

Me and the Society – The European Union: Values, Institutions, and Democratic Participation

Lesson Plan (6th Grade)

1. Theme: Me and the Society: The European Union as a Community of Values, Rights, and Cooperation

Key thematic axes:

European Identity – Shared Values – Democracy – Human Rights – Solidarity – Rule of Law – Cooperation Between Countries – Active European Citizenship

2. Grade: 6th Grade

3. Target Group

Students studying in a Greek primary school in a multicultural and multilingual environment, including students from different cultural, religious, and national backgrounds.

4. Lesson Type

Lesson aimed at: introducing the European Union as a political and value-based community, developing understanding of democratic institutions and cooperation, fostering awareness of shared European values and citizenship.

This is a conceptual, discussion-based, and values-oriented lesson, not focused on factual memorization or institutional detail.

5. Duration: 45 minutes

6. Key Terms and Concepts

European Union, Europe, cooperation, democracy, human rights, equality, solidarity, rule of law, institutions, European citizenship, participation, common values, decision-making

7. Pedagogical Methods

Teacher-guided conceptual discussion

Use of simplified institutional models

Comparison (national level vs. European level)

Case-based reasoning

Reflection and dialogue

Intercultural and inclusive perspective

Focus: understanding ideas, explaining relationships, ethical and civic reasoning.

8. Teaching Aids (Means)

Map of Europe / EU Member States

EU flag and symbols

Visual charts showing EU institutions (simplified)

Short teacher-read explanatory texts

Oral scenarios and cases

Key concepts displayed visibly

9. Goals

Educational Goals

Students will learn to:

- ✓ Explain what the European Union is and why it exists
- ✓ Identify basic European values
- ✓ Recognize the role of institutions in democratic decision-making
- ✓ Understand the idea of European citizenship

Formational Goals

Students will learn to:

- ✓ Respect diversity within Europe
- ✓ Appreciate cooperation and solidarity
- ✓ Develop democratic thinking
- ✓ See themselves as part of a wider European community

10. Cross-Curricular Connections

Citizenship Education, History, Geography, Ethics / Values Education, Language Development, Intercultural Education

11. Expected Results

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

- ✓ Describe the European Union as a community of values
- ✓ Name key democratic principles of the EU
- ✓ Explain why cooperation between countries is important
- ✓ Show awareness of European citizenship and participation

12. Preparation for the Teacher

The teacher prepares:

a map of the European Union,
simplified explanations of EU institutions,
short texts on European values,
guiding questions encouraging reflection and discussion.

13. Lesson Structure

A. Introduction – Activating Prior Knowledge (6 minutes)

Teacher presents:

the EU flag,

a map of Europe,

images of students from different European countries.

Teacher Questions:

What do European countries have in common?

Why might countries choose to work together?

Can cooperation make life easier or fairer?

Transition Statement:

“Today we will learn about the European Union as a community based on shared values, cooperation, and democratic decisions.”

14. Core Concepts – Theoretical Framework

The European Union is a unique community formed by European countries that have chosen to cooperate closely. It is not a single country, but a union based on shared values, common goals, and democratic principles. The EU was created to promote peace, cooperation, and stability after periods of conflict in Europe.

At the core of the European Union are shared values, including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. These values guide how decisions are made and how people are treated within the Union. They apply to all Member States and form the ethical foundation of European cooperation.

Democracy is a central principle of the EU. Decisions are made through institutions that represent citizens and governments. Although institutions

operate at a European level, their purpose is similar to democratic institutions in individual countries: to represent people, create rules, and protect rights.

The main EU institutions include:

the European Parliament, which represents EU citizens,

the European Commission, which works for the common European interest,

the Council of the European Union, where Member States cooperate and decide together.

These institutions work together to balance different interests and ensure democratic decision-making.

European citizenship complements national citizenship. It gives people additional rights, such as the right to move, study, and work in other EU countries, as well as the right to participate in democratic processes. European citizenship also involves responsibilities, including respect for shared values and democratic rules.

Solidarity is a key concept within the EU. It means supporting one another, especially in times of difficulty. Cooperation between countries helps reduce inequality, promotes development, and strengthens peace. Solidarity shows that challenges can be addressed more effectively together than alone.

The European Union respects cultural diversity. While countries have different languages, traditions, and histories, shared values allow them to coexist peacefully. Diversity is seen as a strength rather than a problem.

Pedagogical notes for the teacher

1. The European Union as a Civic and Value-Based Community

From a pedagogical perspective, the EU should not be introduced primarily as a bureaucratic structure, but as: a response to historical conflict, a framework for peace and cooperation, a community built on agreed ethical principles.

Students benefit from understanding that:

cooperation is a choice, not an obligation,

shared values make cooperation possible,
disagreement exists, but dialogue is the solution.

This framing supports democratic thinking and discourages simplistic “us vs. them” perspectives.

2. European Values: Ethical and Civic Meaning

Core EU values—democracy, human rights, equality, rule of law, solidarity—should be treated as: guiding principles rather than slogans, values with practical consequences in everyday life.

Pedagogical focus:

Connect values to situations students understand (fair rules, equal treatment, helping others).

Avoid abstract legal language; emphasize ethical meaning.

Students at this age can understand that values: guide decisions, limit power, protect weaker members of society.

3. Teaching EU Institutions at an Age-Appropriate Level

Institutions should be introduced functionally, not technically.

Pedagogical approach:

Focus on what institutions do, not how they are elected or structured in detail.

Use analogies (e.g. school council, class representatives).

Key conceptual goal: Institutions exist to organize cooperation and make democratic decisions for many people. Avoid overloading students with names, dates, or procedures. The aim is institutional understanding, not memorization.

4. Democracy and Decision-Making in a Multinational Context

This lesson allows students to explore a more complex form of democracy: many countries, different interests, shared decisions.

Pedagogical importance:

Students learn that democracy includes compromise.

Not all decisions make everyone happy.

Fair processes matter more than individual preferences.

This supports higher-level civic reasoning and tolerance for disagreement.

5. European Citizenship: Identity Without Exclusion

European citizenship should be presented as:

additional, not replacing national identity,

based on participation and values,

connected to rights and responsibilities.

Pedagogical sensitivity:

Avoid suggesting a single “European culture.”

Emphasize pluralism and diversity.

Students should understand that: multiple identities can coexist, belonging is based on shared values, not origin.

6. Solidarity and Cooperation as Civic Skills

Solidarity is introduced not as charity, but as: mutual support, shared responsibility, long-term cooperation.

Pedagogical focus:

Use examples of shared challenges (environment, disasters).

Emphasize collective solutions.

7. Intercultural Pedagogical Context

In a multicultural classroom, this lesson supports: inclusive identity-building, respect for differences, shared civic ground.

Teacher guidance:

Avoid stereotypes or cultural hierarchies.

Focus on values as common ground.

The EU provides a meaningful framework for teaching unity without uniformity.

15. Sample Texts and Case Studies

Informational Text – European Values

“The European Union is based on shared values such as democracy, human rights, equality, and cooperation. These values help different countries live and work together peacefully.”

Case Study 1 – Working Together in Europe

Several European countries face a natural disaster. Some countries are more affected than others. The EU decides to help by sharing resources and support.

Discussion Focus:

solidarity – cooperation – shared responsibility.

Case Study 2 – One Decision, Many Countries

A new environmental rule is discussed at EU level. Some countries worry about costs, others focus on protecting nature. A decision must balance different needs.

Discussion Questions:

Why is it difficult to make decisions for many countries?

Why is compromise important?

How do shared values guide decisions?

Discussion Focus:

democracy – compromise – fairness – cooperation.

16. Optional Enrichment (If Time Allows)

Creating a “European Values Charter”

Comparing school rules with EU rules

Short reflection: “What does being a European citizen mean to me?”

17. Variations – Role Play

Role Play – “The European Council Meeting”

Students represent different countries and discuss a common issue, aiming to reach a fair decision.

Focus:

democratic dialogue, negotiation, perspective-taking.

19. Sources of Information

European Commission. (2020). The EU & me: A guide for young learners. Publications Office of the European Union.

European Parliament. (2019). Build your Europe! Educational toolkit.

Council of Europe. (2018). Reference framework of competences for democratic culture: Volume 1 – Context, concepts and model. Council of Europe Publishing. <https://www.coe.int>

Council of Europe. (2016). Competences for democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies. Council of Europe.