Step 1: My Democracy

Debate: Should we expand the European Union to include more countries?

OBJECTIVES

- Learn about the arguments on both sides of the debate around the enlargement of the European Union
- Express a point of view and listen to the arguments of others

DESCRIPTION

During this activity, participants take part in a role play activity debating whether or not to include more countries in the European Union.

Note: This debate is topical as the European Commission presented its strategy for enlargement of the EU to the Balkan countries in February 2018.

MAJOR SKILLS AQUIRED

- Improve and test their communication skills within a group: expressing an opinion, listening to others' opinions, debate skills.
- Discuss their vision for the European Union (deepen or expand?)

CORE COMPETENCY AREAS

Area 1: Using language to think and communicate
Understand, and express oneself in written and spoken language

Area 3: Personal and civic growth
Expressing sensitivity and opinions, respecting others

DURATION

2 hours (1 hour if using variant)

RESOURCES

- Appendix: Selection of documents.
- On the section Techniques d'animation of our website --> Animer un débat (in French)
- Eduscol resource about debates (in French)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Room arranged to encourage participants moving around and work in small groups
- Post-its
- Selection of documents (see Appendix)

Method

BEFORE YOU BEGIN (5') :

Explain the idea of role play

Two teams of lawyers compete to convince a fictional court whether or not to expand the European Union to new countries.

STEP 1 (10') :

Creating groups

- Ask participants to organise themselves into groups: 'agree' on one side, 'disagree' on the other, and the undecideds in the middle.
- Randomly divide the participants into two groups (or 4 depending on the number of people). The first group will argue for the enlargement of the European Union, the second against.

STEP 2 (60'): :

Preparing arguments

- In the groups, allow an individual working time where each participant can think of arguments and write them on post-its. To do this, they can use the selection of documents (15')
- The post-its are shared amongst group members and the group prepares their arguments. Some tips to help during preparation: It's better to use two or three arguments and argue each one well, than to present a huge list of arguments without explanation. Give examples, anticipate the arguments your opponents will use and counter them, tell a story or an anecdote if it might help to reinforce your argument. (30')
- Allow time to think about the formal presentation of the arguments and to prepare (15')

STEP 3 (15') :

Presentation of arguments

Each team presents their arguments.

STEP 4 (15') :

Conclusion

- Suggest a conclusion: what were the strengths and weaknesses of each argument? Summarize the arguments used and add in additional information to develop missing arguments.
- Ask participants to again organize themselves into 'for' and 'against' groups in the room. Has the session changed their opinion? Why? Or if they still have the same opinion, which arguments reinforced their existing beliefs?

VARIANTS AND EXTENSIONS

The subject of the debate can be altered to deal with other subjects such as:

- For or against a President of the European Union?
- For or against transnational parties and lists in European Elections?
- For or against a single European Language?

Other debate techniques are possible, depending on time, group size and what you find works best... If you have 1 hour for the session, you could for example organize a roaming debate, according to the model in the worksheet "Pour ou contre le vote obligatoire" (in French) from Step 1: My democracy.

DISCUSSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Currently, the debate on the enlargement of the European Union centres on whether the western Balkan states should join, but the discussion could be widened to include, for example, Turkey's multiple requests for membership over the last decades, or the case of Ukraine.