



European
Commission

Learning EU at school

A Jean Monnet Action
supporting better
EU education in
primary, secondary and
vocational schools

Sport
Youth
Higher education
Vocational education and training
Adult education
School education

Erasmus+

Enriching lives, opening minds.

Jean Monnet

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Foreword



Mariya Gabriel

*European Commissioner for Innovation,
Research, Culture, Education and Youth*

EU integration has changed the lives of European citizens. The public debate about the good and bad of this change has intensified quite dramatically in recent years.

This is good. Democracy and free speech are among the core values of the EU. Unfortunately, however, not all of the debate is fuelled by facts.

Indeed, Eurobarometer studies continue to show that many European citizens feel that they know too little about the EU, its institutions, priorities, procedures and policies and, most importantly, how all of these affect their lives.

The Jean Monnet Actions have successfully promoted knowledge about the EU for more than 30 years. Its focus, however, was always on higher education.

To respond to the increasing need for European citizens to learn how the EU affects their lives, the scope of the Jean Monnet Actions in the new Erasmus+ programme period was broadened to embrace schools and pupils from primary level onwards. An EU dimension in education, is crucial to help citizens better understand, and connect with, the EU.

This publication introduces the European Commission's response to this request through the Jean Monnet Learning EU Initiative, which will encourage and support schools and teachers to launch their own ways of bringing better EU education into the classroom.

The Jean Monnet Learning EU initiative will launch, appropriately, in 2022 – the European Year of Youth. Europe needs active citizens and the new Jean Monnet for Schools activities, which also include the support for Teacher Training and the establishment of networks of schools active in the field of EU education, will help to prepare young people to shape the future European Union.

I encourage you to read the experiences of your colleagues from all over Europe to get inspired and, hopefully, launch your own projects and activities that we are ready to support through this new initiative.

Learning about the EU

From peace in historically tumultuous Europe all the way down to free movement, cheaper phone calls, protecting our common environment, confronting climate change, and ensuring online privacy protection, the changes brought about by European integration are quite unprecedented and their impact on you and me – European citizens – is momentous.

Yet, what we teach and learn about the European Union in school is, by and large, limited to history, geography and economics. What the EU means for democracy, diversity, active citizenship and human rights continues to evade most European school curricula.

Meanwhile, our general sentiment about European integration is getting stronger in both directions. European integration is not escaping the waves of polarisation that engulf our societies at the moment. Instead of reflecting on how we can make our EU better, we often reduce our debating arguments to those 'for' and those 'against'.

While there is this widespread tendency to voice strong opinions about the EU, often we teach and learn little in school that can help us build arguments supporting or criticising it. This is not so good. Strong opinions should be built on a foundation of knowledge, not just hearsay, rumours and fake news.

EVERY VOICE COUNTS

As European adults, we can vote our representatives into the European Parliament. To do so meaningfully, we must feel ownership over this greater European community that we live in and be informed about issues that are relevant for us as EU citizens.

In fact, we say so ourselves! In a 2020 survey¹, European citizens were asked what would make them more likely to vote at the next European elections. The majority answered: "More information about the impact of the EU on our daily lives."

Filtering such information from our daily information overload requires active citizenship competences. The most obvious place to support young people's development as active citizens is school.

School is where we get informed and where we develop our sense of belonging to a greater community. For many of us, school is also the first place where we encounter political disagreement and value conflicts, and learn how to tackle them.

Schools should teach about everything that affects our lives. Much of this will relate to the policy priority areas of the EU: climate change, digitalisation, economic growth and jobs, the challenges of globalisation, health and well-being, core

values such as human rights and the rule of law, and indeed the fight against disinformation and support for active citizenship.

Schools across Europe often support the development of active citizenship by immersing their pupils and students in the challenges and opportunities of European integration. The experiences of these schools show that it helps young people to build the foundation upon which they can take the critical positions that are so important in our European democracy.

The European Union has supported such activities for many years. Most of this support has so far been channelled through the Jean Monnet Action which has promoted and supported EU studies in higher education since 1989.

In the years ahead, based on earlier pilot experience and modelled on activity that is already taking place all over Europe, this support will be extended to primary, secondary and vocational schools.

The next section of this publication showcases some of the very different ways in which schools today inform young people of the European dimension in their daily lives.

1 Flash Eurobarometer 485
<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/2260>

Lessons in Europe

Examples of European integration in the classroom



UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

St Martin's College is a school in Swatar, Malta. It spans the entirety of Maltese compulsory education. St Martin's College was one of just 22 EU schools that won the Jan Amos Comenius Prize for high-quality teaching about the European Union in 2020.

They won it not because they ran a particular project or two, but because they leave no stone unturned in their effort to offer the oldest students as much exposure to EU topics as possible. Isabelle Caruana-Dingli, Senior Middle Leader, Sixth Form and teacher of marketing is part of a team of teachers at St Martin's College working on these initiatives.

"All sixth form students in Malta get the basic EU teaching in a standard curriculum subject called Systems of Knowledge," Ms Caruana Dingli explains.

"This teaches our pupils the basics, but we want to give them even more tools to navigate the EU through extracurricular activities. That is why we focus on events."

"We try to expose them to as many opportunities as possible. We don't

want them to grow up insularly, which otherwise is quite easy when you are born and bred on a small island."

Throughout the school year, St Martin's College organises different events and activities that include and involve as many students as possible.

"We want to promote involvement, activism and analytical thinking among our audience of 16 to 18-year-olds," says Ms Caruana Dingli.

"We organise student exchanges, both actual and virtual. We organise meetings with MEPs, particularly leading up to elections, and visits to the EU institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg, Euroscola and the European Youth Parliament."

"The students need to know the dynamics and the workings of the EU. I want them to be active and engaged in decision-making on topics that are

important for them. Many of those topics are related to the EU."

"Young people often think of the EU as something that is far away. Our activities change that. We help to make them see themselves as Europeans and we force them to form opinions."

One of the former students who joined many of St Martins' EU activities is Michaela Ellul. Now 18 years old, she went on to study law. She says that technically, the activities may be called extracurricular, but they were very well integrated into regular classes, with the same teachers involved and an almost universal interest in participation.

"We had many opportunities that not everyone gets," she says.

"In Strasbourg, for example, we visited the actual courtroom of the European Court of Human Rights and the parliament hemisphere. I really loved every aspect of it: how they presented things, how interactive it was, how we were introduced to representatives from different countries."

"I want to be a human rights lawyer. Some of the experiences from then encouraged me directly to study law and I can still use what I picked up from trips and meetings here in Malta with MEPs."

It is these little but significant nudges that Isabelle Caruana Dingli hopes to offer her students.

"At the end of the day," she says, "what we want is to stretch our students and make them look beyond the books. We want them to have as many experiences as possible, to network with other students. A lot of our students will end up studying and working abroad. They need to stand out and differentiate themselves. They need, in my marketing technology, 'unique selling points' for the world that they grow up in and will work in."





CLUB EURO CREW

Three years ago, foreign language teacher Milena Popova launched her Euro Crew Club at the Nikola Vaptsarov Vocational School for Engineering in Radomir, Bulgaria. The school specialises in industrial electronics, economics, informatics and the automation of continuous productions.

For many years Ms Popova had found that she lacked interesting and accessible ways of presenting EU topics to her students. The opportunity to start the Euro Crew Club came when the school got involved in the European Parliament Ambassador School Programme.

“Young people in Bulgaria knew too little about the European Union and the European Parliament,” she says.

“We started teaching the history of EU and then immersed ourselves in various topics such as how the European institutions work, citizens’ rights, what opportunities the EU offers young people, what it does for global warming and climate change and much more.”

The club became a success.

“The discussions on the various topics were exceptional. We held several polls related to the EU. Representatives of the European Parliament visited us. In 2019, students from the school took part in the event ‘Your Europe, Your Say!’ of the European Economic and Social Committee.”

Club Euro Crew has 15 student members who participate voluntarily. Meetings are held two or three times a month. Each meeting covers a topic related to the EU or European parliament. Two students prepare a presentation, but Milena Popova also contributes with materials.

“The specialties of our school may be technical, but they cannot be seen in isolation from the modern and dynamic world that surrounds us. Topics like these give our students an edge.”

The original members of the club have already graduated, but they continue to take part in some activities.

“They still think participation in the club is extremely useful. It has taught them a lot and enriched their sense of preparedness for being citizens of European union.”

A SECOND LIFE FOR CITIZENSHIP TRAINING

The University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro in Vila Real, east of Porto in northern Portugal designed a project that would address the lack of training in EU citizenship with compelling teaching methodologies.

Paulo Martins, Director of the PhD in Web Science and Technology at the university was the coordinator of the project. His main research area is technology-enhanced learning, so designing the methodology for this project was just the job for him. He worked with colleagues from social sciences on the actual EU content.



“Our focus was the development of EU citizenship skills among young people aged 15 to 18. The subject was, and still is, not very well covered in secondary schools.”

“We developed a methodology that would grab their attention and would make learning less dry and heavy. We had to, because we could not make the programme mandatory. It remained strictly extracurricular. We chose a 3D virtual world approach, bringing together five schools. Two teachers per school were involved and a total of 240 students.”

“We started out with a survey among students to find the priority areas of study. Then we prepared the 10 teachers, both in European citizenship topics and in the technology we were going to use. When all was set, we launched the core of the project: the work in the virtual worlds.”

“In Second Life, we developed eight different islands representing eight member states. The starting point was a virtual copy of Lisbon’s famous square Terreiro do Paço.”

“There were five learning activities for the students. The first three took place on the Portuguese island. We had to be careful planning our topics because things that seemed

obvious to us – such as where all the member states were, and which countries are Euro-countries – turned out to not always be so obvious for our students. We touched upon politics, the environment, family, consumption and intercultural dialogue, but there were also country puzzles and tasks where they had to collect travel documents to travel to a country which they wanted to visit in the fourth activity.”

“Finally, in the fifth block called Police Squad, the students returned to Portugal to identify and police human rights violations.”

“Not everything played out in Second Life. There was also a Facebook extension modelled on the TV show Who Wants to be a Millionaire, complete with phone support, asking a friend, and double-or-nothing.”

“The project left its mark not just on the students, but also on the participating schools and particularly their teachers, who not only learned how to approach EU matter but also experienced first-hand how much this education is actually needed.”

TRAVELLING IN THE CLASSROOM

When Portugal joined the EU in 1986, the country's first European debate club was set up at São Bruno School in Caxias, Portugal. The close link meant that from that moment, interested children had unlimited access to EU discussions. More than 30 years later, the school won the Jan Amos Comenius Prize for its relentless coverage of all things European in the classroom.

Isabel Lourenco is the school headmaster and former coordinator of the European Club. Marlene Lucas is responsible for the EU teaching in seventh grade and many of the schools international activities.



"In Portugal, EU topics are spread across the national curricula in history and geography, but we can adjust up to 25% of the curriculum," says Ms Lourenco.

"A decade ago, we decided to introduce our subject called European Culture and Projects. We wanted to teach our children not just what countries are members of the EU but what the common values are and why. This has become part of their curriculum 90 minutes a week for a semester in seventh grade."

"We teach about the history and geography of the EU and about the Euro – the coin that shows them how much the EU is a part of their everyday lives. Then we introduce all topics related to the present. Every year we have

different matters to discuss, typically following the EU's themed years, such as the European Year of Cultural Heritage and now the European Year of Rail. Two years ago, when there were elections, we focused on democracy and voting."

"I try not to present everything on a silver platter. I want to make them feel it, by letting them work together to find information. Just like in the EU, they have to overcome disagreement and find consensus."

"We also participated in two Erasmus+ projects to give other teachers the opportunity to go to Europe and gather new knowledge and experiences for their teaching at home. In this way, we also affect teaching in other subjects."

Asked why their work is so important, Ms Lourenco exclaims: *"Because we are Europeans!"*

"Our pupils are young European citizens," Ms Lucas adds, "I want them to know the core aims of the EU: peace and stability, cooperation and collaboration, but also the relevance in their lives of democracy and the environment."

"We can see that our pupils have gotten a stronger international outlook," concludes Ms Lourenco. "Many participate in Erasmus and study abroad. In fact, last year a student interviewed for the Comenius Prize said that European Culture and Projects is like travelling in the classroom. These classes are really what sets our school apart from others."²

2 Some subtitled testimonials of pupils from São Bruno can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSES2s6KV_c

A NOT SO TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Mauve Carbonell is a history teacher and Jean Monnet Chair at Aix-Marseille Université in southern France.

In 2019, she co-wrote the publication *Teaching Europe and the EU at School*³, which probes whether school education, which has often been a tool in the formation of national identities, can also be a tool for the development of a European identity.

As a researcher in 2012, she became aware of the Learning EU at School pilot action and recognised the potential of it for the south of France where, as she says, “students don’t speak foreign languages, people know little about the EU and there is a lot of nationalism.”

“Teachers here could not teach EU topics because they were afraid of the subject, they did not know how to teach it and they didn’t have any tools.

It is a touchy subject, almost like religion.

They didn’t feel comfortable with it.”

Ms Carbonell set out to analyse the situation with a group of 15 researchers and teacher trainers. Together they proposed tools that could help teachers present European topics.

“One constraining factor was always that our work had to fit into the mandatory programme of the education nationale. There is a small section on teaching European topics and we talked a lot about how to improve that. Apart from the history and geography of the EU, we also wanted to introduce topics related to cultural and language diversity, civil rights and citizenship.”

“Another constraining factor was that we simply had to come up with local solutions. There are tools on EU websites, but French teachers will generally not accept content that comes directly from Brussels. We had to make our own.”

“We created two games. One game for 7-year-olds and one for 10-year-olds. We could test them throughout Aix-en-Provence because the teacher training college has such good contacts in the region.”

“The first game was

a kind of trivial pursuit

with a big map. The class was divided

in five or six groups. They had to answer questions

about the EU. We gave them the resources to help answer the questions. When they had a correct answer, they could go to the big map which was made up of magnets and add a piece.”

“We tried to find a way to disseminate our work. We saw that the teachers and the education directorate were enthusiastic, but we lacked the link with an entrepreneur or a company who could commercialise the game.”

“Unfortunately, not much has changed since and if we are to find a solution, we must address the teachers. There are large parts of Europe where teachers speak no foreign languages and know little about Europe or even the world and international relations. So of course, they cannot teach students these things either.”

“I believe it is primarily the teacher training institutions that we must address.”

3 L’enseignement de l’Europe et de l’Union européenne à l’école, Nathalie Rezzi et Mauve Carbonell L’harmattan, 2019.



LEARNING CONSENSUS

Louis Sund went to a Danish high school (gymnasium) between 2017 and 2020. EU subjects were part of the standard social sciences curriculum, but the international line of his school, Tornbjerg Gymnasium in Odense, went out of its way to raise the bar for its students.

“In Denmark, the first time you learn about the EU is in primary school but that just covers the key history lines and which countries are Member States,” he says.

“In high school we delved deeper into it, but for me the real learning began when we started to emulate EU debates through EU youth parliament sessions with sister schools in Sweden and Germany.”

“In international groups of students that acted as parliament committees, we had to tackle current EU topics, such as equality and sustainability. We had

to debate these topics from different angles, reach consensus, make joint cases, defend these to other groups and vote on them.”

“The first schools we did this with were schools in Gothenburg, Sweden, and Eutin, Germany. Even though we’re culturally quite close, we thought it was pretty hard to reach consensus.”

“That was until we visited the school in Eutin and had to do the same exercise with groups of Italian and Romanian students. That really taught us how difficult it is to reach consensus across Europe.”

“We learned a lot about European institutions and we got to truly appreciate how easy it has become for us to meet and work together across EU borders, but the appreciation of consensus-building across European cultures is my key take-away from it all. It is what really stayed with me to this day – and probably forever.”



NOT SELLING THE EU

Viki Malcolm is a teacher of modern languages and European studies at The King's Hospital School in Dublin, Ireland. This boarding school of 750 students has a solid reputation in teaching EU topics at school. Viki Malcolm is the driving force behind it.

"We teach European studies just to students of the fourth year in our school," Ms Malcolm says.

"This is what in Ireland we call transition year – a year where students do different off-curriculum subjects. They have their core subjects but also others."

"As part of the European Parliament Ambassador School [EPAS] programme, we offer our students a set EU programme in that transition year. We look at EU institutions, we look at the decision-making processes, current affairs and European values. We look at areas where the EU has competence and where they don't. And then of course we look at the democratic process."

"Ireland is a small country, so it is possible to establish very good relationships with our MEPs, which is wonderful."

"We also set up an EU info point. We organise a Europe-themed event every year and we take part in EU activities, such as eTwinning and Erasmus+. We take part in the European Youth Parliament and the Model Council of the EU. This year, we have also started working with the parliament office in Washington on a project called Bridge the Pond. That twinned us with a school in Virginia."

"What draws our students in is working with young people in other countries. Connecting with peers makes it meaningful and takes the teacher out of it. That can be unnerving for us, but it is fantastic to see what happens when you just sit

there at the back of the Zoom call, being the adult in the room and nothing else. More of that!"

"We start the week with the newsroom. One student is tasked with the job to find three topics to present for next week. They learn how to source their information, how to present something, discuss it and defend it."

"The European Youth Parliament is brilliant for that too. They start in a regional session and when they are ready, they progress to a national session."

"What it does to students is fantastic! When we get them in, they typically lack the confidence to form an opinion. That is a big problem. They don't trust themselves. We give them all the tools we need to debate. My classroom is just always talking."

"I would wish that work like this were on the standard curriculum in Ireland, even just for a few weeks or two months. It is essential! Students need to know how to form their own opinions, defend their beliefs, speak up for themselves, be involved and a part of the society around them. I'm not selling students the EU. I'm encouraging them to think for themselves. They discover that decision-making in the EU is much more of a discussion process and not just things being imposed, as most seem to think."

SMALL STEPS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

A decade ago, Italian school children were used to rather traditional ways of teaching and had no EU subjects on the standard curriculum other than the basic developments of post-war European history.

A series of projects around Bologna changed this: they introduced a novel teaching method that was certain to grab the kids' attention and they employed it to teach EU in school.

Marco Balboni, a professor of EU Law at the University of Bologna coordinated the projects.

"As a professor, I was contacted by a group of young communication experts who experimented with teaching 10 to 13-year-olds through video production."

One of them, a former student, was Gaia Farina who ran the Associazione Scomunicati with fellow students in communication sciences. They were looking at participatory video as a teaching methodology and sought the support of Balboni to get the legal and EU expertise necessary to seek EU funding.

"We ended up working together on three projects," says Gaia Farina. "The first was View on EU."

Prof Balboni's task was to prepare the EU-related teaching matter.

"I instructed the teachers with the help of a booklet we produced. We called it Small Steps in the European Union. It translated core EU topics into a language that was suitable for such a young audience."

"We worked on the Treaty of Lisbon. The pupils picked one article from it, such as anti-discrimination, human rights or freedom of expression. Then, with the help of the Associazione Scomunicati, they made a creative video about it. Anti-discrimination was, in fact, the most popular topic."





Balboni developed the content for the teachers but also went and taught together with the teachers themselves.

“The schoolkids very excitedly shared what they knew and what they had learned about the EU,” says Gaia Farina.

The methodology suited them very well and gave them a language to communicate with their peers. They were involved and they produced some amazing videos that are still available online.⁴

“Eventually we ran three projects almost consecutively. The second project was Road to EU. This was also a video project based on a series of workshops organised in three lower

secondary schools. The third was Play with EU, a board game imparting basic knowledge about the EU.”

“Many professors have contacted us since to repeat the workshops in their classes or for us to present in their schools the work we did. However, continuing that work without funds is difficult in Italy. Yet, I know that many professors have been inspired to use video to introduce the history, institutions and fundamental principles of the European Union into their lessons and on the still active Facebook pages we receive many messages from teachers who say that they use it in their daily school practice.”

4 <https://www.youtube.com/user/ViewOnEU/videos>

Support for teaching about Europe through the Jean Monnet Action



The EU's Jean Monnet Actions stimulate teaching and research on the European Union.

In the past decades, support has mainly taken the form of grants for the development of teaching modules in European integration studies, the designation of Jean Monnet Chairs and financial support for Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence for teaching and research at the level of higher education. Networking activities and innovative projects have been supported too.

Until 2020, support was largely limited to activities in higher education.

The new actions for schools and vocational education institutions

In the years ahead, Jean Monnet support will take a big step further. New strands were added in 2020 and 2021 that directly help teachers in primary, secondary, and vocational education to be more confident in tackling European Union issues and to inform young people about it and its functioning. The new actions allow teachers to teach in engaging ways that help to develop critical awareness of what the EU stands for and what difference it makes to our daily lives.

The newly designed Jean Monnet Actions are:



Jean Monnet “Learning EU Initiatives”

These are activities that will boost learning about the European Union in ways that inspire. They can be proposed by a single general or vocational education institution and may be implemented with the support of higher education institutions or other organisations.

Learning EU initiatives should include the development and delivery of specific content to be taught during the school year. In this case, the school year can include summer schools or specific project weeks, seminars and debates, and other educational activities.

Jean Monnet Teacher Training

Teacher training activities will help teacher training institutions to develop new material and methodologies covering EU learning for initial and in-service level teacher training. They may be developed, organised, and delivered in traditional, blended, or online formats. Their output must be certified and recognised.



Jean Monnet Networks

Networks between schools in different countries may be supported to promote the international exchange of good practice in teaching about the EU.

All proposed activities are to be of a three-year duration.

More information can be obtained from the [Erasmus+ website](#).





Who was Jean Monnet?

Jean Monnet (1888-1978) was a French-born international merchant, banker and diplomat who today is considered one of the founding fathers of the European Union.

He was never elected to any office but during different times of his life he was a highly respected advisor of governments on both sides of the Atlantic and even in China.

After pulling France out of the economic trauma of World War II, he became the first president of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, the 1950s predecessor to the European Union.

As early as during World War I and throughout his entire life he promoted international economic cooperation as a driver for peace and prosperity.

Jean Monnet was the first-ever individual to be bestowed Honorary Citizenship of Europe in 1976.

So why have more than 30 years of EU education actions been called after him? Well, Jean Monnet realised very early on that European integration was impossible without actively involving everyone. By “everyone” he meant not only the political parties, employers and trade unions, but first and foremost the citizens themselves. To really reach everyone, then as much as now, you needed to work closely with the informers in society: primarily education and the media.



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