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

Info sheets for younger children

RECONNECT

BINGHAM CENTRE FOR THE RULE OF LAW

Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies

RECONNECT

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 younger children. 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**).

1 WHAT IS THE EU?

The EU is a group of 27 European countries and 'EU' stands for 'European Union'. 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 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. Since then, more countries have joined and 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".

LUXEMBOURG NETHERLANDS

BELGIUM GERMANY

FRANCE ITALY
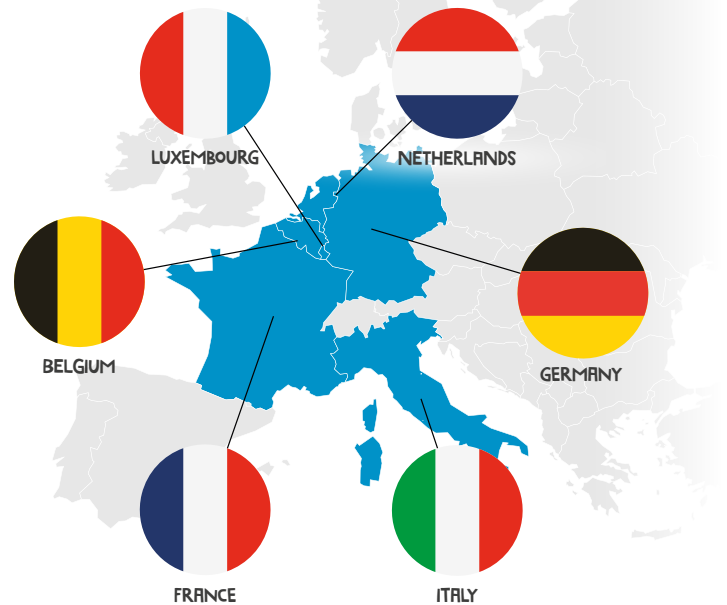
3 WHAT ARE THE EU'S VALUES?

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.

🕊 **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 in the EU use the Euro and so you don't need to exchange money when you travel from Italy to Germany, or from France to Belgium for example. When you go on holiday to these countries, you can just pay for an ice cream in Euros.

5 WHAT IS THE EU'S SINGLE MARKET?

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.

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** sets the EU's overall policy direction and priorities. The **European Commission**, the **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union** work together to make new EU laws.

The European Parliament is the only body which is directly elected. There are European elections every five years where EU citizens elect Members of the European Parliament.

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.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COUNCIL OF THE EU

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

The Plenary Room In the European Council building, Brussels

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.

Being an EU citizen does not replace your national citizenship but adds to it. For example, if you are a German citizen or a French citizen, at the same time you have EU citizenship. If you have a German passport or a French passport, your EU citizenship is also printed on your passport.

Being an EU citizen means that you have some important rights, freedoms and legal protections under EU law.

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).

- **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 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 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 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.

🛡 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 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.

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. 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 that all human beings are free and equal. This rule 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 food, clothing, housing and medical care

Right to go to school for free

Right to organise and take part in peaceful meetings

Right not to be mistreated or wrongly punished

Right to work and to be fairly paid, to rest and leisure

Right to own things (property)

Right to a private and family life

Right to think and say what they like

Right to freedom of religion and belief

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.

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 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 COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN 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.	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.

1 WHAT IS THE RULE OF LAW?

The Rule of Law is one of the key values on which the European Union is based. It contains a number of elements, which we explore in this 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.

In fact, the Rule of Law is a bit like playing football…

EQUALITY

Everyone playing the football game has to follow the rules, whichever team they play for, and whether they are a regular player or the team captain. No one is above the rules!

USE OF POWER

Referees are in charge of the game and they should make decisions about the game fairly and within the rules.

CLEAR AND SIMPLE RULES

The rules of the game should be clear and simple, and everyone should know what the rules are before the game starts. No secret rules!

HUMAN RIGHTS

The rules should protect the players' rights.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

If the rules are broken, the players should be able to complain to the referee. There may be consequences for the rule breaker, like getting a red card and being sent off, or getting a penalty.

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

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 AND SIMPLE RULES

Imagine that you are in a library to borrow a book. You ask for some information about how long you can keep the book, whether you can renew the book during that period, and what punishment there is for delayed return. The employee at the desk provides you with a copy of the 'Library Guide' which is 150 pages long and written in very confusing language. After spending a lot of time trying to find the relevant part of the Guide, you read that there is a fine of 1 EUR for delayed return. That does not seem too high to you, so you decide to return the book 15 days after the deadline. The same employee you spoke to last time tells you that the fine is actually calculated per day of delay and charges you 15 EUR for the late return.

- To protect you against this kind of situation, the Library Guide should have been simpler, clearer and more easily accessible.
- You need to know what rules will apply to ensure that you can make informed decisions when receiving services or buying things from a shop.

USE 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.

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 JUSTICE

Imagine that a teacher says that you have been bullying another child, which is not true. They call your parents/carers into school and tell them what the other child has said. The teacher does not ask for your side of the story and you are not allowed to say anything.

- Schools should work to prevent bullying, and they should act fairly when someone complains about bullying.
- You should have the opportunity to explain yourself and to tell your side of the story, before the school decides what to do.

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 European Union (EU) is based.

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.

All EU member countries face Rule of Law challenges of some kind. But "Rule of Law backsliding" is where states deliberately weaken the system of "checks and balances" on the use of power. For example, states might try to weaken human rights, access to justice or the electoral system in their country. The EU can take action against a country it thinks has seriously and persistently broken the EU's key values such as the Rule of Law.
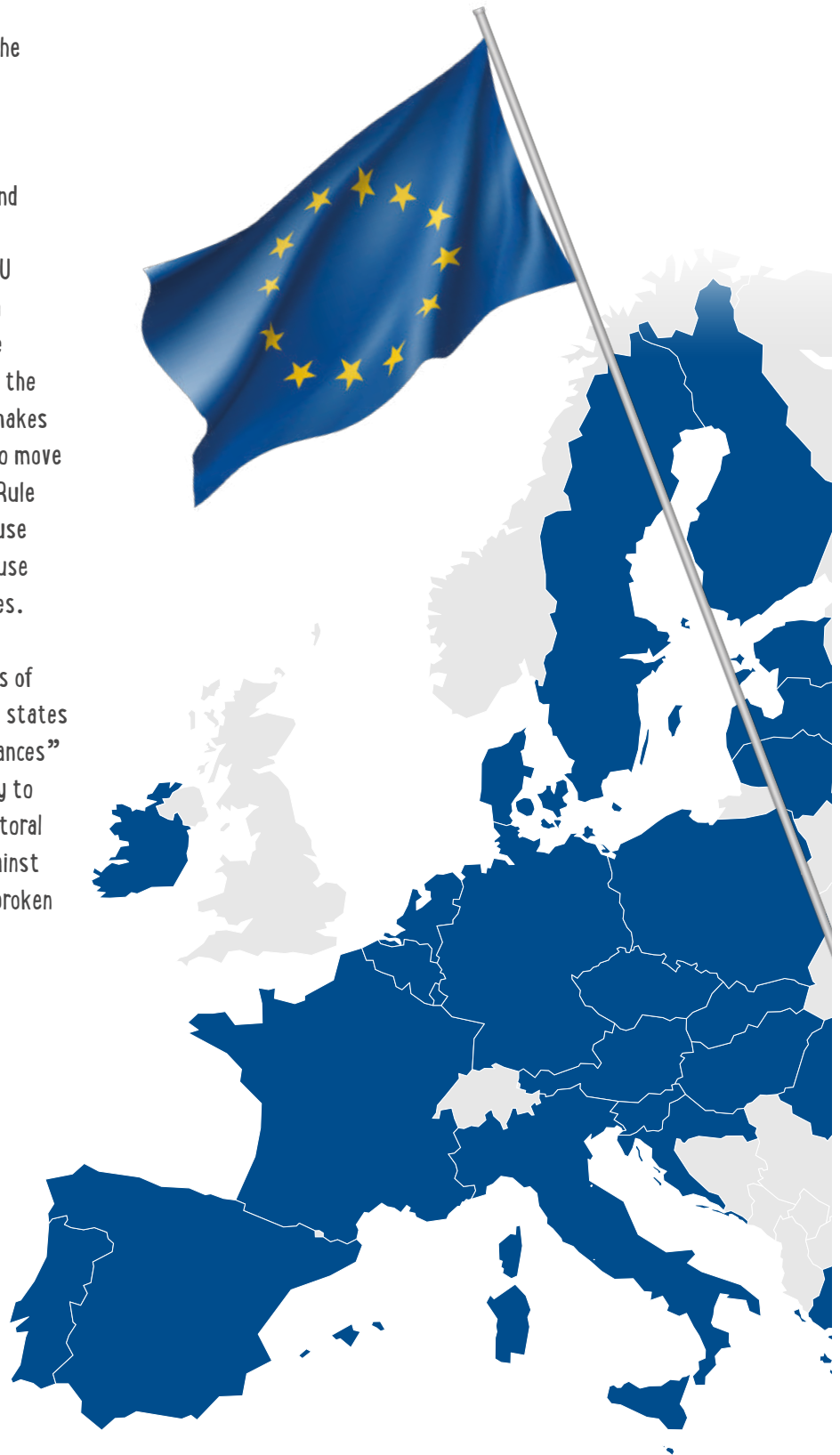
1 WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

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".

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, each with different ideas and plans for how they would run the country if they won the election.

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.

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).

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".

KEY WORDS

Parliament 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 sets a country's policies and priorities, and puts the laws into practice.

Courts are where judges interpret and apply the law, and provide access to justice.

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.) We discuss children's rights in more detail in another info sheet.

4 HOW IS DEMOCRACY IMPORTANT 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. 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:

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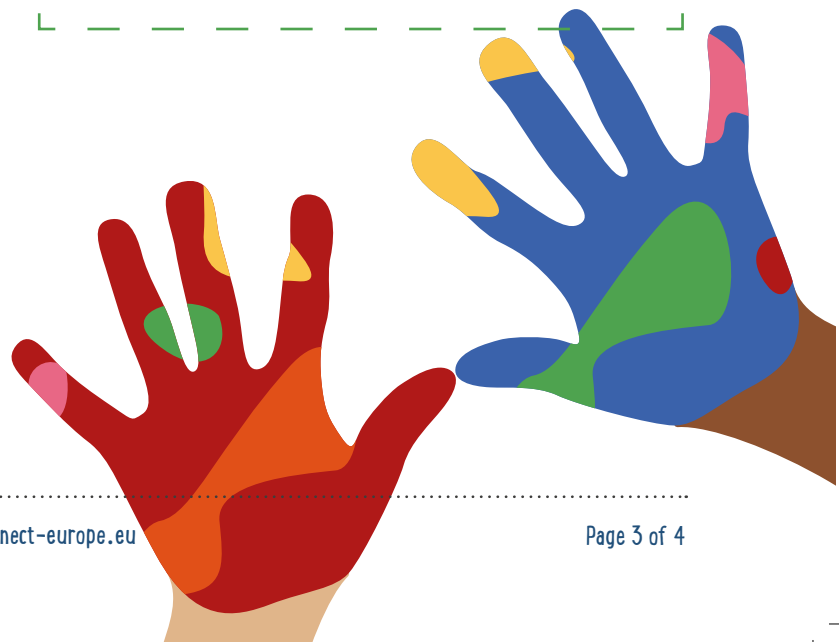
4 HOW ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECTED IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

Children's rights are also protected in the European Union (EU) and this is one of the EU's key goals.

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.

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**". This covers issues such as children's participation in political life, child poverty, health and education, violence against children, the rights of children in the justice system, internet safety, and the protection of children during crisis and conflict.

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.

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

· The 'World Migration Report 2022' published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 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.

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.

For example, 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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", 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.

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

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.

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).
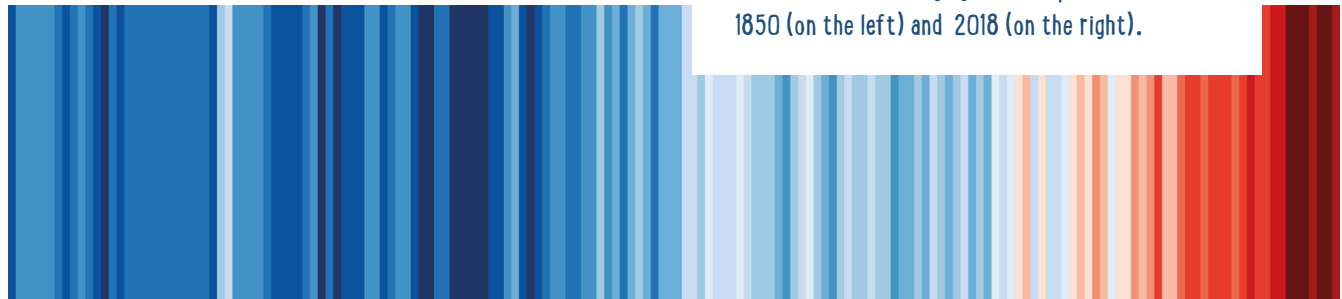
WHY CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

"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.
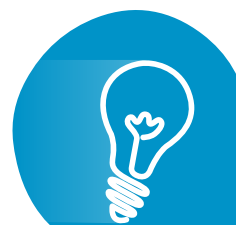
QUICK FACTS:

- 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.

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.

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

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

Grow more trees.

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

Buy less and buy local.

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

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

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

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

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")

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:

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE 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.

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.

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 ¾ (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 (for example, for an hour a day, for watching particular programmes or playing certain games).

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. Never share your passwords.

4. Only talk and connect online with real-life friends and family.

5. Remember to be a good friend online as you would in the rest of your life.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Take a break and have some screen-free time.

9. Use your devices in a shared space such as the living room or kitchen so that you can get help if needed.

10. 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.

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.

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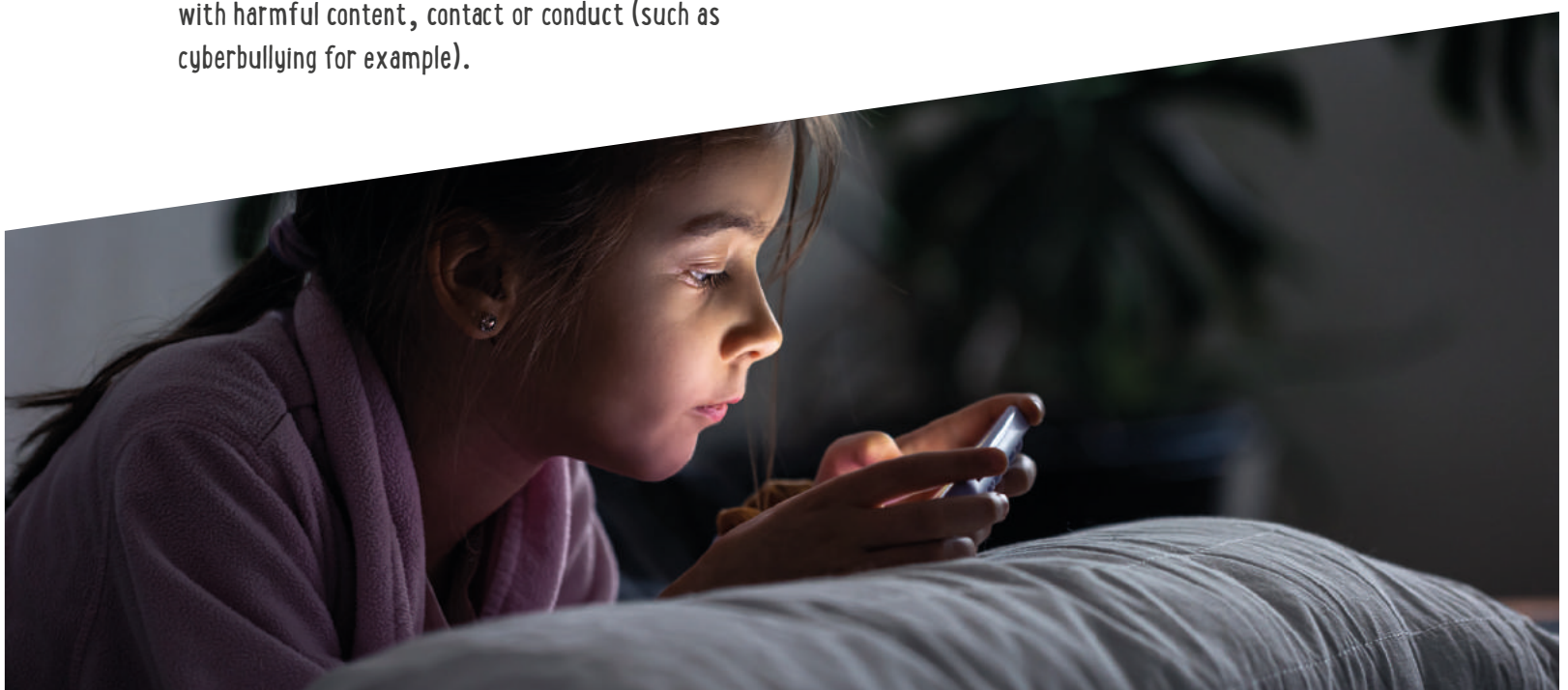
# TOPIC 10: HOW DOES THE EU SUPPORT MY EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

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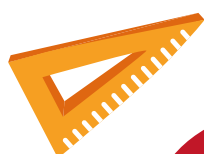
HOW DO THE UNITED NATIONS "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS" FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

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** 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.

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.

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.