

DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Info sheets for older children



RECONNECT

BINGHAM
CENTRE FOR
THE
RULE
OF
LAW

Leuven Centre
for Global
Governance Studies

INTRODUCTION

As part of the RECONNECT research project on ‘Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and the Rule of Law’ (www.reconnect-europe.eu), the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, together with the University of Leuven, has created a set of educational materials for young people living in the European Union.

Concepts like rule of law, democracy and human rights can be complex, but teaching them doesn’t have to be! The set of educational materials covers 10 topics in total and its primary aim is to enable students and educators to engage in class discussions about the EU, and about the meaning and importance of European core concepts such as the rule of law, democracy and human rights. The materials also include topics that will appeal to a younger audience such as children’s rights, migration, climate change, social media, and education.

For each of the 10 topics, there is an info sheet for younger children (primary school / approximately 9-11 years old), an info sheet for older students (secondary school / approximately 12-16 years old) and some short guidance notes for educators.

In this booklet, we have collated the 10 info sheets aimed at older students. The guidance notes for educators that accompany the info sheets are available on the dedicated project web page (<https://reconnect-europe.eu/educators>).

Depending on reading ability, the info sheets can be read by students independently or as a class, before the teacher leads a class discussion. The info sheets are intended to be free standing guides to the ten topics and as such they can be used alone or alongside other teaching resources as part of wider citizenship education in schools.

The educational materials are also available to view, download and print on a dedicated website (<https://reconnect-europe.eu/youthresourcecentre/>).

For university students, professionals, and life-long learners, RECONNECT researchers teach a Massive Open Online Course as an introduction to democracy and rule of law in Europe (<https://reconnect-europe.eu/mooc/>).

We hope that you will find these educational materials interesting and useful.

With many thanks to Dan Gould Design for the graphic design (<https://www.dangould.co.uk>).

The Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and the University of Leuven are two of 18 partner organisations participating in the RECONNECT research project on ‘Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and the Rule of Law’ (www.reconnect-europe.eu). The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation programme under Grant Agreement no. 770142.

TOPIC 1: WHAT IS THE EU?

1 WHAT IS THE EU?

The EU is an organisation of European countries and 'EU' stands for 'European Union'. Out of 50 countries in Europe, 27 are members of the EU. The EU operates a bit like a country – and it has its own values, flag, central bank, banknotes and coins, parliament and court. All the citizens of the member countries of the EU are also called EU citizens.



QUICK FACTS

- There are **446 million people** living in the EU – which is the world's third largest population, after China and India.
- There are **24 official languages** in the EU and each year on 26 September, we celebrate the European Day of Languages.
- The **longest river** in the EU is the River Danube, which begins in Germany and flows through 10 countries.
- By size, France is the **biggest country** in the EU and Malta is the smallest.
- The **richest country** in the EU is Luxembourg while the poorest is Bulgaria.
- The **largest city** in the EU is Berlin (3.7 million inhabitants).
- The **EU's capital city** is Brussels, which is also the capital of Belgium.



THE EU SYMBOLS

- The **European flag** features a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background. They stand for the values of unity, togetherness and harmony among the peoples of Europe.
- The **EU's motto** is "United in diversity", which is about Europeans coming together to work for peace and prosperity, and about celebrating our different cultures, traditions and languages.
- Each year on 9 May, we have **Europe Day** to celebrate peace and unity in Europe.
- There is also a **European anthem**.

2

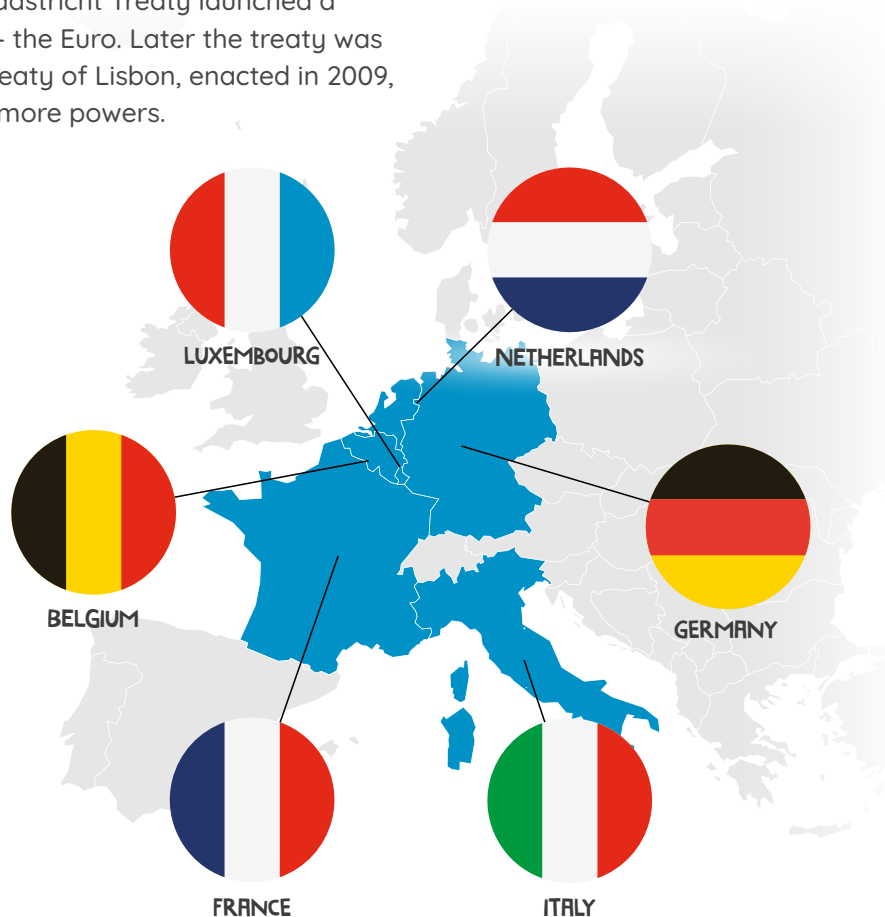
HOW WAS THE EU CREATED?

The community that we know today as the EU first began in the 1950s after the Second World War. Originally there were six “founding countries”: Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. Among other things, the community was designed to help break down trade barriers between countries in Europe, to increase competition between member states, and establish common agricultural and trade agreements and standards through a single market. Since then, more countries have joined and the community has changed its name several times: European Economic Community (EEC), European Community (EC), European Union (EU).

In 1992, the EU was officially formed via the Maastricht Treaty, which was signed by 12 countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom – hence the 12 golden stars in the EU flag). Most significantly, the Maastricht Treaty launched a common currency - the Euro. Later the treaty was amended by the Treaty of Lisbon, enacted in 2009, which gave the EU more powers.

There are now 27 EU member states. On 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom left the EU. It was the first member country to leave the EU and this was called “Brexit”. The EU is also negotiating the entry of new members (candidate countries) e.g., Albania and Serbia.


Globalisation and the way in which the world is increasingly interconnected mean that many issues no longer affect only one country. Globalisation creates opportunities and challenges, and the EU tries to build a common response. For example, EU trade policy creates increased trading opportunities for European businesses and gives EU countries more power in negotiations than if they were negotiating by themselves. Similarly, the EU is currently coordinating a common European response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including issuing guidelines on measures to stop the spread of the virus and supporting vaccination in EU member countries.




3


WHAT ARE THE EU'S VALUES?

There are a number of values that are shared by all EU countries. Let's look at them:

 **HUMAN DIGNITY:** Human dignity is about valuing and showing respect for all people for who they are, simply because they are human beings. Everyone's human dignity must be respected and protected, and it is the real basis for fundamental rights.

 **FREEDOM:** Freedom of movement gives EU citizens the right to move and live freely within the EU. There are also freedoms like the right to education and freedom of religion that are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

 **DEMOCRACY:** In a democracy, the people have a say about how the country is run and they do this by voting. Being an EU citizen also means enjoying political rights. For example, all EU citizens have the right to stand as a candidate (to run for office) and to vote in elections to the European Parliament. A German citizen, for example, can stand as a candidate and vote in France if he or she lives there, or in their home country of Germany.

 **RULE OF LAW:** The Rule of Law is one of the key values on which the EU is based. It contains a number of elements, which we explore in another info sheet. Importantly, it means that the rules should apply equally to everyone and that everyone has to follow the rules, from citizens to the government and other public bodies. If the rules are broken, there should be access to justice in the courts. So, everything the EU does is based on the treaties, which are agreements made by the EU member countries. The Court of Justice of the European Union is the highest court of the EU and its judgments (decisions) have to be respected by all.

 **HUMAN RIGHTS:** Human rights are rights and freedoms which we have because we are people. In the EU, they are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Importantly, we all have the right to be treated equally whatever our sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation for example.

4

WHAT IS THE EURO?

The EU has its own money, a currency, called the Euro. Today, 19 countries of the current 27 in the EU use the Euro and so you don't need to exchange money when you travel from one EU country to the other (e.g. Italy to Germany, or France to Belgium). Others, for example Denmark and Poland, don't use the Euro. The "Eurozone" is simply the collection of all the countries that use the Euro and was created in 2005. The Euro is printed by the European Central Bank, whose headquarters are in Frankfurt, Germany.



5

WHAT IS THE EU'S SINGLE MARKET?

The European single market is one of the distinctive features of the EU. It refers to the EU operating as one territory, without the internal borders and other barriers to free movement which usually operate between countries that are not integrated in this way.

The single market makes it possible for goods, services, money and people to move freely around the EU. Goods are things that people make or grow to sell (like toys, food, clothes and computers). Services are things that people do for others (like doctors, builders, bus drivers, and hairdressers). All EU citizens also have the right to live, work, shop, study, or retire abroad in any EU country. A teacher from France can, for example, teach French in a school in Sweden.

A functioning single market stimulates competition and trade, improves efficiency, raises quality, and helps cut prices. The European single market is one

of the EU's greatest achievements. It has created economic growth and made the everyday life of European businesses and consumers easier, while setting high safety standards for consumers and the protection of the environment. The EU single market has 450 million consumers, and includes 22.5 million small and medium-sized businesses. To ensure free movement between countries, the Schengen Area was established for residents of certain countries - including some non-EU countries. Some countries in the Schengen Area are Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and Sweden, as well as non-EU countries like Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. For residents in these countries, passage to and from other Schengen Area countries is much easier as it doesn't require a visa or the showing of a passport.



6 HOW IS THE EU GOVERNED?

The 27 member countries work together at an EU level to solve issues that affect everyone living in the EU. They overcome their differences to tackle important challenges together.

The EU is governed by four main bodies - The European Parliament, which is based in Strasbourg (France), Brussels (Belgium) and Luxembourg; and the European Council, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, which are all based in Brussels (Belgium).

The European Council is made up of the political leaders of the EU member countries and it sets the EU's overall policy direction and priorities.

The European Commission, which promotes the EU's interests, proposes new laws. The **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union**

then debate and pass new laws proposed by the Commission. The Council of the European Union consists of ministers from national governments, whereas the European Parliament is directly elected. There are European elections every five years where EU citizens elect Members of the European Parliament. After the Parliament and the Council of the European Union decide on EU laws, the Commission works to ensure EU law is properly applied in the member states.

Additional EU institutions include the **European Central Bank** in Frankfurt (Germany) and the **Court of Justice of the European Union**, which is based in Luxembourg. The Court gives judgments (decisions) on a wide range of issues affecting the lives of EU citizens and it interprets EU law to make sure that EU law is applied in the same way in all the member states.



TOPIC 2: WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS AN EU CITIZEN?

1 WHAT IS EU CITIZENSHIP?

Your nationality is usually of the country where you were born. In addition, if you are a national of one of the 27 member countries of the European Union (EU), then you are also an EU citizen.

The EU citizenship was formally established in 1992, in the Maastricht Treaty. We discuss in another info sheet how the EU was created and how the Maastricht Treaty is the agreement that created the EU. Being an EU citizen does not replace your national citizenship but is complementary to it. This means that your primary citizenship may be, for example, French or German, but at the same time you will also have EU citizenship. A reference to the EU would thus appear on your German or French passport.

Being an EU citizen provides you with a host of rights, freedoms and legal protections under EU law that you can use effectively when you move across state borders in the EU.



WHAT DO YOU GET FROM THE EU?

- **Peace** – The EU has been described as “the most successful peace project in human history” and it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.
- **The EU single market** – The single market makes it possible for people, goods (things that people make or grow to sell), services (things that people do for others) and money to move freely around the EU. These are known as the “four fundamental freedoms” (the free movement of people, goods, services and money). For example, you can buy a car in Italy and drive it across France to Austria, your home country. Also, there is no restriction on capital movements or fees, therefore you can transfer as much money as you like from your German bank account to your Italian bank account.
- **Human Rights** – Human rights are rights and freedoms which we have because we are people. In the EU, they are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- **EU safety rules** – These rules mean that citizens have access to safe food, medicine, toys and online content for example.
- **Mobile phones** – You can use your phone without paying extra money wherever you are in the EU (free roaming).

2

WHAT RIGHTS DO EU CITIZENS HAVE?

Let's look at some of the economic and political rights that EU citizens have:

♥ TO BE TREATED EQUALLY

EU citizens have the right not to be treated differently because of their nationality. This is called non-discrimination. Remember, your nationality is usually of the country where you were born, and EU citizenship adds to it.

🏠 TO MOVE AND LIVE IN THE EU

EU citizens have the right to move freely in the EU and to live, work, study, receive a health treatment, look for a job or retire anywhere in the EU.

🔑 TO PROPOSE NEW LAWS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

EU citizens can call on the European Commission to propose new laws through the European Citizen's Initiative. Once support for an initiative has reached 1 million signatures, from citizens of at least 7 EU countries, the Commission will decide on what action to take. The European Citizens' Initiative is a unique way for citizens to help shape the EU directly.

☹️ TO MAKE PETITIONS AND COMPLAINTS:

A petition can be sent to the European Parliament to address a personal need or raise an issue that is a matter of public interest. Additionally, complaints can be sent to the European Ombudsman about misconduct by an EU institution or body. When contacting the EU institutions directly you are entitled to a reply in any of the EU's 24 official languages.

🗳️ TO VOTE AND TAKE PART IN ELECTIONS

In a democracy, the people have a say about how the country is run and they do this by voting. Being an EU citizen also means enjoying political rights. EU citizens have the right to vote and stand as a candidate (run for office) in municipal elections in the EU country where they live. A Hungarian citizen, for example, can stand as a candidate and vote in Spain if he or she lives there.

In addition to national elections (municipal elections or elections for members of national parliaments, such as in Austria, Poland or Malta) there are also European elections for the members of the European Parliament.



European elections take place every five years. In the 2019 European elections, EU citizens elected 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Over 250 million EU citizens cast a vote in those elections. The next European elections will be in 2024.

Out of 500 million citizens 375 million have the right to vote.



QUICK FACT



TO PROTECTION WHEN TRAVELLING OUTSIDE THE EU:

An embassy or consulate is the base or headquarters that one country sets up in another country. One of its roles is to protect and help its citizens when they are traveling abroad. EU citizens can ask for help from the embassy or consulate of another EU member country when they are outside the EU and their own country doesn't have an embassy or consulate there. For example, if you are Italian and your passport has been lost or stolen while you are on holiday in a non-EU country, and there is no Italian embassy or consulate there, then you can go to the embassy or consulate of any other EU member country and ask for help with getting an emergency passport.

3

HOW ARE MY RIGHTS PROTECTED?

We can find some of the rights of EU citizens in Chapter 5 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The governments of EU countries have to follow the over 50 Articles in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We can also find some of the rights of EU citizens in an important treaty called the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Treaties are agreements made by the EU member countries. EU citizen rights are also established in the so-called EU laws enacted by the European Parliament (regulations and directives), for instance on the protection of personal data, on protection from discrimination in employment, or on the right of non-EU citizens to reunite with their EU citizen family members.

Claims about the incorrect application of the Charter, the Treaties and of EU laws by governments and by the EU institutions can be brought before the Court of Justice of the EU.



TOPIC 3: WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

1 WHERE DO HUMAN RIGHTS COME FROM?

We have human rights because we are human beings. These rights cannot be taken away from us because they are part of every one of us since we were born. They apply regardless of where we are from, what we believe in, and how we choose to live our lives.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the core document where human rights and freedoms are listed. It is called “universal” because the rights listed in it apply to every human being in the world. The Declaration says that everyone is entitled to all these universal rights and freedoms “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. The UDHR was adopted last century on the 10th of December 1948 by the United Nations (UN). It set out, for the first time, human rights to be protected around the world.



QUICK FACTS

- In 1945, after World War II, the UN was created in San Francisco (USA) to promote peace and security. It now has 193 Member States, almost all of the countries in the world.
- Today, the UDHR is available in more than 500 languages and is the most translated document in the world.
- The anniversary of the UDHR, the 10th of December, is Human Rights Day.

The UDHR has formed the basis for human rights documents tailored to specific regions of the world, such as Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. For example, the Council of Europe has the European Convention on Human Rights, which was adopted on 4 November 1950 in Rome (Italy).

2

WHAT ARE MY HUMAN RIGHTS?

Article 1 of the UDHR states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This is the basis for all human rights listed in the UDHR, the European Convention on Human Rights and the other human rights documents.

Here are some examples of human rights, which every human being should enjoy:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Right to life |  Right to marry and found a family |
|  Right to liberty and security |  Right to property |
|  Right to prohibition of slavery |  Right to freedom of religion and belief |
|  Right to prohibition of torture |  Right to freedom of opinion and expression |
|  Right to non-discrimination and equal protection of the law |  Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association |
|  Right to prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention |  Right to take part in government |
|  Right to a fair trial |  Right to work |
|  Right to presumption of innocence |  Right to rest and leisure |
|  Right to private and family life |  Right to food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services |
|  Right to freedom of movement |  Right to education |
|  Right to seek and enjoy asylum |  Right to participate in the cultural life of the community |
|  Right to a nationality | |

Human rights are sometimes grouped into two categories: (1) civil and political rights, and (2) economic, social and cultural rights.

Civil and political rights are about living free from government oppression and interference. They include, for example, the right to life, the right to liberty and security, freedom of opinion, freedom of peaceful assembly, the right not to be tortured, and the right to vote. For instance, if you are accused of committing a crime, you have the right to be considered innocent until your guilt is proved: this is called the right to the presumption of innocence.

Economic, social and cultural rights are about meeting the basic needs for human life. They include the right to food, clothing and housing, the right to medical care, the right to work, and the right to education. For instance, the right to education means that the government should make it possible for you to go to school free of charge. Similarly, the right to work means that

the government should protect you against unemployment and make it possible for you to work in favourable conditions. People doing the same work should be paid equally.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** includes both groups of rights, whereas the **European Convention on Human Rights** focuses on civil and political rights. Nowadays, many people do not distinguish between the two categories of rights.

All human rights are **indivisible and interdependent**. The UN has explained that “This means that one set of rights cannot be enjoyed fully without the other... making progress in civil and political rights makes it easier to exercise economic, social and cultural rights”. So, for example, if you are unlawfully deprived of your liberty, this will affect the enjoyment of your economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to work and the right to education.

3

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED?

Your country's government is responsible for respecting and protecting your human rights. In most cases, your human rights will also be set out in the constitution of your country. If you think your human rights have been violated or broken (for example, if you have been mistreated or wrongly punished by the police), you can complain to the courts of your own country.

If you live in Europe, for example, and you still think you have not received a fair decision from a judge of your country, you can take your case against your country to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (France). You can write your complaint in an official language from any of the 47 Council of Europe member countries. One or more judges, coming from all the member countries, will then look at your case and rule whether your country respected your human rights. If the Court decides in your favour, you can get justice, possibly including money as compensation for the damage you have suffered. The Court may also order your government to make sure the same problem does not happen again.

The European Court of Human Rights currently has 47 judges, one from each Member State. However, the judges do not represent that country; they are all independent and act in the interests of justice. Their task is to make sure that your case receives a fair hearing and a fair judgment.



QUICK FACT

Since it was created in 1959, the European Court of Human Rights has delivered over 23,000 judgments.



4

HOW DOES THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights contains the fundamental rights of everyone within the EU. By setting out the rights in one document, it makes them more visible. The Charter is binding for both the EU member states and the EU itself, and the rights set out in the Charter can be invoked before national courts.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is often mixed up with the European Convention on Human Rights. The two documents do cover similar rights and freedoms but there are some important differences ...



THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The community that we know today as the EU first began in the 1950s after the Second World War. There are now 27 EU member countries.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was created by the EU in 2000 and represents the EU's own bill of rights.

The Charter is interpreted by the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg.

The EU itself and the 27 EU member states must respect the rights in the Charter.

On 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom left the EU. It was the first member country to leave the EU and this was called "Brexit". After Brexit, the Charter no longer applies to the UK.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Council of Europe was created in 1949 and it brings together 47 member countries. It is not part of the European Union, but all 27 EU member states are also members of the Council of Europe.

The European Convention on Human Rights was created by the Council of Europe 50 years earlier in 1950.

The Convention is interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (France).

The 47 Council of Europe member states, including the 27 EU member countries, are parties to the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the EU itself is not (yet) a party to the Convention.

The UK remains a member of the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights still applies to the UK.

TOPIC 4: WHAT IS THE RULE OF LAW?

1

WHAT IS THE RULE OF LAW?

The Rule of Law has gained global appeal and recognition, and is one of the key values upon which the European Union is based. It contains a number of elements, which we can see below.

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

- This means the rules should apply equally to everyone.
- Everyone has to follow the rules, from citizens to the government and other public bodies. No one is above the law!
- Everyone should be treated equally, but, it can be ok to treat people differently if there is a real and important reason to do so (for example, there are special rules to protect children).



CLEAR, CERTAIN AND TRANSPARENT LAWS

- All laws and rules should be clear, certain and transparent.
- This means that, at all times, people should know and have confidence in what the rules mean for them - what their rights and responsibilities are, what they can and cannot do, and what the consequences will be if they break the rules.
- This also means that people should be able to easily find the rules, and be told about any rule changes with enough time to prepare for the change. No secret laws!



LAW-MAKING AND THE EXERCISE OF POWER

- All laws and rules should be made in a fair and open way. Having discussions about the rules is part of living in a democracy and different opinions should be heard.
- The government and other public bodies must exercise (or use) the powers given to them fairly and within the limits set out in the rules.
- Countries should also follow rules set out in international law. For example, the 27 member countries must follow rules from the European Union.

HUMAN RIGHTS

- The rules must protect human rights. We have human rights because we are human beings. These rights cannot be taken away from us because they are part of every one of us since we were born. Human rights apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe in, and how you choose to live your life.
- Human rights include, for example, the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the right to a private and family life, the right to freedom of expression, the right to education, and the right to food, clothing, housing and medical care.
- The Rule of Law also helps turn our human rights into a reality. For example, if the government violates our human rights, we should be able to seek access to justice.



WHAT IS THE “SEPARATION OF POWERS”?

The legislature (parliament) makes the laws; the executive (government) sets policy and puts the laws into practice; and the judiciary (courts) interpret and apply the law, and provide access to justice.

The “separation of powers” supports the Rule of Law. The separation of powers requires these three branches of state (parliament, government and courts) to operate separately from each other. This protects citizens’ freedoms and allows the separate institutions to have a system of “checks and balances” on each other’s use of power.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- Everyone should have access to justice if they have a legal problem. For example, everyone should be able to go to court to challenge government decisions that violate their human rights.
- Access to justice will work well only if there is a fair and open hearing.
- The judges must be independent and impartial. This means that judges should not be influenced by outside pressures and people should be confident that their decisions are fair and in line with the rules.



WHY IS ACCESS TO JUSTICE IMPORTANT?

The United Nations says “Access to justice is a basic principle of the rule of law. In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable”.

(Source: United Nations website “United Nations and the Rule of Law: Access to Justice”)

2

HOW CAN THE RULE OF LAW HELP US?

Let’s look at how the Rule of Law might apply in a series of situations:

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

Imagine that there is a rule in your country which says that women and girls should be paid 15% less than men and boys for doing the same work.

- This is unfair and it violates human rights. Women and girls should be paid the same as men and boys, when they do the same work.
- If women and girls are treated differently **because** they are women and girls, they should be able to make a complaint to a court or tribunal and get compensation for their unfair treatment.





CLEAR, CERTAIN AND TRANSPARENT LAWS

Imagine that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a rule in your country which says that you are only allowed to meet up in groups of six people and that you will be fined 1,000 EUR for breaking this rule.

- It is important that the rules are clear, certain and transparent – Can you easily find the rules? Is it clear what you can and cannot do?

- For example, do the rules apply at home and in public places? Do the rules apply indoors and outdoors? Do infants and children under the age of 5 years old count towards the total number of people? Do the rules apply to weddings?
- It is also important that you are told about any rule changes with enough time to prepare for the change.

LAW-MAKING AND THE EXERCISE OF POWER

The police have powers to “stop and search” you if they have good reasons to think that you are carrying illegal drugs, a weapon or stolen property for example. Now, imagine that the police are stopping and searching you, without good reasons, simply because of your skin colour.

- This is discrimination and it is not within the rules that limit the powers of the police. They should not stop and search you simply because of your gender or race, for example.
- If you have been stopped without good reasons or you have been treated unfairly, you can make a complaint against the police and, in some cases, you can go to court to get compensation.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Imagine that you are accused of stealing something from a shop, which is not true. You are arrested by the police, charged with the crime, and quickly taken to court. You are not given access to a lawyer. The judge, who is a relative of the shopkeeper, does not ask for your side of the story before finding you guilty.

- You have the right to a fair trial. Among other things, this means that you should have enough time to prepare your defence; you should have

HUMAN RIGHTS

Your country’s government is responsible for protecting your human rights, including your right to education. This includes the right to free primary school education. Unfortunately, around the world, many children do not get their right to education.

- You can help children know about their right to education and you can campaign for your government to make primary school free for all children in your country.
- If you think your right to education has been violated, you can go to court.

access to legal assistance (and you should get free legal assistance if you cannot afford it and this is needed in the interests of justice); and you should have the chance to tell your side of the story. You also have the right to be presumed innocent until you are proven guilty.

- Also, the judges must be independent and impartial, meaning they must be free from interference and external pressures, and they must not have an interest in the outcome of the case.

3

HOW IS THE RULE OF LAW IMPORTANT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

The Rule of Law is one of the key values on which the EU is based. This is set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union which states “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”.

The Rule of Law is seen as essential for protecting the EU’s other key values, such as human rights and democracy, and for countries to trust each other. Respect for the Rule of Law is also important for EU law to be applied well. For example, countries with strong Rule of Law follow EU rules that protect the environment. The Rule of Law is also important for the EU single market to work well. The single market makes it possible for goods, services, money and people to move freely around the EU. Countries which respect the Rule of Law are also more attractive to businesses because their rights and responsibilities are clear, and because disputes are resolved fairly and in line with the rules. This is called having an “investment-friendly business environment”.



HOW DOES THE EUROPEAN UNION DEFINE THE RULE OF LAW?

The European Union (EU) says that the Rule of Law includes “principles such as legality, implying a transparent, accountable, democratic and pluralistic process for enacting laws; legal certainty; prohibiting the arbitrary exercise of executive power; effective judicial protection by independent and impartial courts, effective judicial review including respect for fundamental rights; separation of powers; and equality before the law”.

Source: European Commission Communication “Further Strengthening the Rule of Law within the Union” (April 2019).





WHAT IS “RULE OF LAW BACKSLIDING” IN THE EU?

All EU member countries face Rule of Law challenges of some kind. But “Rule of Law backsliding” refers to situations where states deliberately weaken the system of “checks and balances” which usually operate to hold those in power to account. For example, states might try to weaken 1) human rights like freedom of expression and freedom of the media; 2) access to justice and the independence of judges; and 3) the electoral

system, so that different political parties find it difficult to effectively challenge the ruling party.

The EU can take action against a country, including suspending its voting rights, if it thinks there is “a serious and persistent breach” of the EU’s key values such as the Rule of Law. This is set out in Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union.

The “Rule of Law” appears in the constitutions of 16 out of the 27 EU member countries. However, elements of the Rule of Law (such as access to justice and equality before the law) appear in all the constitutions of the 27 EU member countries.

The Rule of Law is one of the EU’s key values but it may be named differently in the various member countries. For example, Stato di diritto (Italy), Etat de droit (France), Rechtsstaat (Germany),

Estado de derecho (Spain), Saltna tad Dritt (Malta), Jogállamiság (Hungary), Praworządności (Poland).

In 2019, the EU carried out a Eurobarometer survey in all Member States about the Rule of Law. The results showed significant support of the respondents for the Rule of Law in their country and in the EU, and most respondents said the Rule of Law needed to be improved in their country.

TOPIC 5: WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

1 WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

A democracy is a way of running a country. It is said that democracy was first created in Ancient Greece and the word democracy comes from two Greek words that help us understand what it means:

DEMOS - PEOPLE
KRATOS - RULE OR POWER

So, democracy basically means “people power” or “rule by the people”. It means that people themselves can control how they are governed. They can do this, for instance, by voting in elections to choose their own political leaders.

A dictatorship is different from a democracy. Dictatorships are types of government where one person or group has control over the country and can do what they want. People who live there usually do not have many rights or freedoms.



QUICK FACTS

- The world’s first democracy is said to have developed in ancient Athens (Greece) in around the 5th century B.C.E.
- These days, the majority of countries in the world describe themselves as democratic and democracy is one of the core values of the United Nations Organisation.
- We celebrate the International Day of Democracy on 15th of September each year.
- A popular definition of democracy is from Abraham Lincoln, former President of the USA, in 1863: “government of the people, by the people, for the people”.

REPRESENTATIVE VS DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Representative democracy is when people elect representatives to run the country and vote on their behalf, rather than voting on issues themselves. This is how democracy works most of the time in most countries.

Direct democracy is where people vote on issues themselves. For example, on 23 June 2016 the people of the UK voted to leave the European Union in the Brexit referendum. This was an example of direct democracy. Voting in the referendum was split 51.9% to leave and 48.1% to remain, and so the leave campaign won the vote. Some countries, like Switzerland, often have referendums. In other countries, like Germany, it is forbidden to have national referendums and they only take place at the local level.

2

HOW CAN WE TELL IF A COUNTRY IS A DEMOCRACY?

There are different types of democracies, but they share common features. All these features help to ensure that people can keep control of the government.

1. FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

In a democracy, the people have a say about how the country is run and they do this by voting in elections to choose their political leaders. People can choose between different candidates and political parties, each with different ideas and plans for how they would run the country if they won the election.

Voters have to decide whether they trust the politicians to keep their promises if they win the election. But, if they do not keep their promises, voters can always choose to vote for someone else next time. Elections are therefore an important tool for people to hold governments and politicians to account.

The voting age in most countries is 18 years old. Some countries allow younger people to vote (for example 16 years old in Austria and Malta, and 17 years old in Greece) but the voting age is higher in other countries.

Some countries around the world have a law that provides for “compulsory voting”. This is the case in Belgium and Luxembourg for example. Some people think that participating in elections is a civic duty and that government is more legitimate when higher numbers of people turn out to vote. Some countries even impose sanctions on non-voters. Other people say that voting is a civic right, rather than a duty. What do you think?



What are free and fair elections?

Elections must be “free” which means, for example, that everyone should be free to vote for their choice. Elections must also be “fair” which means, for example, that all voters should have an equal chance to register to vote, all political parties should have an equal chance to campaign for votes, and all the votes should be counted.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Human rights and democracy are linked, and we discuss human rights and what they are in another info sheet. In basic terms, we all have human rights because we are human beings. These rights cannot be taken away from us because they are part of every one of us since we were born. Human rights apply regardless of where we are from, what we believe in, and how we choose to live our lives.

There are some human rights which are especially relevant for democracy. Without these rights it is very difficult to get your voice heard and to take part in conversations about how the country is run. These include, for example, the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections, the right to freedom of thought (to think freely), the right to freedom of expression (to speak freely), and the right to freedom of assembly (to organise and take part in peaceful meetings).

What is majority rule?

In simple terms, “majority rule” is when a decision is made if it is supported by a majority (more than half) of the votes. However, the government should also protect the rights of minorities and so it is important that there is protection of human rights for everyone.

3. PARTICIPATION

As well as taking part in elections, people should be able to participate (take part) in the political and cultural life of their country in other ways. Activities such as organising events and campaigning for the construction of wheelchair access for your townhall building or local theatre, or against the demolition of a park in your neighbourhood, offer private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions. Human rights such as the right to freedom of assembly and the right to take part in the cultural life of the community are especially relevant for participation.



4. RULE OF LAW

The Rule of Law and democracy are linked, and we discuss the Rule of Law and what it means in another info sheet. In basic terms, the Rule of Law is about how political power is used. It means that the people who have the power to make the rules also have to follow certain rules themselves. So, the rules should be made in a fair and open way. Having discussions about the rules is part of living in a democracy and different opinions should be heard. The government and other public bodies should only use their powers fairly and within the limits set out in the rules.

Importantly, they must apply the rules in an equal way to all people, but, it can be ok to treat people differently if there is a real and important reason to do so (for example, there are special rules to protect children). If people feel that the rules are not applied equally or in a good way – for instance because they violate human rights – then they should be able to ask independent courts to control the government.

It is also very important that all the parts of the state (parliament, government and courts) work separately from each other and keep a check on each other. This is called the “separation of powers”.

The Separation of Powers:

Parliament (the legislature) makes a country’s laws and people vote to elect the members of parliament who will debate these laws and represent the interests of voters.

Government (the executive) sets a country’s policies and priorities, and puts the laws into practice.

Courts (the judiciary) interpret and apply the law, and provide access to justice.

The separation of powers requires these three branches of state (parliament, government and courts) to operate separately from each other. This protects citizens’ freedoms and allows the separate institutions to have a system of “checks and balances” on each other’s use of power.

3

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION?

Over 30 years ago, in 1989, world leaders adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is an international agreement about childhood. Children have the same general human rights as everyone else, but they also have some special rights because they are children.

In simple words, the Convention says that “Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them” and that “Adults should listen and take children seriously”. “(Source: ‘The UNCRC: The Children’s Version’ by UNICEF and Child Rights Connect.)

UNICEF says “Children’s views should be heard and considered in the political process - Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in political processes. Without special attention to the opinions of children – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children’s views go unheard on the many important issues that affect them now or will affect them in the future.” We discuss children’s rights in more detail in another info sheet.

4

HOW IS DEMOCRACY IMPORTANT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Democracy is one of the key values of the European Union (EU). A country cannot join the EU if it is not a democracy and does not allow its people to exercise their democratic rights.

There are currently 27 EU member countries. Other European countries which meet the conditions for membership can apply to join the EU. These conditions are called the “Copenhagen Criteria” and they include having stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the Rule of Law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. They also include a free-market economy and the acceptance of all EU laws, including the Euro.

1. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EU citizens have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament. Since 1979, elections for the European Parliament have been held every five years. EU citizens are able to vote for Members of the European Parliament (“MEPs”) to represent their views in Europe. European Parliament elections take place in each EU Member State, so you do not have to travel to Strasbourg (France) which is the official “seat” of the European Parliament.

In the 2019 elections, EU citizens elected 751 MEPs, with over 250 million votes cast in Europe. The next European elections will be in 2024.

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, and there are now 705 seats in the European Parliament, compared with 751 before the UK’s withdrawal. The distribution of seats in the European Parliament takes into account the population size of the member states. So, among the EU member states, Germany has the largest population and the highest number of seats, whereas Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus have the smallest population sizes and the lowest number of MEPs.

How old do I have to be to vote in the European Parliament elections?

Each country sets the voting age for the European elections. In most countries, you need to be 18 years old to vote in the European elections. But the voting age is 17 years old in Greece, and 16 years old in Austria and Malta.

2. OTHER EU INSTITUTIONS

When you vote in your country’s national elections to choose your country’s government, you influence how your views are represented in the EU. For example, the prime ministers and presidents of the EU member countries form the European Council, which sets the EU’s main priorities. And ministers from the governments of the EU member countries are part of the Council of the European Union, which discusses EU matters and takes decisions on EU law and policy. Another way you can have influence as an EU citizen is by taking part in public consultations. The EU Commission, which proposes new laws for the EU, seeks opinions from national parliaments, governments, citizens and other interested parties.

3. THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE

The European Citizens’ Initiative allows people to have a greater say on issues that matter to them by calling on the European Commission to propose new laws. You need to get support for your initiative from at least 1 million people, from across at least 7 EU countries. Then, your initiative will be examined and the Commission will decide what action to take.

4. PETITIONS AND COMPLAINTS

A petition can be sent to the European Parliament to address a personal need or to raise an issue that is of importance to many people. Additionally, complaints can be sent to the European Ombudsman if an EU institution does things that it should not do.

5. THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The Conference on the Future of Europe allows European citizens to debate what future they want for the EU. This provides an example of how participation works at the EU level. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission have all committed to listen and to follow up. European citizens from all around the EU can take part. You can share your ideas, discuss ideas, attend an event, or organise an event.



TOPIC 6: WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A CHILD?

1 WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

Children's rights are a type of human rights. We discuss human rights and what they are in another info sheet. In basic terms, we all have human rights because we are human beings. These rights cannot be taken away from us because they are part of every one of us since we were born.

Children have the same human rights as adults, such as the right to food, clothing, housing and medical care, the right to attend school for free, the right to rest and recreation, and the right to freedom of religion and belief.

Children also have special rights that recognise their specific needs as children. Children's rights are for all children and they are about making sure children are properly cared for and protected, that they can play and go to school, and that they can be happy, healthy and safe. For example, children's rights include the right to be heard, the right not to be exploited for work, and the right to be safe from all types of harm, wherever this happens, even on the internet or on mobile phones.



QUICK FACTS

- Almost one in three people in the world are children (30.3%).
- In 1978, Poland proposed that there should be an international agreement on the rights of children and prepared a draft convention.
- After much work and many negotiations, world leaders eventually adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989.
- The CRC has 54 paragraphs (called "articles") about the rights of children and how they should be protected.
- 196 countries have signed up to the CRC and the United States of America is the only country that has not yet officially joined the CRC.
- Based on the CRC, governments around the world have passed new laws to make sure that people respect children's rights.
- UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) is a special part of the United Nations system and it is dedicated to saving children's lives, to defending children's rights, and to helping them reach their potential.
- We celebrate World Children's Day on 20th of November each year.

2

WHY ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPORTANT?

Children's rights are special rights that recognise the specific needs of children. They are important because children rely on adults for care, protection, support and guidance while they are growing up. What happens during childhood can affect children's growth and development, and their future contribution to society. So, it is important for children to have rights while they are growing up so that they can reach their full potential.

Unfortunately, around the world, many children do not get all of their rights. This does not mean that those children are not valued, that children's rights are not important, that children's views do not matter, nor that agreements like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are not useful. It is important that we all work together to make the world a better place for all children.



QUICK FACTS

- UNICEF estimates that there are 356 million children around the world living in extreme poverty.
- Within the European Union (EU), it was estimated that about one in every five children (22.5%) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2019.
- UNICEF and the International Labour Organization estimate that there are 160 million children in child labour around the world (that is approximately the equivalent of the populations of the UK, Spain, Poland and Hungary combined!) and almost half of them are involved in hazardous work.
- The UN estimates that every year 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. Also, 40% of girls in the least-developed countries are married before the age of 18.
- The World Bank says that at least half of the estimated 65 million primary and secondary age children with disabilities are out of school. It also estimates that one in three primary age children with disabilities are out of school.
- The EU Fundamental Rights Agency estimates that 2.5 million children go through legal procedures each year.

3

WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD?

Over 30 years ago, in 1989, world leaders adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC is an international agreement about the rights of children and 196 countries have signed up to this agreement.

Each country's government is responsible for making sure the rights in the CRC are realised in practice because it is an agreement between countries. But, in practice, children's parents or carers, families, teachers and wider communities also have a role to play in making sure all children enjoy all their rights. For example, teachers should take action if there is bullying in schools because all children have a right to a safe learning environment. Another example is that, while parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children, governments should support parents if they need help to do this, such as financial support or help with their housing.

The CRC explains that a child is anyone under the age of 18 and that all children should enjoy all the rights listed in the Convention. All the rights in the Convention are connected to each other and are equally important. There are four rights in the CRC that play a particularly important role in helping to achieve all the rights in the Convention for all children. They are known as the "General Principles" and they are:

1) NON-DISCRIMINATION

Human rights apply regardless of where we are from, what we believe in, and how we choose to live our lives. The CRC explains that it is especially important that every child has the rights in the Convention without discrimination, "whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background". (Source: UNICEF CRC summary.)

2) BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

The CRC also explains that adults and governments must act on the basis of "the best interests of the child" when they make decisions affecting children, for example, about their education, health or care.

How do adults decide what is in a child's best interests? They should look at the specific circumstances of the child including for example the child's views, the child's identity including their cultural and religious identity, their family situation, their protection, care and safety, and their rights to health and education. It is all about making sure the child can enjoy all their rights in the CRC. For instance, there are some cases where families cannot look after their children and the government should give those children special protection and help, and one possibility may be to place them into a children's home or with a foster family if it is decided this would be in their "best interests".

3) RIGHT TO LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

The CRC explains that all children have the right to life and that governments should do everything they can to make sure that children survive and reach their full potential. For example, the CRC explains that children have the right to good healthcare, healthy food, clean drinking water, and a clean, safe place to live.

The CRC also explains that all children have the right to go to school, learn and play so that they develop into adults. There are also some activities that are not good for children's development. For example, the CRC explains that children should not be exploited for work, and should be protected from work that harms their mental or physical health, or their education.

4) RIGHT TO BE HEARD

Finally, the CRC also explains that children have the right to give their views freely on issues that affect them and should be taken seriously. This does not mean that children get to decide everything themselves without adults to help them. But, as children become older, more mature and more able to make decisions, their views will carry more weight.

How are children's views heard? Children's views should be heard and taken seriously on all issues that affect them. For example, in education, there might be a school council where pupils can give their opinions about the life and work of the school. They might talk about the school rules, the quality of food served at the school canteen, music and sports activities after school, how the school can better protect the environment, or about which books to buy for the school library.

To give another example, in local communities, there might be a local youth parliament or school visits by local government leaders where children can give their opinions about libraries, parks, leisure centres, healthcare, transport or other local issues. This is because governments make decisions and plans about many issues which affect the lives of children - from education and childcare, to food, to housing, to road safety, to healthcare, to cultural and religious activities.

The CRC, therefore, offers a strong support to children's rights and gives children a voice in areas where they previously were not heard.

Quite importantly, the CRC and its related documents (called "Protocols") allow children to make a complaint to the UN when their rights have been violated and they have not been afforded a remedy in the courts of their own country.



4

HOW ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECTED IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

Children's rights are also protected in the European Union (EU) and this is one of the EU's key goals. Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union states that the EU "shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child".

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights contains the fundamental rights of everyone within the EU and some articles of the Charter are specifically dedicated to children. For example, Article 24 is about the rights of the child and Article 32 bans child labour.

Within the EU Commission, which is one of the EU's main governing bodies, there has been a **Coordinator for the rights of the child** since 2007 to make sure that all departments of the Commission properly consider children's rights in all policies and activities.

With the input of more than 10,000 children, the EU has developed an important strategy and action plan relevant to children called "**The Strategy on the Rights of the Child**".

The Strategy was developed for children and it is built around six thematic areas:

1. "Participation in political and democratic life: An EU that empowers children to be active citizens and members of democratic societies."
2. "Socio-economic inclusion, health and education: An EU that fights child poverty, promotes inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems."
3. "Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection: An EU that helps children grow free from violence."
4. "Child-friendly justice: An EU where the justice system upholds the rights and needs of children."
5. "Digital and information society: An EU where children can safely navigate the digital environment, and harness its opportunities."
6. "The Global Dimension: An EU that supports, protects and empowers children globally, including during crisis and conflict."

(Source: The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.)



TOPIC 7: WHAT IS THE EU DOING ABOUT MIGRATION?

1 WHO IS A MIGRANT?

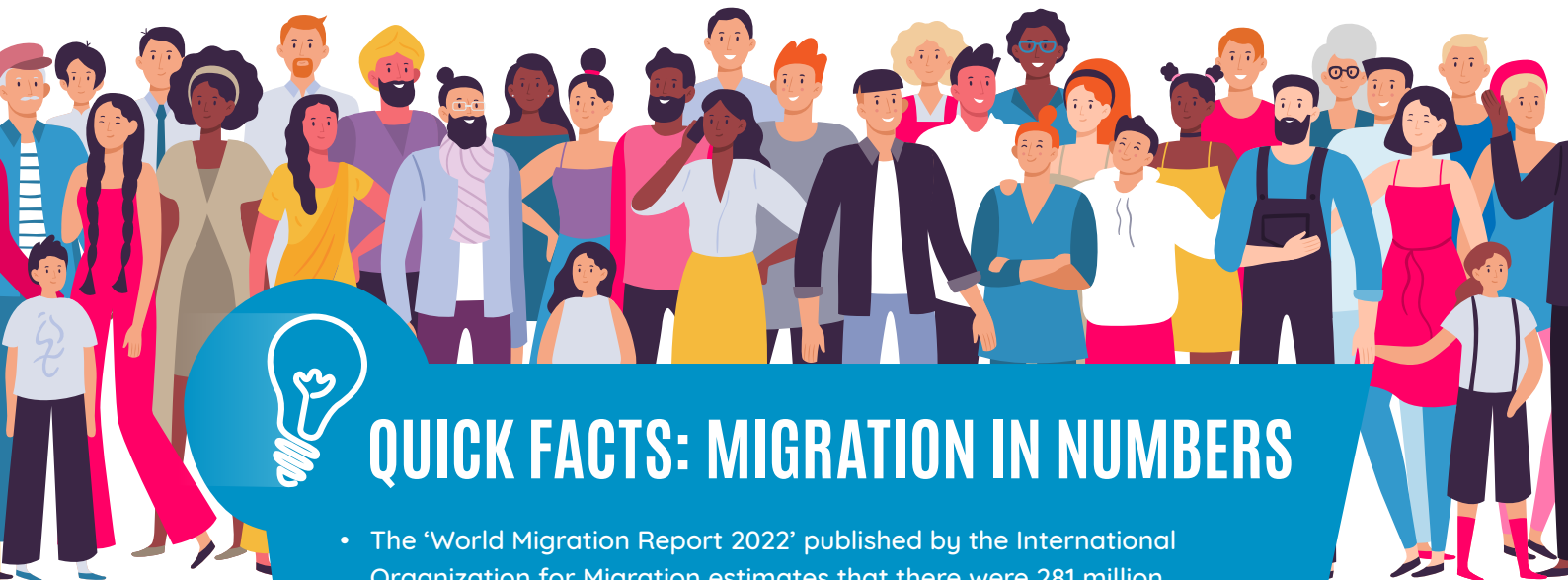
A migrant is a person who moves away from his or her home to another country, and crosses what we call a “state border” (e.g., from France to Germany) or crosses many state borders. This is known as “migration”. People may also move within their own country, and, if they were forced to move because of a war or conflict, or because of a natural disaster (e.g., an earthquake or a flood), they are known as “internally displaced persons”.

In most cases, migrants leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere, mainly to work, to study or to join their family abroad. While everyone has the right to leave his or her own country, there is no matching right to entry in any other country. Migrants usually need a visa and a work, study or residence permit, and they usually do not have

the right to stay in their country of choice for an unlimited amount of time.

There are different kinds of migrants: **migrant workers** move across borders to work; **international students** migrate to a different country to go to school or study at university; **irregular migrants** are people who do not have a valid reason for staying in a foreign country, because, for instance, their entry visa or stay permit has expired (ended); and **trafficked migrants** are people who are brought to a different country for the purpose of exploitation (for example, forced labour).

In most cases, migrants are free to return to their home country at any time if things do not work out as they had hoped.



QUICK FACTS: MIGRATION IN NUMBERS

- The ‘World Migration Report 2022’ published by the International Organization for Migration estimates that there were 281 million international migrants around the world in 2020 or 3.6% of the global population. There were 169 million migrant workers (people who have moved for work) in 2019.
- The Report also estimates that together, Europe and Asia were hosting around 61% of international migrants in 2020.

2

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MIGRANT, AN ASYLUM SEEKER & A REFUGEE?

Refugees and asylum seekers are part of a special category of migrants.

Seeking asylum is a human right – everyone fleeing persecution has the right to seek and enjoy asylum (protection) in other countries.

An **asylum seeker (person seeking asylum)** is someone whose request for asylum (protection) in another country has not yet been decided. The request for asylum may result in the recognition of the person’s refugee status.

Refugees are usually fleeing war, conflict or persecution, and they are protected in international law. An international agreement called the **1951 Refugee Convention** sets out that refugees are people who are outside their country and cannot avail themselves of that country’s protection because of a well-founded fear of persecution (such as a threat to life or freedom) for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The authorities of the destination country will investigate the person’s claim for

asylum. If the conditions for being considered a “refugee” are met, they will “recognise” the person as a refugee and give them refugee status.

The concerns of refugees are **human rights and safety**, not economic advantage. Some refugees are forced to flee with no warning, and many have had bad experiences or been ill-treated. The journey to safety is often dangerous and many refugees risk their lives in search of protection. Refugees cannot return to their home country unless the situation that forced them to leave improves.

As noted above, refugee rights are set out and protected in the **1951 Refugee Convention**, which has been accepted by 146 countries. Refugee rights are also protected under **international human rights agreements** such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which we have discussed in other info sheets.



**QUICK FACTS:
REFUGEES**

- The International Organization for Migration’s ‘World Migration Report 2022’ estimates that in 2020 there were around 26.4 million refugees in the world.



3

HOW DOES THE EU PROTECT MIGRANTS?

As we noted above, there are different categories of people who leave their country, whether willingly or not, and move to another country. The level of rights and protection given to them by the European Union (EU) differs between these migrant categories.

Here is a list in decreasing order of their rights and privileges.

1) Migrant EU Citizens – We discussed the rights of EU citizens in another info sheet. We noted that they have the right to move freely within the EU and can decide to live in another EU member country. There is no need for a visa, or a residence or work permit. If a German citizen moves to Hungary to work, he or she is a migrant worker who enjoys special rights as an EU citizen.

2) Third Country Family Members of EU Citizens – The family members of EU citizens also enjoy special rights, even if they are not EU citizens themselves. For instance, a Moroccan or Canadian citizen enjoys the right to reunite with his or her spouse or parent who is an EU citizen, and has a right to work in the EU under certain conditions. Entry into the EU will usually be possible on the basis of a family visa.

3) Asylum Seekers and Refugees – In terms of asylum seekers and refugees, people who meet the requirements of the 1951 Refugee Convention have the right to protection, to asylum, in the EU. A request for asylum may result in the recognition of the person's "refugee status" (or it may result in "subsidiary protection status" where a person does not qualify as a refugee but still needs international protection).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "REFUGEE" AND SOMEONE WHO QUALIFIES FOR "SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION" STATUS?

As noted above, the 1951 Refugee Convention sets out that **refugees** are people who are outside their country and cannot avail themselves of that country's protection because of a well-founded fear of persecution (such as a threat to life or freedom) for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

EU law sets out criteria for people to qualify for refugee status or subsidiary protection status. **Subsidiary protection** may be given

where a person does not qualify as a refugee but where it is believed that the person, if returned to their country, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm, and the person cannot avail him- or her- self of that country's protection.

Subsidiary protection is seen as a lesser form of protection and, for example, there may be different rules about family reunification for those with subsidiary protection status as compared to refugees.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights contains the fundamental rights of everyone within the EU and some paragraphs (articles) of the Charter are specifically about these issues.

For example, Article 18 of the Charter is about the right to asylum. Article 19 is about protecting individuals from being removed, expelled or extradited (sent) to a country where they personally would be at serious risk of the death penalty or ill-treatment. Also, where lots of migrants arrive by boat or via land, Article 19 of the Charter bans them from being sent away altogether (also known as “collective expulsions”) at the EU borders and requires that each person’s asylum request is considered individually.

4) Regular Migrant Workers and Students – Non-EU citizens (for instance, American, Syrian, Chinese or Nigerian citizens) can also move to one of the

EU member countries for work or study purposes, but rather than being a right, this is a decision that is taken by the authorities of each EU member country. Entry into the EU will usually be possible on the basis of a work or study visa. A work or study permit for a certain period of time will be generally granted once certain conditions are met.

5) Irregular Migrants – Non-EU citizens who find themselves illegally in the territory of an EU country (either because they entered illegally or because their visa or stay permit has expired) enjoy the least protection. Generally, they are working without the protection of an employment contract (because of their irregular status) and uncovered by social insurance. If caught by the police, irregular migrants are usually subject to deportation to their country of origin, unless, exceptionally, family, security or health reasons justify their staying in the EU.



4

WHAT IS THE EU'S POLICY ON MIGRATION?

As we discussed in another info sheet, the 27 EU member countries work together at an EU level to solve issues that affect everyone living in the EU. They try to overcome their differences to tackle important challenges together. Migration is one of these challenges.

The EU's policy on migration focuses on two aspects. First, the EU aims to strengthen controls at the EU's external borders, both sea and land borders, by concluding agreements with or providing support to non-EU neighbour countries, such as Albania, Libya, Morocco and Turkey, for example.

Second, the EU aims to develop a "common asylum system". What does this mean? The EU's member countries have agreed to have a common European asylum policy called the "Common European Asylum System (CEAS)". It makes sure that the procedures for granting asylum and recognising refugee status are fair and effective throughout the EU.

The CEAS includes four core pieces of EU legislation covering different aspects of the asylum process:

WHICH STATE SHOULD EXAMINE THE ASYLUM APPLICATION?

The 'Dublin Regulation' determines which Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application. For example, if a Syrian asylum seeker arrives by boat in Italy but then travels to Germany, the Dublin Regulation determines which member country should examine their asylum claim.

WHO IS A REFUGEE AND WHAT ARE HIS/HER RIGHTS?

The **Qualification Directive** establishes who qualifies as a "refugee" and who qualifies for "subsidiary protection" status, and provides a series of rights for beneficiaries (residence permits, travel documents, access to employment and education, social welfare, housing, and healthcare).

WHAT SHOULD BE THE LIVING STANDARDS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS?

The **Reception Conditions Directive** which establishes common living standards and reception conditions for asylum applicants. It also ensures that applicants have access to housing, food, clothing, education or employment, and health care.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR ASYLUM PROCEDURES?

The **Asylum Procedures Directive** establishes common standards for fair and efficient asylum decisions and procedures.

5

WHAT IS THE EU MIGRANT CRISIS OR THE EU REFUGEE CRISIS?

You may have heard about the “EU migrant crisis” or the “EU refugee crisis” (often the two expressions are – incorrectly – used interchangeably), but what is it?

These terms are often used to refer to the year 2015 when more than 1.2 million asylum applications were made in EU member countries, which was more than double the number in 2014. Most of the asylum seekers were fleeing war and conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Other people seeking asylum came from Kosovo, Albania, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, and Iran for example. In addition, the journey was

often extremely dangerous and the International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 3,770 people died in 2015 while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

More recently, the EU Parliament reported that movement restrictions, border closures and reductions in programmes to take in refugees, which were put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, have resulted in less migration. They also noted that asylum applications in the first ten months of 2020 were 33% (one third) less than during the same period in 2019.



QUICK FACTS: MIGRATION IN EUROPE

- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that children make up one third of the refugees and migrants who have arrived in Europe.
- It is also estimated that every day more than one child dies on the dangerous Central Mediterranean route trying to travel from North Africa to Central Europe.
- The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that at the end of 2020 there were 26.4 million refugees globally and 10% of them were living in the EU.
- Compared to its total population size, the share of refugees hosted in the EU is 0.6%.
- As regards seeking asylum in Europe, it is noted that in 2020, 141,000 asylum seekers were under 18 years old, and nearly 10% of them (13,500) were unaccompanied children (coming mainly from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan).

Lesbos, Greece - September 30, 2015:
Refugees arrive on the boat from Turkey.



TOPIC 8: WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE AND WHAT IS THE EU DOING ABOUT IT?

1 WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

“Climate change describes a change in the average conditions - such as temperature and rainfall - in a region over a long period of time. NASA scientists have observed Earth’s surface is warming, and many of the warmest years on record have happened in the past 20 years.”

(Source: NASA Climate Kids website “What is climate change?”)



When we talk about weather, we are usually referring to what the conditions outside are like. Weather forecasts tell us what weather conditions we might expect in the next few days or weeks. For example, they tell us if it is likely to be sunny, rainy, windy, snowy, hot or cold, and so they can help us decide what to wear and whether to spend time outside.

When we talk about climate, however, we are talking about the typical weather conditions we expect to find in a place over the course of a year. For example, we might describe a particular place as having a climate of mild springs, hot summers, wet autumns, and cold dry winters. Different regions of the same country, for example inland or coastal, may have different climates. Different areas of the planet, for instance the Sahara Desert and the North Pole, clearly also have very different climates.

Climate change is a change in those typical conditions that takes place over a long time. The Earth’s climate has changed many times over its history and, in the past, this was due to natural causes.

However, in the last 150 years or so the Earth has been getting warmer much faster and we are now facing a “climate crisis”. Even a small temperature change, one or two degrees Celsius, can significantly affect our lives and the health of our planet. Other signs of climate change include warmer oceans, shrinking ice sheets and sea ice, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events (like heatwaves, droughts, and floods).

2

WHAT CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE?

Leading scientists agree that changes we are now seeing in the Earth's climate are mainly happening because of human activities.

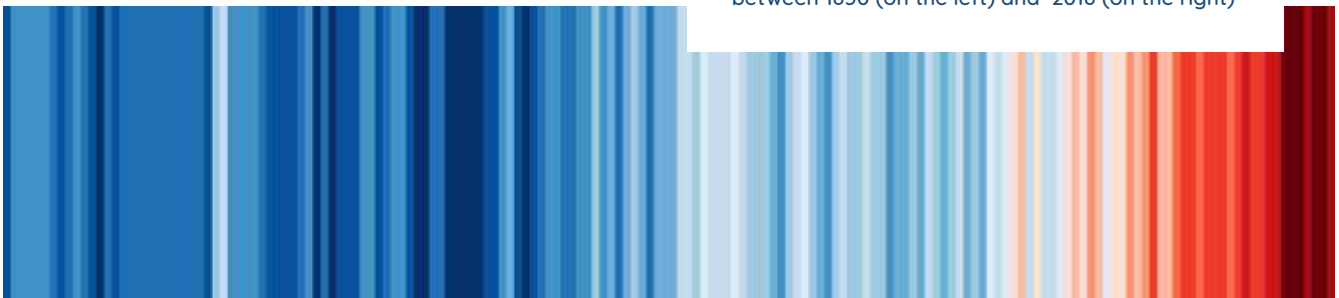
“Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

Examples of greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. These come from using gasoline for driving a car or coal for heating a building, for example. Clearing land and forests can also release carbon dioxide. Landfills for garbage are a major source of methane emissions. Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the main emitters.”

(Source: United Nations website “What is climate change?”)

Warming stripes by climatologist Ed Hawkins: The colors from blue (cooler) to red (warmer) show the increase of the average global temperature between 1850 (on the left) and 2018 (on the right)



WHY CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

“Climate change can affect our health, ability to grow food, housing, safety and work.”

(Source: United Nations website “What is climate change?”)

Climate change matters because some regions of the world could become dangerously hot (such as sub-Saharan Africa) and others could become unsuitable for living in because of rising sea levels (such as small island states). We are already seeing people being displaced because of weather related disasters and extreme weather, and climate change could make this worse.

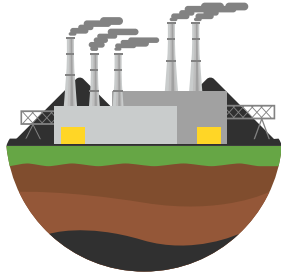


QUICK FACTS:

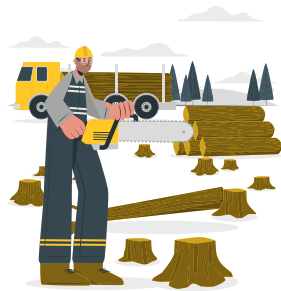
- The last year 2021 was one of the seven warmest years on record.
- The last decade 2011-2020 was the hottest on record.
- 28 trillion tonnes of ice have been lost from the Earth's surface since 1994.
- Up to 1 million animal and plant species are at risk of extinction.

“The leading cause of climate change is human activity and the release of greenhouse gases.” (Source: UK Met Office website “Causes of climate change”)

Human activities which produce greenhouse gas emissions include:



1. Burning fossil fuels (such as coal, oil and gas) – When they are burned, fossil fuels release gases into the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide.



2. Deforestation (cutting down trees) – Trees can help the climate by removing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, when trees are cut down (for example, to create space for farms, cities or roads, to build into furniture or houses, or to burn for heat and energy) we lose this positive effect and the carbon stored in trees is released when they are burned.



3. Agriculture (farming) – Large amounts of methane are produced during the digestion of food by cows and sheep. Nitrous oxide is produced by some fertilisers which contain nitrogen. (Fertilisers are used in farming to improve crop growth and the amount of crop harvested).



3

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

A basic question is how we can continue with activities that are important to our lives (farming, building, using transport, producing energy etc.) while also helping the planet?

There are some things we can do to help:



Reduce the number of flights taken.



Buy less and buy local.



Walk or cycle instead of using cars. Choose car-pooling or public transport.



Recycle, repair and re-use products, and use products made of recycled materials.



Save energy by turning off lights and other devices when possible.



Put on another jumper rather than turning up the heating when it's cold.



Grow more trees.



Use renewable energy like solar energy from the sun or wind power.



Change what you eat – eat more plant-based meals, buy local and seasonal foods, and avoid food waste.



Join or start an eco-club at school to find ways to make school more eco-friendly.



WHAT IS MEANT BY A “CARBON FOOTPRINT”?

“Your carbon footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air because of your own energy needs. You need transportation, electricity, food, clothing, and other goods. Your choices can make a difference.”

(Source: NASA Climate Kids website “What can we do to help?”)

4

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN UNION DOING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

“For Europe, [a recent] report predicts an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including marine heatwaves, and warns that a 2°C increase in temperature will have critical effects for nature and people.

Higher temperatures and intensified weather events will also result in huge costs for the EU’s economy and hamper countries’ ability to produce food.

However, according to scientists, human action can change the course of events.”

(Source: European Council/Council of the EU website “Climate change: what the EU is doing”)

WHAT IS MEANT BY “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”?



“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

(Source: “Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future”)



QUICK FACTS:

- Rhodium Group reported that, in 2019, China was the largest emitter of greenhouse gases (27% of the world’s greenhouse gases), followed by the United States of America (11%) and India (6.6%). Combined together, the 27 European Union (EU) member countries were in fourth place (6.4%).
- The United Nations reported that, within the EU, Germany was the largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, followed by the UK (then still an EU member), France, Italy, Poland and Spain.
- However, it is important to note that these shares have differed historically and we can look at which countries have contributed most to global emissions in the past. For example, looking at carbon dioxide emissions from 1751-2017, the USA has accounted for 25% and China for 12.7% of so-called “global cumulative emissions”. The EU (then including the UK) has historically been responsible for 22% of global cumulative emissions, much higher than today. In contrast, some countries which are large emitters today (e.g., India and Brazil) have not been large emitters in the past (accounting for only 3% and 0.9% respectively).

THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) IS TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE BOTH INTERNATIONALLY AND WITHIN THE EU.

(1) The EU contributed to the development of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and it is committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN was created in 1945, after World War II, to promote peace and security. The UN now has 193 Member States, almost all of the countries in the world. They are working together to fight climate change and promote sustainable development.

All UN Member States adopted the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in 2015. The Agenda includes 17 “Sustainable Development Goals” or “SDGs” to be achieved by the year 2030. The Goals are about ending poverty, improving lives, and protecting the planet. The Goals are for all countries and all people, and governments have pledged that “no one will be left behind”.

This picture shows the 17 Goals:



(2) The EU has signed the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In 1992, an important international agreement on climate change was adopted; it was called the “UN Framework Convention on Climate Change”. Now, there are 197 parties to the Convention from all around the world, including the EU. The parties to the Convention usually meet every year at what is called the “Conference of the Parties” or “COP”.

As noted above in the Quick Facts box, countries around the world have different levels of responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions and different ambitions. The COP meetings bring countries together to try to find a common way forward. Part of the global effort to fight climate change is about providing financial support, in particular to help developing countries to take action, and this is known as “climate finance”.

The 21st UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP21) took place in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015. There, world leaders reached an important international agreement on climate change called the “Paris Agreement”.

There are 193 parties to the Paris Agreement from all around the world, including the EU. In the Agreement, countries agreed to work to keep global warming to well below 2°C, and preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. This would greatly reduce the risks and effects of climate change.

(3) The EU aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least by 55% by 2030, compared to 1990.

Greenhouse gas emissions in the EU did in fact go down by 31% between 1990 (the chosen base year) and 2020, and it is expected they will continue to go down until 2030. However, more action is needed if the EU is to reach its 2030 goal.

(4) The EU also aims to be climate-neutral by 2050.

“When we talk about fighting climate change, we always refer to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. But it’s not just about that.

Becoming ‘climate neutral’ means reducing greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible, but it also means compensating for any remaining emissions. This is how a net-zero emissions balance can be achieved.”

(Source: European Council/Council of the EU website “5 facts about the EU’s goal of climate neutrality”)

We can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, for example, by using cleaner types of energy and greener transport. However, some emissions will remain. We can try to “neutralise” the remaining emissions, for example, by looking after our forests which absorb the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.



WHAT ARE THE “5 PS” THAT SHAPE THE SDGS?



1. **People** - “We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment”.



2. **Planet** - “We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations”.



3. **Prosperity** - “We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature”.



4. **Peace** - “We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”.



5. **Partnership** - “We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people”.

(Source: United Nations website “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”)

WHAT WAS “COP26”?

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) took place in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021. The Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed by every Party at the Conference, representing almost 200 countries.

What was agreed?

“The Glasgow Climate Pact only keeps 1.5C in sight if countries take concerted and immediate action to deliver on their commitments. This means phasing down coal power, halting and reversing deforestation, speeding up the switch to electric vehicles and reducing methane emissions.”

“Ahead of Paris, some scientists said that there was a chance that temperatures could ultimately rise by up to 6°C. The pledges made under the Paris Agreement had the world on track to a 2.7-3.7°C rise. If the pledges made at Glasgow are fully implemented, warming will be kept below 2°C; and with the commitment to further action over the next decade we have kept 1.5°C in reach.”

(Source: “COP26: The Glasgow Climate Pact”)

WHAT IS “CLIMATE DIPLOMACY”?

As well as taking action within its own borders, the EU is also working to fight climate change around the world. This is because the EU accounts for only a share of global emissions (approximately 8%) and so taking action inside the EU is not enough.

Climate diplomacy refers to the EU’s work with non-EU countries and at a global level (for example via agreements like the Paris Agreement) to promote ambitious climate change goals and actions.

WHAT IS THE “EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL”?

Tackling climate change is one of the EU’s top priorities and goals, and the European Green Deal is part of the EU’s work in this area. It is described as “an ambitious package of measures ranging from ambitiously cutting greenhouse gas emissions, to investing in cutting-edge research and innovation, to preserving Europe’s natural environment”.

(Source: European Commission website “European Green Deal”)

There are various elements to the European Green Deal including –

1. “Increasing the EU’s climate ambition for 2030 and 2050”
2. “Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy”

3. “Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy”
4. “Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way”
5. “Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility”
6. “From ‘Farm to Fork’: designing a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system”
7. “Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity”
8. “A zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment”

(Source: Communication from the European Commission “The European Green Deal” dated 11 December 2019)



TOPIC 9: WHAT IS THE EU DOING TO MAKE THE INTERNET SAFER?

1 WHY DO WE NEED PROTECTION ONLINE?

Today, the internet is a daily part of the lives of young Europeans. Children are growing up using devices to play games, be creative, watch videos, do school work, and connect with friends and family for example. Older children may also use e-mail and social media like Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube and Facebook.

The internet opens doors to many new experiences, encourages learning and creativity, and brings people together. However, we also need protection online because children and young people can be exposed to online bullying (“cyber-bullying”), to inappropriate content that is harmful or upsetting, to fake news and false information, to privacy and identity theft, and to other risks.

In addition, many important industries and areas of work (like health and hospitals, energy, finance and banks, and transport for example) depend on digital technologies and a connection to the internet to function. At the same time, online attacks and crimes (“cyberattacks” and “cybercrimes”) are increasing in Europe and there is a need for more action to keep us safe online (more “cybersecurity”).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, even more aspects of our lives moved online. For example, school lessons, work meetings, health appointments, connecting with friends and family, exercise classes – these all happened online, via Zoom or FaceTime video calls for example. However, cybercrime also increased during the pandemic showing the need for more online safety. In fact, it has been estimated that significant cyberattacks in Europe doubled in 2020, following the pandemic.



WHAT IS “CYBER BULLYING”?

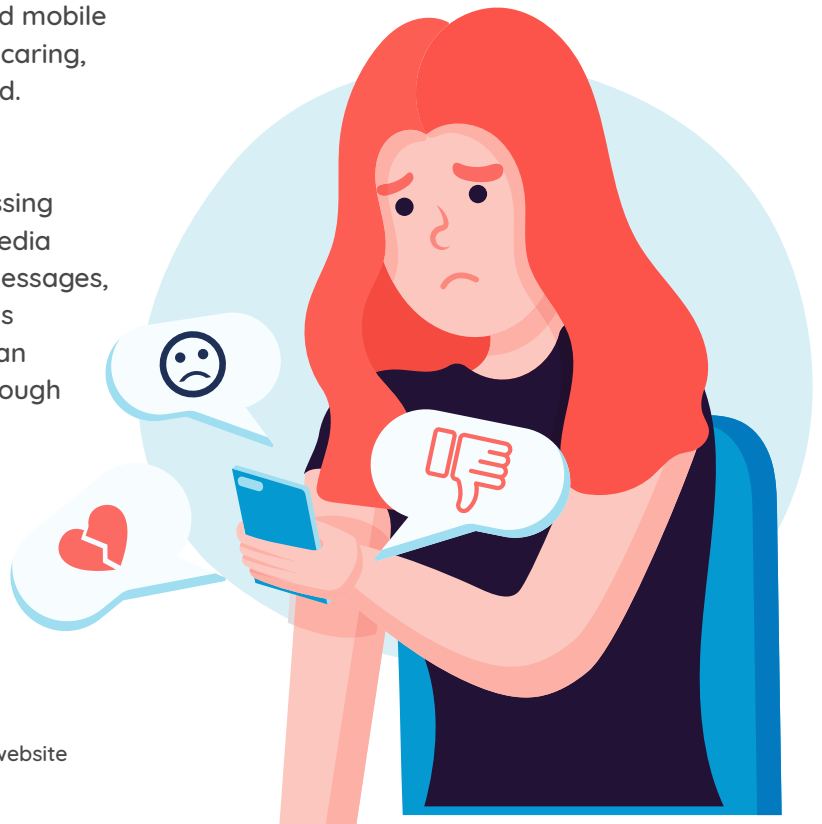
“Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

Examples include:

- spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone on social media
- sending hurtful, abusive or threatening messages, images or videos via messaging platforms
- impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf or through fake accounts.

Face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying can often happen alongside each other. But cyberbullying leaves a digital footprint – a record that can prove useful and provide evidence to help stop the abuse.”

(Source: The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) website “Cyberbullying: What is it and how to stop it”)



WHAT IS “FALSE INFORMATION”?

There is so much information available online that it is not always easy to tell what is real and what is not. False information can be shared by accident without meaning to cause harm (“misinformation”) or it can be shared on purpose to mislead people and cause harm (“disinformation”).

False information online, which we have seen around the COVID-19 pandemic and around the Russian invasion of Ukraine for example, means that it is important to be aware of the problem because not everything you see online is real.

The European Union (EU) says that, “The spread of both disinformation and misinformation can have a range of consequences, such as threatening our

democracies, polarising debates, and putting the health, security and environment of EU citizens at risk”. (Source: European Commission website “Shaping Europe’s digital future: Tackling online disinformation”)

In a 2018 Eurobarometer survey, 85% of respondents thought fake news was a problem in their country and 83% perceived it as a problem for democracy in general.

Check whether the story is from a trusted, reputable source and whether/how it is being reported elsewhere. If you’re not sure whether something you see online is true or false, ask an adult you know and trust to help you find out more.



QUICK FACTS:

- A survey by EU Kids Online in 19 European countries showed that most children report using their smartphones “daily” or “almost all the time”.
- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 1 in 3 internet users around the world are under 18 years old.
- UNICEF also reports that youth (ages 15-24) are the most connected age group and that worldwide 71% are online, as compared with 48% of the total population. However, youth in Africa are the least connected and around 60% are not online, compared to only 4% who are not online in Europe.
- The results of a poll (released in 2019 by UNICEF and the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children) showed that 1 in 3 young people in 30 countries reported having been a victim of bullying online; and 1 in 5 reported having missed school because of cyberbullying and violence.
- In the poll, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ (3 quarters) of young people also said that social networks are the most common place for online bullying.
- We discussed climate change in another info sheet and it is worth thinking here about energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions linked to our online activity because approximately 4.1 billion people, or 53.6% of the world’s population, are now using the internet. Some estimate that our devices, the internet and the various support systems account for around 3.7% of global greenhouse gas emissions! Some internet companies are trying to be more environmentally-friendly, for example, by using renewable sources of energy. You could also help, for example, by thinking carefully before buying the latest phone and by using the power saving mode on your devices.



2

WHAT CAN WE DO TO STAY SAFE ONLINE?

Your parents can set up passwords, parental controls, safe search settings, and virus protection software to help make devices (like smart phones, smart watches, tablets, laptops and computers etc.) and the internet safer for you. They can also help you to keep your personal information safe, to use safe search engines, and to find suitable websites, games and apps.

There are also some things that you can do to stay safe online. For example:



1. Follow the rules agreed with your parents about what you can do online and how much time you can spend online. Also, social media platforms, games and apps have age requirements so check you're old enough before signing up.



2. Follow the rules agreed with your parents about what information you can share online to help keep your identity and personal information safe.



3. Choose your passwords smartly and never share them.



4. Only talk and connect online with real-life friends and family. Also, remember to be a good friend online as you would in the rest of your life.



5. Never arrange to meet someone in real life who you've only talked to online - Some people might not be who they say there are. Sometimes children and young people are tricked into meeting with people who might harm them.



6. Think before you post - Anything you post online (such as comments, messages, videos or photos) could be shared or saved by someone else (such as by taking a screenshot for example), or could get into the wrong hands.



7. Consider setting your profiles to private (and ask an adult if you don't know how to do this).



8. Check that you know how to block, mute and report people or content that worries you (and ask an adult if you don't know how to do this).



9. Be aware of "false information" because not everything you see online is real. If you're not sure whether something you see online is true or false, ask an adult you know and trust to find out more.



10. Think before you click - Don't click on links or download things you don't recognise, and ask for help if you aren't sure.



11. Take a break and have some screen-free time. Also, remember you are more than simply your number of "likes" on social media.



12. Remember, if you have a problem online or have any concerns, ask for help from your parents, teachers or an adult you know and trust. Use your devices in a shared space such as the living room or kitchen so that you can get help if needed.



SAFER INTERNET DAY

Safer Internet Day (SID) is celebrated every February in around 200 countries and territories around the world. The SID theme in 2022 was “Together for a better internet” and it is about encouraging everyone to come together to make the internet a safer place for everyone, especially for children and young people.

WHAT IS A “DIGITAL FOOTPRINT”?

“Whenever you visit a website, share a photo or make a comment online, you leave a digital footprint that other people can see. Your digital footprint includes all the information you share or that’s collected about you online, and there can be a lot of it.

Lots of the information you share can be seen by other people. It can be used to target adverts at you, or it could be seen by a potential employer

years later. Sometimes people can use the details you share to work out your identity.

Your footprint can be both good and bad. It could show things you’re embarrassed about later, or help people to see your skills or things you’re proud of.”

(Source: Childline UK website “Taking care of your privacy and digital footprint”)

3

WHAT IS THE EU DOING TO MAKE THE INTERNET SAFER?

One of the top goals of the European Union (EU) is to help Europe become fit and ready for the digital age. Part of this is about making the internet a safer place for everyone. Here, we discuss four examples of steps that the EU has taken:

1. EU RULES SUCH AS THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

When we go online, we often share personal information (such as our name, address, email address, location, etc.) with our internet provider and with the websites we are visiting. EU rules can help protect our privacy and our data when we go online.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the EU's data protection law. It aims to make sure our personal data is collected and managed correctly, and that it is not misused. The GDPR has been described as "the toughest privacy and security law in the world".

2. THE EU CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

In addition, we discussed the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in another info sheet. It contains the fundamental rights of everyone in the EU and it says that "Everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her".



3. THE BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS PLATFORM AND SAFER INTERNET CENTRES

The EU set out a ‘European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children’ in 2012. Various activities take place under the Strategy and it has also influenced actions in EU member countries.

For example, the EU funds the ‘Better Internet for Kids’ platform which aims to create a safer and better internet for children and young people. The platform provides information, guidance and resources on better internet issues.

The EU also co-funds ‘Safer Internet Centres’ (SICs). They operate in EU Member States and also in Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. SICs

usually offer an awareness centre, helpline, hotline and youth panel.

- **National awareness centres** work to increase understanding about safer internet issues among children, young people, parents and teachers.
- **Helplines** provide information, advice and help to children, young people and parents about dealing with harmful content, contact or conduct (such as cyberbullying for example).
- **Hotlines** allow members of the public to report illegal online content anonymously (without giving their name).
- **Youth panels** provide an opportunity for young people to give their views and share experiences about using the internet, and tips about staying safe online.

4. CYBERSECURITY

Cybersecurity is about keeping us safe online and it is one of the EU’s most important goals.

The EU is taking various actions to strengthen our safety online, including:

- There is a new ‘EU Cybersecurity Strategy’ which covers, for example, the safety of important services like hospitals, energy grids and railways, and devices at home and at work.
- There are various EU laws about cybersecurity.
- There is an EU Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA) which helps member states, the EU institutions and others to deal with cyberattacks.
- There is a European Cybercrime Centre to help EU countries fight online crimes.

WHAT ARE “CYBERATTACKS”?

“[A]s well as new opportunities, the move to a more digital world has also brought new threats in the form of cyberattacks. Cyberattacks are used to steal data, spy on users, disable or manipulate computers and more. They not only target personal computers, but also entire networks, and can be carried out by individual hackers, groups of hackers or even countries.

If the move to digital is to be successful, European citizens and businesses must be able to benefit from new technologies without compromising their cybersecurity. The EU’s Cybersecurity Strategy aims to strengthen our collective cybersecurity and our response to cyberattacks. It will build a stable and secure global Internet where the rule of law, human rights and democratic values are protected.”

(Source: European Commission website “Shaping Europe’s digital future: Cybersecurity”)

WHAT IS “CYBERCRIME”?

“Cybercrime consists of criminal acts committed online by using electronic communications networks and information systems.”

“Cybercrime is a borderless issue that can be classified in three broad definitions:

- crimes specific to the internet...
- online fraud and forgery...
- illegal online content...”.

(Source: European Commission website “Migration and Home Affairs: Cybercrime”)



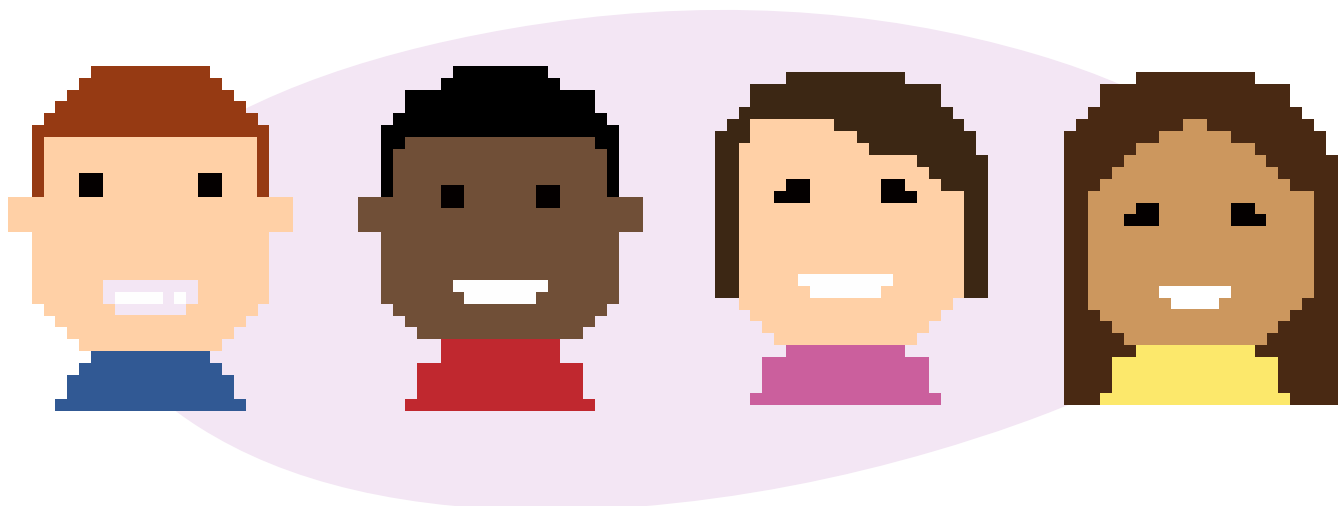
4 WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN THE ONLINE WORLD?

In another info sheet, we discussed children’s rights and how, over 30 years ago, in 1989, world leaders adopted the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention is an international agreement about the rights of children and 196 countries, including all EU member states, have signed up to this agreement. The Convention explains that a child is anyone under the age of 18 and that all children should enjoy all the rights listed in the Convention.

In March 2021, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted an important document called “General Comment No. 25 on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment”.

The adoption of the General Comment makes clear that children’s rights also apply in the online world. In the General Comment, the Committee explains how state parties should implement the Convention in relation to the digital environment.



TOPIC 10: HOW DOES THE EU SUPPORT MY EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

1

WHY IS EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

As we discussed in another info sheet, **education is a human right**, which means that everyone has the right to education. This right is set out in the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** as well as the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**. All children have the right to education no matter who they are: regardless for example of their race, religion, gender or disability, if they live with their family or in a children's home (orphanage), or are a refugee. The CRC establishes that primary education should be compulsory and free to all.

In addition, the right to education is protected by the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, which we discussed in another

info sheet. The Charter contains the fundamental rights of everyone within in the European Union (EU) and Article 14 of the Charter is about the right to education.

Improving children's education and training is very important. Children who receive an education are likely to have **more opportunities to achieve their goals** and reach their potential. Access to quality education and training is also important for a country's **economic growth** because young people will likely develop skills, knowledge and new ideas which they can take with them into the world of work.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



HOW DO THE UNITED NATIONS "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS" FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

We discussed the United Nations "Sustainable Development Goals" or "SDGs" in another info sheet. The Goals are about ending poverty, improving lives, and protecting the planet. The Goals are for all countries and all people, and governments have promised to fulfill them so "no one will be left behind".

Goal 4 is about ensuring inclusive and quality education for everyone and about promoting lifelong learning. Goal 4 is important for sustainable development because education can help lifting families out of poverty, reducing inequalities, and promoting peace.

The EU is committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.



QUICK FACTS:

- There were about 1.3 billion school aged children worldwide in 2020 (5-14 years). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that globally over 1 billion children go to school on any given school day.
- However, UNICEF has also reported that 617 million youth around the world (primary school-age children and lower secondary school-age adolescents) do not have basic maths and literacy skills.
- Also, according to UNICEF around 262 million children and youth (primary and secondary school-age children) were out of school in 2018 – which is almost one in five children in the world's population in that age group.
- It has also noted that more than half of the children who have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The UN has also noted that, around the world, about 5.5 million more primary school age girls than boys were out of school in 2018.

Source: UNICEF website and UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030



2

HOW DOES THE EU SUPPORT MY EDUCATION?

In the EU, education and training systems are organised and provided by the EU member countries themselves, but the EU supports them in this task. For example, the EU helps member states to create new ideas for their education and training systems, for example by financially supporting projects aimed at promoting ideas and research for new training methods, new topics for curricula, or introduction of technology in schools.

There are also opportunities for young people within the EU to study and learn in other EU countries, for instance in universities across Europe as part of the ERASMUS programme, and to have those periods of their education recognised in their home country. Also, degrees, diplomas or qualifications obtained in one EU member country are generally recognised and valid in other member countries. For university level education, this has been achieved through the so called 'Bologna Process' where the member states have agreed to increase the coherence of higher education systems across Europe.



QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME



- According to the EU Commission, ERASMUS stands for European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. The programme is also named after the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536) who traveled for work and study in learning centres across Europe, including Paris, Leuven and Cambridge.
- In the first year of the programme, only 3244 students studied abroad, while now there are over 10 million participants.
- ERASMUS+ has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion, which almost twice the funding of the predecessor programme (2014-2020).
- In 2020 the ERASMUS budget of 3.8 billion Euros financed the training and studies abroad of about **640.000 people**, the activities of **126.000 organisations** and about **20.400 projects**.

ERASMUS is the EU's programme for education, training, youth and sport in Europe established in 1987. It offers mobility and cooperation opportunities, including in early childhood education and care, higher education and vocational training. ERASMUS+ is a more inclusive, digital, and greener version (2021-2027) of ERASMUS.

As we discussed in another info sheet, the 27 EU member countries work together at an EU level to solve issues that affect everyone living in the EU. They try to overcome their differences to tackle important challenges together. For example, the EU is spending money on education in member countries in order to address the impact of global

challenges such as the gap in technological skills between rich and poor countries, climate change, people being forced to flee their home, and conflict. By spending money on children's education, the EU and its member countries are trying to build inclusive, greener, safer and more sustainable societies.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

DIGITAL SKILLS

As we discussed in another info sheet, the internet is a daily part of the lives of young Europeans, and many aspects of our lives have moved online. Digital skills (such as being able to use a computer and the internet) are essential today for succeeding in the world's technology-driven society. Education plays a key role in developing these skills for life and work. A good education makes sure that young people are ready for the digital age.

MIGRATION, WAR AND CONFLICT

We have discussed migration in another info sheet. Millions of children move with their families because of conflict, poverty or weather-related disasters and extreme

weather. Schools can be safe places for children, and education helps protect them against threats including child labour, being forced to move countries against their will, and mistreatment. In societies where there is war and conflict, education can help promote tolerance and peace, and can help break the cycle of violence.

THE CLIMATE CRISIS

We have discussed climate change in another info sheet. The climate crisis is one of the biggest challenges of our time, and so teaching children about environmental issues and how to address them is very important. For example, education about climate change can help children and young people to understand the importance of using environmentally-friendly energy sources.

The EU is helping to create something called the “European Education Area”, which will help all EU member countries to improve their education systems. The EU has also created something called the “Education for Climate Coalition” to help tackle the climate crisis.

We will now look in more detail at these two initiatives.

3 WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA?

As noted above, the EU is creating the “European Education Area” to help member countries make education and training better for everyone in the EU. The EU's education plan is to ensure that all children are treated equally and included in society. The EU would like member countries to work together more when they are planning their education and training systems. One example is that the EU wants to make sure that all students have a chance to learn and speak different languages. The new European Education Area will focus on the climate crisis and digital technology, and will promote young people's participation in democratic life.



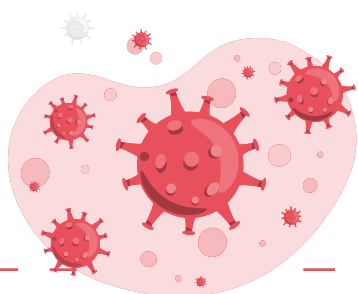
QUICK FACT:

There are around 76.2 million pupils and students enrolled in schools and pre-schools in the EU across all education levels.

The idea of a “European Education Area” was first developed by European leaders at the 2017 Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, but cooperation has been ongoing for decades. As a result of the close cooperation between the EU member countries, the situation in the EU is that:

- Almost 95% of children attend early childhood education from the age of 4.
- More than 40% of young adults acquire a higher education qualification.
- Almost 90% of young people leave education with either an upper secondary diploma or enrolment in training.
- 80% of recent ERASMUS+ graduates gain employment in less than 3 months after graduating.

The EU is also working to ensure further progress in reducing the share of 15-year-olds with low ability in reading, maths and science, and in increasing the participation of adults in learning.



The EU hopes to make the **European Education Area a reality by 2025**. To achieve this, the EU aims to:

- **Promote quality** by improving basic skills such as entrepreneurship, creativity and the ability to use new technology, and by promoting international cooperation between educational institutions.
- **Encourage language learning** and multilingualism, and support the discovery and management of cultural diversity.
- **Promote inclusive education and equality** between women and men across all levels of education and training. One example is tackling sexist behaviour and sexual misconduct in education and training. The EU also works towards equality between men and women in leadership positions, including in higher education institutions, and in professions in which men and/or women are unequally represented.
- **Help students prepare for a new “green” future** by making sure that vocational education and training is adapted to the green and digital transitions.

HOW DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT CHILDREN’S EDUCATION AND WHAT IS THE EU DOING ABOUT IT?

Lots of children in the EU have had to change the way they study because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, lots of children have had to **study at home** and not in school. However, not all children and young people have been able to access remote learning and it has not all been of the same quality.

As COVID-19 has had a big impact on education, the European Education Area is linked with a plan to help EU member countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This other plan is called “**Next Generation EU**”. The “Next Generation EU” plan will invest in education systems in Europe

to help students catch up with learning they have missed because of the pandemic. For example, the EU is spending money to make sure that more students and teachers have access to computers and the internet.

Looking at the global picture, UNICEF has noted that school closures during the pandemic affected more than 1.6 billion learners around the world. Recently, in March 2022, UNICEF warned that in 23 countries – where around 405 million schoolchildren live – schools are yet to fully reopen and many children are at risk of never returning to education.

4

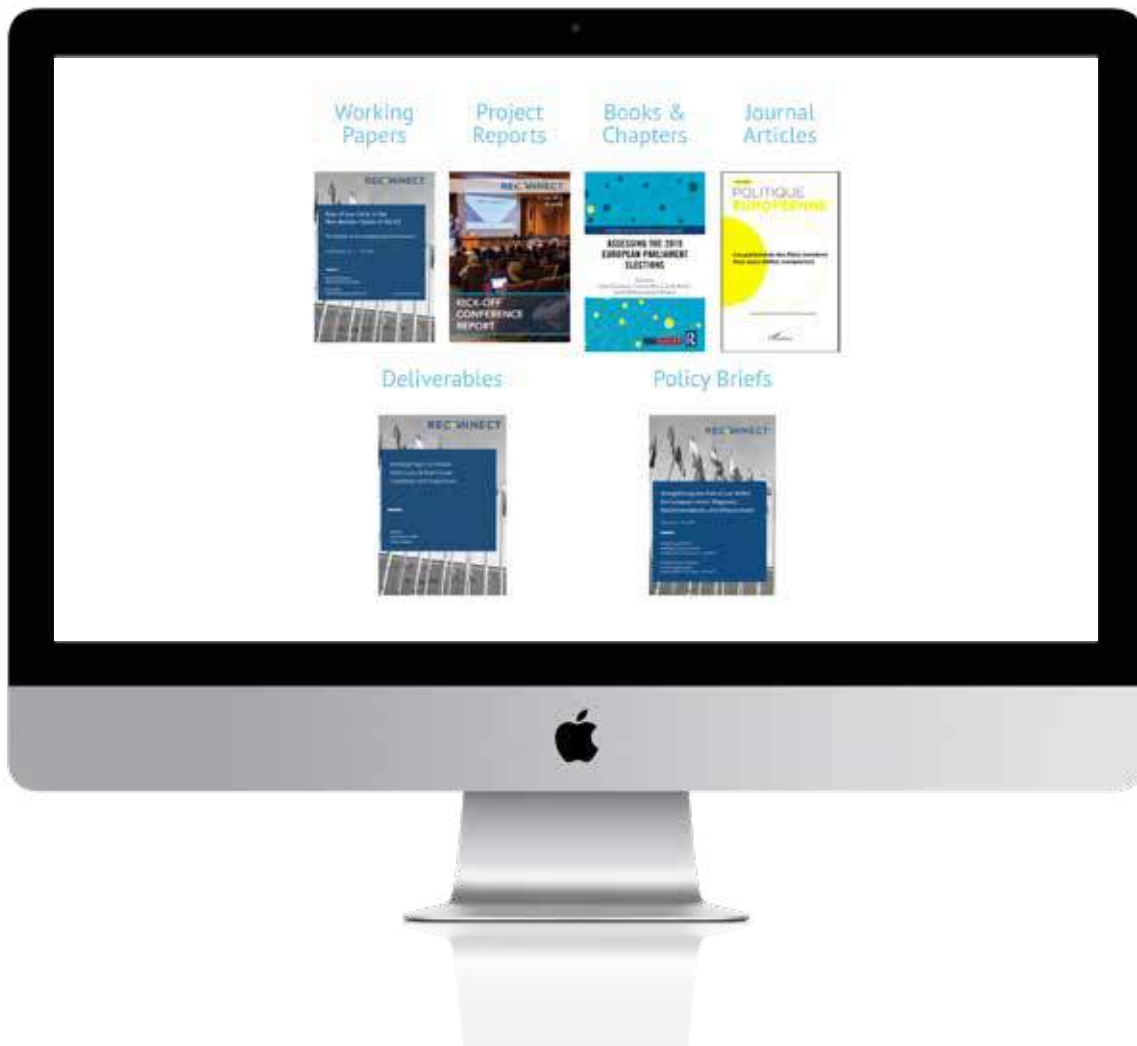
WHAT IS THE EDUCATION FOR CLIMATE COALITION?

We discussed climate change in another info sheet. The EU is trying to use education to help protect the environment and fight the climate crisis. To do this, as noted above, the EU is creating an “Education for Climate Coalition”. The Education for Climate Coalition aims to create a community led by teachers and students who will learn from each other and share ideas about helping to tackle the climate crisis. The EU wants to give financial support (such as money) to education and training opportunities that will help protect the environment. For example, the EU wants to help schools to use science classes to teach students about environmental protection.

Also, the climate crisis is changing the types of jobs that people do and more countries want people to work in jobs that will not damage the environment. The EU also wants to make sure that EU citizens can work in these **environmentally-friendly jobs** by teaching them the skills they will need to do so.



OTHER PROJECT PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON:
[HTTPS://RECONNECT-EUROPE.EU/PUBLICATIONS/](https://reconnect-europe.eu/publications/)



RECONNECT

These info sheets were developed by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law together with University of Leuven as part of the Horizon 2020 EU funded RECONNECT project, ‘Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and the Rule of Law’. They were developed to provide educational material on core European values and key concepts for young people living in the European Union.

The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation programme under Grant Agreement no. 770142

