

Kinesthetic Activity: European Union Connections

by Regina Higgins

Goal

To deepen understanding of the connections between EU nations through a kinesthetic experience.

Materials Needed

- Ball of cotton string (kitchen twine works well)
- 12 cards, each with the name of the first 12 EU member countries printed in large letters
 - The first six EU member states: France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Netherlands
 - The next three EU enlargements of the EU brought in Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, and Portugal
- A paper or cloth bag (for the cards)

Procedure

Begin by telling the group that this is a kinesthetic activity to experience the connections between EU nations. Mention that they can use it in their classrooms.

Ask for twelve volunteers, and tell each to reach in the bag and choose a card.

When all the participants have their cards, ask them to stand in a circle. Each participant should display the country card so the others can see it clearly.

Give the ball of string to one of the participants, with the end of the string loose. (Have the participant hold the string between her/his fingers.) Explain that s/he should look around the circle and pick a country that's connected to her/his country in some way. It can be historically (war, for instance), or culturally (language, music), or geographically (share a border), or another way. The participant holding the string should say what the connection is ("France fought Germany in the first and second world wars") and then, while still holding on to the string, throw the ball gently to the participant with the Germany card.

The participant with the Germany card should look around the circle and choose another country for a connection. While saying what the connection is (and still holding the string), s/he should toss the ball to the country mentioned. Repeat until everyone has had at least one turn.

When the web is complete, ask one participant (perhaps holding the Luxembourg card) to tug very gently on the string. Ask which participants felt something. Probably all will have felt the tug, but if not, ask those participants who felt it to give a gentle tug themselves. Everyone will feel it.

Conclude by pointing out that we've just seen (and felt) that European nations, large and small, are strongly connected through history, geography, culture, language, and in many other ways. Anything affecting even the smallest nation affects all the European nations. The EU is an acknowledgment of that connection, and a determined attempt to make it a strength rather than a vulnerability for all its members.