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EU lesson plans

Content:

Lesson The founders of EU

Lesson EU institutions and their seats

Lesson The members of EU



The Founders of the European Union

From coal and steel to a union: the people, the six countries and the treaties

Level	Upper Secondary (ages 15–18)
Subject fit	History, Social Studies / Civics, European Studies, Citizenship Education
Duration	45 minutes
Class size	12–32 students; groups of 4–5 (works with 6 groups, adapt for fewer)
Ends with	An 8-question quiz (printed in Appendix C; an interactive version is provided in the chat)

1. Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain why six countries chose to pool coal and steel in 1950–51 and how this led to today's EU.
- Name the six founding countries and the key founding treaties (Paris 1951, Rome 1957, Maastricht 1992/93).
- Describe the contribution of at least two founding figures, and speak in role as one of them.
- Rank and justify the reasons behind early European integration, recognising that historians weigh them differently.

A note on the word "founders"

The people usually called the "founding fathers" of the EU are a later label, and historians debate who belongs on the list. This lesson uses six commonly cited figures or groups and invites students to ask who else might be missing.

2. Preparation and materials

- Print the six Founder Cards (Appendix A), one per group, and the Timeline Cards (Appendix B, cut into strips).
- Print the quiz (Appendix C), or prepare it on a quiz platform or use the interactive version in the chat.
- Prepare the nine Reason Cards for the ranking task (Appendix D), one set per pair, and a sheet of paper for the diamond grid.
- Optional: bring a lump of coal and a steel nail, or show pictures of them, for the opening hook.
- Materials: projector or board, timer, sticky notes (for exit tickets), student devices are optional.

3. Lesson at a glance

Time	Activity	What happens	Format
0–5	1. Hook: Why share coal and steel?	A puzzle about two countries that fought wars deciding to share their war industries.	Pairs, then whole class
5–12	2. Founding Moments Timeline	Students order seven event cards from 1946 to 1993.	Teams of 4–5
12–28	3. Founders' Press Conference	Groups become founders, prepare statements and face journalist questions.	Groups of 4–5
28–35	4. Diamond Ranking: Why did it happen?	Pairs rank nine reasons for early integration.	Pairs
35–45	5. Quiz and exit ticket	8 questions (8 min), then a one-line exit ticket (2 min).	Individual

4. Activity guide

Activity 1: Hook: Why share coal and steel? (0–5 min)

Purpose: Create curiosity about what looks like a strange decision.

- Put up the facts: in 1945 Europe lay in ruins after the Second World War; France and Germany (or Prussia before it) had fought three wars in 70 years, in 1870, 1914 and 1939. Coal and steel were the raw materials of tanks, guns and factories.
- Pose the puzzle: In 1950, France proposed that France and Germany put all their coal and steel under one shared authority. Why would a country give up control of its war industries? Pairs discuss for 90 seconds and write one possible reason on a sticky note.
- Collect three or four ideas on the board. Tell students that their ideas will be tested during the lesson and revisited in the ranking task.

Activity 2: Founding Moments Timeline (5–12 min)

Purpose: Establish the chronology that the quiz will rely on.

- Give each team the seven Timeline Cards (Appendix B) in a mixed order. Teams have 3 minutes to place them in order on their desk.
- Reveal the order on the board. Teams self-check and mark their number of correct positions.
- Ask: Which step was the real beginning of the union, 1950, 1951 or 1957? There is no single right answer. Take two quick opinions with reasons.
- Make sure students have noted: Schuman Declaration, 9 May 1950 (celebrated as Europe Day); Treaty of Paris, 18 April 1951; Treaties of Rome, 25 March 1957; Maastricht Treaty, in force 1 November 1993.

Activity 3: Founders' Press Conference (12–28 min)

Purpose: Students learn the founders' motives and personalities by speaking as them.

Preparation (5 min). Each group receives one Founder Card (Appendix A). Within the group, assign roles: the founder (speaker), a note-taker, and journalists who will prepare two questions for another founder. The founder prepares a 60-second statement in the first person covering: who I am, what I want to achieve, why my country should join.

Statements (6 min). Groups give their statements in the order of the timeline (Schuman first). Each statement lasts 60 seconds. Listening groups note one thing they agree with and one thing they would challenge.

Press questions (5 min). Open the floor for journalists. Use the question bank below if the class is quiet. Founders answer in role and may consult their group.

Sample journalist questions

To Schuman: Why is France offering to share control over its own industry?

To Adenauer: Many people in Germany and abroad mistrust a rebuilt Germany. How will this plan help?

To Monnet: Why start with coal and steel and not a full political union?

To De Gasperi: What does Italy gain from joining a union with richer neighbours?

To Spaak or the Benelux group: Why would small countries want to be part of this plan?

To any founder: Who might be left out of this project, and does that matter?

Support and challenge

Support: give a sentence frame ("My name is _____. In my country, people want _____. I believe the best way to achieve peace is _____").

Challenge: ask the founder to respond to a critic (for example, a worker in a coal region worried about losing control).

For smaller classes: merge cards (Adenauer + De Gasperi; Spaak + Benelux).

Activity 4: Diamond Ranking: Why did it happen? (28–35 min)

Purpose: Develop historical reasoning: causes are many and their weight is debated.

- In pairs, students receive nine Reason Cards (Appendix D) and arrange them in a diamond: 1 most important at the top, 2, 3, 2, and 1 least important at the bottom.
- Give 4 minutes for the ranking. Pairs must be ready to defend their top and bottom card.
- Spend 3 minutes on debrief: ask two pairs with different top cards to explain. Return to the sticky notes from the hook: which of the original ideas appeared among the nine?
- Concluding thought for the teacher to share: most historians point to several overlapping reasons, such as preventing war, economic recovery and security, rather than to a single cause.

Activity 5: Quiz and exit ticket (35–45 min)

- **Quiz (8 min):** Students answer the 8 multiple-choice questions in Appendix C individually, on paper or using a quiz platform. Use the interactive version in the chat for a quick whole-class run. Give about 60 seconds per question.
- **Mark and discuss (included in the 8 min):** Go through the answers briefly. Ask students to raise a hand for each question they got right and to explain any surprising answers.
- **Exit ticket (2 min):** Each student writes one sentence on a sticky note: "The founder whose idea I find most convincing is _____ because _____." Collect on the way out.

5. Assessment and differentiation

What	Evidence and look-fors
Quiz	Scores out of 8. Look for common errors (confusing Paris and Rome, or the 1950 declaration with a treaty) and revisit them next lesson.

What	Evidence and look-fors
Press conference	Accurate use of the founder's facts, speaking in role, quality of questions and answers.
Diamond ranking	Clear justification of choices using evidence from the lesson; willingness to revise a view.
Exit ticket	Whether students can link a founder to an idea or decision.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Sentence frames, a glossary of the key terms on each card, and a seat close to the teacher for the quiz with the option of reading questions aloud.
- **Stretch:** Ask students to find a founder's own words in an official EU source and explain them, or to research a person who is missing from the usual list.
- **Homework option:** Write a 150-word diary entry from the point of view of a coal worker in 1951 reading about the new treaty.

Appendix A: Founder Cards

Robert Schuman (1886–1963), France

- French foreign minister (1948–52). Born in Luxembourg and raised in Lorraine, a border region that moved between German and French control.
- On 9 May 1950 he announced the plan to place French and German coal and steel production under a common authority, open to other European countries. 9 May is now celebrated as Europe Day.
- Aim: make war between France and Germany "unthinkable" and in practice impossible.
- Later President of the European Parliamentary Assembly (1958–60).

Jean Monnet (1888–1979), France

- Economist and civil servant who helped design the plan behind the Schuman Declaration.
- Believed in a step-by-step method: concrete shared projects create real solidarity, and political unity follows later.
- First president of the ECSC High Authority (1952–55).
- After 1955 he led a committee that kept working for a closer union.

Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967), West Germany

- First Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949–63).
- Wanted Germany to be reintegrated as a trusted democratic partner in Western Europe and backed reconciliation with France.
- Welcomed the Schuman Plan as a way to regain equal standing for Germany.
- In 1963 he signed the Franco-German Élysée Treaty with Charles de Gaulle.

Alcide De Gasperi (1881–1954), Italy

- Italian Prime Minister (1945–53) who guided Italy from post-war ruin toward democracy.
- Saw European integration as protection for fragile democracies and a chance to rebuild Italy's economy and standing.
- Supported Italy joining the coal and steel community in 1951.
- Was born in a region that was then part of Austria-Hungary, giving him a personal view of shifting borders.

Paul-Henri Spaak (1899–1972), Belgium

- Belgian foreign minister and Prime Minister at different times.
- First president of the ECSC Common Assembly (1952–54).
- Chaired the committee whose 1956 report (the Spaak Report) prepared the Treaties of Rome and the common market.
- Later served as Secretary General of NATO (1957–61).

Joseph Bech and Johan Willem Beyen (Luxembourg and Netherlands)

- Bech, long-serving Luxembourg foreign minister; Beyen, Dutch foreign minister in the 1950s.
- With Spaak, they sent a joint Benelux memorandum in 1955 that helped relaunch European integration after earlier setbacks.
- Beyen had pushed for a wider common market, a key idea behind the European Economic Community.
- Represented the interest of smaller countries, which gain a voice in shared institutions.

Appendix B: Timeline Cards

Date	Event
Sept 1946	Winston Churchill gives a speech in Zurich calling for a kind of united Europe to prevent another war.
9 May 1950	Schuman Declaration: France proposes pooling French and German coal and steel (now Europe Day).
18 April 1951	Treaty of Paris signed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). It took effect in 1952.
June 1955	Messina Conference: the six foreign ministers agree to relaunch integration, leading to the Spaak Committee.
25 March 1957	Treaties of Rome signed, creating the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom. They took effect on 1 January 1958.
7 Feb 1992	Maastricht Treaty signed.
1 Nov 1993	Maastricht Treaty takes effect and the European Union is formally established.

Note: The seven cards above are the full set. For a faster version, remove the Messina Conference card and the 1992 signing card (five cards total).

Appendix C: Quiz (8 questions) and answer key

- 1. On what date did Robert Schuman present his plan for coal and steel?**
 - A. 8 May 1945
 - B. 9 May 1950
 - C. 25 March 1957
 - D. 1 November 1993
- 2. Which two industries were pooled under the first European community?**
 - A. Oil and gas
 - B. Coal and steel
 - C. Cars and ships
 - D. Wheat and wine
- 3. Which of these countries was NOT one of the six founding members?**
 - A. Italy
 - B. Luxembourg
 - C. Denmark
 - D. The Netherlands
- 4. Who was the first president of the ECSC High Authority?**
 - A. Jean Monnet
 - B. Konrad Adenauer
 - C. Winston Churchill
 - D. Alcide De Gasperi
- 5. Which treaty created the European Economic Community (the "common market")?**
 - A. Treaty of Paris
 - B. Treaty of Rome
 - C. Maastricht Treaty
 - D. Treaty of Versailles
- 6. Which treaty formally created the European Union under that name?**
 - A. Treaty of Paris (1951)
 - B. Treaties of Rome (1957)
 - C. Maastricht Treaty (1992/93)
 - D. Messina Declaration (1955)
- 7. Konrad Adenauer is best described as:**
 - A. First Chancellor of West Germany
 - B. French foreign minister
 - C. Italian Prime Minister
 - D. Belgian foreign minister
- 8. What was the main aim of the Schuman Plan?**
 - A. To create a single currency
 - B. To make war between France and Germany unthinkable
 - C. To build a European army
 - D. To end all trade barriers worldwide

Answer key

Q	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950; 9 May is Europe Day.
2	B	Coal and steel were the key materials for war industry.
3	C	Denmark joined later, in 1973. The six: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands.
4	A	Jean Monnet held the post from 1952 to 1955.
5	B	The Treaties of Rome were signed on 25 March 1957.
6	C	Signed in 1992 and in force from 1 November 1993.
7	A	He led West Germany from 1949 to 1963.
8	B	Peace through shared economic interests was the core idea.

Appendix D: Reason Cards (for the diamond ranking)

Print one set per pair, one reason per card.

#	Reason for early European integration
1	To prevent another war between France and Germany.
2	To rebuild economies destroyed by the Second World War.
3	To place the war industries (coal and steel) under a shared authority.
4	Fear of Soviet power during the Cold War and the wish for a strong Western Europe.
5	Encouragement and aid from the United States (such as the Marshall Plan).
6	To create a larger market in which businesses can grow.
7	To strengthen new democracies in West Germany and Italy by anchoring them in Europe.
8	A genuine belief in the idea of a united Europe.
9	To give smaller countries a voice alongside bigger neighbours.

LESSON PLAN

EU Institutions and Their Seats

Who makes decisions in the European Union?

Duration	45 minutes	Level	B1/B2
Target group	Upper secondary school, grades 2–3	Subject	English
Lesson type	Communicative, interactive	Main skills	Speaking, reading, collaboration

1. Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- name the main institutions of the European Union;
- identify their seats or main places of work;
- explain the basic functions of the European Parliament, European Commission, European Council, Council of the European Union and Court of Justice of the EU;
- use English to describe institutional roles and locations;
- cooperate in groups, ask questions and justify their answers.

Success criteria

Students can correctly match at least four institutions with their roles and locations and explain the difference between the European Council and the Council of the European Union.

Key vocabulary

institution • seat • headquarters • member state • legislation • propose • adopt • represent • negotiate • implement • judge • summit

Materials and preparation

Interactive whiteboard or projector; pictures of EU institution buildings; a map of Europe; institution, function and city cards; phones (optional); online quiz or mini-whiteboards; paper exit tickets.

2. Detailed lesson procedure

Stage 1. Warm-up: “Where is the EU?”

Timing: 0–5 min | Interaction: Whole class; visual thinking

Teacher’s procedure: Display pictures of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the European Commission in Brussels and the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg.

Questions / prompts:

- What do these buildings have in common?

- Do all EU institutions work in Brussels?
- Why do you think the EU has institutions in different cities?
- Which EU institutions have you heard of before?

Wrap-up / feedback: Students discuss their ideas with a partner for one minute and share answers. Transition: “Today, you are going to become EU experts. Your mission is to discover who makes decisions in the European Union and where these decisions are made.”

Stage 2. Discover the institutions

Timing: 5–12 min | Interaction: Teacher–student discussion; guided discovery

Teacher’s procedure: Present the five key institutions using a map, pictures and short descriptions. Students take notes in a simple table.

Key content:

- European Parliament — represents EU citizens; shares law-making and budgetary powers. Seat: Strasbourg; also works in Brussels and Luxembourg.
- European Commission — proposes EU legislation and implements EU policies. Main base: Brussels; also Luxembourg.
- European Council — sets the EU’s general political direction and priorities. Main meeting place: Brussels.
- Council of the European Union — represents national governments; shares law-making and budgetary powers. Meets mainly in Brussels, with some meetings in Luxembourg.
- Court of Justice of the European Union — ensures EU law is interpreted and applied consistently. Seat: Luxembourg.

Wrap-up / feedback: Explain: “The European Council and the Council of the European Union are two different institutions. The European Council sets priorities, while the Council of the EU works with the European Parliament to adopt legislation.” Quick check: students show one finger for the European Council and two fingers for the Council of the EU as the teacher reads descriptions.

Stage 3. Interactive challenge: “Match the EU!”

Timing: 12–20 min | Interaction: Groups of 3–4; card-matching race

Teacher’s procedure: Give each team three sets of cards: institution names, functions and cities.

Students’ task:

- Match each institution with its function.
- Match each institution with its seat or main place of work.
- Prepare one sentence explaining each match.
- Be ready to justify one answer if another team challenges you.

Wrap-up / feedback: Scoring: 1 point for each correct function match, 1 point for each location match and 1 bonus point for a clear explanation in English. Useful language: “This

institution is responsible for...”, “Its seat is in...”, “We matched these cards because...”, “We agree/disagree because...”

Stage 4. Role-play: “An EU law is born”

Timing: 20–30 min | Interaction: Group work; speaking; problem-solving

Teacher’s procedure: Scenario: The EU is considering a new initiative to reduce plastic waste in schools and public spaces. Assign each group one institutional role.

Group roles:

- European Commission: propose a new EU initiative and explain why it is needed.
- European Parliament: represent citizens and suggest changes to the proposal.
- Council of the European Union: represent national governments and discuss the proposal.
- European Council: set broader political priorities for Europe.
- Court of Justice of the EU: explain why EU laws must be interpreted consistently and consider a hypothetical legal dispute about how rules are applied.

Wrap-up / feedback: Each group prepares a 30–45-second statement. Language prompts: “We propose that...”, “Our citizens/governments need...”, “We support this proposal because...”, “We would like to amend the proposal by...”, “Our main priority is...”. Invite two or three groups to present. Clarify that Parliament and the Council of the EU normally act as co-legislators; the Commission generally proposes legislation; the European Council sets political priorities; the Court interprets EU law and is not a routine stage in passing every law.

Stage 5. Quiz: “EU Institutions – True or False?”

Timing: 30–38 min | Interaction: Individual responses; whole-class feedback

Teacher’s procedure: Students answer using an online quiz, mini-whiteboards, coloured cards or fingers. Award one point per correct answer.

Quiz statements:

- The European Parliament represents EU citizens. (TRUE)
- The European Commission is mainly responsible for interpreting EU law in court. (FALSE — the Court of Justice of the EU interprets EU law.)
- The European Parliament’s official seat is in Strasbourg. (TRUE — its committees also meet in Brussels, and its Secretariat is based in Luxembourg.)
- The European Council and the Council of the EU are the same institution. (FALSE)
- The European Commission generally proposes new EU legislation. (TRUE)
- The Court of Justice of the EU is based in Frankfurt. (FALSE — it is in Luxembourg; the European Central Bank is in Frankfurt.)

Wrap-up / feedback: Ask students to correct each false statement. If using an online quiz, provide immediate feedback and let students explain their answers.

Stage 6. Exit ticket: “One thing I know now”

Timing: 38–45 min | Interaction: Individual reflection; formative assessment

Teacher's procedure: Students complete three short sentences on paper or digitally.

Questions / prompts:

- “The institution responsible for ... is ...”
- “The city I associate with ... is ...”
- “One difference between the European Council and the Council of the EU is ...”

Wrap-up / feedback: Collect responses before students leave. Review them to identify misconceptions, especially confusion between the two Councils and the locations of Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg.

3. Differentiation

B1 students — support	B2 students — extension
Match institutions with short, simplified descriptions.	Explain the differences between institutions in more detail.
Use sentence starters and vocabulary cards.	Justify answers and respond to opposing arguments.
Work with a supportive partner.	Discuss whether the EU's institutional structure is easy for citizens to understand.
Identify the main city associated with each institution.	Explain why the European Parliament works in several cities.

4. Assessment criteria

- Knowledge: correct identification of institutions, roles and locations.
- Communication: ability to use relevant vocabulary and explain ideas in English.
- Collaboration: active participation in group tasks and role-play.
- Critical thinking: ability to distinguish similar institutions and justify answers.

5. Optional homework: “A Virtual Tour of EU Institutions”

Students work individually or in pairs to create a one-slide digital presentation or a mini-infographic about one EU institution.

- The institution's name and a picture of its building.
- Its seat or main place of work.
- Three facts about its responsibilities.
- One interesting fact.
- A short explanation of why the institution matters to young Europeans.

Suggested tools: Canva, Google Slides or PowerPoint.

6. Teacher resources

- **Official EU website — Institutions and bodies:** https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/types-institutions-and-bodies_en
- **European Parliament — Why Parliament works in Strasbourg and Brussels:** <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/faq/3/zasto-se-parlament-seli-iz-bruxellesa-u-strasbourg>
- **EUR-Lex — Protocol on the seats of EU institutions:** <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016E/PRO/06>

Teaching tip: Aim for approximately 10 minutes of explanation and 35 minutes of active learning, speaking, collaboration and assessment. This gives B1/B2 learners multiple opportunities to use English while developing their knowledge of the European Union.

LESSON PLAN

Meet the 27: Exploring the Member Countries of the European Union

An interactive double lesson for Upper Secondary students

Level	Upper Secondary (ages 15–18)
Subject fit	Geography, Social Studies / Civics, History, European Studies, Citizenship Education
Duration	90 minutes (one double period). Can be split into 2 × 45 min: see the note after the timeline.
Class size	16–32 students; works in groups of 4–5 and pairs
Prior knowledge	None required. Students should have a phone or laptop for short research.

1. Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Name and locate EU member states on a map and state how many members the EU has today.
- Describe how the EU grew from 6 founding members to 27 and explain at least two reasons countries joined.
- Distinguish between EU membership, the eurozone and the Schengen Area.
- Present a profile of one member state (capital, accession year, currency, a distinctive fact, what it brings to the EU).
- Negotiate a compromise as a national delegation and reflect on why decisions among 27 countries are hard.
- Evaluate arguments for and against further enlargement.

Key vocabulary

Term	Meaning
Member state	A country that has signed the EU treaties and takes part in its institutions.
Accession / enlargement	The process of a country joining the EU, and the EU growing in size.
Candidate country	A country officially recognised as working towards membership.
Eurozone	EU countries that use the euro as their currency.
Schengen Area	A zone where people can cross internal borders without routine passport checks. It includes some non-EU states and excludes some EU states.

Term	Meaning
Single market	Free movement of goods, services, capital and people between member states.
Qualified majority	The usual EU voting rule: at least 55% of member states (15 of 27) representing at least 65% of the EU population.

2. Preparation and materials

Before the lesson (about 30 minutes)

- Print the country cards from Appendix A: one card per country, or one per student group if you have fewer students.
- Print or write the four corner signs: TRUE, FALSE, TRUE BUT TRICKY, NOT SURE.
- Print the enlargement year cards (Appendix C) and the Council role cards (Appendix D).
- Prepare a large blank map of Europe (wall poster or whiteboard) and sticky notes or pins, one per country.
- Mark out three overlapping areas on the floor with string or hula hoops for the sorting game: EU, Eurozone, Schengen.
- Check the facts in Appendix A against the official EU website (european-union.europa.eu) the day before. Candidate-country statuses and eurozone membership can change.

Materials

Wall map or projector, string or hula hoops, sticky notes, markers, printed cards, student devices (or printed fact sheets if devices are not allowed), timer, optional quiz platform (Kahoot, Quizizz or Mentimeter) for the final quiz.

3. Lesson at a glance

Time	Activity	What happens	Format
0–10	1. Four Corners: Fact or Myth?	Students move to a corner to vote on statements about the EU.	Whole class, moving
10–20	2. The Human Timeline	Students hold year cards and line up to rebuild the story of enlargement.	Whole class, moving
20–50	3. Country Expert Jigsaw	Research one country, then rotate in "speed-meetings" and pin it on the map.	Groups of 4–5, then pairs
50–60	4. Three Circles Sorting Game	Place country cards in the EU / Eurozone / Schengen areas.	Teams, moving
60–80	5. Mini EU Council Simulation	Delegations negotiate how to spend a fictional €10 billion fund.	Delegations of 2–3
80–90	6. Exit Quiz and Reflection	Quick quiz, enlargement line-up and exit ticket.	Individual and whole class

Splitting into two 45-minute lessons

Lesson 1: Activities 1, 2 and 3 (research and speed-meetings). Lesson 2: Activities 3 (map wrap-up, 5 min), 4, 5 and 6.

4. Activity guide

Activity 1: Four Corners: Fact or Myth? (10 min)

Purpose: Activate prior knowledge, surface misconceptions and get students moving in the first minute.

- Put the four signs in the corners of the room: TRUE, FALSE, TRUE BUT TRICKY, NOT SURE.
- Read one statement from Appendix B. Students walk to their corner in silence, with no talking to friends.
- Ask one student per corner to justify the choice in one sentence. Reveal the answer and add one line of context.
- Aim for 6–8 statements in 8 minutes. Keep a quick tally on the board of how many students were right.

Teacher tip

Start with an easy statement so every student succeeds once. Save the tricky ones (eurozone, Schengen) for the middle and tell students that these two ideas come back later in the lesson.

Activity 2: The Human Timeline (10 min)

Purpose: Understand enlargement as a story, not a list.

- Hand out the year cards (Appendix C) to 9–10 students. Each card shows a year, the number of members after that wave and the countries that joined.
- Without talking, they line up in chronological order. The rest of the class acts as "fact-checkers" and may suggest swaps.
- Each card holder reads their card aloud. Ask the class: What was happening in Europe at that time? Why might these countries have wanted to join?
- Pose the discussion question to pairs for 60 seconds: What changed most between 1958 and 2004? (Expected answers: size, diversity, the end of the Cold War division of Europe.)

Point out that 2020 is the only time the number went down, when the United Kingdom left.

Activity 3: Country Expert Jigsaw (30 min)

Purpose: Every student becomes the class expert on one member state and learns about the others from peers.

Step A, Expert groups (10 min). Divide the class into groups of 4–5. Give each group one or two country cards (the cards in Appendix A list the basics). Groups research and complete a "Country Passport" with:

- Capital, accession year, currency, main language(s)
- One surprising or distinctive fact (food, invention, tradition, landscape)
- One thing this country contributes to the EU (for example an industry, a policy priority, a cultural export)
- One challenge or debate the country is involved in within the EU (headline level only)
- A hand-drawn flag or symbol on the back of the passport

Step B, Speed-meetings (15 min). Students re-form into new pairs, each pair made up of experts from different countries. Run three rounds of 4 minutes: Partner A presents their country in 90 seconds, Partner B asks two questions, then they swap. After each round, the teacher calls "Rotate!" and students find a new partner.

Step C, Map wrap-up (5 min). Each group sticks their country's note on the wall map and states one fact in a single sentence. The class looks for patterns: Which regions have most newer members? Which countries are islands? Which are landlocked?

Support and challenge

Support: provide a sentence frame ("The capital of ____ is _____. It joined the EU in ____ because _____.") and a printed fact sheet in place of devices.

Challenge: ask experts to find one fact that contradicts a common stereotype about their country, and to cite their source.

If you have fewer than 27 groups, assign the founding six and the 2004 wave first; the rest can be covered by volunteers or as homework.

Activity 4: Three Circles Sorting Game (10 min)

Purpose: Make the difference between the EU, the eurozone and Schengen concrete.

- Lay out three overlapping rings on the floor (EU, Eurozone, Schengen). Add a fourth zone outside all rings for "Europe but not EU".
- Give each team a stack of country cards, including a few non-members: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Ukraine, Serbia, United Kingdom.
- Teams race to place cards in the right zones within 4 minutes. Teams then rotate to check another team's work and challenge any card.
- Debrief: Why is Ireland in the EU but outside Schengen? Why is Norway in Schengen but not the EU? Why do Poland and Sweden not use the euro? (Answers are in Appendix B.)

Activity 5: Mini EU Council Simulation (20 min)

Purpose: Experience why consensus among many different countries is difficult and why it matters.

Setup (2 min). Divide the class into delegations of 2–3 students. Each delegation draws a role card (Appendix D) with its country's simplified priorities. The scenario: the EU has €10 billion for a new fund and must decide how to share it across five areas:

- A. Climate and energy
- B. Defence and border security
- C. Youth and education exchanges
- D. Digital technology and AI
- E. Regional development

Round 1, Opening statements (3 min). Each delegation has 20 seconds to state its top priority and why.

Round 2, Negotiation (8 min). Delegations move freely, trade support and draft a joint allocation on a shared sheet (the five percentages must sum to 100%).

Round 3, Vote (3 min). The "Council President" (teacher or a volunteer) reads the draft. For this simulation, the proposal passes if at least two-thirds of delegations approve. If it fails, one 2-minute round of amendments follows.

Debrief (4 min). Ask: Who got what they wanted? Who compromised most? Was the outcome fair? How would the process change with 27 real countries? Link to the real qualified-majority rule from the vocabulary table.

Important note for teachers

The role cards are simplified for classroom use and are not exact national positions. Remind students that real governments hold varied views and that these roles are a thinking tool. Encourage students to argue the role fairly, even if they disagree with it.

Activity 6: Exit Quiz and Reflection (10 min)

- **Quick quiz (5 min):** Run a 6-question quiz on Kahoot, Quizizz or Mentimeter, or use mini whiteboards. Suggested questions: How many member states? Name two founders. Which was the most recent member? Which country uses the euro since 2026? Name one country in Schengen but not in the EU. Name one candidate country.
- **Enlargement line-up (3 min):** Draw a line across the room from "The EU should keep growing" to "The EU should pause enlargement". Students stand where they agree most. Invite two students from opposite ends to give one reason each, then let anyone move if they were persuaded.
- **Exit ticket (2 min):** Each student writes on a sticky note: one thing I learned, one question I still have. They hand it in at the door.

5. Assessment and differentiation

Assessment

What	Evidence and look-fors
Formative (during lesson)	Four Corners responses; accuracy of the human timeline; quality of Country Passports; how well students use evidence in the Council simulation.
Exit ticket	Check for lingering confusion about the EU / eurozone / Schengen distinction and use the questions to open the next lesson.
Optional summative task	Write a 300-word briefing: "Should the EU admit a new member in the next ten years? Choose one candidate country and argue your view." Use the success criteria below.

Criterion	Developing	Secure	Excellent
Accuracy of facts	Several errors	Mostly accurate	Accurate and sourced
Understanding of EU structures	Mixes up terms	Explains each term	Compares and applies terms
Argument and evidence	Opinion only	Opinion with one reason	Balanced, with evidence
Collaboration (observed)	Needs prompting	Contributes reliably	Builds on others' ideas

Differentiation

- **Support:** Sentence frames, printed fact sheets, mixed-ability groups with clear roles (researcher, writer, presenter, checker), and a simplified Council card with only two priorities.

- **Stretch:** Ask students to compare two countries' reasons for joining, explain a current EU debate, or investigate why some members have opt-outs.
- **EAL / language support:** Pair students with a bilingual peer, allow country names and key terms in home languages on the passport, and pre-teach the vocabulary table.
- **Accessibility:** Offer a seated option for every movement activity (cards passed around the table, or colour-coded voting cards).

Extensions and homework

- Create a short video, poster or infographic: "Why I would visit / live in / study in ____" for one member state.
- Interview a family member or neighbour about what the EU means in daily life (travel, work, prices, studies).
- Follow one real EU decision in the news for a week and report back.

NOTE: All Lesson plans were generated with the help of AI

Appendix A: The 27 member states (fact sheet and card source)

Data reflects the situation in 2026. Verify against the official EU website before teaching. Cut the table into strips to make country cards, or give students the whole table as a reference.

Country	Capital	Joined EU	Euro?
Austria	Vienna	1995	Yes
Belgium	Brussels	1958 (founder)	Yes
Bulgaria	Sofia	2007	Yes (from 1 Jan 2026)
Croatia	Zagreb	2013	Yes (from 2023)
Cyprus	Nicosia	2004	Yes
Czechia	Prague	2004	No (koruna)
Denmark	Copenhagen	1973	No (krone)
Estonia	Tallinn	2004	Yes
Finland	Helsinki	1995	Yes
France	Paris	1958 (founder)	Yes
Germany	Berlin	1958 (founder)	Yes
Greece	Athens	1981	Yes
Hungary	Budapest	2004	No (forint)
Ireland	Dublin	1973	Yes
Italy	Rome	1958 (founder)	Yes
Latvia	Riga	2004	Yes
Lithuania	Vilnius	2004	Yes
Luxembourg	Luxembourg City	1958 (founder)	Yes
Malta	Valletta	2004	Yes
Netherlands	Amsterdam	1958 (founder)	Yes
Poland	Warsaw	2004	No (złoty)
Portugal	Lisbon	1986	Yes
Romania	Bucharest	2007	No (leu)
Slovakia	Bratislava	2004	Yes
Slovenia	Ljubljana	2004	Yes

Country	Capital	Joined EU	Euro?
Spain	Madrid	1986	Yes
Sweden	Stockholm	1995	No (krona)

Totals: 27 members. 21 use the euro (Bulgaria joined on 1 January 2026). 6 do not: Czechia, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden. Ireland and Cyprus are the two EU members outside the Schengen Area. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are in Schengen but not in the EU.

Candidate countries (nine): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. Kosovo is a potential candidate. Progress differs a lot between candidates, so check current status before the lesson.

Appendix B: Four Corners statements and answer key

#	Statement	Answer	Teacher note
1	The EU has 28 member states.	FALSE	27 since the UK left on 31 January 2020. It had 28 from 2013 (Croatia) until then.
2	Poland joined the EU in 2004.	TRUE	Part of the largest enlargement ever: 10 countries in one wave.
3	Every EU country uses the euro.	FALSE	21 of 27 do. Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Romania, Sweden and Denmark keep their own currencies.
4	Luxembourg was one of the six founding members.	TRUE	With Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.
5	Norway and Switzerland are EU members.	FALSE	Both are in Schengen but outside the EU.
6	Croatia is the most recent member.	TRUE	Joined in 2013.
7	Germany has the largest population of any EU country.	TRUE	Around 84 million.
8	The EU has 24 official languages.	TRUE BUT TRICKY	Yes, 24. Most documents are produced in far fewer working languages in practice.
9	All EU countries are in the Schengen Area.	FALSE	Ireland and Cyprus are not.
10	A country can leave the EU.	TRUE	The UK did, using Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

Sorting game debrief answers

- Ireland has a treaty opt-out from Schengen, linked to its Common Travel Area with the UK. Cyprus is not yet part of Schengen and is still working towards joining.

- Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have special agreements that include Schengen but not full EU membership.
- Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Romania and Sweden are expected to adopt the euro eventually but have not yet done so. Denmark has a formal opt-out.

Appendix C: Human timeline year cards

Year	Members after	Joined / changed
1958	6	Founding members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands (Treaty of Rome signed 1957, in force 1958).
1973	9	Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom join.
1981	10	Greece joins.
1986	12	Spain and Portugal join.
1995	15	Austria, Finland and Sweden join.
2004	25	Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia join.
2007	27	Bulgaria and Romania join.
2013	28	Croatia joins.
2020	27	The United Kingdom leaves the EU.

Note: East Germany joined in 1990 through German reunification without changing the number of members, a good bonus fact for the "fact-checker" class.

Appendix D: Council role cards (simplified for classroom use)

Delegation	Top priorities in this exercise	Possible red line
Poland	Defence and border security; regional development funds.	Will not support a plan with under 20% for defence.
Germany	Digital technology and industrial competitiveness; careful public spending.	Wants the fund to be spent efficiently with clear targets.
France	Strategic independence in technology and energy; support for farming regions.	Wants some funding for regional development.
Spain	Climate adaptation (drought, wildfires); regional development.	Needs a meaningful share for climate and energy.
Estonia	Digital and cybersecurity; defence.	Wants digital to be a main pillar.
Malta	Climate and sea-level concerns; a voice for small states.	Will not accept a plan that leaves small states out.
Sweden	Climate and energy; transparent rules; education.	Wants strong accountability for spending.

Delegation	Top priorities in this exercise	Possible red line
Greece	Border and maritime security; wildfire response; regional development.	Wants support for countries at the EU's external border.
Netherlands	Climate; research and innovation; budget discipline.	Is cautious about large new spending.
Romania	Regional development; border security; digital.	Wants regional development to be at least 15%.
Ireland	Youth and education exchanges; research; keeping the single market strong.	Wants a meaningful share for youth and education.
Italy	Regional development; climate resilience; border management.	Wants a balanced package, not a single focus.

For smaller classes use 6–8 roles; for larger classes, use all twelve and add duplicate delegations as "observers" who write a one-minute report.

Appendix E: Country Passport template

Country and flag sketch	
Capital	
Joined the EU (year and wave)	
Currency and language(s)	
One distinctive fact	
One thing it brings to the EU	
One issue it faces in the EU	
Source(s) used	

*NOTE: All the lesson plans were generated by AI based on the teachers' prompts, implemented later successfully in the classrooms.



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