages in the European Union: English, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, French, Greek, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Dutch, German, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish and Hungarian. Each is equally important in the institutions of the European Union, which shows the importance of cultural and linguistic equality.

The European Union promotes the protection of regional and minority languages, such as Basque, Breton, Kashubian and Sami.

Topics to consider:

Language as an element of cultural identity: Why is the protection of languages important for preserving cultural heritage?

Difficulties resulting from linguistic diversity: What challenges does having so many official languages in the EU create?

- How can technology (e.g. automatic translations) help overcome language barriers in Europe?



DEFINE - LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

The boundaries of my language define the boundaries of my world.

Author: Ludwig Wittgenstein “The Logical and Philosophical Treatise”

BACKGROUND TO THE DEBATE:

The philosopher’s famous statement can be used to conduct an Oxford-style debate. This statement is an excellent pretext for a discussion about the multitude of official languages in the European Union and the high position of English, considered an international language (*lingua franca*).

The matter is further complicated by “Brexit” (i.e. Great Britain’s exit from the European Union), which, as some claim, should lower the rank of English, at least in the European Union. This move, in turn, should raise the rank of French. Why? For instance, the European Parliament is located in Brussels. Meanwhile, English is still the primary language of communication in the Union.

THESIS OF THE OXFORD DEBATE:

After “Brexit,” the international language in the European Union should be French.

For more information on how to conduct an Oxford-style debate in class and how to prepare for it, check [Teaching supplement](#).





TRADITIONAL OR DIGITAL POSTER OR INFOGRAPHIC

MAKING A POSTER OR INFOGRAPHIC:

Preparation:

1. Students pair up. Then each pair chooses one of the official languages of the European Union.
2. Then they prepare a poster or infographic that illustrates:
 - In which country/countries the language is spoken,
 - The number of people who speak the language,
 - Interesting facts about the language (e.g. characteristic phrases, alphabet, dialectal differences),
 - The importance of the language in the EU (e.g. role in translating EU documents, use in EU institutions).

They can also add literary quotes or fragments of songs in the language.

Presentation of work:

After preparing the posters or infographics, students present their projects to the class.

Reflection after the presentations:

After the presentations, you can ask students a question for discussion:

- Why is it important for the European Union to protect linguistic diversity?
- What could be the consequences of not protecting minority languages?



SUMMARY

An alternative way to summarize the topic of diversity could be to display materials promoting youth exchanges Erasmus+ and/or European Solidarity Corps.

These initiatives not only demonstrate the practical benefits of international cooperation, but also inspire students to actively engage in activities aimed at European integration.

Participating in European projects gives young people the opportunity to gain valuable experience, both at home and abroad. Secondary school students have the opportunity to experience first-hand how the values of the European Union, such as diversity, contribute to increasing mutual understanding and building community.



Erasmus+





SOLIDARITY

*European solidarity is the foundation
of our cooperation, building a united
Europe and protecting our values.*
Jean-Claude Juncker

“Solidarity is one of the most important values on which cooperation between the Member States of the European Union is based. It means cooperation, support and mutual assistance, especially in crisis situations. The European Community strives to ensure that joint actions are more effective than individual initiatives of individual countries. Solidarity is key to dealing with challenges such as humanitarian, migration, climate, economic and health crises.”

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBERATE?

October, 17th - World Day for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty

December, 18th - International Migrants Day

April, 22nd - International Earth Day

The solidarity of the European Union is of great importance, as it does not allow EU citizens to be left without support. Also, when a disaster or crisis affects only some Member States. Cooperation between European Union countries is particularly visible in times of crisis, which is why we encourage you to celebrate the World Day for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty to talk about humanitarian crises as well as the increasingly alarming reports monitoring the level of extreme poverty. The World Day for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty aims to raise awareness of the problem of poverty in the world and to mobilize actions to eliminate it. It was established by the UN General Assembly in 1992. We also encourage you to talk about the migration crisis during International Migrants' Day. It is also necessary to discuss the climate crisis, e.g. during International Earth Day, which is particularly important for young people. They will be the ones who will struggle in the future with global warming and, consequently, with the migration of people living in areas that will become unbearable to live in.





EXERCISE: EXAMPLES OF SOLIDARITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Objective of the activity: Students will learn about specific cases in which EU countries have provided mutual assistance.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC:

The teacher draws attention to the importance of solidarity in the European Union, emphasizing that this cooperation is visible in moments of crisis. Then the students are asked to familiarize themselves with selected examples of solidarity in the Union.

EXAMPLES OF SOLIDARITY CASES:

1. COVID-19 pandemic:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, EU countries shared medical supplies, sent medical personnel to the regions most affected by the pandemic and cooperated on the purchase of vaccines.
- Discussion question:
How did EU countries' cooperation during the pandemic affect the speed of the crisis?
Did all countries receive sufficient support?

2. Migration crisis:

- In 2015, Europe was hit by a major migration crisis.
- Hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Middle East and Africa arrived in Europe seeking shelter. Some countries, such as Greece, Italy and Hungary, were at the forefront of the influx of migrants. The European Union took steps to distribute refugees among member states and provide financial and logistical support to the countries most affected.
- Discussion question:
Did EU countries cooperate sufficiently during the migration crisis?
What were the difficulties in implementing the principle of solidarity?

3. Financial aid for countries in economic crisis:

- EU countries, such as Greece, that were hit by the economic crisis received financial support from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The rescue packages were aimed at preventing bankruptcies and stabilizing the economy.
- Discussion question:
How has financial solidarity affected economic stability in the EU?
Were the conditions imposed on countries receiving aid fair?

DISCUSSION ON SOLIDARITY:

After reviewing the examples, students discuss the topic:

"What are the benefits and challenges of applying the principle of solidarity in the European Union?"

Possible topics for discussion:

- Does solidarity in the European Union function evenly in all crises?
- Which countries benefit most from the principle of solidarity?
- Is solidarity limited in situations where individual countries have conflicting interests?



Source: Canva.com

The photo on the right shows a slogan often seen in Poland after Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022. At that time, Poland accepted refugees from Ukraine fleeing the war through its border.

It is estimated that over a million refugees entered Poland from Ukraine through the Polish-Ukrainian border. Some of them returned to their home country after some time. However, a significant number still remain in exile in Poland or emigrated further to Western Europe. In this way, Poland, as a member of the European Union, showed solidarity with the Ukrainian nation in a crisis situation for them by opposing war, cruelty, aggression and violence on a large scale.



LEARNING CORNER

Many ready-made and interesting materials on the subject of Solidarity and knowledge about the European Union can be found in the "Learning Corner", which is available on the official website of the European Union. For this topic, we recommend the Civic Education Package, which helps explain the advantages of cooperation and the benefits of European integration. Within the package, we will find five ready-made lesson plans (in all EU languages).

In addition, an interesting element at this stage may be conducting an educational game Europa Quest. This is an interactive quiz that encourages teamwork, which increases the sense of community between participants. The quiz is prepared on topics related to the EU, its institutions, history, decision-making and European culture (in all EU languages).



SUMMARY

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLIDARITY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

After defining the problem, you can reflect with your students on the overall importance of solidarity for the stability and unity of the European Union.

CONCLUSIONS WORTH EMPHALIZING:

Solidarity is not only a symbol of community, but also an important principle of action, which contributes above all to:

1. Maintaining unity in difficult times

In times of crisis, solidarity between Member States allows for better coping with problems that could otherwise be impossible to overcome alone.

2. Strengthening the EU's international position

Joint action in the spirit of solidarity makes the European Union stronger on the international stage. The EU can better respond to global challenges such as climate change, migration or health crises.

3. Building trust and cooperation between countries:

Mutual assistance and support create an atmosphere of cooperation and trust, which helps the Union to function more effectively as a whole.

Moreover, the word "Solidarity" will always be associated by Poles with the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarność" – a nationwide trade union established in 1980 to defend workers' rights, which until 1989 was also the main opposition against the government of the Polish People's Republic and communism.

Source: Wikipedia

In the picture - a Solidarity flag





HUMAN RIGHTS

*All human beings are born free
and equal in dignity and rights.*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
Article 1, Paris, 1948

“Human rights are the fundamental rights that every person has, regardless of nationality, gender, religion or other characteristics. They are protected at international, regional and national levels.” Every person is entitled to certain rights simply because they are human. They cannot be stripped or deprived of them in any way.

This seems obvious, but it was not always this way and we still encounter countless cases around the world where human rights are violated. What is more, they are often violated in ways that are blatant and incompatible with humanity.

WHAT DAY CAN WE CELEBRATE?

December, 10th - International Human Rights Day

After the experiences of World War II, most countries have recognized and signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it is still necessary to fight to preserve these rights.

Knowing these 30 rights, which were written to prevent the atrocities of World War II from ever happening again, is a good introduction to understanding what rights people have.

Human Rights are a fundamental value in the European community, alongside Human Dignity, Democracy, Freedom, Equality and the Rule of Law. The European Union itself is one of three institutions, alongside the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, that create the European system for the protection of human rights. The most important elements of the system for the protection of fundamental rights in the European Union include:

- treaty guarantees ensuring the protection of fundamental rights;
- adoption of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- establishment of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in Vienna;
- work on the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.





EMPATHIZE - HUMAN RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION:

It is worth asking students if they can define human rights. Usually, it is possible to quickly develop a sensible definition in a relatively short time, but when it comes to listing those rights that are inalienable to every citizen of the European Union. This is much worse.

GOAL:

Familiarization with the 30 rights that arise from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

COURSE OF THE EXERCISE:

1. Ask students to write down on sticky notes the human rights they know (as per the rule: one right per sticky note). Have students stick them in one place in the room.

2. Then, watch a short and powerful introductory film on Human Rights, available in open access on the website youthforhumanrights.org.

3. After watching this video you can now view [Universal Declaration of Human Rights Illustrated](#)

4. Each student must have a chance to read at least one of the thirty articles. The articles are read one by one, and the person reading checks whether a given right is already on the board - if not, then he writes it on a separate note and attaches it to the board. In this way, the rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be collected..

5. The lesson can end with the preparation of an art or graphic poster. Students will be asked to write down thirty Human Rights and they can be displayed at school to celebrate International Human Rights Day.



DEFINE

GOAL OF THE EXERCISE:

Students will understand how human rights are applied and the challenges associated with their implementation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISE:

Each group of students analyzes a case of human rights violation in different contexts.

For example: child labor, racial discrimination, freedom of speech. It is best to use materials from specific cases documented and prepared in the form of accessible educational materials, which can be found on the Amnesty International letter writing marathon website (see next page).

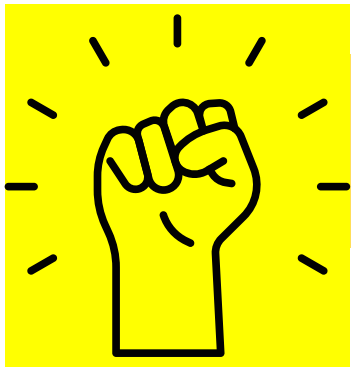
Every year at the turn of November and December, stories of several to a dozen people whose rights have been blatantly violated are published.

DISCUSSION:

Each group answers the questions:

- What rights were violated?
- What actions should be taken to prevent similar situations in the future?





TAKE PART IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTION

We propose that we encourage students to act to protect human rights. To this end, the school can take part in the Letter Writing Marathon organized by Amnesty International. It is the world's largest campaign for human rights.

Every year around International Human Rights Day, millions of people around the world join forces to speak up for specific people whose rights are violated and to change their fate. The aim of the campaign is to write letters to decision-makers, who have a real impact on the fate of heroes and heroines whom students could meet at the stage of defining problems. In addition, you can also send expressions of support for them and their loved ones.

Visit the website: [Write for Rights](https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/)

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Source: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>





CHILD PROTECTION

*Every child has the right
to love, protection and development.*
Convention on the Rights of the Child,
UN, 1989

It is almost unbelievable that it was not until 1924 that the League of Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, known as the Declaration of Geneva. Previously, the most common actions against children were violence, exploitation, as well as for most of them, lack of development and education prospects.

“The Declaration contains five principles and states that humanity should give the child the best it has, and that it is incumbent upon humanity to provide children with care, protection, assistance in difficult situations, opportunities for development, and defense against exploitation. Then, the protection of children's rights was included in Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which entitled mothers and children to special care and assistance, as well as social protection.”

WHAT DAY CAN WE CELEBRATE?

November, 18th - World Day for Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation Abuse, and Violence

However, the groundbreaking document in guaranteeing children the due protection of their rights was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly only in 1989.

The World Day for Prevention and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence is intended for children and all those who interact with children for personal or professional purposes to raise their awareness of child sexual exploitation, abuse, violence and facilitate open discussions on protecting children from these crimes. The Council of Europe has developed a variety of awareness-raising tools and resources. Every year, the Council of Europe invites its partners to focus on a specific theme. For instance, in 2024, the theme for this day is "Emerging technologies: threats and opportunities for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse."





Source: *Child Rights Convention Booklet*

INTRODUCTION TO THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD:

Print out the Convention on the Rights of the Child prepared by UNESCO, which is easy to use in class, or provide a pdf version if students can view it digitally. Students divide into teams of three and familiarize themselves with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Students draw randomly from the cards situations of children in difficult conditions: refugee children, child soldiers, child workers, children victims of domestic violence, children without parental care, children affected by natural disasters, children in a situation of social marginalization, and children affected by climate change.

These materials should be prepared in advance by the teacher.

CLASS DISCUSSION – WHAT INSTITUTIONS TAKE CARE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

The teacher leads a discussion on the role of various institutions in protecting children's rights:

- International organizations or NGOs, e.g. UNICEF,
- Governments of countries together with Children's Rights Ombudsmen,
- Relevant social services, courts and police.

Students share ideas on how they themselves can contribute to protecting children's rights (e.g. by helping at school, reporting violations of children's rights).

Search for other inspiration for your lessons on websites:

UNICEF:

[UNICEF The World's Largest Lesson](#)

CHILDREN RIGHTS:

[Council of Europe Children's Rights](#)



DEFINE AND IDEATE

EDUCATIONAL DRAMA – SIMULATION

- Students take part in a short educational drama in which they act out different scenarios related to the violation of children's rights. Each team creates a short scene presenting a situation of violation of children's rights, which they previously drew.
- Students work in pairs to act out scenes in which one child breaks the law and the other two try to intervene or seek help.
- After each scene, students discuss what can be done to improve the situation and ensure that children's rights are respected in that situation.





RULE OF LAW

*Where the law ends,
tyranny begins*
Two Treatises on Government,
John Locke, 1689

“The rule of law is one of the fundamental values of the Union, alongside democracy, human rights, human dignity, freedom and equality, without which the European Union could not function.

The rule of law ensures that all Member States respect the same principles and legal standards. This ensures the equality of all citizens of the EU before the law, as well as the protection of their fundamental rights. The European Union, through monitoring and intervention (e.g. the procedure of Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union), aims to counteract situations in which the rule of law is eroded in the Member States. This is to prevent authoritarian tendencies and protect democracy.”

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

October, 17th - European Day of Justice

October, 10th - World Day against the Death Penalty

European Justice Day is celebrated every year around 25th of October. This day aim is to bring justice closer to citizens, inform them about their rights and promote the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of justice through procedural simulations and information sessions. The day is open to all European citizens, students and people working in the field of justice. This time is also a good pretext for discussions on the rule of law, because it is the Courts that we demand to uphold the law. Ultimately, they provide us with the guarantee that all citizens of the EU (including the legislative and executive powers) are equal before the law.

They provide us with the guarantee of a fair trial, because they are independent and impartial. Talking about justice, we also recommend to celebrate World Day against the Death Penalty. For instance, in 2024 and 2025, this day will be dedicated to challenging the misconception that the death penalty can make people and communities safer.





EMPATHIZE - RULE OF LAW

QUESTIONS TO START A DISCUSSION:

- What does the word rule of law mean to you?
- Have you heard of it in the context of the European Union?

The teacher displays a quote from Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

An example in the context of the EU: respect for the independence of courts, freedom of the media or the right of citizens to a fair trial.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RULE OF LAW NOTION:

The teacher explains that the rule of law is:

A principle that means that everyone – both citizens and the authorities – are equal before the law and respect the commonly established rules.

Example: independent courts, free elections, protection of civil rights.

The teacher emphasizes that:

- the rule of law protects us as citizens by ensuring equality before the law, protection of human rights and justice.
- observance of the law in the EU is a condition for maintaining peace and cooperation between states.

QUESTION TO STUDENTS:

„What you can do as a citizen to protect the rule of law in your country?“

Examples: education, participation in elections, support for independent institutions.



SIMULATION GAME

SIMULATION GAME: DEBATE AT THE EUROPEAN UNION FORUM

GOAL:

Students take on the roles of representatives of EU Member States and discuss the rule of law.

PREPARATION:

The teacher divides the class into three groups:

- Group 1: Citizens of a country where the rule of law is being violated (e.g., restricting media freedom).
- Group 2: Representatives of EU countries that support the rule of law.
- Group 3: Neutral mediators representing the European Commission.

COURSE OF THE DEBATE:

- The groups prepare short arguments regarding their position.
- A moderated debate takes place, in which the mediators propose possible solutions (e.g. introducing sanctions or dialogue).

PODSUMOWANIE:

The teacher asks the students:

- Did you manage to find a compromise?
- What difficulties did you encounter during the discussion?





MECHANISM FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RULE OF LAW IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The teacher presents a selected example (e.g. the procedure of Article 7 TEU, the European Commission reports on the rule of law, or the "money for the rule of law" mechanism).

SELECTED EXAMPLE:

In 2020, a budget conditionality mechanism was introduced that allows EU funds to be withheld from countries that violate the rule of law. What do you think about this? Is it an effective solution?

Students briefly discuss: "Should the European Union have the right to interfere in rule of law issues in member states?"

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

- Students write down the answer to the question: "What would happen if there was no rule of law in our country?" on sticky notes and stick them to the board.



SUMMARY

BRAINSTORMING:

The teacher asks the students:

"How can we promote the rule of law in our society?"

- The students share ideas, such as education, strengthening independent institutions, and promoting democratic values..

TEACHER'S SUMMARY:

- The teacher emphasizes that the rule of law protects us as citizens.
- It ensures equality before the law, justice and protection of human rights.
- He points out that its observance in the EU is a condition for maintaining peace and cooperation between states.

Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.





CASE STUDY - THE DEATH PENALTY

TOPIC: MORAL DILEMMA - THE CASE OF TREVOR (US CITIZEN)

GOALS:

1. Students will develop the ability to analyze moral dilemmas.
2. Students will learn to argue and consider different perspectives.
3. Students will strengthen their teamwork and communication skills.

AFTER CLASS STUDENT:

- is able to identify various moral and ethical aspects of a problematic situation,
- is able to defend his/her position and listen to other arguments.

PREPARATION:

The teacher instructs the students:

“Whoever is for the death penalty sits on the right side of the room. Whoever is against the death penalty finds a seat on the left side of the room.”

This way we have two groups of students: on the right - supporters of the death penalty, and on the left - opponents of the death penalty, initially. Try to find their opinions - why are they for or against death penalty. Ask one student to be a scribe.

The scribe divides the whiteboard into two halves and notes down the arguments for or against on each side of the whiteboard.

SHOWCASING TREVOR'S STORY IN PARTS:

1) The teacher presents the first part on the forum:

Caroline, a 16-year-old, was hitchhiking in Florida (near Daytona Beach) with her traveling companion Jerry. During this adventure, tragedy struck. Jerry was shot, by the man who kidnapped them, and Caroline was raped. She testified at the police station about what happened to her and gave the identity of the criminal. She was then called to the police station to identify a potential suspect among the people lined up.

After carefully examining the suspects, she chose Trevor, a theology student, from the line. Trevor admitted that he was in Daytona Beach the night Caroline's tragedy occurred. Caroline testified that Trevor was the one who killed Jerry and raped her. The jury sentenced Trevor to death.

2) The teacher asks the students, “Should the jury sentence Trevor to death?”

Students respond to the question. After the exchange of views, students can switch sides—opponents can join the supporters of the death penalty or remain where they are if their views have not changed.

3) The teacher reads the next part of Trevor's story:

A year later, the Florida Supreme Court ordered a retrial, finding that the victim was an unreliable witness and expressing “significant doubt” that Trevor was the killer. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The state moved to drop the charges, and the prosecutor who convicted Trevor later expressed doubts about his guilt.

4. The teacher asks, “What should be done about Trevor in this situation? Are you still for or against the death penalty for Trevor?” Students respond to these questions and crystallize their views on the death penalty. Making the final decision on which side of the barricade they want to sit in class.

5. The teacher then reads the end of Trevor's story..

Trevor lives alone in a studio apartment in Chicago, works in a packaging warehouse, and is an active campaigner against the death penalty. Although he has not been on death row for years, Trevor remembers waking up one night after a friend had been electrocuted and “feeling like someone had stabbed me.” Trevor has written several poems about his friends who have been executed and is working on a book. “I should have lost hope,” he says, “but I didn’t.”

6. The teacher asks students to add on arguments for and against to the board respecting the principle ping-pong (one argument supporters of the death penalty and one the opponents). At the end, they count down the number of arguments on each side and decide which arguments of the opponents were the most convincing





OPENNESS

*Europe must be open to dialogue
and cooperation if it wants to remain
a leader in the global world*
Ursula von der Leyen

“Openness is one of the key pillars of the European Union, which manifests itself on many levels: political, economic and social. The European Union strives to build bridges, both within the community and beyond its borders, developing dialogue, cooperation and promoting integration. Openness to new countries, cultures and ideas allows Europe to remain innovative and competitive in the global world.”

It is thanks to openness that the free movement of people, goods, services and capital is possible. The European Union needs openness to cooperate with other countries, organisations and communities in the face of global problems such as climate change, international trade and migration crises.

WHAT DAY CAN WE CELEBRATE?

December, 18th - International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day is celebrated every year on the 18th of December to highlight the human rights of migrants and their contribution to society. This day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 in response to the growing number of migrations worldwide.

Given the numerous crises that affect many corners of our planet, such as humanitarian, economic and climate crises, this day is a reminder of the need for international cooperation to manage migration in a humane, human rights-compliant and safe manner.

Migrants often face human rights violations and social exclusion and discrimination. Therefore, International Migrants Day is a reminder of the need to protect their rights and dignity, regardless of their legal status.

Finally, this day highlights that migration crises, such as refugee situations, are not just a challenge for one country, but a global problem.





GOAL:

Students will understand how the European Union establishes relations with countries outside the EU and what benefits and challenges arise from enlargement.

INTRODUCTION:

ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

Since its inception, the European Union has gradually expanded its borders, accepting new member states. At first, there were only 12, but now there are 27. For example, the most recent enlargements included countries such as Croatia in 2013. Nine countries have official candidate status: Turkey (since 1999), North Macedonia (since 2005), Montenegro (since 2010), Serbia (2012) and Albania (since 2014). In 2022, several countries gained candidate status: Ukraine, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2023, Georgia joined the candidate countries.

TOPICS TO DISCUSS:

EU enlargement policy:

- What are the conditions for joining the Union?
- What are the benefits of accepting new countries?

Relations with third countries:

- How does the Union cooperate with other regions of the world, e.g. on trade, climate or security?

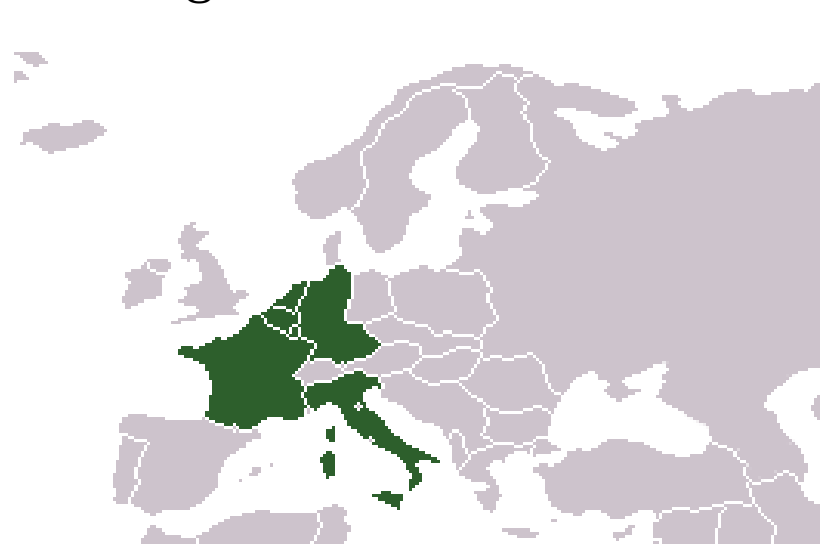
CLASS DISCUSSION: THE OPENNESS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE WORLD

Students are invited to discuss the openness of the European Union to other countries and cultures.

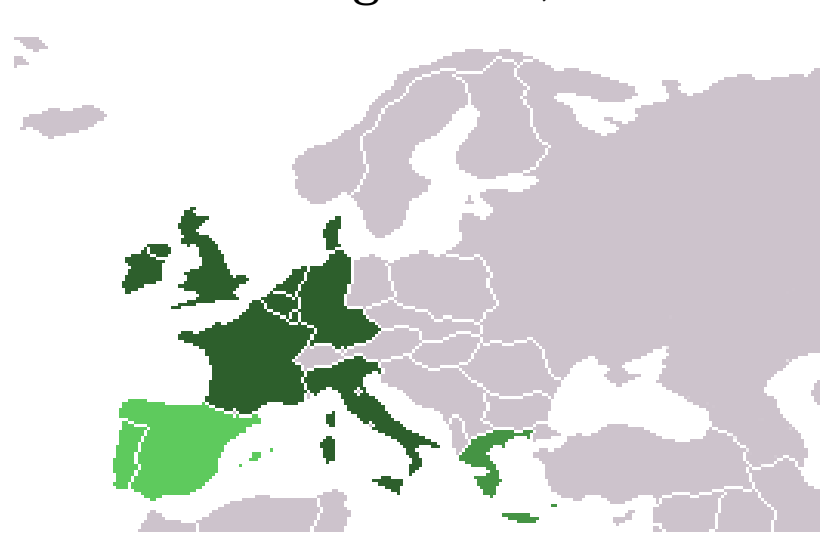
QUESTIONS TO STUDENTS:

- Should Europe be more open to the world?
- Does the admission of new Member States strengthen the EU or does it bring challenges?
- What are the benefits of cooperation with third countries (e.g. the US, China, Africa)?
- Should Europe become more open to immigration and support a more global approach to problems such as climate change?

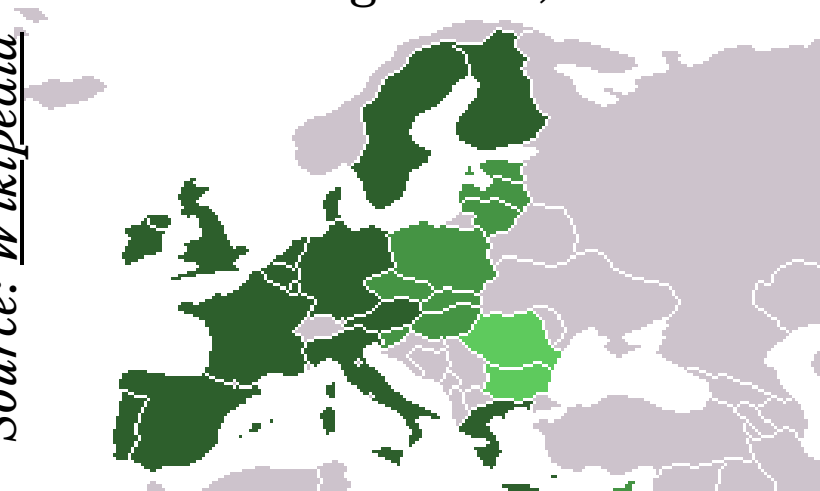
Founding countries, 1952-1958



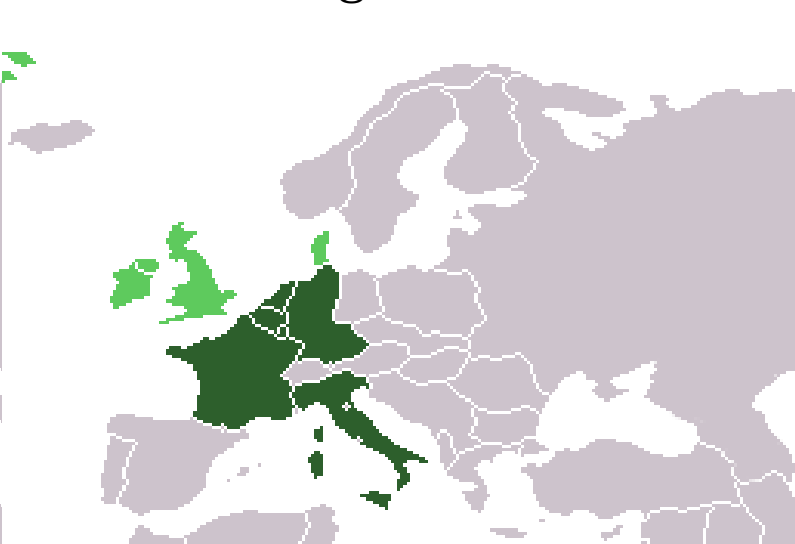
3rd Enlargement, 1986



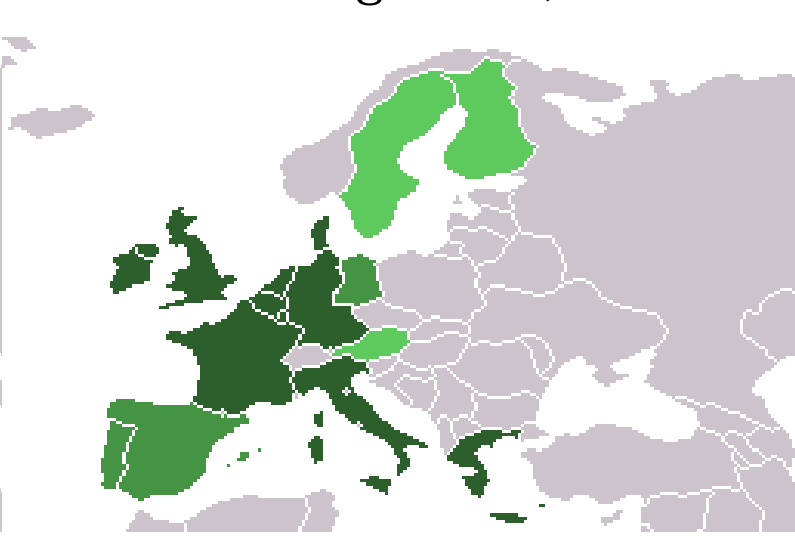
6th Enlargement, 2007



1st Enlargement, 1973



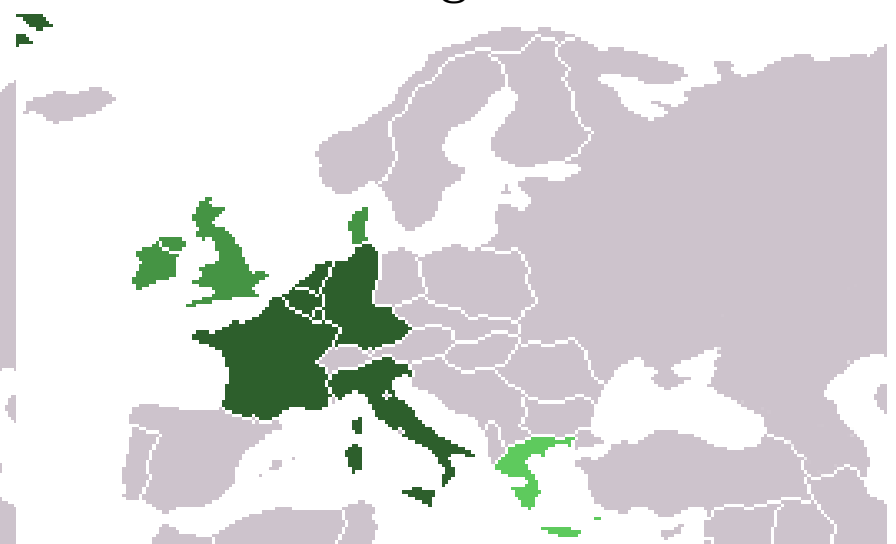
4th Enlargement, 1995



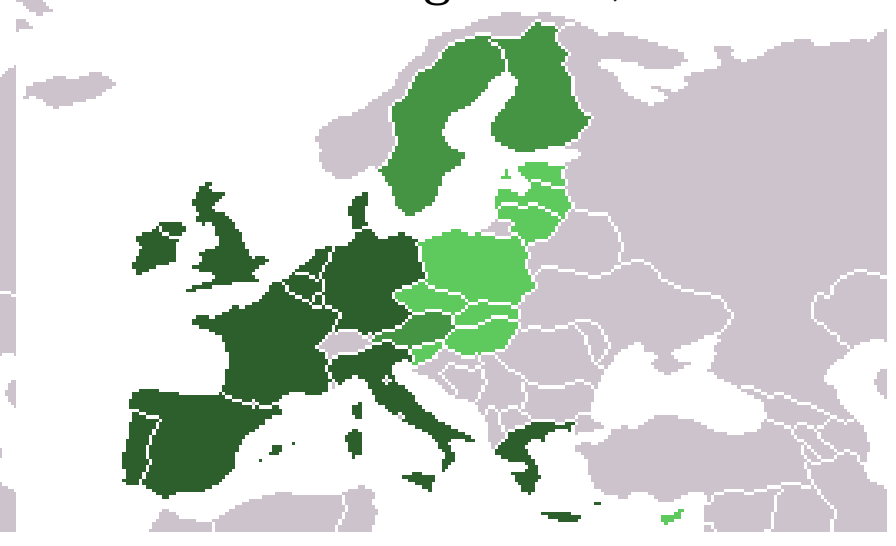
7th Enlargement, 2013



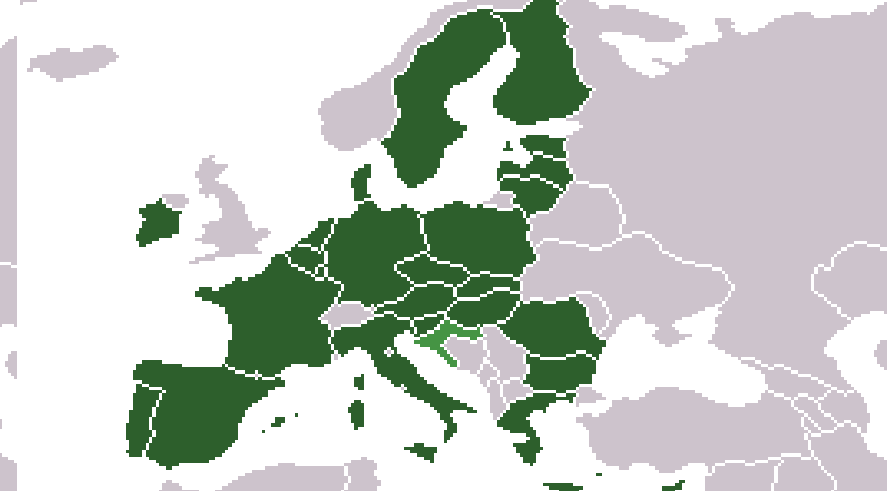
2nd Enlargement, 1981



5th Enlargement, 2004



Brexit, 2020



Source: *Wikipedia*





PROJECT

PROJECT – ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBER STATES

GOAL:

Students will understand the challenges and benefits of EU enlargement. This project will give them the opportunity to prepare proposals for an information campaign on one of the candidate countries.

1. SELECTION OF CANDIDATE COUNTRY

Students are divided into groups, each of which selects one of the candidate countries for the European Union (e.g. Turkey, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova).

Each group will have to explore topics related to the selected country, including:

- The political and economic situation,
- Relations with the European Union,
- Culture and society,
- Progress in the process of accession to the European Union.

2. CREATING AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

The students' task is to prepare a proposal for an information campaign that would aim to educate EU citizens about the selected candidate country and its potential integration with the European Union. The campaign should include the following elements:

- Campaign slogan: A short, catchy slogan promoting the candidate country as a future EU member,
- A poster or infographic: Presenting the most important information about the country and the benefits of its accession to the EU.
- A video or multimedia presentation: Telling the story of the candidate country, showing its progress and aspirations related to EU membership.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Each group presents its information campaign to the class, trying to convince the "public of the EU" (i.e. other students) that their candidate country deserves a place in the community.



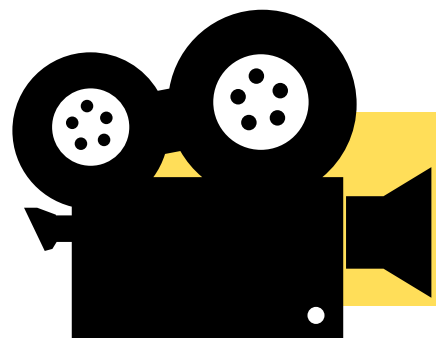
Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



LESSON'S EFFECTS:

After the lesson, students will:

- Understand the causes of migration and the challenges faced by migrants.
- Be aware of the role of migrants in society.
- Be able to talk about migration in an empathetic and factual manner.



MOVIE SCREENING

In order to strengthen the empathy process, it is worth working with a movie material showing the experiences of refugees.

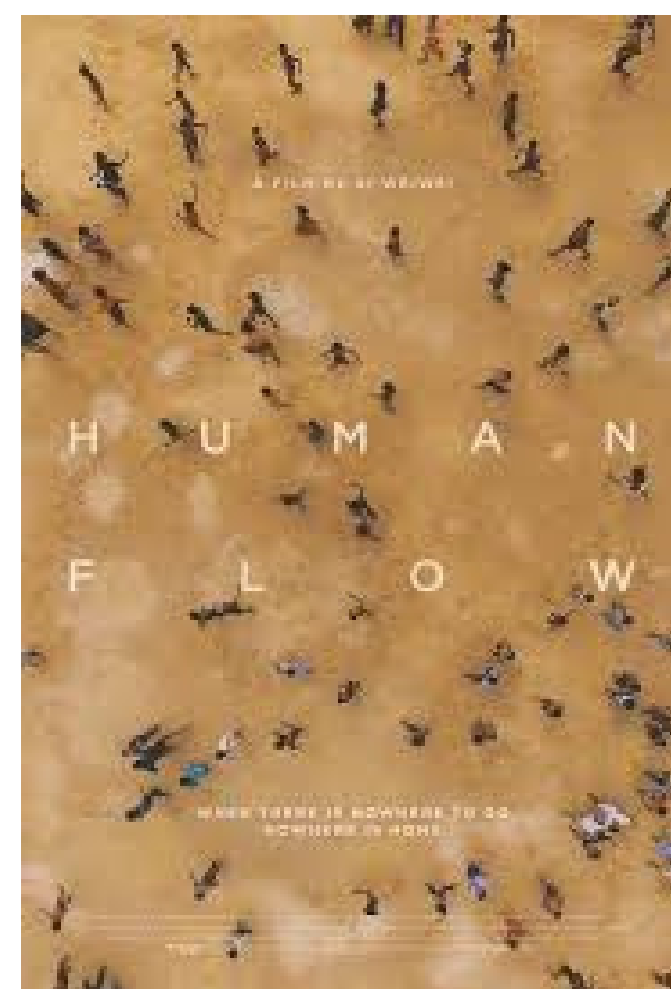
1) HUMAN FLOW (2017)

For a global perspective and a broad look at migration, we recommend the documentary "Human Flow". It is a monumental documentary showing the global migration crisis. Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei presents moving stories of people forced to leave their homes due to war, persecution, poverty and climate change. The film visits over 23 countries, including Greece, Syria, Afghanistan, Kenya and Mexico, showing the daily lives of migrants in camps, on the borders and on their way to a better life. However, it also has some drawbacks - the movie is very long (it lasts over 2 hours). However, a half-measure is to show an interview with director Ai Weiwei, which is available on YouTube in English ([link here](#)) or at least a [Human Flow Trailer](#).

Reasons to watch the movie:

- It presents migration in a comprehensive, global way and from different perspectives.
- It emphasizes that migration is not only numbers and statistics, but above all the stories of people, their hopes and suffering.
- It forces the viewer to reflect on the humanitarian aspect of migration and the responsibility of societies towards migrants.

Duration: 140 minutes (you can select key fragments, e.g. scenes showing refugee camps or conversations with migrants).



2) "FIRE AT SEA" (FUOCOAMMARE, 2016)

A documentary about the refugee crisis on the Italian island of Lampedusa, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale. The film shows the daily lives of the island's inhabitants and the dramatic situations of refugees trying to get to Europe. Check out [Fire at Sea Official Trailer](#).

Why is it worth it?

- It touches the heart and raises awareness of the reality of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean.

THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THESE MOVIES:

Migration is not only a problem, but also a call for solidarity and joint action for peace, justice and human rights.





WORKSHEET

MIGRANTS IN OUR WORLD: RIGHTS, CHALLENGES, INTEGRATION

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Task 1: Who is a migrant?

Read the definition below and answer the questions:

A migrant is a person who leaves their home country to live in another place, permanently or temporarily, for various reasons, such as work, education, climate change or armed conflicts.

1. What are the three main reasons for migration you can name based on the definition?

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Name two challenges a migrant may face in a new country:

- _____
- _____

**Task 2: Analysis of the migrant's story
(To be done after watching the movie)**

1. What were the reasons for the migration of the selected person from the documentary?

2. What difficulties did the person in migration crisis have to face?

3. What support did the person in migration crisis receive from the local community or institution?

4. What emotions did you feel while learning about this story?

Task 3: Migrants' rights

Read the following excerpts from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and answer the questions:

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." (Article 3)

1. How might this right protect migrants?

"Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." (Article 13)

2. Why is this right important to migrants?

"No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property." (Article 17)

3. How does this right protect migrants who must leave their homes?



SUMMARY

1. AFTER THE SCREENING, STUDENTS ANSWER QUESTIONS IN TEAMS.:

1. What challenges did this person face?
2. How could society help them?
3. What human rights were at risk in this situation?

The groups then present their findings.

2. THE TEACHER DISPLAYS A SUGGESTIVE IMAGE OF A REFUGEE.

For example, “Hope for a New Life” by Warren Richardson

A child is passed through a hole in barbed wire to a Syrian refugee who had already managed to cross the border from Serbia into Hungary, near Röszke, August 28, 2015.

This photograph by Warren Richardson was awarded the World Press Photo of the Year in 2016. Hungary responded to the surge in migrants trying to enter the country by building a four-meter-high fence along the entire border with Serbia in 2015. People tried to find their way through before the fence was completed on September 14, 2015.



Source: <https://wepresent.wetransfer.com/stories/world-press-photo-warren-richardson-hope-for-a-new-life>

2. THEN THE TEACHER WRITES A SENTENCE ON THE BOARD:

"Migrants are important to our world because..."

Students in a circle finish the sentence with their own reflections or write their reflections on sticky notes and stick them on the board under the sentence.



PRIVACY PROTECTION

*In the digital age, privacy is our right
and protecting personal data is crucial.*

General Data Protection
Regulation

“Privacy and the protection of personal data have become one of the important social and legal challenges in the digital age. In the European Union, these principles are regulated by the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), which protects citizens from abuses related to the collection, processing and sharing of their personal data. Modern technologies allow easier access to information about individuals, so it is important for everyone to understand what data is protected and why this protection is important.”

WHAT DAY CAN WE CELEBRATE?

January, 28th - Data Protection Day

The European Union has the strictest data protection regulations in the world. Therefore, the aim of the holiday is to raise awareness and support activities in the field of privacy protection. People's personal data is processed every second - at work, in relations with public authorities, in the health sector, when they buy goods or services, travel or surf the Internet.

It is important that citizens of the EU are familiar with the risks associated with the protection of their personal data and their rights in this area from an early age. Increasingly, younger children have access to the Internet via their phone, which was often bought for safety, e.g. so that the child could easily and quickly contact a parent. It is worth spending some time at school to know how to protect your privacy. We encourage you to prepare a lesson involving personal data protection or use the help of an expert.





EXERCISE: WHAT PERSONAL DATA IS PROTECTED BY GDPR?

GOAL OF THE EXERCISE:

Students will consider what types of personal data are protected under European Union regulations.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION:

Explaining that GDPR is a law that protects the personal data of European Union citizens.

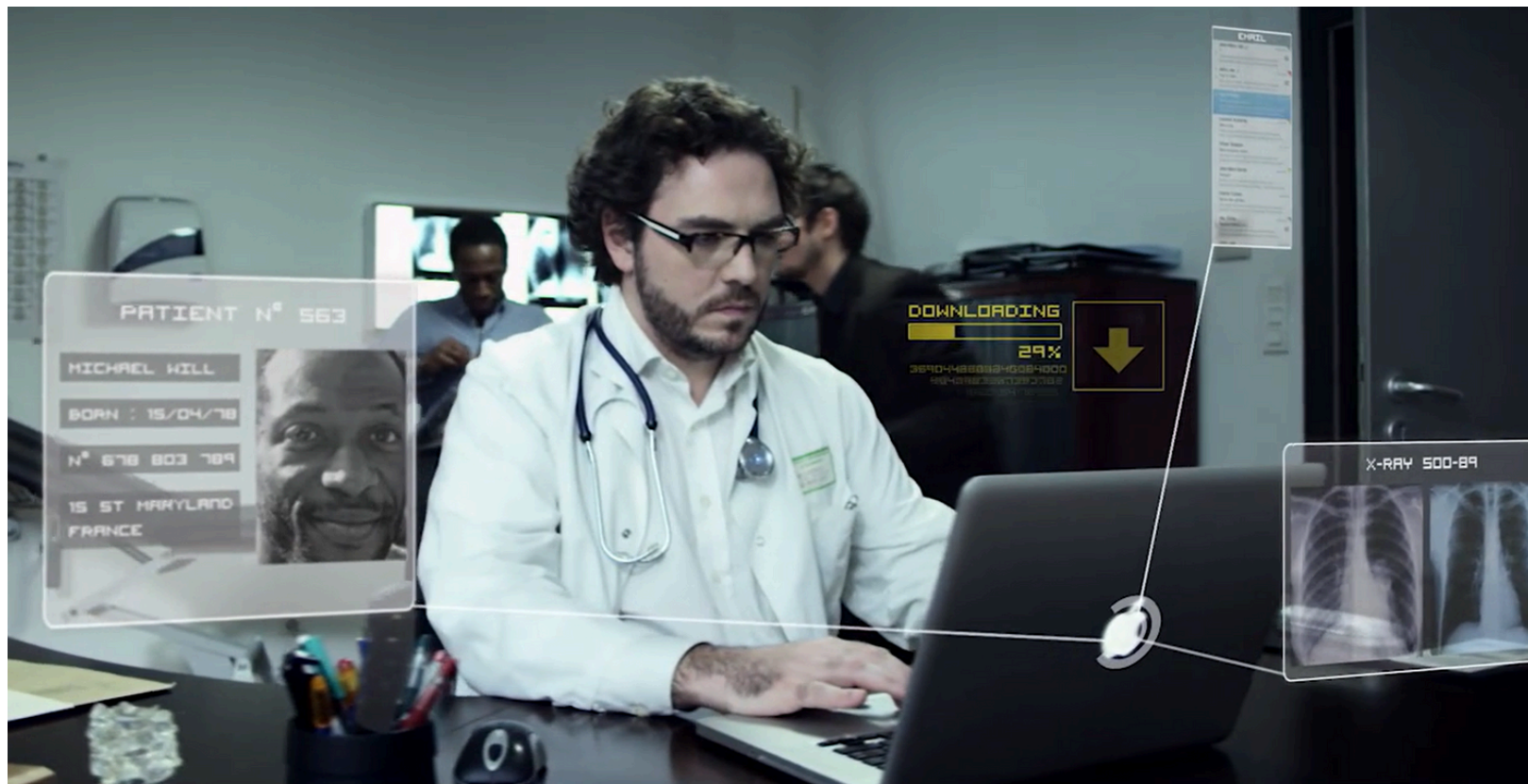
Examples of personal data include:

- Name and surname,
- Residential address,
- Email address,
- Phone number,
- ID card number,
- Location data (e.g. from GPS),
- Data concerning health, religious beliefs, sexual orientation,
- Internet activity data (e.g. browsing history, cookies).

INSPIRATION AND WARNING

The Council of Europe has prepared a short educational movie that can be a great inspiration before working in teams. The movie is available at: [Council of Europe Data Protection Day](https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/28-january-data-protection-day).

Below is a frame from the movie:



Źródło: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/28-january-data-protection-day>

TEAM WORK:

Students are divided into teams and each team is tasked with developing a list of personal data that can be collected by various companies, organizations, or social media.

Each team focuses on a different area, e.g.:

- Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram),
- Mobile applications (e.g. games, navigation applications),
- School and online education (e.g. educational platforms),
- Online medical services (e.g. online consultations, e-prescriptions).

DISCUSSION AFTER WATCHING THE MOVIE AND TEAMWORK::

After completing their work, the teams present their lists and the teacher asks a question for a joint discussion:

"Why is privacy protection important in a digital society?"

Topics to consider in the discussion:

- What are the risks that can result from the misuse or illegal sharing of personal data?
- How does privacy affect individual freedom and security online?
- What are the consequences of personal data leakage (e.g. identity theft, marketing manipulation, fraud)?



GDPR QUIZ OR ANALYTICAL TASK

1. QUIZ

To consolidate knowledge, the teacher can invite students to participate in a quiz:
[Link to a quiz on kahoot.](#)

2. ANALITICAL TASK:

Task 1: Analyzing privacy settings on social media

Students are asked to analyze their privacy settings on popular social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, TikTok, Facebook). They are asked to pay attention to:

- Who has access to their personal data (e.g. photos, posts, location).
- What information is publicly available and what can only be visible to selected people.
- Does the platform allow for easy deletion of personal data or an account.

After analyzing, students can consider whether their data is adequately protected and whether they would like to make changes to their privacy settings.

Task 2: Case study on a data leak

Students analyze an example of a data leak, such as a Facebook data leak or a leak from an e-commerce site where the data of millions of users was exposed.

They are asked to answer the following questions:

- What personal data was exposed?
- What consequences did the leak have for users?
- What steps did the company take to fix the situation and ensure better data protection in the future?



Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



SUMMARY

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIVACY PROTECTION IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY

After discussing the protection of personal data, we can move on to discussing key privacy issues in the digital age:

1. Personal security:

Protecting personal data prevents abuses such as identity theft, cyberbullying or phishing (internet fraud). Every person has the right to control what information about them is collected and how it is used.

2. Control over data:

GDPR gives EU citizens the right to "be forgotten", which means that they can request the deletion of their data from the databases of companies or organizations. This is an important tool in ensuring privacy protection and control of one's own information.

3. Protection of children and young people online:

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to threats on the Internet. GDPR introduces additional provisions on the protection of minors' data, which aims to minimize the risks associated with the misuse of digital platforms.

4. Digital education:

It is crucial that young people are aware of the risks and know how to use tools to protect their privacy, such as strong passwords, two-factor authentication or privacy settings in social media accounts.



Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



HUMAN DIGNITY

*He who does not remember the past is
condemned to repeat it.*
George Santayana

Human dignity is one of the fundamental values of the Union, alongside democracy, human rights, the rule of law, freedom and equality, without which the Union could not function. It is a property that belongs to every human being, and every person is an end in themselves and has a sense of self-worth, and therefore deserves respect. Human dignity was violated during the World War II, as exemplified by the Holocaust. Stripping people of their dignity distances both victims and perpetrators from their humanity. Such experiences should never be repeated. That is why we must preserve the memory of these tragic events, in order to save future generations of young people from repeating them.

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

January, 27th - Holocaust Remembrance Day

In order to discuss the value of human dignity, it is worth celebrating a day at school that will commemorate events that are evidence of the destruction of all human rights and the deprivation of human dignity. Hence, we propose celebrating Holocaust Remembrance Day at school. One way to commemorate what humanity should not forget is for every young person until they finish high school to go to the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau (former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp) and see this tragedy with their own eyes.

At the Auschwitz Memorial and Museum, you can choose between guided or unguided tours. However, for organized groups, it is worth booking a guided tour. You can choose a general tour of 2.5 hours or 3.5 hours. These are the shorter versions. In addition, there are even longer options, the so-called one-day 6-hour or two-day study tour (3 hours per day). For students who are unable to participate, it is worth booking an online tour that lasts 2 hours. Of course, a visit to the Auschwitz Memorial and Museum is not everything. It is worth preparing for it. The museum provides many educational materials on its website, which can be used to prepare young people and/or to summarize their knowledge after they return from their visit. Link to materials: [here](#)





GOALS:

- Students are able to analyze historical events from an ethical perspective.
- Students are able to express their reflections on the protection of human dignity in the contemporary world.
- Students develop empathy towards the victims of the Holocaust and other victims of persecution.
- Students shape attitudes of respect towards the dignity of every person.

INTRODUCTION:

The teacher begins the lesson with the question:

- What is human dignity? Why is it important?

In this context, it is worth saying that the Holocaust is an example of the mass deprivation of dignity from people. The Auschwitz Memorial and Museum has already prepared many educational materials. Therefore, we suggest using them and starting the lesson with selected topics from the tab: [How to Prepare Students for Visit.](#)

Reflection on the documentary (as above):

- Students watch a short documentary about life in concentration camps.

After the movie, the teacher asks:

- What feelings did this material evoke in you?
- What can we do to prevent similar tragedies in the future?

TEAM WORK:

Analysis of source texts:

- The teacher distributes fragments of memoirs of Holocaust survivors (a selection [here](#)).
- Students read the texts in small groups and answer the questions:
 - What manifestations of deprivation of dignity are described in the text?
 - How did the victims try to maintain their dignity in these difficult conditions?

Resources for teachers

Educational pack for teachers to help prepare for and reflect upon a visit to the Auschwitz Memorial



Education pack for teachers

Preparatory and summary materials for a visit to the Memorial

Source: website of Museum and Memorial Auschwitz - Birkenau; <https://www.auschwitz.org/>



PROJECT 1: MEMORY CAPSULE

PROJECT – “MEMORY ENCHANTED IN OBJECTS – STORIES OF KL AUSCHWITZ”

AIM OF THIS PROJECT:

Thanks to such a project, students will not only deepen their historical knowledge, but also develop skills and attitudes that are essential in shaping a conscious, empathetic and active citizen.

COURSE OF THE PROJECT:

1. The class is divided into teams and each of them creates a symbolic "memory capsule" containing objects, images, slogans and other testimonies of memory that they believe best reflect important lessons from the past regarding the Holocaust.
2. Topics proposed by the Auschwitz Museum can be discussed: Children in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Evacuation and Liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Women in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Women in the Service of the SS, Poles in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Roma in Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Resistance Movement in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Sonderkommando, Art in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Escapes from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Extermination of Jews in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, SS Staff in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Employment of Auschwitz Concentration Camp Prisoners and Criminal Medicine.

MEMORY CAPSULES' PRESENTATIONS:

Groups discuss their capsules and their meaning.

Below are two of the most symbolic photos of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum:



Source: website of Auschwitz - Birkenau
Museum and Memorial;
<https://www.auschwitz.org/>





PROJECT 2 - EDUCATIONAL GAME ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

PROJECT TITLE:

WITNESSES TO HISTORY – AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT:

Preserving the memory of the Holocaust by creating an interactive educational game (escape room or RPG) that will introduce players to the fate of prisoners and key historical facts.

GOALS:

1. Developing historical knowledge about the Holocaust
2. Shaping empathy and understanding towards victims and witnesses of history
3. Developing creativity and teamwork skills of students
4. Creating an innovative educational tool

TYPE OF GAME: ESCAPE ROOM OR RPG:

- Escape room (stationary): The game involves solving puzzles within a certain time limit, reproducing the atmosphere of historical events.
- RPG (Role-Playing Game): Participants take on the roles of historical figures and make decisions that influence the course of the game, based on facts.

PROJECT STAGES:

1) Forming a project team:

- Electing a leader and dividing roles
- Researchers (responsible for collecting historical materials)
- Screenwriters (creating the game's plot)
- Puzzle or game mechanics designers
- Graphics and technicians (preparing the visual side of the game)

2) Collecting historical materials:

- Analysis of diaries, photographs, documents and prisoners' memories
- Consultation with experts and visits to memorial sites (e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau museum)

3) Game design:

a) Plot development:

Choosing the main plot (e.g. prisoner escape, helping a family in the ghetto)
Introducing authentic stories of historical figures as inspiration

b) Creating game mechanics:

ESCAPE ROOM:

- Puzzles related to historical facts (e.g. ciphers, documents, maps)
- Space layout (e.g. prison cell, hidden hiding place)

RPG:

- Moral decision-making system (e.g. helping fellow prisoners vs. risking punishment)
- Turning points based on real events

c) Visual Design and Props:

- Creating character cards, maps, document replicas and props
- Preparing a mobile app (optional) or printed materials

4) Game testing and improvement

- Running a test game among peers or teachers
- Gathering feedback and making corrections

5) Game presentation and implementation

- Organizing an event where participants can play an escape room or RPG
- Photo/video documentation of the event

6) Project evaluation

- A survey among participants about the game (impressions, level of difficulty, educational value)



100 EQUALITY

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.
Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union

Equality is one of the fundamental values of the Union, alongside democracy, human rights, human dignity, freedom and equality, constituting its foundation. Equality is inseparably intertwined with other values, creating a coherent system that states that all citizens of the European Union are equal before the law. This is ensured by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and at the same time prohibits discrimination against people on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

March, 8th – International Women's Day

May, 17th – International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Equality in the European Union is not just an abstract value, but a specific principle that is applied in practice. Its aim is to build a community in which every person has the chance to live a decent life, develop and participate in society on equal terms. Through its policies and actions, the European Union strives to eliminate barriers that hinder equal treatment and opportunities for all citizens. It is therefore essential in the Union to maintain gender equality, opportunities and equality before the law. Therefore, it is essential in the European Union to help people in a more difficult situation: migrants, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. The Union also prohibits discrimination. Specific policies and programs that we can distinguish are:

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which promotes women's participation in the labor market and opposes violence against women.
- Equal Opportunities Strategy for People with Disabilities 2021-2030, which aims to ensure accessibility and integration.
- The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which combats discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.





GOALS:

Students will learn about the challenges that women in Europe still face, especially in the workplace, and then discuss whether Europe is doing enough to promote gender equality.

INTRODUCTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

KEY AREAS to cover in class:

- Equality in the workplace: equal pay for equal work, women's promotion, access to management positions.
- Family policy: availability of parental leave for men and women, equal sharing of care giving responsibilities.
- Gender-based violence: combating domestic violence, sexual harassment and discrimination.
- Education: equal access to education and eliminating gender stereotypes in education systems.

MOVIE SCREENING

Teacher shows an episode "Why women are paid less?" of the documentary series "Explained" Season 1. Available on YouTube: [Why do women earn less? Why women are paid less?](#)



WORKSHEET - GENDER EQUALITY

WORKSHEET TO MOVIE SCREENING "WHY WOMEN ARE PAID LESS?"

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Before screening the movie

Task 1 Make a hypothesis:

Why do women earn less than men?
.....

While watching the movie

Task 2 Answer the following questions based on the video:

What does the term "pay gap" mean and how is it calculated?

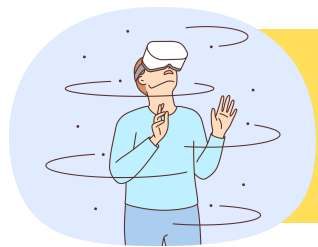
-

What are the most important reasons for the gender pay gap?
Name at least three:

-
-
-

Do women and men do the same work in the same way? How does the film answer this question?

-



SIMULATION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEBATE

SIMULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEBATE SUPPORTED WITH DATA COMING FROM A MOVIE:

QUESTION: "IS EUROPE DOING ENOUGH FOR GENDER EQUALITY?"

Students, divided into teams, consider the following issues:

Gender equality in the workplace:

- Do women have equal opportunities for career development and pay compared to men?
- What actions should be taken to close the pay gap?

Division of household chores and childcare:

- Does contemporary society support an equal division of family and professional responsibilities between women and men?
- What solutions could support greater involvement of men in childcare?

Stereotypes and education:

- What gender stereotypes still exist in society and how do they affect young people's lives?
- How can education contribute to changing these attitudes?



SUMMARY

DEBATE SUMMARY: THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

After the discussion, it is worth summarising the key aspects of gender equality in the EU:

1. Equal rights at work:

The European Union has introduced many regulations that aim to equalize opportunities in the workplace, including directives on equal pay for equal work, parental leave provisions and protection against discrimination.

2. Equality in education:

In many EU countries, actions to eliminate gender stereotypes are included in education programs. It is important that both girls and boys have the same opportunities to develop in scientific, technical and professional fields.

3. Equality in politics:

Women are still a minority in politics at European and national level, but the EU promotes policies to increase women's participation in decision-making processes.

4. Gender-based violence:

Fighting violence against women and girls is a priority for the EU. Organisations and Member States are taking action to combat domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.



EMPATHIZE - STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY

TASK: STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY AT SCHOOL

GOALS OF THE TASK:

Students have the opportunity to survey their peers to understand how gender equality is perceived in their environment.

1. PREPARING THE SURVEY

Students prepare a set of questions that will form the basis of a survey on gender equality.

The questions can cover various aspects, such as:

- Is gender equality respected in your school?
- Do you think that girls and boys have equal opportunities in their educational development?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed unequal treatment based on gender?
- Do you think Europe is doing enough for gender equality?
- How do you assess the division of household chores in your family? Is it equal?

2. CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

Students conduct a survey among their peers. They can do this traditionally, by handing out paper surveys, or digitally, using online tools such as Google Forms. The survey can be anonymous, which allows for more honest responses.

3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

After collecting the responses, students analyze the results, focusing on key areas such as:

- Do most students believe that gender equality is respected in their environment?
- What are the most common gender equality issues mentioned by respondents?
- Are there differences in the perception of gender equality between boys and girls?



Source: Canva.com



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The Mirabal sisters (Patria Mercedes Mirabal, Minerva Argentina Mirabal and Antonia Maria Teresa Mirabal) were residents of the Dominican Republic. They were involved in opposition activities against the dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Among the democratic activists in that country, they were known as Las Mariposas, or the Butterflies. They were repeatedly imprisoned for their stance. They were also tortured. However, they did not stop fighting against the Trujillo regime.

Finally, on November 25, 1960, at the initiative of the dictator, they were beaten to death. The murder of the girls provoked the fury of the citizens of the Dominican Republic, and their anger turned against the dictator. He was executed six months later.



Photo: Mirabal sisters.

Source: [*Wikipedia*](#)

The story of the Mirabal sisters, although tragic, shows that the fight for a just cause of a few people can lead to significant changes in the entire society. The Mirabal sisters did not bow to the pressure of the regime, and their persistence in striving for equal rights led to political changes in the entire country.



WORKSHEET - HOMOPHOBIA

WORKSHEETS FOR LESSONS ON INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Task 1: Read the definitions below and fill in the missing words.

1. Homophobia is an unjustified (fear) or (dislike) of homosexuals or, more broadly, LGBTQIA+ people.
2. Tolerance means (acceptance) and ... (respect) for people with different views, orientations, or ways of life.
3. Equality is the principle that all people have the same (rights) and (obligations).

Task 2: Write down three associations you have with the concept:

1. Tolerance: _____
2. Homophobia: _____
3. Equality: _____

Task 3: Case study:

Read the story below and answer the questions.

Kate noticed that her classmate, Peter, was often ridiculed for his behavior and style of dress. Once she heard someone call him an offensive word, implying that he was gay. Peter looked very sad, but said nothing. Kate did not know what to do, so she simply ignored the situation.

1. How do you think Peter felt in this situation?
2. Was Kate's behavior appropriate? Why/not?
3. How could Peter have been helped in this situation? Give two specific ideas.
4. Have you ever witnessed a similar situation? How did you react?

Ad. 1

Ad. 2

Ad. 3

Ad. 4

Task 4: Mark whether the following sentences are fact or myth:

- Every country in the world recognizes same-sex partnerships.
- Homophobia negatively affects the mental and physical health of LGBTQIA+ people.
- There are organizations that support LGBTQIA+ people.
- Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people only occurs in countries with a low level of development.
- All people, regardless of orientation, have the right to legal protection against violence and discrimination.





PROJECT - CAMPAIGN FOR EQUALITY

EQUALITY PROJECT

Examples of social campaigns:

- The teacher shows a short movie, e.g. “How rugby made me proud?”, which is available on the European Council website or posters from existing anti-homophobia campaigns.
- We also recommend the website „Love Has No Labels”, where students can learn about the specific stories of LBGTQIA+ people.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Students are divided into 4 teams (each group works on one element of the campaign).

ASSIGNING TASKS TO GROUPS

Each group chooses one campaign area:

- Team 1: Develop a campaign slogan and social media content (e.g. hashtags, posts).
- Team 2: Design educational posters and leaflets.
- Team 3: Prepare a short film or multimedia presentation.
- Team 4: Plan accompanying events (e.g. color day, workshops or flash mob).

CREATIVE WORK IN TEAMS:

- Students work in teams, completing their tasks.
- The teacher provides support as needed.

SUMMARY AND PRESENTATION OF IDEAS

- Each group presents the results of their work to the class.
- The teacher summarizes the campaign elements created together, emphasizing their strengths and importance in the social message.
- The class collectively selects the best ideas, which will be implemented in the school in the form of a campaign.

IF THE LESSON IS PART OF A LARGER PROJECT, STUDENTS CAN:

1. Refine your ideas in the next classes.
2. Start implementing the campaign in school (e.g. hanging up posters, organizing events, publishing materials on social media).
3. Organize the campaign finale on May 17th (International Day Against Homophobia).



Source: Canva.com



FREEDOM

The only freedom that deserves the name of freedom is that which consists in pursuing our own good in our own way, provided we do not seek to deprive others of their good or hinder their efforts to pursue it.

John Stuart Mill, "On liberty"

"I demand so little; I desire so little; I have seen so little; I will see so little.
I think so little; I matter so little; I have heard so little; I am capable of so little.
I love and understand freedom; I cannot give up my freedom;
I love and understand freedom; I cannot give up my freedom."

These are the lyrics of a well-known Polish song by Chłopcy z Placu Broni. Poles, having fought for freedom throughout the centuries, should reflect on and appreciate this value. Freedom is one of the fundamental values of the European Union, alongside democracy, human rights, human dignity, the rule of law, and equality, forming its very foundation. It is guaranteed in several articles of the Treaty on European Union.

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

March 3 – World Press Freedom Day

May 3 was designated by the UN General Assembly as International Press Freedom Day. It was initiated by UNESCO in 1993. The decision was made to celebrate the Windhoek Declaration signed in 1991 promoting press freedom and independent media in African countries, but it has since spread around the world. The day aims to draw attention to the importance of press freedom in the process of democratization, the defense of human rights and the role of the media in ensuring transparency in governments and societies. It is also an opportunity to commemorate journalists who have lost their lives or been persecuted for their work.

Numerous events are organized around the world on May, 3rd:

- Educational events: workshops, lectures and debates on the role of free media in society;
- Reports and studies: organizations such as Reporters Without Borders publish reports on the state of press freedom around the world, including countries where press freedom is under threat.
- Remembering journalists: events are organized to commemorate journalists who died while fulfilling their duties.





GOALS OF THIS CLASS:

1. Students understand what freedom means in the context of EU values.
2. Students can identify examples of the application of the principle of freedom in everyday life and EU policy.
3. Students reflectively consider what freedom means in their lives and in society.

COURSE OF THE LESSON:

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher starts a class on freedom with playing an inspiring song. Here are some powerful songs that capture the spirit of freedom, resilience, and human rights: of asks question:

- **Redemption Song** – Bob Marley (a powerful anthem about overcoming oppression)
- **Imagine** - John Lennon (a vision of a world free from division and oppression)
- **Kocham Wolność** - Chłopcy z Placu Broni (for Poles this song symbolizes their historical struggle for freedom, resilience against oppression, and the enduring value of independence, making it an anthem of both personal and national liberation).

After playing a powerful song, teacher asks:

- What does the word “freedom” mean to you?
- What are some examples of freedom in everyday life?

Students spontaneously share their answers. The teacher emphasizes that freedom is one of the key values of the EU, including freedom of movement, freedom of expression and economic freedom.

2. MAIN PART OF THE CLASS: FREEDOM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The teacher briefly presents the meaning of freedom in the context of the EU:

- Freedom as a fundamental right: included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- Freedom of movement within the EU: no internal borders, freedom to work and study in other EU countries.
- Freedom of speech, religion, political beliefs – pillars of democracy.

3. TEAM WORK:

Students are divided into 4 groups and analyse different aspects of freedom in the EU:

- Team 1: Freedom of movement – what does it mean in practice for EU citizens? (e.g. work, study, travel).
- Team 2: Freedom of speech and expression – examples of its protection in the EU (e.g. journalists’ rights).
- Team 3: Freedom of religion and belief – how does the EU support religious diversity?
- Team 4: Economic freedom – what does the single market mean for businesses and consumers?

Each group prepares a short presentation (written or oral) and presents its conclusions.



Image generated by students using artificial intelligence as part of the Understanding the European Union lesson.



SUMMARY

INDIVIDUAL WORK:

Students write down answers to the questions on sticky notes:

- What examples of freedom do you see in your daily life?
- What can you do to support freedom in your environment?

Teacher asks questions:

- Why is freedom so important in the European Union?
- How can freedom be protected in the context of contemporary threats (e.g. disinformation, extremism, restriction of human rights)?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK:

Write a short reflection (200–300 words) on the topic:

“What is freedom to me and why is it worth protecting?”



WORKING WITH A MOVIE - FREEDOM OF PRESS

GOALS OF THE CLASS:

- Students understand what press freedom is and why it is so important for democracy and human rights.
- Students learn about the threats to press freedom around the world.
- Students can analyze and critically evaluate the role of the media in shaping public opinion.

MATERIALS:

- Short articles or reports on press freedom around the world (e.g. from organizations like Reporters Without Borders, Amnesty International).
- A film about press freedom (e.g. excerpts from a documentary or feature film)

COURSE OF THE CLASS:

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC:

The teacher explains that 3rd of May is World Press Freedom Day. This date aims to commemorate the importance of free media and draw attention to the threats that journalists and freedom of speech can face around the world.

Then he asks open-ended questions:

- What do you understand by the term "freedom of the press"?
Freedom of the press (freedom of the press, freedom of the media) - one of the basic civil liberties, meaning the functioning of the press and printing without legal and political restrictions or censorship interference. The term freedom of the press also includes the freedom of non-print media, such as radio, television and online media. (source: Wikipedia)

Why are the media called the fourth estate?

- What is the importance of independent media in a democratic society?





RECOMMENDATION 1:

For a lesson with high school students, we recommend the film "Spotlight" (2015). Here are a few reasons:

- It is easy to watch.
- The film is accessible and engaging, even for younger viewers. It addresses important topics in a clear way, without unnecessary complexity.
- It has a universal message.
- It shows how journalists can contribute to revealing the truth and improving society, which fits perfectly with the topic of freedom of the press.
- It presents examples of reliable journalism.
- The Spotlight team is a symbol of a responsible and independent approach to journalistic investigations.
- It is a good starting point for a conversation about ethics in the media and the role of journalists.

The film asks difficult questions, such as the limits of freedom of the press, the influence of the media on public opinion and social responsibility. These are great topics for analysis and debate. The film is over 2 hours long, so we propose fragments for the lesson.

Trailer available here: ["Spotlight" \(2017\)](#)



Source: [Filmweb](#)

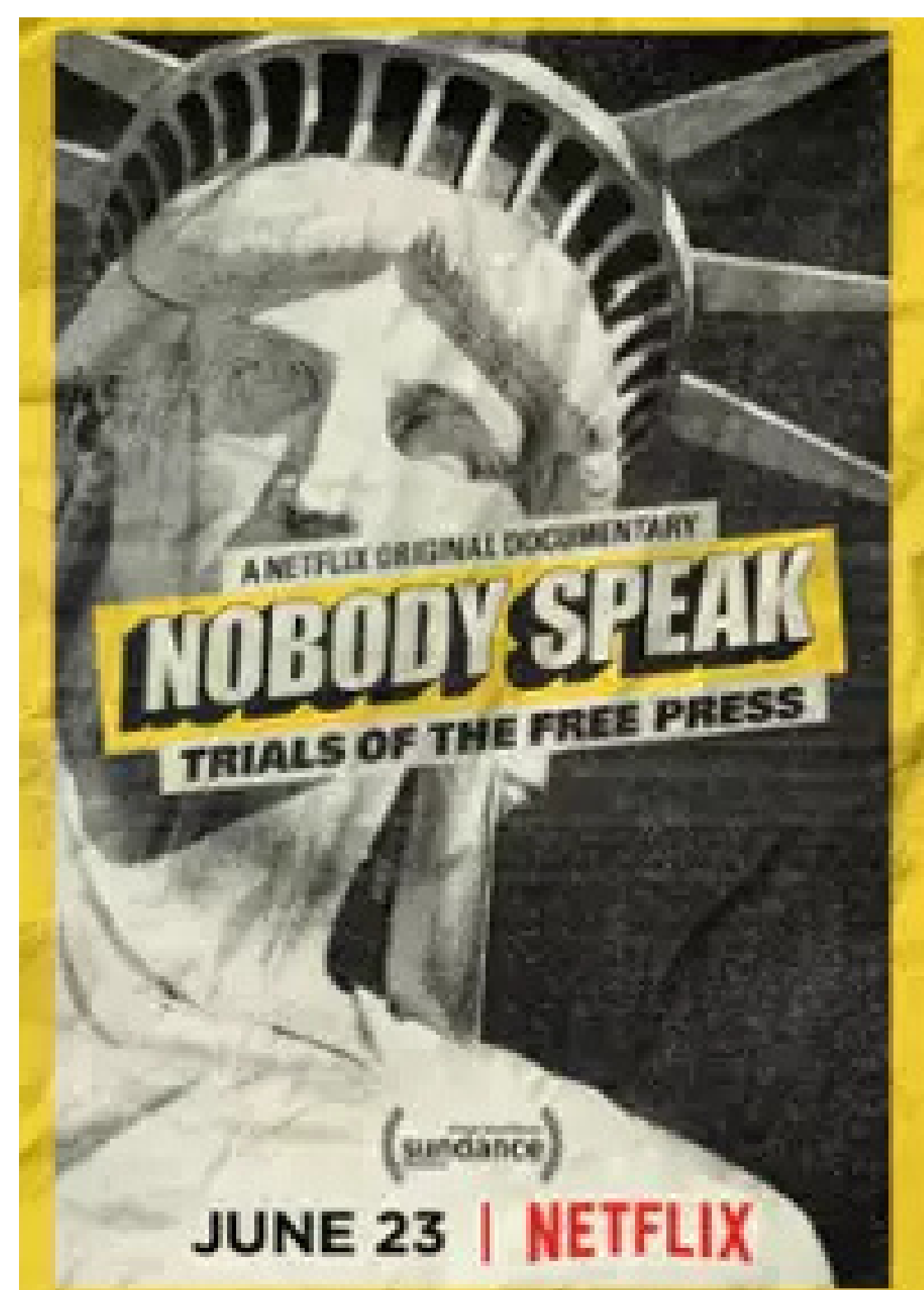
RECOMMENDATION 2:

If you need something shorter or more documentary-like, we recommend "Nobody Speak: Trials of the Free Press," which addresses contemporary threats to press freedom in an understandable way when it comes to the influence of money, power, and technology on the media.

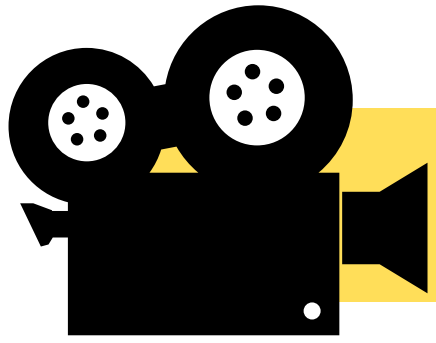
Trailer available here: [Nobody Speak: Trails of the Free Press](#).

Here is a suggestion for how to use this documentary effectively in the classroom. The entire film is about 95 minutes long, so you can select key fragments for the lesson, such as:

- The Gawker vs. Hulk Hogan court case (discussion of privacy and freedom of speech).
- Media purchases by billionaires (impact of capital on press independence).
- Threads about fake news and social media censorship.



Source: [IMDb](#)



MOVIE SCREENING - SPOTLIGHT

LESSON TOPIC: THE ROLE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN THE DEFENSE OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE BASED ON THE FILM “SPOTLIGHT” (2015)

INTRODUCTION

Students are divided into 5 teams and fill out worksheets. Before watching the film, they are to write down answers to the following three questions:

- What qualities should a reliable journalist have?
- Why is freedom of the press important in a democratic society?
- Give two examples of famous cases revealed by journalists that have influenced social or political change.

The teams then share their answers with each other.

WATCHING MOVIE CLIPS:

As the teams watch the film, they write down their observations after each clip:

Movie clip:

Opening scene (Signal of the problem)

Time: 0:00–5:00

Teacher description: The action begins in Boston in the 1970s, where a cover-up of a priest suspected of abuse is taking place. This introduces a taboo topic and a systemic problem.

Goal: To illustrate how the problem of abuse was covered up for years and the role of journalists in exposing such cases.

2. Meeting with victims (First contact with the problem)

Time: 29:00–35:00

Teacher description: Journalists talk to attorney Mitchell Garabedian and victims of abuse.

Goal: To show the emotional burden of their work and the first steps in uncovering the truth.

3. Document Analysis (Investigation in Action)

Time: 48:00–53:00

Teacher Description: The Spotlight team searches public records for evidence that church leaders protected priests accused of abuse.

Goal: Illustrate the hard work of journalists and their determination to get to the truth.

4. Editorial Discussion (Journalistic Ethics)

Time: 1:10:00–1:15:00

Teacher Description: Editors consider whether to publish a story right away or wait until they have more evidence.

Goal: Analyze ethical dilemmas in a journalist’s work, such as responsibility to victims and society.

5. Publishing the Article (Culmination of the Investigation)

Time: 1:55:00–2:00:00

Teacher Description: The Spotlight team publishes its findings, which causes a wave of reaction.

Goal: To highlight the impact of independent media on social change and justice.

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

Choose one of the following tasks to complete:

- Write an essay (250–300 words) on the topic: “Can media be fully independent? Consider the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.”
- Create a poster or infographic on “How to support independent journalism?”
- Research a contemporary issue exposed by the media and prepare a short presentation (5 minutes) on the topic.



MOVIE SCREENING - NOBODY SPEAK

INTRODUCTION TO THE MOVIE

Before the screening, give students an introduction to the issues being discussed. Ask students who Hulk Hogan is and if they are familiar with the Gawker case. You can provide a few sentences of clarification if you are unsure.

WHILE WATCHING:

Ask students to note key events that surprised them or seemed particularly important to them. This will help them discuss later. Show selected clips, such as the beginning of the film (the Gawker case) and a clip about billionaire Sheldon Adelson buying The Las Vegas Review-Journal.

DISCUSSION AFTER WATCHING THE MOVIE - TEAM WORK

Divide the class into teams and give each team a different task:

Team 1: Analyze the Gawker vs. Hulk Hogan case

- What were the main arguments for and against Hulk Hogan winning the case?
- How did the influence of private sponsors (e.g. Peter Thiel) change the course of the case?
- Was the court right or was Hulk Hogan right?

Team 2: Influence of billionaires on the media

- Should there be a law to restrict such practices?
- Why was Sheldon Adelson's purchase of the newspaper controversial?
- How might this situation affect the content published in the media?

Team 3: Contemporary threats to freedom of the press:

- What other examples of threats to media are presented in the movie?
- How has social media changed access to information?
- How can content be regulated to avoid censorship?



*A frame from the movie
Source: [IMDb](#)*

SUMMARY

Each team presents its conclusions.

FINALLY, MAKE A SHORT REFLECTION::

- Is press freedom under threat in the European Union? If so, where?
- How can students verify information in the age of disinformation?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK:

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

- "Should freedom of the press have limits? Give arguments for and against."
- "How does technology change access to information and affect media freedom?"
- "Are the media in your country independent? Assess with examples."





COMMUNITY

*When people are facing the same danger,
there is no point in pursuing separate interests
that determine their future.*
Jean Monnet, Memoirs

“The European Union is not just a political organization, but also a community in which member states cooperate for the common good.

The European Community provides its citizens with security, development opportunities and protection of their rights, and also enables joint action on global challenges such as climate change, migration or economic issues.”

WHAT DAYS CAN WE CELEBRATE?

May, 9th - Europe Day

Europe Day is a celebration and symbol of peace, unity and cooperation expressed in the European Community. May, 9th commemorates the anniversary of the so-called Shuman Declaration, in which the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, in cooperation with Jean Monnet (a French diplomat who acted in the background), presented a plan of political cooperation, which at first concerned the coordination of steel production and coal mining.

This vision aimed to economically link France and the Federal Republic of Germany so that war between European nations would become unthinkable. The vision of Schuman and Monnet is considered to be the first stage of the integration of European states, which eventually led to forming the community that is the European Union today.

Symbols of the EU are included in the celebrations, such as the flag, the anthem of the Union "Ode to Joy" and the motto: "United in diversity", which was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter. The aim of Europe Day is to promote the values of the European Union: democracy, freedom, human rights, solidarity and equality, as well as to raise citizens' awareness of the history and achievements of the European Union and, above all, to inspire young people to actively participate in civic life and co-create the future of Europe. Europe Day is not only an opportunity to celebrate the past, but also to reflect on the future of Europe - the common challenges and values that unite people regardless of national, cultural or political differences.





GOALS OF THE LESSON:

Students will understand how the European Union functions as a community, what rights and obligations arise from EU membership, and what benefits it brings to citizens.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC:

How does the European Union work as a community of states?

- Common institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and other institutions work to make decisions that benefit all citizens of the European Union.
- Solidarity: Member states support each other, especially in times of crisis (e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic or economic crises).
- Free movement of people, goods, services and capital: These four freedoms enable citizens of the European Union to travel, work, study and trade throughout the community.

TEAM DISCUSSION: BENEFITS OF BEING AN EU MEMBER

Students are divided into teams and asked to consider the question:

"What are the benefits for citizens of having their country part of the European Union?"

EXAMPLES OF BENEFITS TO CONSIDER:

- Education and mobility: Programs such as Erasmus+, which allow students to study abroad.
- Financial support: EU funds for regional development and infrastructure projects.
- Citizenship rights: The right to work, settle and vote in any EU country.
- Common action to protect the environment: The EU takes integrated action to combat global warming.

Each team presents their thoughts.

DEBATA

In the next step, we propose a simulation game where students simulate a debate in the European Parliament and strive to reach a compromise. There are already some really cool ready-made debate simulation games proposed by the European Council:

- EUcraft: negotiate and reach an agreement in the Council of the EU - it is a game in which students can simulate being a minister from a EU country and try to negotiate an EU decision on one of the issues, e.g. a universal charger, a ban on single-use plastic or more ecological buildings. It is an internet game and it is also possible to join the game using an application.
- Role-play EU decision-making - is also a simulation game prepared by the European Commission, which allows you to learn about the EU decision-making process based on the Chocolate Directive

The simulation games prepared concern specific topics. However, if you are interested in conducting a simulation debate on a different topic, on the next page we present a universal scenario of the simulation debate, thanks to which students will be able to take up basically any topic that interests them.





SIMULATION GAME – COMMUNITY FACING CHALLENGES

Students take on the roles of representatives of different EU countries to discuss and cooperate on solving contemporary challenges such as migration, climate change, economic crises and foreign policy.

PREPARING FOR A SIMULATION GAME

Students are divided into teams, each representing a different EU country. Each team receives:

- A short description of the country: Basic information about the political, economic and social situation in the country.
- A description of the challenges facing the community: Each group will have to face one or more challenges, such as migration, climate change, the economic crisis or rising nationalism.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL DEBATE SIMULATION

Each group prepares its proposal for solving the challenges, taking into account the interests of its own country and the interests of the European Union as a whole.

Examples of challenges:

- Migration: How should responsibility for accepting refugees and migrants be divided between the Member States?
- Climate change: What joint actions can EU countries take to reduce CO2 emissions and combat global warming?
- Economic crises: What forms of financial support can be offered to EU countries experiencing an economic crisis?
- International cooperation: What should the EU's position be in relations with other world powers, such as the United States or China?

DEBATE

Each group presents its position in the debate. The aim is to reach an agreement that will be beneficial to the whole community while taking into account the interests of individual countries.

Roles in the debate:

- Representatives of the countries: Each team tries to convince the others of its solution.
- Moderation: One person takes the role of the President of the European Council and moderates the debate, ensuring that the discussion is structured and constructive.

SUMMARY OF THE SIMULATION GAME

After the simulation, you can lead a discussion by asking:

- Was it easy to reach an agreement on common solutions?
- What challenges arise from trying to reconcile the interests of different countries?
- How does the European Community help member states to face global challenges?





DID YOU KNOW THAT...

TRANSYLVANIA, THE PLACE OF UNION OF THREE NATIONS AND FOUR RELIGIONS

Transylvania, today a territory belonging to Romania, had been a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual region for centuries. The most important political group living there were the Hungarians. They were the core of the nobility and magnates. These lands were also occupied by the Székelys – a free people who spoke Hungarian but were not of Finno-Ugric origin. The third nation were the Transylvanian Saxons, descendants of German settlers.

During the meeting in Kápolna (Căplîna) on September 16, 1437, they formed a *unio trium nationum* – a union of three nations: the Hungarians, the Székelys and the Saxons. The three nations recognized themselves as equals. They also committed to mutual assistance in the event of a threat and to joint taxation. They also decided that they wanted to co-rule with the rulers and established an assembly that became the Transylvanian Diet. Transylvania was one of the most tolerant states in modern Europe. In June 1557, the Transylvanian Diet in Torga (Romanian: Turda) recognized Unitarianism as equal to Catholicism, Calvinism, and Lutheranism. In this way, the four religions were equalized.

Transylvania was also an attractive place to settle for many religious minorities persecuted in Europe. An example of this is the Arians, who were expelled from the Polish-Swedish War after the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The religions and nations that formed a tolerant union in Transylvania did so so that their state could survive among such powers as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, and the Habsburgs, for whom any internal conflict would be an opportunity for armed intervention.

Photo: Coat of arms of Transylvania

Source: [Wikipedia](#)



TEACHING SUPPLEMENT

With this small teaching supplement, we would like to clarify any doubts that may arise when trying to conduct a lesson in the proposed way. First of all, we would like to introduce the main assumptions of various methods that engage students in action. All topics are based on activating methodologies. This approach allows students to actively participate in the learning process.

In this supplement, we have paid special attention to activating methods that encourage critical thinking and creative problem-solving and simply engage them. Among these methods, we distinguish simulations of parliamentary and Oxford debates and more relaxed discussions that develop argumentative skills, teach analysis of different points of view and shape rhetorical competences. We have also used elements of drama that allow students to experience the issues discussed in a more empathetic and interactive way by taking on different roles. Another important element is didactic games that strengthen engagement and facilitate knowledge acquisition through competition and cooperation. In addition to activating methods, we have also used problem-based methods that require students to search for solutions on their own and work with source materials.

An example is work with texts, in which students analyze and interpret content, developing critical thinking skills.

Another important element is the project method, which allows for the implementation of more complex tasks that require cooperation, planning and responsibility for one's own work. In turn, case studies, including: The Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD) enables students to analyze specific situations and make ethical decisions, which helps develop social and moral competences.

We also introduced expository methods such as museum visits, which involve direct contact between students and various sources of knowledge and inspiration. Similarly, the use of film screenings allows for a better understanding of the issues discussed by combining the visual and narrative layers, which may be particularly appealing to students with different learning styles. As supporters of the Design Thinking methodology, we have introduced its elements in most topics. This is an innovative approach to problem-solving based on cooperation and creativity.

This process uses various techniques that stimulate creative thinking, such as brainstorming, the 365 method, and other tools that support the generation of innovative solutions. The aim of this methodology is not only to find an effective solution to a given problem, but also to introduce real change and break the current status quo.

In this chapter, we have collected the key assumptions of all the methods mentioned, as well as practical tips on how to use them. Our goal was to create an accessible guide that would help teachers conduct classes effectively and attractively. In case of doubt, they would be able to refer to this material as a reference point, which would allow them to better adapt their methods to the needs of students and the specifics of a given topic. We believe that this will make lessons more engaging, effective and inspiring for both students and teachers.





DEBATE SIMULATION IN SCHOOL PRACTICE

The debate simulation in school practice involves students playing out a formal debate. The most important thing in a debate is not to argue about opinions but about arguments.

To do this, the participants of the debate present arguments on a given topic, analyze different points of view and learn the art of discussion. This type of exercise can be carried out in different formats, such as the Oxford debate, parliamentary debate or more relaxed forms of exchanging arguments, which in this manual we call a discussion.

THE PURPOSE OF THE DEBATE SIMULATION IS:

- Developing argumentation skills – students learn to logically formulate their thoughts and provide justifications.
- Practicing communication skills – both in terms of speech and active listening.
- Working on critical thinking – participants analyze information, assess its credibility and draw conclusions.
- Shaping an attitude of tolerance and openness – students learn to respect other opinions and approach them with respect.
- Group integration – working together in teams on arguments helps build relationships.

WHAT DOES DEBATE SIMULATION LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

- Selecting a topic – the teacher or students select a topic, e.g. “French should be the language of communication in the European Union after Brexit.”
- Division into groups – one group represents the “for” side, the other “against”. There may also be people acting as moderators (called the marshal in the Oxford debate) or juries.
- Preparing arguments – each side prepares its position, using available materials and knowledge.
- Conducting the debate – participants take turns presenting arguments, counter-arguments and answering questions.
- Wrapping up – this may involve voting for the winner of the debate or the jury makes this decision; however, if we do not want to predict a winner, we recommend that the teacher discusses the course of the debate, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments.

BENEFITS OF USING DEBATE SIMULATION IN SCHOOL:

Debate simulation is a great educational tool that develops key 21st century competences, the so-called 4Ks: critical thinking, communication, cooperation and creativity. Using this methodology strengthens students' engagement, teaches them to make decisions and respect other views. What's more, it motivates them to learn and expand their knowledge and develops the ability to evaluate information. During the debate, students practice stress resistance and coping with difficult situations. Thanks to this, it becomes a valuable element of the modern teaching process, which prepares the young generation for civic and social life.

On the next page, we will draw attention to the significant differences between parliamentary debate, Oxford debate and discussion.



*Da Vinci Academic High School
Students in Oxford style Debates
Tournaments in 2023-2024*





DIFFERENCES IN DEBATE SIMULATION

SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DEBATES IN SCHOOL PRACTICE:

Characteristic	Oxford-style debate	Parliamentary debate	Discussion
structure	Strictly defined, formal	Structure inspired by parliamentary debates	Informal, loose form of exchanging ideas
number of teams	2 teams: proposition i opposition	Up to 4 drużyn (the largest factions modelled on the European Parliament)	Can even cover the entire class without dividing it into teams.
number of speakers	4 speakers in each team	2 - 4 speakers in each team	No limits regarding the number of participants
rules of speech	Each speaker has a set time to speak. You can interrupt your opponents at specific times by signaling with your hand.	Each speaker has a set time to speak. You can interrupt your opponents at specific times by signaling with your hand.	The statements are free, the teacher or moderator controls the course
aim	Convincing the audience and judges of your arguments	Reflecting parliamentary debate, participants propose a new law or change an existing one; a discussion of the proposal occurs	Free exchange of opinions and analysis of the topic
role of audience	Does not ask questions; may vote on who won the debate if no judges are appointed (but a jury is usually appointed)	Less frequently involved, but can judge as a jury	Active participation, possibility of spontaneous speaking (full participant in the discussion)
topics	A predetermined topic in the form of a thesis, often controversial	Social, political or legal topics	Can cover any topic, including school issues.
level of formality	High – clearly defined rules and time for speaking	Medium – inspired by real parliamentary debates	Low – relaxed form of conversation, teacher may intervene
examples of topics	The European Union should not admit any more members.	Poland should accept refugees.	Should we stop changing our clocks for summer and winter time?

From the above list, only the Oxford and parliamentary debates probably require more explanations regarding structure and rules.

However, due to their loose nature, we will leave the discussion to the creative invention of teachers or discussion moderators.

OXFORD-STYLE DEBATE

1. Debate structure:

- Teams - two teams of four speakers each take part in the debate:
- The proposition side - defends the thesis of the debate (agrees with it).
- The opposition side - challenges the thesis of the debate (is against it).
- Audience - can ask questions (but this is not usually done and can vote at the end of the debate (if a jury has not been appointed).
- Moderator (Chairman of the debate): watches over the course of the debate, ensures the rules and time of speeches.
- Jury: Can evaluate the arguments and the way the debate is conducted.

2. ORDER OF SPEECHES

- Each speaker has a set time for their speech (e.g. 3-5 minutes). The order is as follows:
- First speaker of the proposition - presents the thesis and main arguments.
- First speaker of the opposition - responds to the arguments of the proposal and presents the position of the opposition.
- Second speaker of the proposition - develops the arguments of the proposal team.
- Second speaker of the opposition - develops the arguments of the opposition and counter-argues.
- Third speaker of the proposition - refutes the allegations and summarizes the arguments.
- Third speaker of the opposition - refutes the allegations and summarizes the arguments of the opposition.
- Fourth speaker of the proposition - final summary (does not introduce new arguments).
- Fourth speaker of the opposition – final summary (introduces no new arguments).





OXFORD-STYLE DEBATE

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULES OF THE OXFORD DEBATE:

1. FORMALITY AND CULTURE OF SPEECH

- Each beginning of a speech should begin with an invocation “Dear Chairman, Dear Opponents, Dear Audience”
- The participants of the debate address each other with respect, avoid aggression and offensive language (for this, they may be punished by the Chairman of the debate with minus points if the debate is held on points).
- Each address to the opponent with a question should begin with the formula: "Dear Chairman, a question/information.
- The speaker's speech may not be interrupted - the exception are questions to the opponent (marked by raising the hand and the opponent accepts the question when he is ready to accept it).

2. CLARITY OF ARGUMENTATION

- Arguments should be logical, well-founded and based on facts.
- You may not deviate from the topic of the debate.

3. NO NEW ARGUMENTS IN THE SUMMARY

- The fourth speaker of each team may not present new arguments - his task is only to summarize the debate.

4. QUESTIONS FOR OPPONENTS (ALSO CALLED "POINTS OF INFORMATION" OR "POI")

- During the speech, you can raise your hand and propose a question for the opposing speaker.
- The speaker should accept at least 2 questions, and may reject more.
- Questions should be short and related to the topic of the debate.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Once we have a thesis for the debate, we should give students a side to draw. It is very important that the participants do not choose a side in the debate themselves, but that it is drawn. These are usually controversial, so sometimes we can feel certain preferences related to our own opinions or worldview. It is important to be able to argue with arguments, not our own opinions. The Oxford-style debate is an excellent method for developing critical thinking and teamwork in this way.

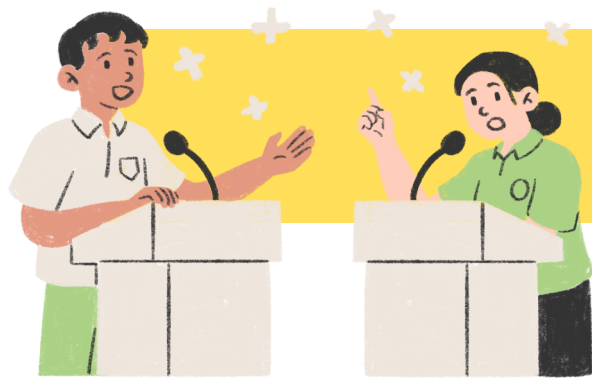
When students draw a side, they should have adequate time to prepare for the debate in the context of the argument and their own role in the debate. Usually, one lesson should be enough for preparation, and the second should be for the debate itself and its summary.

Of course, often the thesis is so complicated or extensive that 45 minutes may not be enough for preparation and participants should devote some time after the lesson. Participants in the debate should be additionally rewarded for such ambition. In Oxford debating tournaments or other competitions such as championships, etc., the teams do not know which side of the debate they will be in (proposition or opposition) until the competition itself starts. Which is why they prepare their arguments and speech structures for both possibilities and only draw a side of the debate 15 minutes to 30 hours before the debate.



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Students in Oxford-style Debates
Tournaments 2022-2023*





PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

Source: Canva.com



1. DEBATE STRUCTURE

The school version of a parliamentary debate consists of:

- Two teams (or four in the British model):
- Governing party (proposition) – presents and defends the proposed thesis.
- Opposition party – argues against the government's theses and presents counterproposition.
- Debate chairman – leads the debate, ensures adherence to the rules and speaking time.
- Audience or jury – may ask questions and evaluate the debate.

2. ORDER OF SPEECHES AND SPEAKING TIME

A parliamentary debate takes place in several rounds, in which each side presents its arguments.

- First speaker of the ruling party – presents the thesis and main arguments.
- First speaker of the opposition – refutes the government's arguments and presents counterarguments.
- Second speaker of the ruling party – develops the government's arguments.
- Second speaker of the opposition – develops the opposition's arguments and refutes the allegations.
- Third speaker of the ruling party – refutes the arguments of the opposing party.
- Third opposition speaker – refutes the opposing party's arguments.
- Fourth opposition speaker (the first or second opposition speaker or another person) – sums up the debate
- Fourth proposal speaker (the first or second proposal speaker or another person from the team) – sums up the debate
- The length of the speech is set before the debate, usually 6 minutes. Apart from the speech of the fourth speaker, who has half the time of the previous speakers, in this case three minutes.

3. The most important rules of parliamentary debate

- Formal nature of the speech
- Participants address each other in a polite and respectful manner.
- The following terms are used: "Mr. Speaker", "Dear Opposition", "Ladies and Gentlemen".
- The statements must be well-structured and substantive.

4. Clarity of argumentation

- Arguments must be logical, well-justified and based on facts.
- Each side presents both arguments supporting its position and refutes the allegations of its opponents.

5. Interaction between teams (possibility of interruption)

- At certain moments, opponents may volunteer to ask questions or retort arguments (30 seconds after the opponent begins his speech until 30 seconds before the opponent ends his speech - the time for asking questions is signaled by a previously established sound).
- The speaker may accept or reject the question, but may not completely avoid interaction.

6. Prohibition of presenting new arguments in the summary

- Closing statements are used to summarize the debate, not to introduce new theses.

7. Audience and voting

- After the debate ends, the audience or jury evaluates the argumentation and the way the discussion was conducted.
- Voting may take place based on the effectiveness of the arguments or the persuasion of the audience





DRAMA

It allows students to actively engage in learning by taking on roles and acting out scenes. This method primarily focuses on students' activity and involvement.

Drama develops empathy in students, because taking on different roles allows you to better understand a character, a social situation, or an event in which you are taking part. Additionally, it requires movement and expression, which increases the experience of the consequences of various decisions, because we not only talk about them, but also do them.

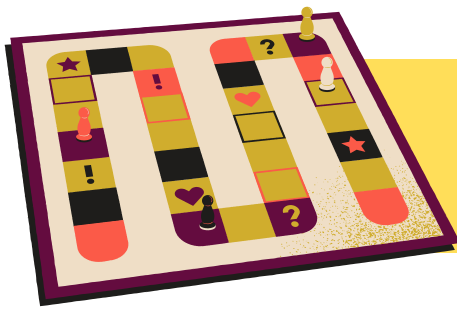
The lack of a ready-made script forces students to improvise and develops creativity in students.

Among the drama techniques, we can distinguish:

- Improvisation, where students act out scenes without prior preparation.
- Forum theater, a method in which students can change the course of action to find the best solution to a problem.
- Hot seat, where one student takes on a character and the rest ask him questions to better understand his motives and emotions.
- Pantomime, which involves acting out scenes without words, which develops expression and interpretation.
- A frozen scene (freeze frame), where students present a still situation and then analyze the emotions and relationships of the characters. Role-playing, or taking on the role of a specific character to better understand their perspective.



Source: Canva.com



DIDACTIC GAME

Didactic games engage students through elements of play, competition, and collaboration. They enable students to acquire knowledge in an active and engaging way, fostering creativity as well as analytical and social skills. The entire process, known as gamification, should have a clear goal and simple rules. Most importantly, it must be adapted to the students' abilities. There is nothing worse than a complex didactic game that discourages student engagement instead of stimulating it.

TYPES OF DIDACTIC GAMES IN THIS HANDBOOK:

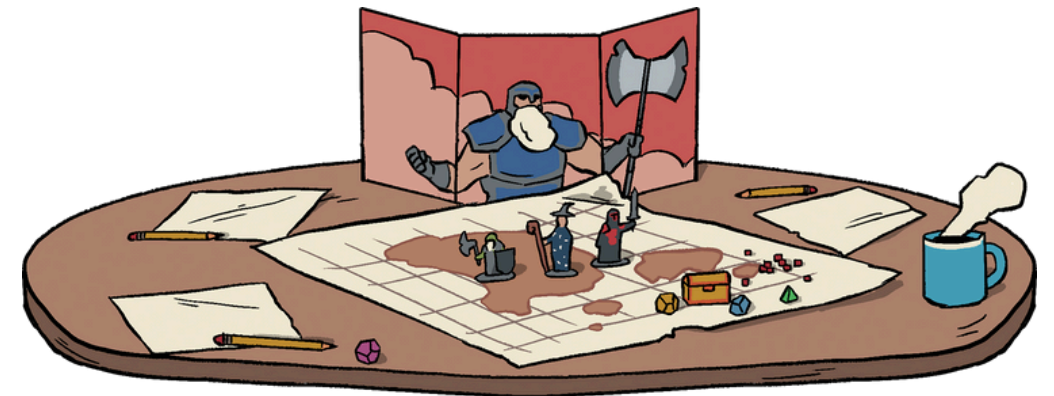
In this handbook, we propose two types of didactic games:

- **Quiz-based games** – to summarize and supplement knowledge.
- **Escape room or role-playing (RPG) games** – as a project for students to complete.

While the first format is already widely used in classrooms due to the availability of digital tools like Kahoot, Quizziz, Wordwall, and Learning Apps, escape rooms and RPGs are less common.

One possible reason for this is that designing such games is time-consuming, yet highly engaging. That is why we suggest that students create the game themselves as part of a project.

In this way, the teacher takes on a supportive role in the game development process rather than designing the game alone. In the chapter on human dignity, we addressed difficult topics, such as Holocaust remembrance, by designing such a game. We also provided detailed suggestions on how the game development process might look. Below, we have gathered universal guidelines on how to create a didactic game, regardless of the subject matter.



GAME PREPARATION:

- Choose the didactic goal (determine what students should learn through the game).
Examples of goals: consolidating or gathering information on a given topic (e.g., the Holocaust) or learning new vocabulary.
- Select the game format - the game can take various forms, such as a quiz, simulation, field game, board game, card game, or role-playing game (RPG) - it is worth adapting the format to the subject matter of the lesson.
- Prepare materials and rules
- Create question cards, game boards, props, or a game scenario.
- Set scoring rules and define how winners will be rewarded.

Group Division (if teamwork is required)

- Students can work individually, in pairs, or in teams.
- It is important to ensure a fair distribution of skills among teams so that no one feels disadvantaged.

GAMEPLAY:

- Explaining the rules - before starting, make sure all participants understand the rules.
- You can conduct a short trial round to make sure everything is clear.

Active Student Engagement

- The game should be dynamic and engaging.
- If the game has different stages, introduce elements of surprise or additional challenges.
- Support students, but allow them to arrive at solutions independently.

Time Management

- Set a time limit for completing tasks to prevent the game from dragging on too long.
- Adjust the pace to match student engagement levels.

Game Summary

- Together with students, analyze what they learned and which strategies were effective.
- It is helpful to ask what they found difficult and what could be improved in future games.
- Highlighting the Educational Value - summarize how the game contributed to knowledge acquisition.

Rewards and Motivation

- A reward system can be introduced (e.g., extra points, certificates, or small prizes).



PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING LEARNING – GENERAL OVERVIEW

...es individual or team-based development of a specific topic by students. The key aspect is acquiring knowledge through action, information-seeking, and presenting the results of their work. As a result, students become active participants in the lesson, while the teacher acts as a mentor rather than the primary source of knowledge. The outcome of such work may be a solution to a problem, a presentation, a film, a game, a campaign, etc.

PREPARATION

1. Choosing the Project Topic

- The topic should be engaging for students and have practical applications.
- It can be suggested by the teacher or selected collaboratively with students.

2. Defining Objectives and Assessment Criteria

- Clearly specify what students should achieve and how their work will be evaluated.
- It is worth setting criteria such as engagement, originality of the idea, and quality of the presentation.

3. Group Division and Role Assignment

- If the project is group-based, it is important to ensure that each student has a specific responsibility (e.g., research, presentation creation, visual design).

4. Timeline and Deadlines

- Establish project milestones and specific deadlines for each stage.
- Consider introducing “checkpoints” to monitor progress.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Students work independently in teams, gathering materials, analyzing information, conducting experiments, and solving problems. The teacher's role is limited to that of an advisor.

PRESENTING PROJECT RESULTS

1. Presentation Format

The teacher and students agree in advance on the form of presentation. Possible formats include:

- Multimedia presentations (PowerPoint, Canva, Prezi)
- Educational video or documentary
- Poster or infographic
- Debate, etc.

2. Public Presentation of the Results

- Students present their projects to the class, the teacher, or a wider audience.
- This can be organized as a “project fair” or an exhibition of student work.

3. Summary and Reflection

- A discussion about what students have learned and what could have been done better is recommended.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT

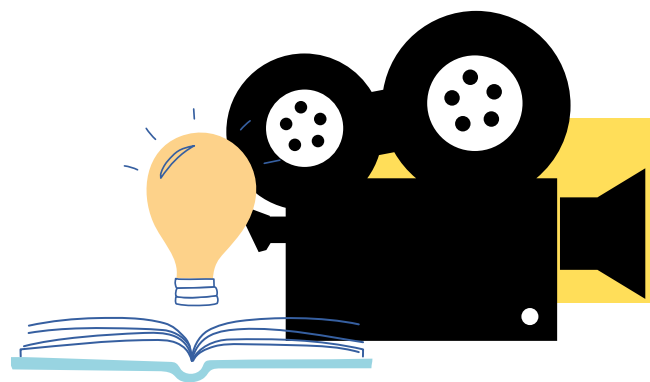
Assessment Criteria

When evaluating the project, it is important to consider:

- Content quality – Does the project provide accurate and reliable information?
- Creativity – Have students demonstrated originality?
- Engagement – Did every team member actively participate?
- Presentation quality – Was the content clear, engaging, and well-structured?

Group and Individual Assessment

- Both the group's overall performance and individual contributions can be assessed.
- Self-assessment and peer assessment should be encouraged, using tools like Google Forms or MS Forms for feedback surveys.



Working with texts or films in a lesson can be engaging if appropriate active learning methods are used. Students absorb content more effectively when they actively analyze, interpret, and relate it to their own experiences. Instead of passive watching or reading, it is beneficial to use interactive tasks (e.g., brainstorming, pair work, worksheets for texts or films, or scene analysis through discussion). It is important to incorporate activities before, during, and after watching a film or reading a text, as proper preparation beforehand and reflection afterward help deepen understanding.

WORKING WITH TEXTS

BEFORE READING

ACTIVATING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE

- Brainstorming – What associations do students have with the topic of the text?
- Introductory Questions – Provide a few quotes from the text and ask students to predict its content.
- Mind Map – Students write down their associations with the title or theme.

SETTING A READING GOAL

- Why are we reading this text? What are we looking for?
- Identifying key aspects students should pay attention to.

DURING READING

- STOP Method – The teacher pauses at key moments and asks students to predict the next events or reflect on what they have read.
- Highlighting and Note-Taking – Students mark key passages and write down questions.
- Pair Work – Each pair or group analyzes a different aspect of the text, such as characters, themes, or metaphors.

AFTER READING

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- What are the main messages of the text?

CREATIVE TASKS

- Perspective Change – Writing a passage from the perspective of a different character.
- Text Adaptation – Students create a film script or a comic based on the text.
- Debate on the Text's Themes – Students are divided into two groups (e.g., "For" and "Against").

WORKING WITH FILMS

BEFORE WATCHING

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

- Puzzles, Quizzes – Asking students about their associations with the film's topic.
- Film Title and Poster Analysis – Predicting the plot based on the poster.
- Brief Historical/Cultural Context – If necessary for understanding the film.

SETTING A VIEWING GOAL

- What should students focus on? (e.g., characters, film's message, cinematic techniques).

DURING WATCHING

- Paused Viewing ("Freeze Frame" Method) – The teacher stops the film at key moments and asks questions about the plot, characters' emotions, and possible endings.
- Scene Note-Taking and Analysis – Students write down key quotes, scenes, and analyze cinematic techniques (music, lighting, camera shots).

AFTER WATCHING

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- What made the biggest impression on them?
- What emotions did the film evoke?

CREATIVE TASKS

- Writing a Film Review – Students evaluate the film and justify their opinions.
- Alternative Ending – Students create a different conclusion to the film.
- Acting Out a Scene – Students reenact a selected scene in the form of a play/drama.
- Storyboard – Drawing key scenes from the film in comic form.



CASE STUDY METHOD

The case study method involves analyzing a specific situation or problem and searching for possible solutions. We propose using a particular variation of this method, known as the Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD) in the context of discussing justice while celebrating the World Day Against the Death Penalty. Although this method was not fully implemented in accordance with its standard discussion format, applying it to this specific case yielded significant results.

Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion is primarily used for controversial cases where students must assess the actions of a protagonist or determine whether they were treated fairly or unfairly, right or wrong. This method is one of the few that actively supports ethical, moral, and democratic education. Below are the key guidelines for effectively conducting a lesson using this approach.

CASE STUDY INSPIRED BY KMDD

PREPARATION

- The teacher selects a protagonist around whom a morally significant issue will be centered.
- The case should be engaging and relevant to the lesson topic.
- Inspiration can come from everyday life, history, politics, science, economics, or literature.

WORKING ON THE CASE

- The teacher acts only as a moderator during the session.
- Students are divided into two opposing groups based on their initial opinions—for example, whether they support or oppose the death penalty. (This step differs from KMDD, where the first stage is an oral presentation of the moral dilemma.)
- Each opposing group is further divided into 4-person teams tasked with developing arguments.
- The moderator reads the prepared case description, either in full or in fragments, and asks students to start formulating arguments defending their chosen stance—whether the protagonist acted rightly or wrongly.

DISCUSSION RULES

- Ping-Pong Rule – The moderator allows a student from the opposing group to respond, ensuring a one-to-one exchange of arguments.
- No Ad Hominem Arguments – Personal attacks are strictly prohibited.
- The main discussion is structured around two principles:
 - The ping-pong rule (alternating arguments between groups).
 - A designated scribe records the arguments of both sides, preferably on a board, displaying them side by side.

FINAL STAGES OF DISCUSSION

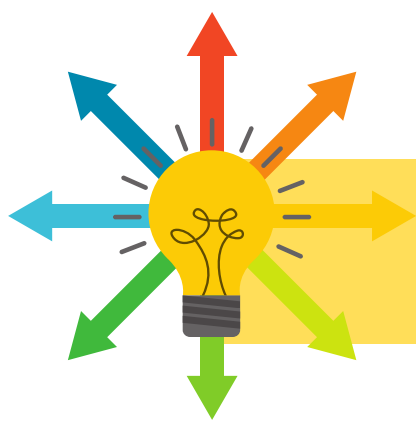
- After hearing the case presentation, students develop and refine their arguments for their stance.
- The second-to-last stage involves reassessing individual positions—students may change their views on the protagonist's actions.
- In the final stage, opposing groups vote on the strongest argument from the other side, reinforcing the skill of recognizing the value in arguments they do not necessarily support.
- The session concludes with a reflection phase, including additional questions, clarifications, and feedback.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION ENHANCEMENTS

Various tools can be used to enrich the discussion:

- SWOT Analysis – Evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a decision made by the protagonist.
- Decision Tree – Mapping possible choices and their consequences.
- Mind Map – A graphic representation of the problem and potential solutions.





DESIGN THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM

Last but not least methodology which we recommend to apply in the classroom is Design Thinking. This is an innovative approach to problem-solving and meeting user needs, emphasizing empathy, creativity, and iterative testing of solutions. This method consists of five key stages:

1. Empathizing – Understanding the needs of the user.
2. Defining the problem – Identifying the key challenge.
3. Ideating – Brainstorming and using creative methods to generate solutions.
4. Prototyping – Quickly creating a model of the proposed solution.
5. Testing – Evaluating the effectiveness of the solution in practice.

Typically, to develop a truly innovative solution using the Design Thinking methodology, all five stages should be completed. However, for the purposes of conducting lessons based on the suggested topics, we encouraged selective use of specific stages. Below, we outline the entire Design Thinking process to provide a better understanding of its methodology, as some educators may want to apply the full process to address challenges faced by their school.

CONDUCTING A LESSON USING DESIGN THINKING

To effectively implement a Design Thinking lesson, it is essential to prepare a well-structured lesson plan that actively engages students and guides them through each stage of the process. The teacher's role is primarily that of a facilitator rather than an instructor.

PREPARATION

1. Defining the Lesson Topic and Objective

The topic should relate to real-life problems and challenges, such as:

- Low mood among students in the school environment.
- Feeling overwhelmed by academic workload and school responsibilities.
- Excessive plastic waste generated by people in the community.

2. Preparing Materials and Workspace

Materials:

- A whiteboard or large sheets of paper.
- Sticky notes.
- Markers, pens.
- Access to computers or tablets (optional).
- For the prototyping phase, creative materials such as LEGO bricks can be useful.

Workspace Setup:

- Arranging desks to facilitate teamwork.
- Creating a designated space for posting ideas (a board or wall).

3. Team Building

Before starting the lesson, it is crucial to allocate time for team formation. The goal is to create interdisciplinary teams, meaning that in a school setting, students with different skills and strengths should be grouped together. This ensures that they complement each other in collaborative work.

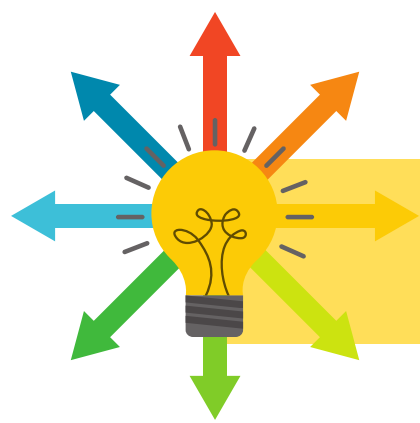


Source: Canva.com



Source: Canva.com





DESIGN THINKING

STAGE 1: EMPATHIZE – GETTING TO KNOW THE USER AND THEIR NEEDS

Goal: Students learn to look at the problem from the user's perspective.

Student task:

- Conducting a mini-interview and/or desk research to find out what problems or needs end-users have.
- User experience analysis

Tools in the form of ready-made templates/formats that we recommend at this stage are:

- empathy map
- persona
- moodboard
- user experience path
- context map
- interview sheets with answer sheets

Example:

If the problem is school stress, students can conduct short surveys in class or talk about their own experiences. Based on these experiences, you can write an empathy map, prepare a persona as well as deduce the user's experience path, indicating what pains and needs we notice at the next stages of this path and what emotions accompany our hero.

STAGE 2: DEFINE THE PROBLEM – DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

Goal: Precisely defining the main problem.

For this purpose, we compose a definition into the template:

"How can we help (who)

(in what).....

(so that) (effect)?" e.g.:

"How can we help students cope with stress so that they feel at ease at school?"

After talking to the students, the group may come to the conclusion that school stress results from an excess of homework and a lack of strategies for dealing with it.

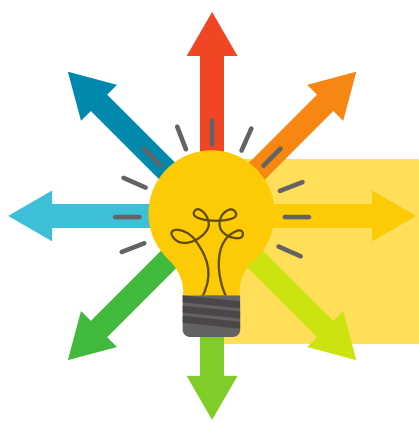
STAGE 3: IDEATE - GENERATING IDEAS (CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING)

Goal: Finding as many solutions as possible (without assessing their reasonableness at first) to the challenge created by the team at the stage of defining the problem.

At this stage, we can use various creative techniques, but for this purpose, we recommend the following three in particular:

- Brainstorming - writing down all ideas.
- SCAMPER Method – Transforming Existing Solutions:
 - Substitute - Replace one of the components with something else, e.g. material, process, color, place, etc.
 - Combine - Combine what is present with something completely different. Combine different entities/groups.
 - Adopt - Use ideas from other fields to solve your problem.
 - Modify - Make it bigger, longer, wider! Make it smaller, shorter, narrower.
 - Put to other uses - Could the weight, form, structure suggest different or new uses? Can they be used for other purposes after modification?
 - Eliminate - What can be omitted from existing solutions?
 - Reverse - Can we turn the existing solution upside down? What would be the opposite? Can we reverse the roles? Can we swap the cause and effect? Can we change the order, pace, rhythm, schedule?
- The 365 method - a variation of brainstorming, which involves:
 - Each team member receives a stack of sticky notes.
 - Each student in the team writes down 5 ideas in 5 minutes (the teacher keeps track of the time).
 - Then, the written notes remain in place and the students move to the seat of the person sitting next to them clockwise.
 - The teacher starts another 5-minute countdown, and the participants in their new seats develop the ideas they found in the seat or add new ones.
 - After 6 rounds, the team analyzes the results and chooses the best solutions.





DESIGN THINKING

STAGE 4 - PROTOTYPING

Goal: Prepare the first version of the solution to check its operation. It should be a schematic solution

Types of prototypes:

- Wireframe – drawing or model of the solution.
- Presentation of the concept – description of how the product/service works.
- Application demo – creating a basic version, e.g. in Canva, Figma, PowerPoint.
- Scene/drama – acting out a situation in which they test the solution.
- Storyboard – a card with 6-10 fields supplemented with drawings, where the first is the current situation and the last is the dream situation after the change.

Example:

A group working on stress can design an application with daily challenges that help to relax.

STAGE 5 - TESTING - EVALUATING AND IMPROVING SOLUTIONS

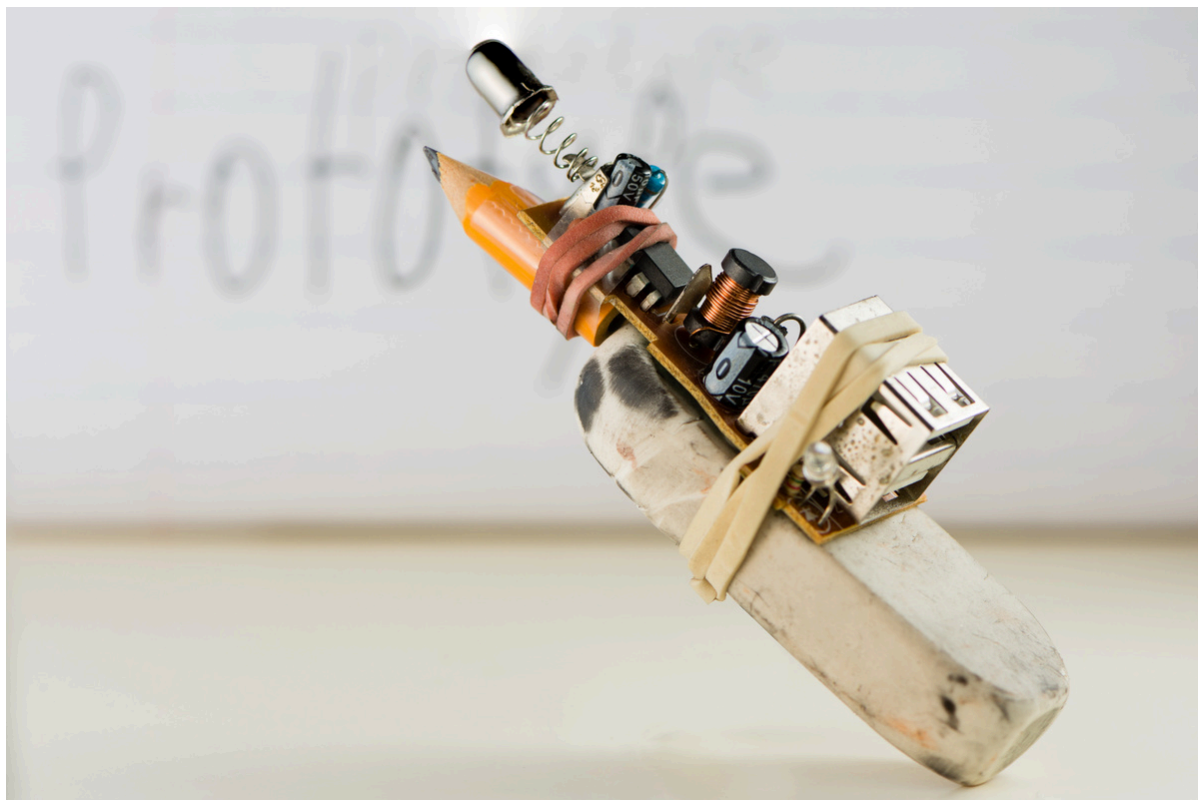
Goal: Students check if their idea actually solves the problem.

Methods of testing:

- Gathering feedback from the class – What works? What can be improved?
- User survey – does the solution actually meet the needs?
- Improving and iterating – introducing improvements.

Example:

If a group has created an app for stress management, the class can evaluate its functionality and suggest additional features.



Source: Canva.com



Source: Canva.com



Source: Da Vinci Academic High school in Poznan, <https://davinciszkola.pl/ladv/2024/12/28/nowe-profil-w-licem-akademickim/>, access: 31.01.2025

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