



Introduction for staff

In all age groups in the UK there are indications of a lack of knowledge and understanding of the European Union (EU) and not many Britons, it seems, identify in a positive way with Europe. In a recent survey of identities in different EU countries 4% of UK respondents chose “European” as the one word they most identified with compared with 23% in Germany and 20% in Poland¹. Interpretations and views of these findings will vary. However, there can be no doubt that combating a lack of interest in, and ignorance of, European institutions and issues is an important task for citizenship education.

On the following pages we have summarised some main points of the history and purpose of various European institutions as background for staff working with young people. Some activities are provided to raise students’ awareness of Europe and to encourage them engage in some of the arguments.

Citizenship learning opportunities

Many citizenship questions arise in relation to the development of the EU, the UK’s membership and the role of Europe in the wider world. Among them are:

- What citizenship rights and responsibilities are entailed in EU membership?
- Should we think of ourselves as being citizens of Europe?
- How do the powers of the EU affect our daily lives?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of EU membership for the UK?
- How do citizenship rights vary across different European countries?
- Citizens of the 28 EU States have the right to live and work in any member country. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these migration rights?
- Should the process of enlarging the EU continue further?
- How democratic is the EU? Should it be more open and democratic?
- Is there fair representation of the EU and individual European countries in the British media?
- Overall Europe is a rich continent. What does the EU do – and what should it do – about problems in other parts of the world?

These materials can be used to introduce learners to issues related to the EU. The activities are most appropriate for young people studying at level 2 or 3 including Citizenship Studies at GCSE, AS and A levels. However, the materials could be adapted for use with other groups and could help to meet the requirements of the Key Stage 4 Programme of Study for citizenship.

¹ *The Observer*, 1 December 2013

Suggestions for using the materials

Board Storm

In order to illustrate the variety of ideas and views about the EU, carry out a 'board storm' by asking learners to call out any words they associate with the European Union. Analyse the results by categorising the words offered into different lists:

- objective versus subjective
- positive versus negative
- accurate versus inaccurate

Quiz

Many people in this country lack knowledge of the history, institutions and role of the European Union. As another introductory activity and to build some basic knowledge, use our Quick Euro Quiz (page 10) and try to make it fun. You could put learners into groups and run it as a 'pub-quiz' style competition, with a prize for the winners.

Answers: 1 (A) 2 (B) 3 (B) 4 (D) 5 (B) 6 (C)* 7 (B) 8 (D) 9 (B) 10 (B)

**there is an exception to this: Citizens of the Republic of Ireland resident in the UK can vote in UK elections*

Debate

There are many arguments for and against the UK's membership of the EU. Of course, the arguments become more complex when people disagree over the extent of our involvement and the level of influence of European institutions over our way of life. Some of the arguments for and against are provided in 'UK and the EU – in or out?' (page 11). Use them as follows (or adapt as appropriate for your group):

- Photocopy the arguments on to card and cut them up as sets. Give a shuffled set to each pair of learners.
- Ask pairs to sort them into two piles: 'arguments for UK membership of the EU' and 'arguments against UK membership of the EU'.
- Allow about 10 minutes for this activity, and then ask pairs to join up with another pair to compare their conclusions.
- Ask each group of four to select four statements that they all agree with. They should use these statements as the basis of a short speech that they prepare and practice. They should choose one of their number to make the speech to the whole group. The speech should not be longer than three minutes. Ask another learner to time them to make sure they do not exceed the limit and use a whistle or bell when their time is up.
- This activity can form the basis of preparation for a formal debate on UK membership of the EU ending with those present voting on the issue.
- As part of the debrief, encourage learners to form their own opinions on some of the

wider issues relating to the UK membership of the EU:

- How democratic is the European Union?
- What advantages does membership give to the EU countries?
- Do all countries benefit equally from these advantages?
- Is the standardisation of rights, regulations and working conditions good for citizens of EU countries or not?
- What should the role of the EU be in the wider world? Has it been successful in playing this role?
- How does membership of the EU affect the UK's relationships with countries outside of the Union?

For further arguments on the UK staying in or coming out of the EU see the BBC news website: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20448450

Also, for further background on the 'in-out' EU debate, see the *Evening Standard* guide to EU rights (and addressing the question 'So what has Europe ever done for you?') at www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/european-debate/

- For a follow-up activity distribute copies and ask learners to read the article "Young people 'want UK to stay in Europe'" (see pages 13-14).

Discuss the article with learners.

Do the figures in the article about support for the EU reflect the views of your own learners on this issue?

In the discussion raise the issue of how far young people do (or should) vote in elections to make their views (about Europe and other issues) count, as compared with the views of people in older age groups who have a record of being much more likely to vote in elections.

Background to European institutions

After the Second World War, 10 European countries came together in 1949 to form the **Council of Europe**. They wanted to prevent a European war ever happening again. They also wanted to make sure that the horrors of concentration camps, genocide and forced labour could be prevented in the future, and so they set up a code of rights that all European countries would respect. They called this code the **European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (ECHR)**. It was based on the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, agreed



in 1948 by the

fledgling United Nations. The Council of Europe set up the **European Court of Human Rights** in Strasbourg where individual people could go above the heads of their own government to bring a case. It was later decided that these rights should also become law in each member country, although this has not yet happened in all 47 members.



Although all 28 countries of the **European Union (EU)** also belong to the Council of Europe, the two organisations are different and separate. The European Union has its origins in co-operation over coal and steel production. There was a huge task to rebuild Europe after the massive destruction of World War II and greatly increasing coal and steel production was essential to this effort. In response six countries (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) got together to form the **European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)**.



This was established by the **Treaty of Paris in 1951** and created a common market for the member's coal and steel industries.

A wider aim, after two World Wars starting in Europe, was to try to ensure future peace through economic co-operation and inter-dependence between the countries involved in the ECSC, and 60 years later, in 2012, **the European Union received the Nobel Peace Prize** for advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.

In a further key step forward the same six countries signed the **Treaty of Rome in 1957**, creating the **European Economic Community (EEC)**. This involved building a wider common market covering a whole range of goods and services and all customs duties between the six countries were abolished in 1968. The EEC later became known as the **European Community (EC)** - the word 'economic' was dropped from the name to demonstrate that cooperation was no longer only concerned with matters of trade.

The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) introduced new forms of co-operation between the governments of member states – for example on defence, and in the area of justice and home affairs. By adding this inter-governmental co-operation to the existing community, the Maastricht Treaty created the European Union (EU).

The number of members of the EU has gradually increased since 1957. The UK joined in 1973, and at the beginning of 2004 there were 15 members: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In 2004, '**enlargement**' allowed in ten new member countries: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania followed on 1 January 2007 and Croatia on 1 July 2013. Albania; Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Montenegro; Serbia; Turkey are candidate countries – they have applied but have not yet been allowed to join. In order to join the European Union, a state needs to fulfill the economic and political conditions generally known as the Copenhagen criteria (after the Copenhagen summit in June 1993). That requires a secular, democratic government, rule of law and corresponding freedoms and institutions. According to the EU Treaty, each current member state and also the European Parliament have to agree to any enlargement.

Economic and political integration between the current 28 member states of the European Union means that these countries have to take joint decisions on many matters with limits on whether individual countries can veto proposals acceptable to the majority. They have developed common policies across a very wide range of fields – from agriculture to culture, from consumer affairs to competition, from the environment and energy to transport and trade.

The **Treaty of Lisbon (2009)** defined what the EU can and cannot do and made some alterations to the structure of the EU's institutions and how they work, with the overall aim of making the EU more democratic and reinforcing its core values. Changes included greater powers for the Parliament – equal status with the Council of the European Union in making laws and more say on the EU budget and the appointment of the President of the European Commission – and a Citizens' Initiative where a policy change will be considered if one million citizens petition for it.

EU Institutions

The European Council

The role of the European Council is to define the political direction of the EU and determine its priorities. The European Council consists of the Heads of State or Government of the 28 Member States, together with its President and the President of the European Commission. It meets twice every six months and, as required, the President can convene special meetings of the Council. It meets in Brussels.

The European Commission

The European Commission carries out much of the day-to-day work of the European Union. It drafts proposals for new European laws, which it presents to the European Parliament and the Council of The European Union. The Commission makes sure that EU decisions are properly carried out and supervises the way EU funds are spent. It also plays an important role in ensuring that everyone abides by the European treaties and European law.

The Commission is led by a President and 28 Commissioners, assisted by over 30,000 other staff. Each member country nominates one commissioner although their acceptance for the role is subject to consultation with the incoming president and acceptance by Parliament. The Commission is appointed for a five-year term, but it can be dismissed by Parliament.

The Commission acts independently of the governments of the member states. Many, but not all, of its staff work in Brussels. The President of the European Commission is the head of the executive body of the European Union.

The 28 Commissioners each have responsibility for a particular area of EU policy.

The Court of Justice of the European Communities

Its job is to ensure that EU legislation (technically known as “Community law”) is interpreted and applied in the same way in each member state. The Court has the power to settle legal disputes between member states, EU institutions, businesses and individuals.

The Court is composed of one judge per member state, so that all the EU’s national legal systems are represented. The Court is assisted by eight ‘advocates-general’. Their role is to present reasoned opinions on the cases brought before the Court. They must do so publicly and impartially. The judges and advocates-general are either former members of the highest national courts or highly competent lawyers who can be relied on to show impartiality. They are appointed by joint agreement of the governments of the member states. Each is appointed for a term of six years, after which they may be re-appointed for one or two further periods of three years.

The Council of the European Union

The Council is a key decision-making body of the European Union. It is made up of government ministers from each country. Depending on the issue on the agenda countries are represented by the minister responsible for that subject (foreign affairs, finance, social affairs, transport, agriculture, etc.).



Through a process of ‘co-decision making’ the Council shares responsibility for law making in the EU with the European Parliament. The Presidency of the Council is held for six months by each member state on a rota basis.

The European Parliament

Since 1979, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have been directly elected by the citizens they represent. Parliamentary elections are held every five years, and every EU citizen who is registered as a voter is entitled to vote. From the May 2014 election there are 751 MEPs.

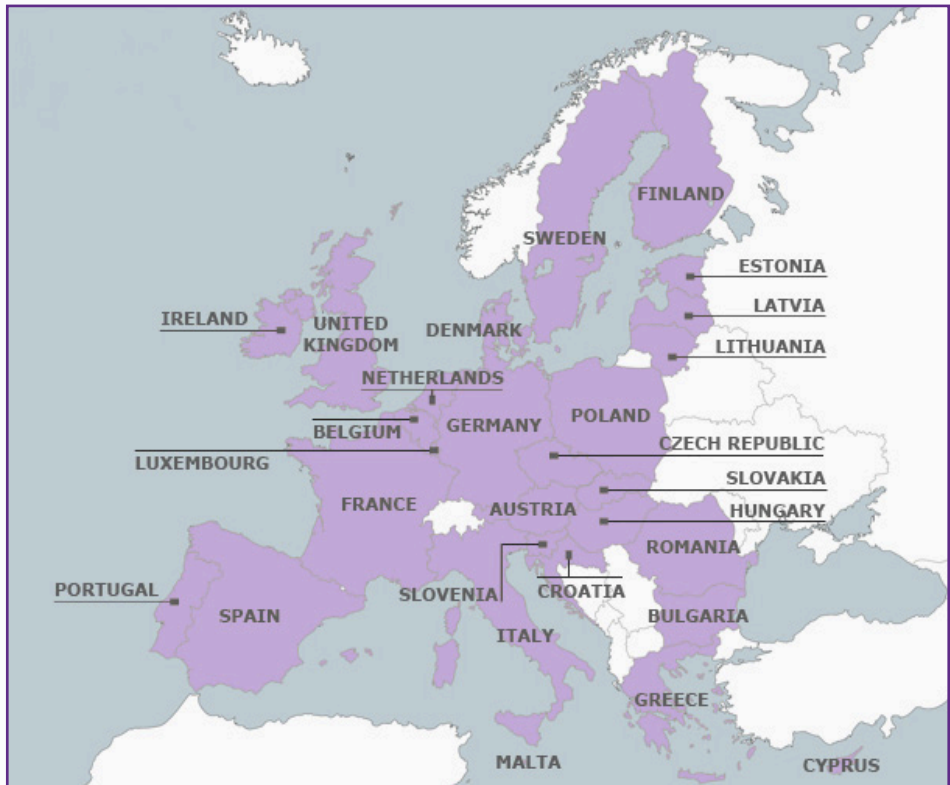
The European Parliament works in France, Belgium and Luxembourg. The monthly plenary sessions, which all MEPs attend, are held in Strasbourg – the Parliament’s ‘seat’. Parliamentary committee meetings and any additional full sessions are held in Brussels, whilst Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the “General Secretariat”). The MEPs do not sit in national blocks but in Europe-wide political groupings that bring together all the main political parties operating in the EU member states. The Parliament has four main roles:

- It shares with the Council of the European Union the power to make new laws for the EU.
- It shares with the Council of the European Union authority over the EU budget.
- It has democratic supervision over all EU institutions, particularly the Commission. This means it keeps an eye on how these institutions are working, and can sack the whole Commission if there are sufficient concerns.
- It plays a key role in the appointment of the President of the Commission.

European Union – ten key facts

- 1 The first step towards the EU was when six countries (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) signed the Treaty of Paris in 1951 to form the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). In 1957 the same six countries agreed the Treaty of Rome. This established the European Economic Community (EEC), creating a wider common market for trade between the member states.
- 2 It is different from the Council of Europe, which has 47 members, and was set up to protect human rights following the Second World War.
- 3 The European Union today has 28 members, including 10 new members that joined in 2004 under 'enlargement', two that joined in 2007 and one in 2013.
- 4 The UK joined in 1973, but has not yet joined the 'Eurozone'. This consists of 19 countries that use the euro (€) as their common currency. The 19 countries are: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.
- 5 Membership of the EU gives citizens of member countries the right to live, work and trade in any other country of the EU.
- 6 The European Commission consists of a President and 28 Commissioners, assisted by many thousands of staff members. The Commission carries out the day-to-day work of the European Union, drafting proposals for new laws and overseeing the way the work of the EU is carried out.
- 7 The EU has a Parliament of 751 Members who are voted in by citizens of every member country at the same time, every five years. Parliament oversees the Commission and, with the Council of The European Union (of national governments), it makes EU laws and decides how the EU budget is spent.
- 8 The Council of The European Union is a key decision-making body of the EU. It is made up of the relevant ministers of each country's national government, depending on the issue being discussed. For example, if the issue is housing, then all housing ministers will attend.
- 9 The Court of Justice of the European Union makes sure that EU laws are carried out properly in each member country. It also settles disagreements between countries.
- 10 The EU has standard regulations and laws on many aspects of life and work in the member countries. These regulations can lead to much disagreement.

Map of Europe and the European Union



QUICK EURO QUIZ

1. What was the first step towards the European Union (EU)?

- A) The European Coal and Steel Community
- B) The Cross Europe Economic Confederation
- C) The Common Agricultural Policy

2. When did the UK join the European Economic Community?

- A) 1963
- B) 1973
- C) 1983

3. How many countries are there in the EU today?

- A) 27
- B) 28
- C) 47

4. Which of the following is NOT a member of the EU?

- A) France
- B) UK
- C) Germany
- D) Turkey

5. 19 EU countries have adopted the Euro as their currency. Which of the following countries is part of the Eurozone?

- A) Denmark
- B) Italy
- C) UK
- D) Sweden

6. Which of the following is NOT a right of EU citizens?

- A) The right to work in another EU country
- B) The right to live in another EU country
- C) The right to vote in national elections of another EU country
- D) The right to trade in another EU country

7. Which of the following institutions is directly elected by citizens across the EU?

- A) The European Commission
- B) The European Parliament
- C) The Council of the European Union
- D) The European Court of Justice

8. Which of the following is NOT a key aim of the EU

- A) To prevent European wars
- B) To enable the free flow of goods and people within the EU
- C) To make trade easier by removing barriers
- D) To promote tourism between member states

9. How often do elections to the European Parliament take place?

- A) 3 years
- B) 5 years
- C) 7 years

10. Which of these is the odd one out?

- A) The Council of the European Union
- B) The Council of Europe
- C) The European Commission
- D) The European Parliament
- E) The European Council

UK and the EU: In or out?

STATEMENTS FOR STAYING IN

The EU provides **security** for its members. After the two devastating world wars of the 20th Century, the EU has ensured that no European countries will fight each other again. The Union also gives greater security from outside attack.

The EU provides a **huge market** for companies within the area to trade in. There are no barriers to trade, no taxes or restrictions, and people have greater choice. Goods coming into the EU from outside the area are taxed and that makes them more expensive for consumers to buy.

The EU aims to protect the **environment**. There are rules and regulations controlling pollution, waste disposal, CO2 emissions, water cleanliness, etc. Countries wishing to join the EU have to have plans in place to clean up the environment.

EU regulations are being **standardised** all across the area so that people in different member countries get the same rights at work, the same standard of benefits, and the same human rights.

All citizens of countries within the EU have the right to **live and work** in any of the other member countries. This gives people much more freedom to improve their quality of life and find work that they enjoy.

The EU **helps poorer countries and regions** in Europe by providing the money for regeneration and job creation. This can include road-building, parks' redevelopment, funding of community facilities, etc.

The huge trading area of the EU and the funding for poorer areas means that **many jobs** depend on the UK membership of the EU. Some countries, such as Japan, build factories here so that they have a way into the European market.

The EU promotes **democracy and human rights**. New member countries have to agree to abide by democratic principles in their governments, and they have to protect human rights in the way that all people, including criminals and opposition groups, are treated.

The EU can be a **force for good in the rest of the world** and has more power than the separate countries operating alone. This is especially important now that the USA is the only superpower left in the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

EU regulations make sure that goods and services produced in the member countries have to **meet certain standards of quality and safety**. This is good for the consumer and also for the people who make the products.

UK and the EU: In or out?

STATEMENTS FOR COMING OUT

The close relationship between members of the EU can **undermine relationships** with other countries. Britain has always had strong relationships with Commonwealth countries, but trade has been affected by our membership of the EU.

The EU regulations create a mountain of **'red tape'** for businesses and other organisations, and some of them are not sensible, like the rule stating that some British chocolate must be called 'family milk chocolate' when sold in other European countries.

The free movement of people around Europe means that anyone from the EU can come to our country and get work, housing and benefits. The government has **no way of controlling how many people come**, where they live in the UK or what jobs they get.

Some countries in the EU **have more power** than others within the Union. The bigger countries have more seats in the Parliament, and their governments seem to have more say over what happens.

The aim of some countries in the EU is for much **closer political and economic union** - almost a 'Unites States of Europe'. This would affect each country's sovereignty.

Some EU **policies favour particular groups of workers** and industries at the expense of others. The agricultural policy, for example, allows for huge sums of money to subsidise farmers, sometimes for not using their land at all.

EU organisations have **too much power** and have taken away the right of individual countries to make their own decisions about matters that directly affect them - for example, about hours people can work and how much holiday they should have.

Although the EU is very good for poorer countries, especially for the new members from Eastern Europe which get a lot of financial help to improve their environment and facilities, **the richer countries, like the UK, France and Germany, have to pay a great deal towards this.**

The EU is **undemocratic** in that decisions are made a long way away from individual people. Many people do not understand how European institutions work and do not even know who their local Member of the European Parliament is. They cannot protest about the decisions they do not agree with.

The regulations on acceptable quality of goods to be sold within the EU has meant that some of our previous trading partners in the third world are unable to sell to us, and have **trade barriers** operating against them.

Young people ‘want to stay in Europe’

Young Britons are significantly more pro-European than older generations and fear that leaving the EU would jeopardise their job prospects at home and on the Continent, research suggests.

A “generation gap” has opened up in British attitudes to Europe, with young people who have grown up with the freedom of movement reluctant to give up the right to pursue career opportunities in other EU countries.

The poll by ICM Research, found that 41 per cent of adults aged between 18 and 24 were either firmly in favour of EU membership or leaning towards support, against 32 per cent who took the opposite view – a pro-EU gap (after rounding) of eight points.

By contrast, the survey found an anti-EU majority of 25 points among the over-65s, with 60 per cent strongly against continued membership or leaning towards that stance, and only 35 per cent taking the opposite position.

The findings of the British Future poll imply that a referendum on EU membership could divide the country down generational lines, rather than by class, gender or geography.

Mr Cameron has promised a na-

tional vote by the end of 2017 if the Conservatives win the next election.

Fear about what impact withdrawal from the EU will have on jobs appears to be the key reason for the gulf between age groups.

Asked what risks would influence their decision in a referendum, 82 per cent of young voters named the effect on the economy and employment, compared with 62 per cent of over-65s.

The gap was even more striking among voters who raised concerns about Britons’ potential loss of the right to work in the EU, with 77 per cent of under-25s citing it as a risk, against 49 per cent of older voters.

More than three-quarters (76 per cent) of those aged 18 to 24 are worried about losing EU inward funding for disadvantaged areas of the UK, versus 54 per cent of the 65-plus group who viewed this as a risk.

Younger people said they were concerned that the UK’s response to EU migration should not discriminate against newcomers, which is likely to reflect how this age group has been brought up in a much more mul-

tiracial society than their older relatives.

By a majority of nearly eight to one (70 per cent to 9 per cent) they agreed with the statement:

“People are worried that immigration from Romania and Bulgaria will put pressures on local public services and we need to manage that. But let’s not stir up tensions before they’ve even got here – we can deal with the issues without being prejudiced”.

In contrast, the statement was supported by a majority of less than two to one among over-65s (56 per cent to 29 per cent).

Case study

AG, 23, from Manchester, moved to Germany in January 2013. He teaches English to business clients around Berlin.

“Before I migrated to Germany, the European Parliament wasn’t on my agenda. Since migrating, that is no longer the case and I share the fears expressed in this survey about losing that free movement.

“I originally moved because of the employment situation in Britain. There was no shortage of opportunities abroad. I just loved the ease with which I could

move and I remember remarking at the time to my parents that it seemed even easier to move to Germany, paperwork-wise, than it did to get a job in my local area.

“I am concerned [about potential movement restrictions]. I think it would be a tragedy to lose such a privilege. I had American and Australian colleagues in Kiel who were always fretting about visas and I was marvelling at how great it was that I didn’t have that inconvenience.”

Adapted from
The Independent
15 December 2013

Resources and Links

The European Parliament

www.europarl.org.uk

This website of the European Parliament's office in the UK gives information on educational resources and other publications. The website www.europarl.eu.int offers an overview of the European Parliament, including an audiovisual guide, contacts and link to the citizens' portal.

The European Commission

www.cec.org.uk

The UK offices of the Commission report on political, social, economic and social developments in the UK and publish booklets, guides and newsletters, some for downloading.

European Youth Parliament

www.eybuk.org

The EYP seeks to promote the European dimension in education and give 16–22 year olds the opportunity to participate in 'a practical, positive learning experience', express opinions and take an interest in current affairs and the democratic process. Activities include three international 9-day sessions, national committees, European studies programmes and a Young European of the Year Award.

Active Citizens FE European Union Teaching Resources

www.activecitizensfe.org.uk/european-union-teaching-resources.html

A collection of resources for teaching learners about the European Union; including detailed lesson plans and activities as well as items that teachers can use in developing their own plans. Websites containing free resources and links to projects and forums in which teachers may wish to explore taking part.

Published by ACFE 2014. This resource pack was originally written by Julia Fiehn and published by QIA (2007) as part of the Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme. In order to maintain its usefulness and availability it has been revised and updated by Active Citizens FE.

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
Active Citizens FE (ACFE) www.activecitizensfe.org.uk