

mucf
Swedish Agency for
Youth and Civil Society

Discuss the EU



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This exercise challenges, raises issues and deepens the knowledge of participants about the EU. The exercise contains 45 question cards divided into 11 different subjects. The question cards address various European challenges and choices, and invite discussion and different perspectives on these issues.

All subjects are introduced on the front of the question card in order to set the question in the right context. Some of the question cards are at a more advanced level that can be of use if they are suitable for the group. You can also add your own question cards.

Who for?

The exercise is suitable for collaboration between young people of upper secondary school age in the classroom, at the recreation centre, or the youth centre.

Time required

Approximately 15–40 minutes.



This is how the exercise works

The exercise can be done in a number of different ways. Two methods are presented here: either as a “walking wall” in pairs of participants, or as a group exercise. Choose the method that suits you and your group best.

Group exercise with discussion cards

- 1. Print and cut out the discussion cards (below) in the quantity required. If necessary, remove any questions you consider unsuitable for the group or the activity. You can also add your own questions.**
- 2. It is important that everyone feels comfortable about active participation in the exercise. Therefore, feel free to use this exercise as a follow-up to another activity that also has a theme of Europe or democracy.**
- 3. Divide the group into smaller groups (3–5 people), and give them one set of discussion cards each. Either all groups receive all cards or you divide the cards up so that all groups receive one/several issues per theme.**
- 4. Instruct the groups to draw one card at a time and to discuss it until they feel they have finished or get stuck. Tell them how much time they have to complete the exercise, preferably 15-40 minutes.**
- 5. Assemble the groups into one large group for a joint discussion, and discuss the following issues:**
 - On what issues did you most agree?
 - On what issues did your opinions differ most?
 - Can you identify any major challenge that is facing the EU?
 - Were any issues particularly difficult to address? Why were they difficult? (If information is missing – what is it?)

Roundabout discussion

1. **Choose 4–5 discussion issues that suit the specific subject covered by your activity.**
2. **Print and cut out the discussion cards (below) and paste them in the middle of a flipchart sheet (one card per sheet) and set out the sheets on different tables.**
3. **Divide the participants into as many groups as there are discussion issues and set them out on each table. There should be 3-5 people in each group to stimulate a good discussion with several perspectives.**
4. **Initiate the discussion rounds**
 - **Discussion round 1 (10–15 minutes).** The groups discuss their issue. Participants write down keywords from during their discussions on the flipchart sheet. Once the discussion round is over, one participant remains at the table while the others move on to the next table.
 - **Discussion rounds 2–3 (every 10 minutes).** The participant remaining at the table starts by presenting the conclusions from the previous group. The discussion then continues. What does the new group agree/disagree with? The participants add and write down new keywords on the flipchart sheet. Once the discussion round is over, one participant remains at the table while the others move on to the next table. New discussion rounds will take place until all groups have sat at all of the tables and have discussed all of the issues. A new person will remain in each round.
 - **Discussion round 4 (10 minutes).** Before the final round, ask the groups to try to summarise their discussions based on what has been written down on the flipchart sheets and to devise a suggested answer. Limit the number of discussion rounds to four, because more than four may seem lengthy.
5. **Assemble everyone in a large group and allow each group to briefly present the results of the last discussion round they participated in. They can use the keywords on the flipchart sheet to assist them.**

What does the EU do?

The EU is active in almost all policy areas. The EU's entitlement to introduce new laws and regulations varies between different policy areas and individual issues. However, on certain issues, such as fishing quotas and international trade agreements, it is only the EU that can decide. On other issues, such as taxes and healthcare, the EU is not allowed to decide anything at all.

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Question 1.

Are there any other issues you think the EU should not decide on?

Question 2.

In your opinion, what are the most important issues for the EU to focus on over the next few years?

Question 3.

What types of issues are too difficult for Sweden to handle on its own, without EU cooperation?

Give examples and explain why.

Question 4.

The EU was created to preserve peace in Europe following the Second World War. Now peace has reigned throughout the EU for 70 years. Does the EU contribute to peace in Europe?

Explain why/why not.

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Citizens' Initiative

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Advanced question.

The EU countries are developing military cooperation for peacekeeping efforts. Do you think the EU should have a combined army instead of each country having its own army?

Advanced question.

What is meant by the EU motto “united in diversity”? Is that true, or are our different cultures being blurred out by the EU?

Question 1.

How do you think it is possible collect a million signatures from at least seven different countries?

Question 2.

If you were to initiate a European Citizens’ Initiative, what would it address?

European Parliament

The European Parliament consists of 705 MEPs from all EU Member States. Sweden and Swedish parties account for 21 of them. They have to coexist within the European Parliament with other similar parties from other countries in the European Parliament's political groups. The European Parliament currently consists of 7 different political groups.

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Question 1.

87 per cent of the electorate voted in the 2018 Swedish parliamentary elections. 55 per cent of the Swedish electorate voted in the European Parliament elections the following year. Why do you think that so many fewer people vote in the European parliamentary election than in the Swedish parliamentary election

Question 2.

Are you planning to vote in the next European parliamentary election in 2024? Why/why not?

Advanced question.

Would it be better for all Europeans to choose between the same (European) parties instead of national parties when voting in the European election? Swedish voters currently vote for Swedish parties, Germans for German parties, etc. What are the advantages and disadvantages of creating “European parties” that all Europeans can vote for??

Advanced question.

It is often said that politicians in the European Parliament have a less confrontational approach, that they try to compromise between the parties in order to find the best solution. Why do you think this is the case?

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers decides on EU legislation in conjunction with the European Parliament. The Council of Ministers includes one minister from each country. The Swedish government is therefore involved in deciding on all laws in the EU, not only through the Swedish ministers in the Council but also through the Swedish MEPs in the European Parliament.

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influence

Young people throughout Europe are asked about their proposals and priorities for EU youth policy through the EU Youth Dialogue. This was the case when the EU's 11 youth goals were drawn up, for example.

Question 1.

Around 10 million people live in Sweden, while around 83 million people live in Germany. Is it fair that a small country like Sweden has the same number of votes as a large country like Germany, i.e. one vote, in the Council of Ministers? Is it fair that Sweden has 21 MEPs, while Germany has 96?

Question 2.

On certain issues, all countries must agree in the Council. This applies to foreign policy, for example. It's enough for one country to say "stop", and then the EU cannot do or say anything on the issue. Is that good or bad? What do you think?

Advanced question.

EU legislation must be available in all of the 24 official languages. MEPs are entitled to use any of these languages in the parliamentary debates. Is that good or bad? What do you think?

Question 1.

Is it possible to influence EU policies? What do you think? What would you do if you had a proposal to change something throughout the EU that you felt should be changed?

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Question 2.

If you had an idea, what could you do to persuade a politician or a party to listen to you and your friends?

Question 3.

One important way for young people to get involved and to express their opinions is through associations. Do you think Swedish associations are open to all young people? Or are there any obstacles to everyone participating?

Question 4.

Is it important that young people are involved in deciding on issues that concern their lives?

Question 5.

As a European citizen, you are entitled to vote in European parliamentary elections. You also have a range of rights, such as to start a citizens' initiative, the right to healthcare in other countries, and protection against discrimination. However, European citizenship is also a question of making your voice heard and helping to shape Europe. As an active European citizen, you can get involved and influence society in partnership with other people around Europe. But how?

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Rights

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Advanced question.

Let's theorise that you and your friends want to arrange a meeting, between young people and politicians, to discuss healthcare, education, migration, climate or gender equality. What type of politician would be best to invite: local politicians, parliamentary politicians, or MEPs?

Question 1.

Do we have the same core values throughout Europe?
What do you think?

Question 2.

In 1974, Sweden became first in the world to allow mother-father-couples to share parental leave. Since then, there has been a gradual introduction of dedicated months for each parent. In 2019, the EU decided that it should not be possible to transfer two months of parental leave between parents. Is it good that the EU decides on this, or is it better for each country to decide for itself?

Question 3.

How can the EU influence non-European countries to respect human rights? In what ways? What do you think?

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A common European market

With its population of 446 million, the EU is a large market. Several product labels are used throughout the EU, such as the EU label for organic products, which guarantees compliance with the EU rules for organic agriculture. The EU also has other product labels, such as the eco-label, or the EU leaf, which is a uniform visual symbol for organic products from the EU.

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Advanced question.

The European Commission monitors compliance by EU member states with EU laws. If the European Commission discovers that a country has not complied with EU law, it can be held accountable in court and the country can be sanctioned with a fine. Is that good or bad – what do you think?

Advanced question.

What do you think the EU should do if a country does not comply with the EU law on human rights?

Question 1.

Organic farming is currently regulated by the EU. For products to be sold as organic in EU member states they have to meet minimum rules for food quality as well as environmental protection and animal welfare. We also have the KRAV label in Sweden, which drives the development of organic and sustainable foods. Do we need an organic product label at both national and a European level?

Question 2.

In a common European market, all countries can buy products from all of the other countries without paying customs duties, and this means that we as consumers have more products to choose from at lower prices. Why is this the case? What do you think?

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EU influence on Sweden

Approximately half of all issues handled by the municipality are connected with the EU in one way or another. It's not just a question of laws and regulations decided on by the EU that Sweden is obliged to follow. It can also be a question of financing and support that is provided by the EU to Swedish municipalities in order to run various projects, such as youth exchanges within Erasmus+.

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Question 3.

Among other things, EU consumer protection provides a two-week right of withdrawal for online purchases, a two-year guarantee, and free roaming throughout Europe. Do you think that people are aware of their rights? How can you make sure that everyone knows?

Question 1.

Do people know for what and how the EU influences Sweden and the lives of its people? Do you think it's important that people living in Sweden know about the influence of the EU, or doesn't it matter?

Question 2.

In your opinion, what is the most positive influence of the EU on Sweden and our lives?

Question 3.

In your opinion, what is the worst impact and effect that the EU has on Sweden and our lives?

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EU's youth programme

Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are EU programmes for young people. In 2018, as many as 853 000 young people participated in volunteer projects in other countries, participated in student or youth exchanges, or carried out other projects and activities made possible through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. 70 per cent of all young people who have participated in exchanges, projects or travelled as volunteers believe that their job prospects have increased.



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Question 4.

Poland sent firefighters to help fight the fires that swept through Sweden during the summer of 2018. What other community initiatives might there be that could benefit from lending experts and providing assistance to each other?

Question 1.

Should all young people in Sweden get the chance to travel abroad on some kind of exchange? If so, why?

Question 2.

Do you think that travelling abroad on youth exchanges, projects or volunteering supports personal development? What can you learn that you can't learn at school?

Question 3.

Do you think that youth exchanges, European projects and volunteering have anything to do with democracy? Why/why not?

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Question 4.

A volunteer is someone who works to improve society without being paid for it. 21 per cent of young people in Sweden respond that they have participated in a voluntary activity in the last 12 months according to the Eurobarometer. Is it important for society that young people make voluntary efforts?

Question 5.

Youth leaders and young people at a youth centre in Germany wonder whether your youth centre wants to get involved and organise a youth exchange with them and a youth centre in Hungary. You would meet for a week, and work together to make where you live a better place for young people to live in. What suggestions do you have for what you could do or discuss while you are on the youth exchange?

Question 6.

What would you like to work with if you visited another EU country as a volunteer?

Advanced question.

Your municipality has a so-called twin town or twin municipality (friendship city) in France. Now they are inviting ideas for what to do together next year. What do you think municipalities from different countries can learn from each other? What municipal activities would you suggest (such as school, infrastructure, social care, culture and leisure, or the environment) for a week of exchange and competence development in France? What areas should be the focus for participants to exchange knowledge on and learn about? What collaborations could be initiated in order to be of benefit to young people in the municipality?

EU enlargement

All countries in Europe that meet the conditions for membership can apply for EU membership. Among other things, the country must have a stable democracy with respect for human rights, as well as follow the rule of law and implement all EU regulations. In addition to these criteria, any new member must be approved by all EU Member States. This is a complicated process that takes a long time.



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Advanced question.

EU har 27 medlemsländer och just nu förhandlar EU med fem länder som vill ansluta sig till EU – Albanien, Montenegro, Nordmakedonien, Serbien, och Turkiet. Finns det någon gräns för hur många medlemsländer EU kan ha, tycker du?

Advanced question.

What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of having more EU member states?

Advanced question.

Should it be possible for a member state to completely block the application for membership of a potentially new member state? Why/why not?