



Name: _____ Class: _____

European Teaching Modules

AMBASSADOR SCHOOLS



European Parliament

Module 1: “A brief history of the EU”

The European Union (EU) affects your life every single day, mostly without your 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 to France or Germany, for example, without going through any border controls, and can pay in euros in several different countries. This means you can quickly see if an ice cream is cheaper here than in Italy!

This is all quite normal for you, but it has not always been like this. The 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.

You can watch a film about the history of the EU on:
<http://bit.ly/1SBFuhF>

Write down three things you know about the Second World War.



1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

To be able to understand the origins of the European Union, you need to read the following text a few times. Your teacher will also be able to explain things in more detail.

After the Second World War, the political leaders and citizens of Europe were determined that such a war should never 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.



This is why the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, came up with a plan. On 9 May 1950, he announced the plan, which is now known as “The Schuman Plan”.

“Europe Day” is now celebrated every year on 9 May.

The Schuman Plan made sure France and Germany cooperated in steel and coal production. 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 so joined the others.

In 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded. This was the beginning of the European Union.

Which six countries took part?

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 the 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. United Kingdom	_____
5. Spain	_____
6. France	_____
7. 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.

By 1992 twelve countries, called 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 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 work in another EU country without any problem.

Now the European Union has 28 Member States.

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

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

Do you think this is a good or a bad idea? Try to explain why.

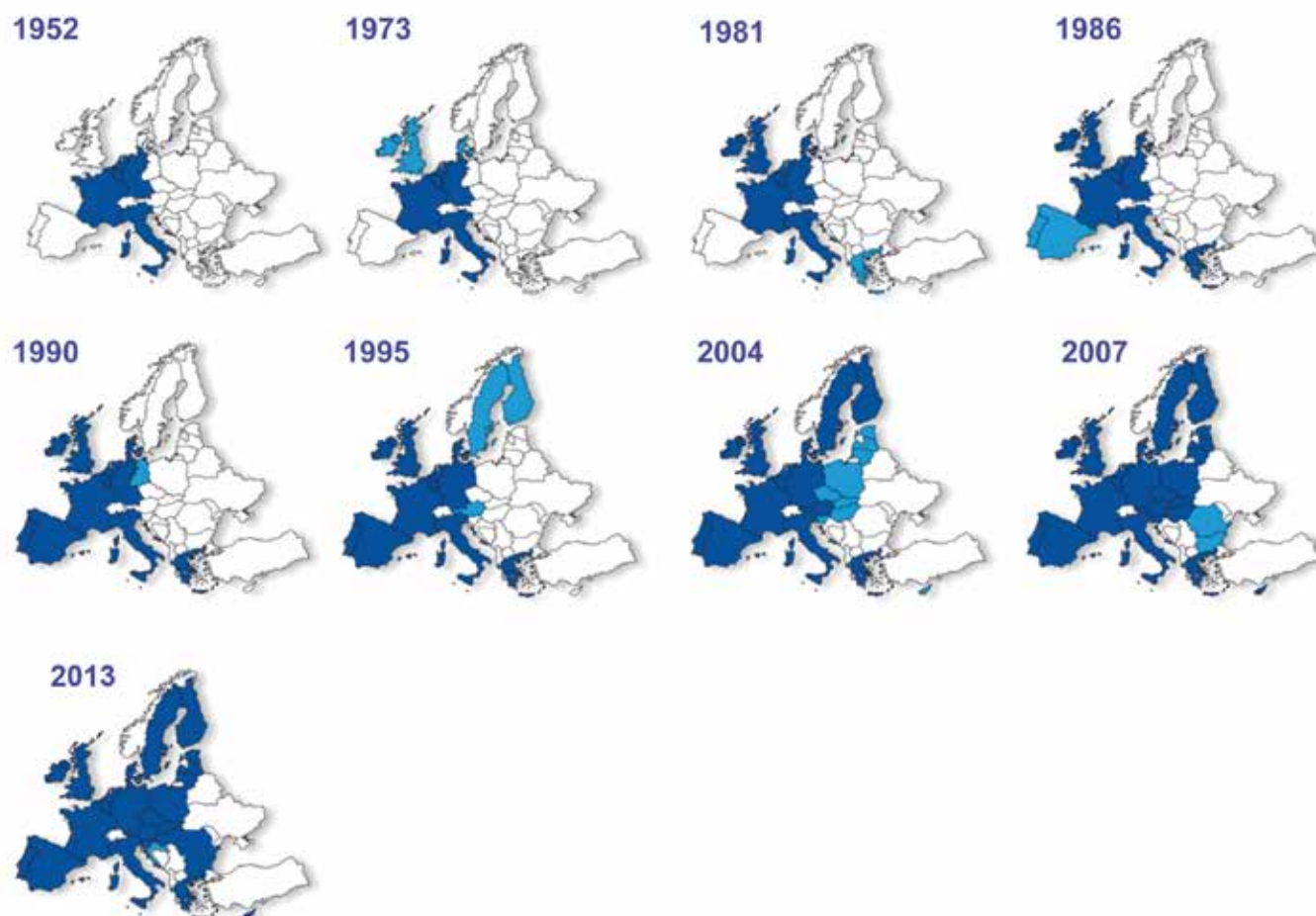
Since 1 December 2009 a new treaty applies to all Member States. It is called 'The Lisbon Treaty' and was introduced in order to make the European Union more democratic and easier to govern. Where it makes more sense to organise something on a European level, it is now possible to do so, for example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

Can you give another example?



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





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.

Give another example of this:



What do the stars on the European flag stand for?



Above you see a blank map of Europe.
Put a cross in the countries that are a Member State of the EU.



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 spends a lot of money on people in poor countries?
- 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 60 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 you can work and travel throughout almost all 28 EU Member States without having to go through border controls?
- 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 trade, the environment, export, safety and the handling of international problems, like terrorism, and the financial crisis?



And there is much more...

Europe is closer than you think: We all live here and Europe affects us all every day: whether in terms of food, the price of mobile telephone calls, education, the environment, work - your future and mine...

Which countries have you been to on holiday? Or which countries would you like to visit?

Are you in contact with students or friends who do not live in the Netherlands? If so, which country do they come from and which language do you speak together?

You have to work as an intern in a European country. Which country would you choose and why?

During your internship you become ill and have to go to a doctor or to hospital. Which documents do you need?





Europe has got something to do with it!

As we have discovered, European cooperation began with only 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 could have fewer tasks. The European Parliament and the Ministers of the EU countries could decide on this, but so far this has not happened.

Human rights

Human rights and democracy are fundamental EU values. Countries wanting to become members of the EU have to respect human rights. We want 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.



Give an example of discrimination in:

Sexual orientation _____

Religious belief _____

Disability _____

Euro

The introduction of the euro has made it much easier to see where something is cheaper. You do not need to change money or work out the price in another currency when you are on holiday in a euro country. The euro enables companies in Europe to do business quicker and make better agreements.

You can already pay in euros in 19 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain.

The other 9 Member States could also introduce the euro, but they have to make sure that their country does not have too much debt, for example.

**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 animal and plant species do not become extinct).

There are, for example, agreements on greenhouse gas emissions; in 2020 the emissions have to be reduced by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels.

But there are also laws about noise pollution and the quality of swimming water, things that may directly affect you.

What are greenhouse gasses?

Why are greenhouse gasses 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 are our oil and gas reserves not going to run out at some point? Are these fuels not responsible for global warming? The EU wants 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. And did you know that the ordinary light bulb is going to disappear?



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

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

What do YOU do to save energy?

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

The European Union takes decisions on a lot of topics as you have discovered in this chapter. But a large part of the decisions is taken at a different level: local, provincial or national. The European Union only takes a decision when this is more efficient than taken at a national, provincial or local level (= subsidiarity principle). Below you find several tasks. Sometimes the responsibility should be at EU level, sometimes at another level.

Tick the boxes: For the same task there can be several levels of responsibility.



Responsible level?	Local	Provincial	National	EU
Collection of household garbage				
Railway infrastructure				
Telecommunication				
Parking lots in your living area				
Organisation of regional transport				
Labeling of consumer products				
Fight against terrorism				
Support of the poor				
Recreative facilities				
Farmers' subsidies				
Home care				
National budget				
Mobile phone charges				

Would you like to take more or less decisions at EU level and why ?





Policy areas

Go to www.europa.eu and choose the English version; click on “policy areas” to read absolutely everything about European policy areas.

Here are some examples:

- Audiovisual and media
- Education
- Culture
- Customs
- Foreign trade
- Agriculture
- Food safety

Take a look sometime at a few sites to do with Europe, for example:

www.europesejongerensite.nl

This site features reports by some young people about their European experiences, with photos, articles and interesting facts.

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:European_Union

Here you can read all about Europe’s influence on our daily life.

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

www.europarl.europa.eu

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

www.euractiv.com/en

All you need to know about the European Union and news on current EU affairs.

www.europaomdehoek.nl (only in Dutch)

Lots of information about projects in the Netherlands which are financed with European money. Do you ever wonder why the boards at the side of the motorway, in town or in a nature reserve include the European Flag? Here are the answers!



Want to play a game?

Go to www.europa.eu and choose the English version.

Go to “children: games, quizzes and competitions” (quick links, centre left). Play the “EuropaGO” games by clicking on different objects in the room to learn all about Europe.

Of course, now you know even more about Europe...

But what do you now know 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 problem 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 28 EU countries (Member States) is able to influence the policy they make jointly. 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 28 countries? Bear in mind the various languages and cultural differences.



Who does what in the European Union?

The EU institutions are the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers), the European Council, 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.

The European Council: at the top!

The political leaders and heads of state 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. The Netherlands are represented in the European Council by the Prime Minister. In the Council, the leaders of the EU discuss important topics like the economy, the environment, the financial crisis or foreign policy. The European Council elects a new chairman, President, every two and a half years. The President can be re-elected for another two and half years.

Find out who this is.

What would be the first thing you would like to discuss NOW at a European Summit if you were 'President'?



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 28 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 agricultural ministers come together. The Dutch Minister goes to Brussels, just like the other agricultural ministers from the countries of the European Union. This means that 28 ministers attend the meetings. If the meeting is about education, then all the ministers of education go to Brussels.

The ministers try to ensure that each country more or less agrees with the decision taken. If really important decisions need to be taken, 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'.

The European Commission

In the European Commission there are also 28 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 there to govern the European Union.

Look up the words European Commissioner on the Internet. Who is the Dutch European Commissioner and what is his/her area of responsibility.

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



The European Parliament

Every five years, everyone over 18 years of age is entitled to vote for the European Parliament. You vote for a political party, just like in the Dutch elections for the Lower House or for your local council. Usually, these are the 'standard' Dutch parties. The elected Dutch representatives do not sit together in the European Parliament. They join the people from other EU countries with whom they most

agree, and so form a European party. The CDA, for example, works with all the other Christian Democratic parties from the EU, and the PvdA, with all the other Social Democratic parties.

How many members does the European Parliament have?

How many Dutch members are there?

Below is an overview of the European political parties:



Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)



European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)



Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)



Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA)



Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD)



Europe of Nations and Freedom Group (ENF)

NI Non-attached Members – Members not belonging to any European political party

									NI	Total
Belgium	4	4	4	6		2		1		21
Bulgaria	7	4	2	4						17
Czech Republic	7	4	2	4	3		1			21
Denmark	1	3	4	3	1	1				13
Germany	34	27	6	4	8	13	1	1	2	96
Estonia	1	1		3		1				6
Ireland	4	1	1	1	4					11
Greece	5	4	1		6				5	21
Spain	17	14		8	11	4				54
France	20	13		7	4	6	1	20	3	74
Croatia	5	2	1	2		1				11
Italy	15	30	2		3		17	5	1	73
Cyprus	1	2	1		2					6
Latvia	4	1	1	1		1				8
Lithuania	2	2	1	4		1	1			11
Luxembourg	3	1		1		1				6
Hungary	12	4				2			3	21
Malta	3	3								6
Netherlands	5	3	2	7	3	2		4		26
Austria	5	5		1		3		4		18
Poland	23	5	19				1	2	1	51
Portugal	7	8		2	4					21
Romania	12	15	1	3				1		32
Slovenia	5	1		1		1				8
Slovakia	6	4	3							13
Finland	3	2	2	4	1	1				13
Sweden	4	6		3	1	4	2			20
United Kingdom		20	21	1	1	6	22	1	1	73
Total	215	189	74	70	52	50	46	39	16	751

Look at the distribution of seats in the European Parliament.



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 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. In all, a pretty complicated process!

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?

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

Think of the environment. Pollution is a problem that does not stop at the Dutch border and not even at the borders of Europe. As you know, part of the Netherlands lies below sea level. The earth is warming up and the ice caps at the North and South Poles are melting, causing the sea level to rise. The scale of the consequences is as yet unknown, but it is a fact that global warming will create a lot of problems. For example, in the Netherlands we must ensure that our dikes are high and strong enough to prevent flooding.

The Netherlands cannot tackle these kinds of huge environmental and climate issues alone, it is a worldwide problem. The Netherlands is a relatively small country and that is why it is important 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, the Netherlands can influence large countries like China and the United States for example, to improve environmental policy.

Look up on the Internet how many inhabitants the European Union and the United States have.

The European Union: _____

The United States: _____

Terrorism and crime

You have probably heard of the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11th 2001. Since then the word terrorism is often mentioned in the news and the newspapers. Terrorism does not stop at the border of any particular country. It is a matter that concerns us all.

The same applies to crime. For example drugs are smuggled into Europe from Colombia or Afghanistan. So, it is not only a problem for the Netherlands, but for Europe and many other countries around the world.



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

We think that:



Why are there security checks for liquids at airports?

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?

The European Union has made it easier for police and criminal investigators to work together within Europe, for example at the Europol organisation based in The Hague.

Go to www.europol.europa.eu to find out what they do.



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 do the Netherlands have to generate energy?
What are therefore our sources of energy?**

Which energy do we get from abroad?



European citizenship

What is citizenship, actually? 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 in 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 Dutch 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 a Dutch 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 the challenge of living, working or studying in another 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.

It may seem difficult, but there are ways to make your views on what you want for Europe’s future heard: you can vote in the European elections. You elect a Dutch party that represents your views. They work together with similar parties from other European countries to form a European party.



Take the VVD and D66, for example. Together with liberal parties from other Member States, they form the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

Which party does the Partij van de Arbeid form with other European Social Democratic parties?

Go to www.europeesparlement.nl and find out which European parties the remaining Dutch parties belong to.

Complete the following list:

Dutch party	European party
CDA	EVP
PVV	_____
PvdA	_____
VVD	_____
D66	_____
GroenLinks	_____
SP	_____
ChristenUnie	_____
SGP	_____
Partij vd Dieren	_____





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 a 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?

Which standards do they require?



When you have been on holiday in France or Spain, you probably noticed that lots of things are different than in the Netherlands. Not only the language, but also the food, clothes, people's behaviour and all kinds of other things. But when you travel outside of 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 Italy.

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. The European Union does not only work together in areas like the economy, security and the environment, but 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.

European values

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.

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

In the Netherlands men can get married to men and women to women. This is called a same-sex marriage. This regulation is not European law. The EU is of the opinion that every country should decide such matters for themselves. You can also be legally married in Spain if you are a homosexual, but not in Poland.

The Netherlands is the only country in the EU with bars where you can buy soft drugs legally, ('coffee shops'). The other countries think this is a bad idea, but the EU has no say in this.

Would you want the EU to have a say on soft drugs policy or not? Explain your view.

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 the Netherlands. The EU therefore supports these poorer countries by providing extra funding for education, job-creation, healthcare projects and the construction of roads and bridges. As a result everyone can benefit and a more even distribution of wealth is achieved.

What do you think of this?





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 European Treaty for Human Rights 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.

Do you think that everyone in the Netherlands 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 and foreign policy

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 without a reason, threaten you or have your telephone tapped.

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 28 Member States believe they are able to achieve more together than individually. When acting alone, the Netherlands has much less influence globally than the 28 Member States as a whole.

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 when you are playing with friends at primary school. And now that you are at secondary school, you also want to express your opinion. If you have an opinion, you 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 the Netherlands as soon as you turn 18. From then on you can influence your local and provincial councils, the Lower House and even Europe.

Is your vote important?

Sometimes people think that their vote does not count, but is this true? Is it actually so easy not to vote and pretend that nothing is the matter?

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.

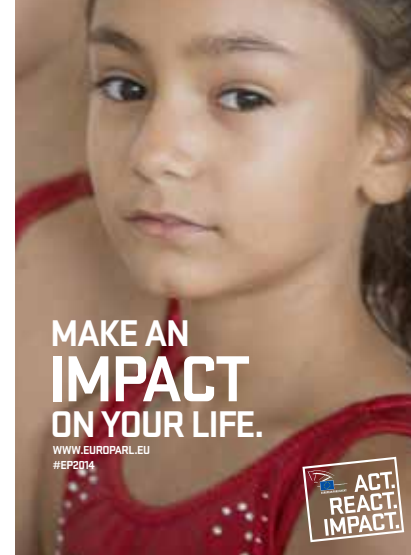
How could that affect you?

This is a simple but clear example. If you choose not to use your vote, then you must 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 751 members in the parliament; the number of Dutch MEPs (short for Members of the European Parliament) is 26. After the elections of 2014 the chairman of the largest European political party was chosen as President of the European Commission.

You can read more on this at: www.europarl.europa.eu



After the elections, the Member States make agreements about issues that affect everyone in Europe, such as safety, the environment, the economy, transport, human rights and energy. This is done in the same democratic way as in the local council or the Dutch Lower House. After the elections, all the countries also agree how responsibility for different areas should be shared. In Europe we call these 'Policy areas'.

You will be allowed to vote for the European Parliament in 2019. If you turn 18 before then, you will be able to vote in other elections sooner. 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.

What will you do?

If you are eligible to vote for the European Parliament in 2019, will you do so?

Why /why not?





**We hope you will cast your vote
in 2019!**

CU IN EUROPE!

Colophon:

For young people looking to discover Europe...

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Authors:

Anne-Marie Eekhout

Wil Willemsen

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CumLingua Taal & Communicatie

www.cumlingua.com

European Parliament Information Office for the Netherlands

Korte Vijverberg 6

2513 AB The Hague

www.europeesparlement.nl

epdenhaag@ep.europa.eu

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