



**European Parliament  
Ambassador School Programme  
Student Workbook**

**Name:**

**Class:**



**AMBASSADOR SCHOOLS**

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## Module 1: A brief history of the EU

The European Union (EU) affects your life every single day, mostly without you knowing it.

For example, the emergency telephone number is the same throughout Europe. So you can dial 112 in any European country if your home is broken into, if there is an accident or a house on fire.

It is also thanks to the European Union that you can travel from France to Germany, for example, without going through any border controls, and can pay in Euros in 20 different countries. This means you can quickly compare prices!

This is all quite normal for you, but it has not always been like this. European countries have not always cooperated with each other. Between 1870 and 1945 France and Germany went to war against each other no fewer than three times. You will have heard or read about the last war, the Second World War (1939-1945), in particular, and will have discussed it in history lessons.

**Find out more about the Second World War and the history of the EU and then list three things you now know about the Second World War.**

1

2

3



After the Second World War, the political leaders and citizens of Europe were determined that no war should ever happen again. But this was easier said than done. France and Germany had a history of fighting each other and although this war was over, they were by no means friends.

On 9 May 1950 French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, presented a plan based on the ideas of the French diplomat Jean Monnet. This plan, which became known as “the Schuman Declaration”, enabled cooperation in steel and coal production between France and Germany.



*Robert Schuman*

This meant that neither country could make weapons without the other knowing it. France and Germany were then able to earn as much money as possible from both resources. This money was used to build new roads, homes, and other buildings to replace those that had been destroyed during the Second World War. Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy were enthusiastic about the idea and joined France and Germany to officially form the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. This was the beginning of the European Union.

‘Europe Day’ is now celebrated every year on 9 May, marking the anniversary of the ‘Schuman Declaration’.

[Watch this clip to find out more](#)

**Who were the six founding countries?**

**Why were coal and steel so important after the war?**

The cooperation between these countries was such a success that they decided to work together even more. This is how the European Economic Community (EEC) was founded in 1957. The agreements on this European cooperation were written down in a treaty.



The treaty contained agreements on agriculture, the economy and transport. Proper agricultural regulations were drawn up to ensure that no one would ever die of starvation again in Europe. Cooperation on the economy and transport meant that these countries were able to buy each other's products more easily and cheaply.

**Name a supermarket product from each of the following European countries.**

COUNTRY	PRODUCT
1. The Netherlands	
2. Italy	
3. Germany	
4. Spain	
5. France	
6. Greece	

More and more countries began to think it would be a good idea to participate and be able to benefit from the economic advantages of this co-operation.

By 1992 twelve countries, known as Member States, had joined. In a treaty signed in Maastricht that year, it was decided that from then on the collaboration would be called the European Union. This new treaty made trade and travel between the EU countries even easier. Many import and export regulations were abolished, making it even more profitable to trade between Member States. The treaty also made it possible for employees to live and work in another EU country without any problem.

According to the EU treaty, any democratic European country can become a member. It is therefore likely that the European Union will continue to expand over the coming years.

There are now 27 Member States in the EU, following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom on 31 January 2020.

**Can you name countries that are not in the European Union yet, but would like to join?**

**Do you think more countries joining the EU is a good or bad idea? Try to explain why.**

Since 1 December 2009 the Lisbon Treaty applies to all Member States. It was introduced in order to make the European Union more democratic and easier to govern. Where it makes more sense to organise something on a European level, it is now possible to do so, for example common mobile phone rates or immigration and asylum-seekers policy.

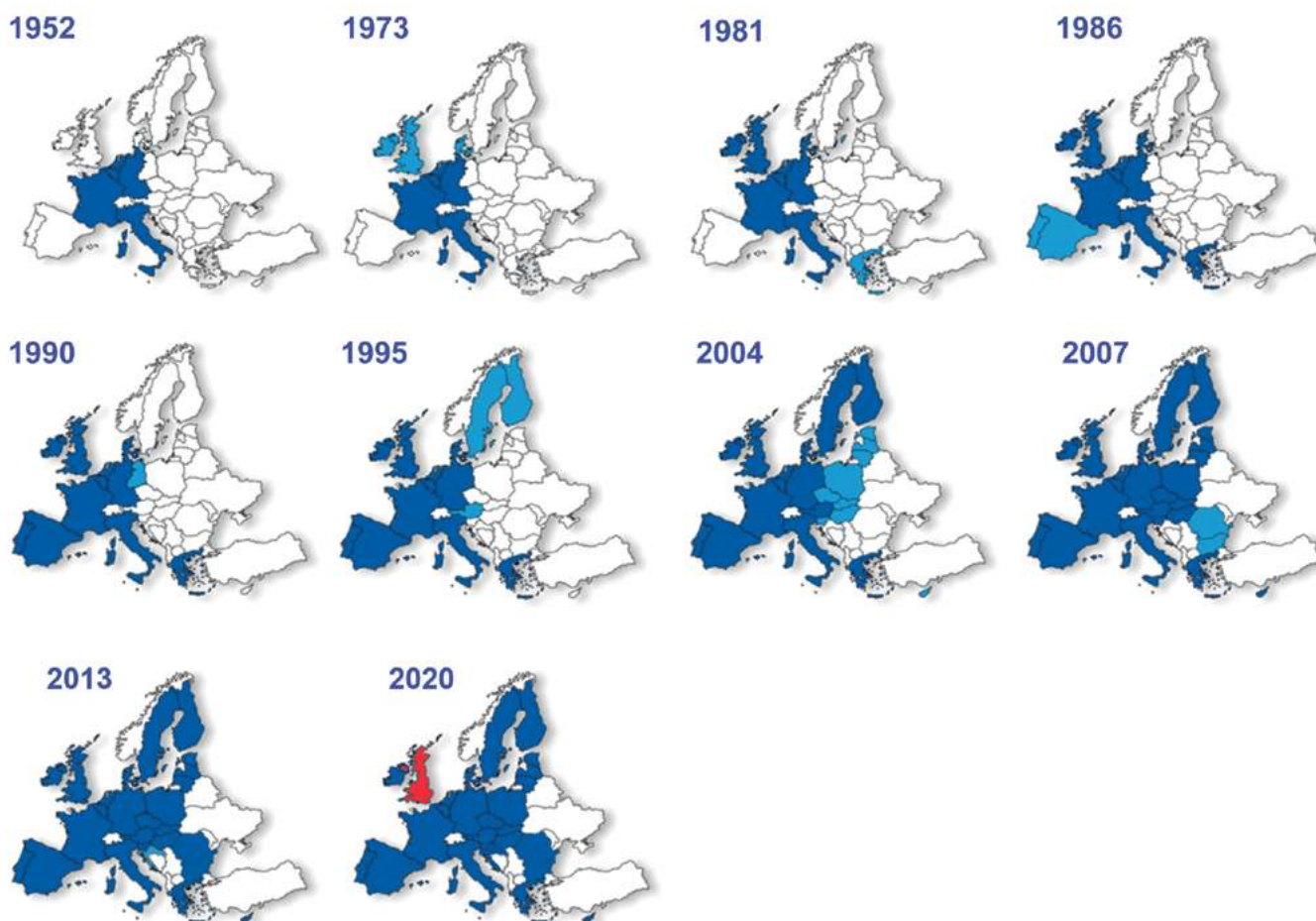
**Can you give another example of something that is decided at European level?**





This is an overview of when each country joined the European Union.

YEAR	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
1957	Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany (founding Member States)	6
1973	Denmark, Ireland and United Kingdom	9
1981	Greece	10
1986	Portugal and Spain	12
1990	East Germany reunites with West Germany and so joins the European Union as part of Germany	12
1995	Finland, Austria and Sweden	15
2004	Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Czech Republic	25
2007	Bulgaria and Romania	27
2013	Croatia	28
2020	United Kingdom (formally withdraws from the EU)	27



## Ireland's 50 Year Membership of the EU

On 22 January 1972, the Treaty of Accession was signed by Taoiseach Jack Lynch and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Patrick Hillery. Four months later, 83% of Irish people voted "yes" to joining the European Economic Community in a referendum held on 10 May. Ireland, along with Denmark and the United Kingdom, became a member of the EEC on 1 January 1973. In 2023, Ireland celebrated 50 years of EU membership. Over the last five decades, life in Ireland has greatly improved, and much of this positive change can be contributed to the EU.

[Watch this video to see some of the ways that being part of the EU has benefitted Ireland.](#)

On 'Europe Day', 9 May, the anthem of the European Union, called "Ode to Joy" is often played. The music comes from Ludwig von Beethoven's ninth symphony, composed in 1823. The anthem does not have any words and expresses the ideals of freedom, peace and cooperation that Europe stands for.

**Look up 'European Anthem' and listen to the music on YouTube.**



This anthem is not meant to replace the national anthems of the individual Member States. The differences between the countries, such as their own national anthems and languages, will continue to exist. The EU countries only do things collectively that will benefit all the countries. This is known as UNITED IN DIVERSITY.



**What do the stars on the European flag stand for?**



Above you see a blank map of Europe.

**Put an X in the countries that are a Member State of the EU.**

### **The House of European History**

The House of European History is a museum in Brussels that focuses on the history of Europe since 1789. One of the museum's projects is 'My House of European History'. It collects stories from people across Europe whose own history is part of our shared past. Read their stories and add your own. Does someone from your family have a story from their past in Ireland or elsewhere in Europe that could be added?

[Make your story part of history](#)

## Module 2: The European Union and you:

### How the European Union affects your life

- Did you know that the EU has enabled more than two million students to study and find internships abroad?
- Did you know that the EU gives development aid to countries with weaker economies?
- Did you know that the EU has banned animal testing for cosmetics?
- Did you know that the EU has prevented war between its Member States for over 75 years?
- Did you know that the EU has made agreements regarding mobile phone rates and that these are now cheaper as a result?
- Did you know that the EU has made sure that men and women have the right to receive equal pay for the same work?
- Did you know that the EU places strict requirements on agricultural policy, and that the quality of our food is also monitored?
- Did you know that the EU also makes agreements with countries outside the EU on global topics such as terrorism, climate change, financial crises, international trade ?

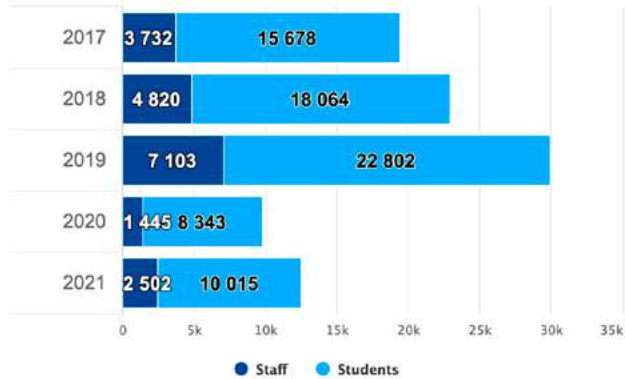
**And there is much more...**



## Ireland - Erasmus+ 2021 in numbers

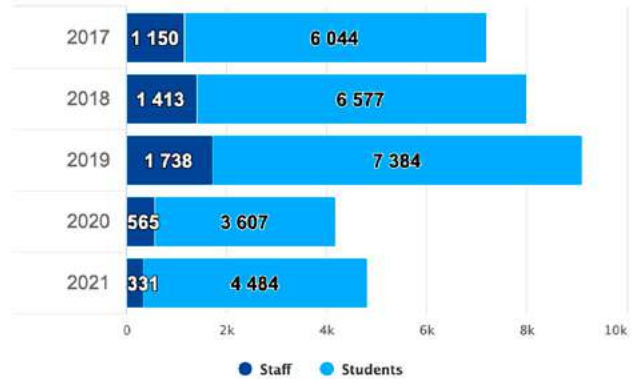
### Erasmus+ participants travelling to Ireland

Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2021



### Erasmus + participants leaving Ireland

Erasmus+ in numbers 2017-2021



Source: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/statistics-and-factsheets/factsheets/country-2021>

Europe is closer than you think: it affects us all every day in areas of food quality, the environment, roaming charges, travel, education, work and lots more.

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It provides opportunities for Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad.

**Which countries in the EU have you visited and which ones would you like to visit in the future?**

**College students can study in another EU country via the Erasmus+ programme. If you could study in another European country, which country would you choose and why?**

**When visiting another European country what document do you need if you have to see a doctor or go to hospital?**





## European Cooperation

As we have discovered earlier, European cooperation began with coal and steel. Later, the economy and energy were added, and gradually other policy areas were also included. Whenever Member States realised that their national problems could be dealt with more easily at a European level, the EU was given another task. This was the case with agriculture, environmental pollution, immigration, crime and counterterrorism. It is sometimes said that Europe should have fewer tasks. The power to make such a decision lies with the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers of the EU countries.

### *Human rights*

Human rights and democracy are fundamental EU values. Countries wanting to become members of the EU have to respect human rights. The EU wants to prevent xenophobia and other forms of discrimination on the grounds of religious belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. It is very important to the EU to offer hospitality to people who have had to flee their country because of war or persecution. The EU is also trying to bring an end to human trafficking, in particular the trafficking of women and children.



## *Euro*

The introduction of the Euro has made it much easier to compare prices. You do not need to change money or work out the price in another currency when you are on holiday in a Eurozone country. The Euro enables companies in the Eurozone to do business quicker and make better agreements.

You can already pay in Euros in 20 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain.

The other Member States could also introduce the Euro, but they have to make sure that their country for example does not have too much debt.

[Watch the video How is a euro coin designed \(1/7/21\)](#)

**Look in your purse or wallet to see which coins you have and what is on them.  
How are the coins similar?**

**Can you see which euro country they come from and how can you tell?**



## *The Environment*

The environmental standards of the EU are among the strictest in the world. The emphasis is placed on fighting climate change and protecting peoples' health. The EU wants to use natural resources sensibly and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity (to make sure that endangered animals and plant species do not become extinct).

The EU has set the target to be the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050; a country cannot emit more greenhouse gases than it offsets, for example by planting trees. Additionally, EU countries will generate as much renewable energy as possible, such as wind, solar and geothermal. By 2030, the emission of greenhouse gases should be reduced by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels, and by 100% in 2050. The EU is planning to invest in sustainable energy and the conservation of biodiversity: this proposal is called "The Green Deal".

[Watch the video Timeline: European Climate Action \(23/6/21\)](#)

**What are greenhouse gases?**

**Why are greenhouse gases damaging?**

**Name three endangered animal species.**

1

2

3





## Energy

Energy is essential in our lives; we need energy for transport, our central heating and air conditioning, as well as to keep factories, offices and farms running. But will our oil and gas reserves run out at some point? Are these fuels responsible for global warming? Via the Green Deal, the EU gives support to the the Member States to pursue better and more energy-efficient policies and to carry out more research into wind and solar power. Every citizen should also take a look at their own energy consumption. This includes simple things like using a car, hot water, central heating, air conditioning and lighting.

**How can you save energy at home?  
Give five examples.**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**What do YOU do to save energy? If you don't, what could you do?**



*Europe has got something to do with it! Not always...*

The European Union makes decisions on a lot of topics as you have discovered already in this chapter. But a large part of the decisions in Ireland are taken at a different level: local, regional or national. The European Union only makes a decision when it is more efficient to do so than at a national, regional or local level. This is known as the subsidiarity principle.

In certain areas, the EU's role is limited to supporting, coordinating or complementing the actions of Member States. Public Health is one of these areas. Organising and delivering healthcare is the responsibility of national governments. The EU's role is to complement national policies by helping them achieve shared objectives, generating economies of scale, pooling resources, and helping countries tackle common challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, pandemics, chronic diseases or the impact of increased life expectancies on healthcare systems.

**Given the outbreak of Covid-19, some people think that the EU should have a more active role to play in the area of public health. Do you agree? Explain why/why not.**

Take a look at the below list. In some cases, there can be several levels of responsibility. Sometimes the responsibility is at EU level, sometimes at another level.

**Tick the boxes accordingly.**

<b>Responsible level?</b>	Local	Regional	National	EU
Collection of household waste				
Railway infrastructure				
Telecommunications				
Car parks in your neighbourhood				
Organisation of local public transport				
Labelling of consumer products				
Fight against terrorism				
Support for the poor				
Recreational facilities				
Farming subsidies				
Home care				
National budget				
Mobile phone charges				

**Would you like more or fewer decisions to be taken at EU level and why / why not?**



## *Policy areas*

**Go to [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) and choose the English version; click on “EU by topic” to find out about European policies.**

Here are some examples:

- Agriculture
- Culture
- Customs
- Education, training and youth
- Environment
- Food safety
- Trade

**Here are a couple of useful sites for you to check out:**

**[www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)**

Information about the European Parliament, its Members and the legislative process.

**[www.europarl.ie](http://www.europarl.ie)**

Information about the European Parliament in Ireland, your MEPs and our activities.

**[https://europa.eu/european-union/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en)**

Europa is the official website of the European Union.

If you have any questions about the EU and how it all works, you will find a lot of the answers here.

**<https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu>**

How does Europe impact my life, my education, my region? You'll find a lot of information here!

**[www.euractiv.com/en](http://www.euractiv.com/en)**

EU News and current affairs from the capitals of Europe



**Want to play a game?**  
Go to the Learning Corner of the [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) website and try out **one of the many games there!**

**What do you know about Europe now that you did not know before?**

**Now, I know that:**

**Now, I know that:**

**Now, I know that:**



## Module 3: Making decisions

Imagine if everyone in your class came from a different European country and that you had to make decisions on all kinds of things. And on top of that, you all speak different languages. That would be difficult!

The European Union faces this challenge every day. That is why there are different institutions, each with its own specialisation, ensuring that the work is shared. This is sometimes complicated, but it is necessary to ensure that every one of the 27 EU countries (Member States) is able to influence the policies they make together. When the countries hold meetings, interpreters translate what everyone is saying. That way everyone can speak their own language and still understand each other.

**How would you organise a school party with students from 27 countries? Bear in mind the various languages and cultural differences.**



### *Who does what in the European Union?*

The EU institutions are the European Council, the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers), the European Commission and the European Parliament. Together, they make the rules and decide EU policies. The countries themselves have to make sure that the rules are implemented. The EU also has a court of law: the European Court of Justice. The Court monitors whether the countries, citizens and businesses in the EU comply with these rules.

#### *1. The European Council: at the top!*

The political leaders from each Member State draw up the general outline of European Union policy. They usually meet four times a year. We call this a European Summit. Ireland is represented in the European Council by the Taoiseach. In the Council, the heads of state or government of the EU discuss important topics like the economy, the environment, the financial crisis or foreign policy. The European Council elects a new President every two and a half years. The President can be re-elected for another two and half years.

**Find out who is the current President of the European Council?**

**If you were President of the European Council, what would be the first thing you would like to discuss at a European Summit?**



## *2. The Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers): each country has its own voice*

The Council of Ministers is yet another council. This council also has 27 members, one from each country. These are not the prime ministers, but ministers who vary depending on the subject of the meeting. If the meeting is about agriculture, for example, then all the ministers for agriculture come together. The Irish Minister goes to Brussels, just like the other ministers from the other EU countries. If the meeting is about education, then the ministers for education go to Brussels.

The ministers try to ensure that each country more or less agrees with the decisions made. If really important decisions need to be made, for example, whether or not a country should be allowed to become a member of the EU, then all the countries need to say 'yes'. This is called a unanimous vote.

## *3. The European Commission*

In the European Commission there are also 27 people, one from each country. They are called Commissioners. Unlike the Council of Ministers, the commissioners do not represent their country, but the EU as a whole. Each commissioner is responsible for a different subject. The European Commission makes proposals for European laws and monitors their implementation by all Member States. The Commission is the executive of the European Union.

**Look up the words “European Commissioner” on the Internet. Who is the Irish European Commissioner and what is his/her area of responsibility?**

**Is this an important issue for you?  
Explain why or why not.**

#### *4. The European Parliament*

Every five years, everyone over 18 years of age is entitled to vote in the European Parliament elections. You vote for a political party, just like in Irish general and local elections. The elected Irish MEPs do not sit together in the European Parliament. They join



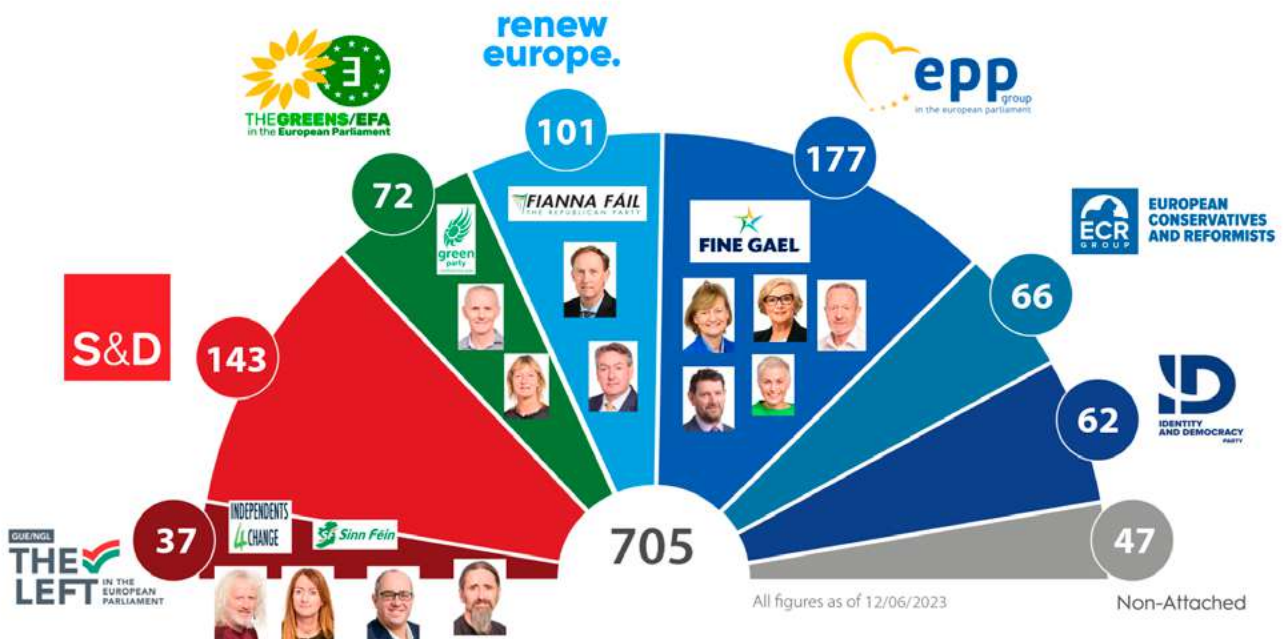
MEPs from other EU countries with whom they most agree, and so form a European political group. Fine Gael, for example, works with all the other Christian Democratic parties from the EU, and Fianna Fáil with all the other Centrist parties.

**How many Members does the European Parliament have in total?**

**How many Irish Members are there?**



Below is an overview of the distribution of seats among the European political groups following the 2019 European elections.



Following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, the European Parliament counts 705 members.

- EPP Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats)
- S&D Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- Renew Renew Europe Group
- Greens-EFA Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- ID Identity and Democracy Group
- ECR European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- GUE/NGL The Left Group in the European Parliament
- NI Non-attached Members – not belonging to any European political party



### *How do you make a European law?*

The European Commission initiates a new law. For example, the Commission believes that mobile phone calls should be cheaper throughout the EU. They put this idea on paper in the form of a proposal, which then goes to the European Parliament. If the Parliament does not agree, the proposal is amended.

The proposal then goes to the Council of Ministers. If they approve the Parliament's amended proposal, the law is passed. The Council of Ministers can also make changes, just like the Parliament.

If they cannot agree, then the idea is abandoned.

**Opposite is a simple diagram of how a law is made:**





**What would you like to make a European law about?**

**What would you like it to regulate?**

**[Watch the video What happens when EU law is broken \(26/6/21\)](#)**

**How do you think you could influence decisions made within the EU?**



## Module 4: Europe without borders!

Important problems do not stop at the border, do they?

### *The Environment*

Ireland cannot tackle environmental and climate issues alone. Climate change is a worldwide problem. Ireland is a relatively small country and that is why it is important when it comes to the environment that we are part of the European Union. The European Union has more inhabitants than the United States of America. Together with other members of the EU, Ireland can influence large countries like China, India and Brazil for example, to improve environmental policy.

## Find out the population of the European Union and these countries.



The European Union: \_\_\_\_\_



The United States: \_\_\_\_\_



China: \_\_\_\_\_



India: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Terrorism and crime*

You have probably heard of terrorist attacks in Europe (in Paris at the music venue Bataclan in 2015, the Brussels bombings in 2016, the Manchester arena bombing in 2017). Unfortunately terrorism does not stop at the border of any particular country. It is a matter that concerns us all.



The same applies to crime eg. international drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime. For example drugs are smuggled into Europe from Colombia or Afghanistan. So, it is not only a problem for Ireland, but for Europe and many other countries around the world.

To combat this, European cooperation is necessary. For this reason Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, was founded in 1992 and Eurojust, the EU agency for criminal justice cooperation, in 2002.

Find out more about what these agencies do at the below links:

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/>

<http://www.eurojust.europa.eu/>

**Discuss the following with a classmate: "Should we fight drug-related crime as a country, or at a European level?"**

**We think that:**



**Can you give an example of cross-border crime? Don't forget cyber criminality.**

**Why are you checked so strictly at the airport when you fly to the United States?**

**Airports want to use a body scan in the future. What does a body scan do?**

**Would you want to be scanned before boarding a plane?**



## *Energy*

**Everything around you is made with the help of energy. There are many different kinds of energy. Can you name three ways of generating it?**

1

2

3

**Which natural resources does Ireland have to generate energy?  
What are our sources of energy?**

**Which energy do we get from abroad?**



### *European citizenship*

What actually is citizenship? It has to do with the rights you have in the country you live in, but also with your place in society and your participation within it.

**How do you feel about the place where you live and what do you know about your town or village?**

European citizenship is not something that replaces Irish citizenship, but is something extra. This citizenship has the following advantages:

- You can live, work and study anywhere in the European Member States. There are, for example, special arrangements that enable you to study in a European country for a few months.
- If you are an Irish citizen living in a French village, you are entitled to vote for the local council. That way you can influence what happens in your area and make sure that a new road is built in your neighbourhood, for example.

**Would you like to live, work or study in another European country? If so, which country would you choose and why?**



**Underline five words that are important for 'your Europe' in the following list. Compare your choices with those of your classmates.**

Solidarity, environment, terrorism, border controls, foreign workers, food safety, work, human rights, discrimination, good wages, a fair share for all, culture, song festival, European football competition, clean seas, fisheries, free market, no border controls between EU countries, freedom to work anywhere, euro, animal testing, security, equal rights for men and women, studying.

How can you make your views heard on what you want for Europe's future? One way of doing that is to vote in the European elections. You can elect an Irish MEP who represents your views. Your MEP works together with MEPs from other European countries who have similar ideas in a political group.

Take for example, Sinn Féin. Their MEPs, together with like-minded MEPs from the other Member States, form the Group of the The Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL).



**Go to [www.europarl.ie](http://www.europarl.ie) and find out which European political groups the Irish MEPs belong to:**

	<b>Irish MEPs</b>	<b>National Political Party</b>	<b>European Political Group</b>
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____
13.	_____	_____	_____



## Module 5: European values

You have probably heard of moral standards and values. But what are they actually? Values are ideals that are very important to you or to a group of people: happiness, security, being social, freedom, respect or love, for example. In order to uphold these values, you need standards. So standards are kind of rules of conduct. The value of safety, for example, requires you to keep to the standard maximum speed limit and not drive through a red light. The value of respect needs you to treat people equally.

People sometimes think very differently about (moral) standards and values. Your background, religion or country of origin can influence this.

**Which values are important to you?**



If you have ever been to another European country, you probably noticed that lots of things are different than in Ireland. Not only the language, but also the food, clothes, people's behaviour and all kinds of other things. But when you travel outside Europe, you will notice that Europeans also have a lot in common.

**Write down three differences between you and your best friend.**

1

2

3

**Of course there are also similarities. Name three of them.**

1

2

3

**Now write down three similarities and differences between you and someone of your age from France.**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

**If you lived in a country that had just been hit by a serious earthquake or flooding, which values would then be the most important for you?**

Some values are shared by people throughout the world, such as good health, happiness and love. However, there are also values such as freedom, peace, solidarity, equality and democracy, which are often determined by governments. There are also governments that do not always listen to what their people would like. This kind of government is called a dictatorship.



**Can you name some countries where the government does not respect the values of freedom and democracy?**

Every EU country is a democracy, where human rights are important. As well as working together in areas like the economy, security and the environment, the EU also devotes considerable attention to upholding these values both within Europe's borders and beyond. If a country wants to become a member of the EU, they also have to respect these values and implement them in their own country. Of course this applies to all of the countries that are already a member of the EU.

EU values are common to the EU countries in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail. These values are an integral part of our European way of life.

### *Freedom*

All European citizens are free to travel, work and live anywhere in the EU. You are also free to say what you want, think or feel as long as you do not restrict other people's freedom by discriminating against them.

The EU is of the opinion that each country should decide some matters for themselves, such as same-sex marriage for example. This was legalised in Ireland in 2015 following the marriage referendum. However only 14 of the 27 EU countries allow for same-sex marriage.

### **Would you want to live in a country where your religion, opinion or sexual orientation was discriminated against?**

### *Solidarity*

The European Union also includes countries that have weaker economies. There is poverty and high levels of unemployment and the schools are often not as good as in Ireland. In order to support these Member States, the EU has created a number of funds such as the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**. The aim of this fund is to reduce the difference in levels of prosperity in order to promote economic and social cohesion between EU Member States. As a result everyone can benefit and a more even distribution of wealth is achieved.

In 2021 the EU launched the **NextGenerationEU** initiative with funding of more than €700 billion to help EU countries recover from the Covid19 pandemic and make their economies more sustainable, resilient and ready for the green and digital transitions.

The **European Solidarity Corps** creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe.





### *Diversity, but equal before the law*

Everyone is different: in their language, culture, religion, appearance, opinion and origins. We want these differences to be respected within the European Union so that we can live, learn and work side by side, just like we do in school. We want to live in a society where there is mutual respect, where there is no discrimination and where everyone has the same opportunities. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU states that every EU citizen has equal rights. Which means that policemen, lawyers, teachers, farmers, carpenters, job seekers, or disabled people, in short all European citizens, must be treated equally, regardless of gender, sexuality, religion etc.

**Do you think that everyone in Ireland has the same rights? Give an example if you agree or disagree.**

You can regard Europe as one big society where countries and citizens, wherever they come from, try to respect the values of freedom, religion, equality, solidarity and democracy.

**Do you think this is possible or impossible? Explain why.**



### *Human rights*

Everyone has particular rights just by being human. These are things that you can *do* or *have*, such as the right to education, healthcare, freedom of speech and privacy. There are also rights to protect you from people who might want to damage or hurt you. For example, the police are not allowed to arrest you, threaten you or have your telephone tapped, without a valid reason.

There are organisations that try to persuade governments to respect human rights.

**Look up an organisation that is involved in protecting human rights at an international level. Try to describe what it does.**

Within the EU, human rights are fundamental. These rights are laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon and all Member States have agreed to uphold them. Countries that want to join the EU must also adhere to these articles in the Treaty.

The EU also discusses human rights with countries outside Europe and tries to bring about improvements. The 27 Member States believe they are able to achieve more together than individually. When acting alone, Ireland has much less influence globally than the 27 Member States as a whole.

### *Sakharov Prize for Freedom and Thought*

The Sakharov Prize is awarded every year by the European Parliament to honour exceptional individuals and organisations that have defended human rights and fundamental freedoms.

[Watch the video Andrei Sakharov: the man behind the Sakharov Prize for Freedom and Thought \(20/5/21\)](#)

### **Find out who are the current laureates of the Sakharov prize**

**Name some of the countries the EU discusses human rights with.**

**Which human rights does the EU discuss with these countries?**

**Which human rights do YOU think are very important?**





## Module 6: Your voice in Europe

Sometimes you have a definite opinion on a particular subject. And sometimes you would like to get involved in all kinds of issues. There are also occasions when you really believe that something needs to be done, and want to talk about it and put forward ideas.

This all starts at a young age as you begin to form a perspective. Now that you are a young adult, and nearing voting age, you may want to express your opinion. If you have an opinion, you should make yourself heard and say what you feel or think.

*Your vote makes a difference!*

This is all about you, your vote and your opinion. You are officially allowed to vote in Ireland as soon as you turn 18. From then on you can influence your local councils, the national government and even Europe.

*Is your vote important?*

Sometimes people think that their vote does not count, but is this true?

Of course not!

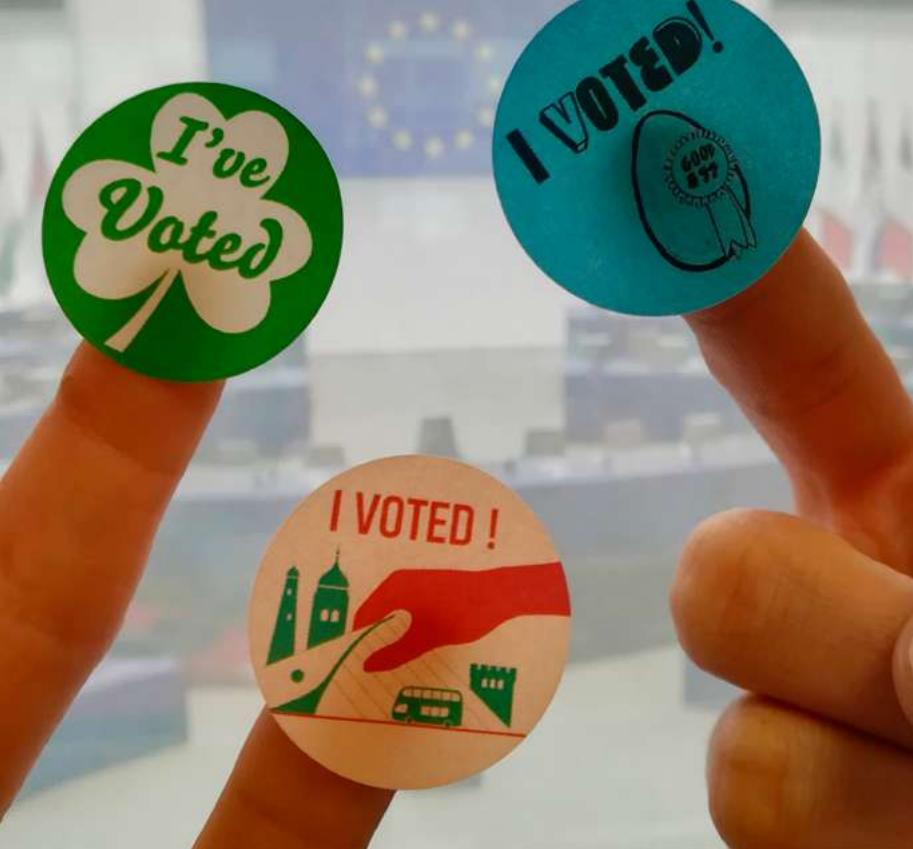
Imagine that you want to be elected on to the students' council at your school and there are 100 students who are entitled to vote. Fifty out of the 100 do not come to the election and their vote is wasted.

**How could that affect you?**

This is a simple but clear example. If you choose not to use your vote, then you should not complain about any future decisions taken.

*Your vote for the European Parliament*

Since 1979, the citizens of the European Union have been able to elect a European Parliament every five years. There are 705 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The current number of Irish MEPs is 13. This number is likely to increase to 14 for the 2024 elections.



After the elections, the Member States make agreements about issues that affect everyone in Europe, such as employment and social affairs, environment, energy, transport and trade, and youth. This is done in the same democratic way as in your local councils or in the Oireachtas. After the elections, all the countries also agree how responsibility for different areas should be shared. In Europe we call these 'Policy areas'.

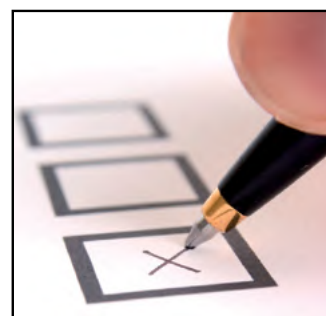
If you turn 18 before June 2024, you will be able to vote in the next European elections. You will

need to find out more about your political preferences before you can decide who to vote for, or which party to choose. You could vote for a left-wing or right-wing party. Maybe you would like to vote for a party that focuses on the environment; there are lots of possibilities. This is why it is very important to find out more about each party's point of view. You can read about these views in a party manifesto on the political party's website. Many politicians also use Twitter. [The Twitter accounts of the Irish MEPs can be found here](#)

*What will you do?*

**If you are of voting age, will you vote in the next European Elections in 2024?**

**Do you think it is important to vote? Why/why not?**



Aside from voting once every five years, you can make your voice heard in the European Union in other ways as well.

### *European Youth Event*

Every two years, the European Youth Event (EYE) takes place in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The next EYE takes place in 2025. This is a unique opportunity for thousands of young Europeans between the ages of 16 and 30 to make their voices heard. During the event, they exchange ideas and perspectives on youth-related issues and develop innovative solutions to crucial questions for the future. Young people get the chance to meet with European decision-makers and speakers with a wide range of professional experience. At the same time the EYE provides an opportunity to experience the rich cultural diversity within the EU through the staging of various artistic performances and spectacles.

[Find out more about the EYE and the June 2023 edition](#)



### *The Conference on the Future of Europe*

The Conference on the Future of Europe gave European citizens from all walks of life the opportunity to debate on Europe's challenges and priorities. Four European Citizens' Panels, chosen through random selection, were organized to allow citizens to jointly think about the future they want for the European Union. This one-year journey (May 2021-May 2022) of discussion, debate and collaboration between citizens and politicians on the future of Europe culminated in a report submitted on 9 May to the Presidents of the EU institutions. The report outlines 49 proposals and more than 320 measures including concrete objectives. It is now up to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission to follow up, each according to their own area of competence.



[You can find out more about the Conference on the Future of Europe here](#)



# Join the community [together.eu](https://together.eu)

## *Together.eu*

Following the 2019 European elections, the European Parliament launched [together.eu](https://together.eu) - a community of EU citizens who want to come together to promote active participation in local communities and promote democratic engagement in Europe.

[Together.eu](https://together.eu) is non-partisan – it is open to members of any political party and none. It is a platform that gives like-minded individuals a chance to bring democracy to every corner of Europe.

By joining, you can take part in events, trainings (eg. EU basics webinars) and expert talks and organise your own community activities. You will be kept up to date with our newsletters and the events page listing activities from all EU countries.

**[You can sign up to the platform at the link below.](https://together.eu)**

**[https://together.eu/](https://together.eu)**



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# European Elections 6-9 June 2024!

## Notes

## Notes

## Notes



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