Europe in a nutshell

A short introduction to Europe and the European Union (EU)
for 9 to 15 year olds

Teachers' Guide

'Europe in a nutshell' gives a broad picture of Europe, combining geographical, historical, and political perspectives. Each section is presented on one page. You can print the entire document or individual pages and use them as hand-outs for your pupils. You may of course also adapt the content of the Word document to your specific teaching needs.

I.   AIMS

- To give a basic idea of Europe's common history and culture
- To give basic information on the creation of the EU, its activities and institutions, and the role of its Member States
- To focus on connections (rather than isolated facts) between
    - Europe's past and its present
    - EU Member States, citizens, institutions and activities
    - Various subjects (geography, history, politics and culture)

II.   CURRICULAR THEMES

Geography: defining Europe's borders; distinguishing between Europe and the European Union; number of continents in the world.

History: putting historical events into a broader context; understanding how history affects the present; learning lessons from history.

Social studies: placing countries in their European context; democracy and communism; war and peace; preparing to play an active role as citizens.

Modern foreign languages: Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

III.   EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Geography (pp. 1 and 6)

- Ask which European countries pupils have visited and if they have noticed any significant differences in the geography/landscape/climate, etc.

History (pp. 2 and 3)

- Discuss: How did European countries interact with each other in the past?
  (Through trade, treaties, and political cooperation, but also through wars and conflicts)

- Discuss: How did European countries inspire each other throughout history?
  (e.g. in the areas of science, inventions, the arts, religion, philosophy)

- The Second World War, discuss: How did your great-grandparents live during WWII. Do you think that after the war they were able to make friends with people they had been at war with?

Social studies (pp. 3 to 5)

- Discuss: What does it mean for your pupils to be European or to live in Europe?

- Discuss: Why was the EU created? Why did so many countries want to join the EU?

- 'What the EU does today' (p. 4): Why did EU countries decide to deal with these issues at European level? Would you decide otherwise in certain fields?

Modern foreign languages (pp. 1 to 6)

- Read '*Europe in a nutshell*' in a foreign language that you are learning. ('Europe in a nutshell' is available in 23 languages, all of which can be found on the website).

- Discuss any of the above questions in class or get your pupils to give their answers.

- Have your pupils prepare a list of words that are used in at least two European languages (including their mother tongue).

- Encourage your pupils to play the *Let's explore Europe! game* (available in 22 languages) in the foreign language they are learning.

IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MATERIAL

Europe – our continent (p. 1)

Additional material on European geography, transport, languages, the climate, farming and the sea: *Let's explore Europe!* (brochure for 9 to 12 year olds), pp. 3-18

Europe – our history (p. 2)

Additional material on European history up until WWII: *Let's explore Europe!*, pp. 19-29

Establishment of the European Union (p. 3)

Additional material on the creation and development of the European Union and its predecessors:

- Brochure: *Let's explore Europe!*, pp. 30-33

- Website with detailed background information: *The history of the European Union*

What the European Union does today (p. 4)

The EU possesses only those competences expressly given to them by all Member States (principle of conferral). Here are three examples (referring to some of the headings on p. 4):

- 'Freedom for everybody': The free movement of workers was guaranteed by the Treaty of Rome, which founded the European Economic Community (1957). The Treaty of Maastricht (1992) extended the right to every EU citizen without reference to an economic activity.

- 'Money': The euro was established by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. It was launched as a virtual currency in 1999 and started circulating as coins and banknotes in 2002.

- 'Helping poorer regions': Regional policy finds its origins in the Treaty of Rome (1957), with its legal basis established in the Single European Act (1986).

For an explanation on how responsibilities are shared between the EU and its Member States, see *Europe in 12 lessons*, p. 20.

More examples of EU policies:
Europe: What's it all about? (brochure for pupils aged 13 and above), pp. 24-33

How the European Union takes decisions (p. 5)

Additional information on the EU institutions, how they work together and how decisions are made:

- *Europe: What's it all about?*, pp. 16-23

- *How the European Union works* (detailed background information)

Member States of the European Union (p. 6)

Additional information on the individual EU Member States:

- *Basic information on each EU country*'s political system, history, economy, geography, culture and traditional food

- *Interactive map* that pupils can use to discover more about EU countries