



DICYDE

– Digital Citizenship and Youth Democracy Education

Editors

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Dear Reader,

welcome to the book “DICYDE – Digital Citizenship and Youth Democracy Education”, which was designed to be a compass for your journey into the complexities of the modern world. Divided into three fundamental parts, this book aims to equip you with the necessary knowledge and insights to navigate the realms of the European Union, help you understand the significance of digital citizenship and democracy, and prepare you for the ever-evolving landscape of the youth labor market.

Part I: “Why European integration? The crisis of nation-state” delves into the challenges of European integration. As you stand on the brink of adulthood, understanding the EU’s structure, policies, and its impact on the member nations is crucial. Through these pages, we aim to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the EU’s foundation, its functions, and the roles it plays in shaping our common future.

Part II: “Let’s talk about the European digital citizenship” unveils the landscape of the digital world, which is an integral part of your lives. In this section, we explore the concept of digital citizenship, the ethical responsibilities, the impact of technology on society, and the tools required to navigate the digital realm safely and responsibly.

Part III: “Being entrepreneurial and labor market” focuses on the dynamic landscape of employment, arming you with insights into the ever-evolving job market. You’ll explore tips, trends, and strategies to help you not just find a job, but to navigate the terrain, understand the skills in demand, and to thrive in the competitive world of work.

Our goal is to empower you with knowledge, skills, and perspectives to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The world is changing rapidly, and being prepared is the key to success. This book is your guide, providing the tools you need to confidently step into your future.

As you embark on this journey through the pages, remember that knowledge is a powerful catalyst for change. The insights you gather here will be the cornerstone for the decisions you make, the paths you choose, and the impact you create in the world.

In the book, you will find links and references to source materials such as acts of law, such as European treaties, as well as direct links to websites with interesting audio and video materials. The book can also be found in its electronic version on the dicyde.eu project website and the pecsa.edu.pl website. The electronic versions contain active links that will assist you in navigating European affairs. Importantly, the textbooks in electronic versions on our institutions' websites have been translated into Italian, Romanian, and Polish. This will allow you to develop your language skills without limiting you in any way.

We wish you an enlightening and empowering journey ahead!

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CHAPTER I

– Why European integration? the crisis of Nation-State

Authors: Raffaella Cinquanta

Keywords: Supranational, intergovernmental governance bodies (Block 2); Europe, history of Europe/Political and economic integration in European countries/political and social issues in European countries (Block 3); Civic principles: equity, freedom, sense of community (Block 5).

INTRODUCTION

The primary historical reason for the European integration process is the crisis of the nation-state and of its absolute sovereignty. This crisis is a consequence of the contradiction between the ever-increasing interdependence at a global level, brought about by the economic, social and technological progress, and the political splitting of Europe into many nation-states, preserving their absolute sovereignty despite being too small to cope with issues that went beyond their national borders. This contradiction began in the 19th century and exploded after World War II, when the old system of European nation-states had fallen due to the rise of the global bipolar system and its two superpowers (USA and USSR). This shift in the world order marked the beginning of the European integration process.

The European states could choose between three approaches to closer cooperation, which differed in the way they regarded national sovereignty and its powers:

FEDERALISM: This approach aimed at setting up a European federation – the United States of Europe – by restricting the absolute sovereignty of each member state, drawing up a constitution and establishing a federal government, a federal parliament, and a federal court of justice.

CONFEDERALISM: This approach aimed at establishing a simple intergovernmental cooperation among national states with no transfer of sovereignty to the European level. The goal was to establish a free trade area with no single currency, no single foreign policy, no federal government, and no constitution.

FUNCTIONALISM: This in-between approach proposed to kick-start the unification of Europe by devolving to a common authority only certain technical functions of the states and the relative national powers (e.g. coal and steel industry, agriculture etc). In this way, European states could begin their integration without it affecting their national sovereignty and without the need for a federal constitution. The short-term goal was to establish sector-specific communities, mostly of economic nature. In the long-term, functionalism aimed at setting up a European federation, as the result of a progressive transfer of sovereignty from the nation-states to the European communities.

The functional, step-by-step approach was adopted in 1950, at the beginning of the European integration. Since then, it has been consistently applied, increasingly transferring national sovereignty to joint European institutions. This explains the peculiar structure of today's EU, which is a new and hybrid institution: more than a confederation, yet not a full federation. Its most distinctive feature is that Member States have ceded some of their sovereign rights to the EU, which in those sectors has the power to act independently and adopt European legislation with the same force as national laws. However, the EU was created and has grown as a result of international treaties, the traditional tool of international organisations, rather than by a constitutional process, typical of the foundation of sovereign states.

This chapter describes the main features of the EU from the perspective of the crisis of the European nation-states and its peculiar outcome that is the European integration. It aims at highlighting the federal, confederal, and functional features of the EU in the light of its historical and ideological meaning. After tracing the main steps of its history, the chapter outlines the EU founding values, goals, symbols (with a focus on European citizenship), its institutional and legal structure, its competences and tasks, and ends with a final consideration on its future.

1.1 EU MAIN HISTORIC STEPS AND ITS FOUNDING FATHERS

- 1951 In the aftermath of World War II, as a result of the French Foreign Minister Robert [Schuman Declaration](#) (9 May 1950), six founding states (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC – Treaty of Paris, 18 April 1951). Its main goal was to secure peace between Europe’s nations by bringing them together as equals cooperating within shared institutions. The ECSC was the result of the functional approach proposed by [Jean Monnet](#) and the political action of European leaders like [Konrad Adenauer](#) and [Alcide De Gasperi](#).
- 1957 The same six countries signed the Treaties of Rome, setting up the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC) for a wider common market covering a whole range of goods and services. Customs duties were abolished on 1 July 1968 and common policies, notably on trade and agriculture, were put in place during the 1960s. The main actors of this progress were [Paul-Henri Spaak](#), [Walter Hallstein](#), [Joseph Bech](#), [Johann Willelm Beyen](#), [Sicco Mansholt](#).
- 1973 The EEC was so successful that Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom decided to join: the first enlargement of the European communities. Consequently, new social and environmental policies

were introduced shortly after, while the European Regional Development Fund was set up in 1975.

- 1979 After a phase of stagnation of the European economies and a crisis of the integration process, the first elections to the European Parliament (EP) by direct universal suffrage marked a decisive breakthrough towards European democracy and citizenship. The first EP president was [Simone Veil](#), an Holocaust survivor. A prominent member of the new Parliament was [Altiero Spinelli](#) who was the mastermind behind European federalism since the war. In 1984 he led the EP in the drawing of an innovative project for a European constitution.
- 1981 Greece joined the Communities, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. The enlargements came after the fall of dictatorships in these countries, proving that European integration is strictly connected to the values of freedom and democracy. Moreover, the expansion into Southern Europe led the Communities to implement regional aid programmes.
- 1986 Despite the wave of “euro-pessimism” caused by the worldwide economic recession, new impetus for further integration came in 1985 with the Commission and its President Jacques Delors. A White Paper was published setting out a timetable for completing the European single market by 1993. This new goal was enshrined in the Single European Act (SEA, which was signed in 1986 and came into force the following year), that increased the number of cases where the Council could take decisions by a qualified majority rather than by unanimity. The SEA established European cooperation in the field of foreign policy. It also strengthened the European Parliament and laid foundations for European policies in areas such as social cohesion, environment, and research.
- 1992 The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the resulting reunification of Germany in 1990, and the democratisation of Central and Eastern Europe countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 massively impacted the European Communities and their Member States. To face this historic juncture, the Treaty of Maastricht was signed on 7 February 1992 and came into force on

1 November 1993. It provided for the creation of a single currency, established the European Union (EU) by adding intergovernmental cooperation in new areas to the existing Community system and placing under the same “umbrella” in a “three pillars” structure: the European Community (EC), the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs. One of its main innovations was the establishment of the European citizenship.

- 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU, bringing its membership to 15 states.
- 2002 The single currency provided for by the Treaty of Maastricht – the Euro – became reality on 1 January 1999 and replaced the old currencies of 12 EU states on 1 January 2002. Since then, the Eurozone has grown into a major world currency.
- 2004 Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, EU received membership applications from six former Soviet bloc countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), the three Baltic states that had been part of the Soviet Union (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), one of the republics of former Yugoslavia (Slovenia), Cyprus and Malta. By extending the benefits of European integration to these young democracies, the EU helped to stabilise the continent. Negotiations opened in 1997, and in 2004 the biggest-ever EU enlargement took place: the number of EU Member States rose to 25. Bulgaria and Romania followed in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, bringing the EU’s membership to 28 states. The massive enlargement and the growing complex challenges of globalisation pushed EU to devise a more efficient decision-making method. The criticism of the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001), focused on institutional reforms which didn’t effectively deepen European integration, started a debate that resulted in the Laeken Declaration on the Future of the EU (2001). A European Convention was set up, which drafted a [Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe](#). Adopted by the European Council in 2004, the Constitution was rejected in 2005 by national referendums in France and the Netherlands.

- 2007 The project of Constitution was replaced by the Treaty of Lisbon, signed on 13 December 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009. Instead of replacing the Treaties with a constitutional text, it amends them by significantly changing the way EU works in order to strengthen its capacity to act within and outside its borders, increase its democratic legitimacy and enhance its overall efficiency. The Treaty merged the EU and the EC into a single European Union and adapted most of the changes provided for in the Constitution (introduction of the permanent President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the President of the European Commission is proposed by the European Council taking into account the results of the European elections and is elected by the European Parliament).
- 2017 The worldwide financial and economic crisis of 2008, the significant rise of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 EP elections, the immigration crisis of 2015, led to the first “exit” from the EU. In a referendum held on 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union and on 29 March 2017 triggered the “Brexit” process. It was concluded on 31 January 2020, when the UK officially left the EU and entered a transition period.
- 2020 The Covid-19 global pandemic has presented the EU with an unprecedented and multifaceted crisis which has deeply challenged EU and its Member States. The EU has helped them to coordinate national responses (vaccines, digital Covid certificate) and set up a historic recovery and resilience fund to support the economies. However, the crisis has highlighted existing issues regarding EU democratic institutions and norms.
- 2022 In this critical background, EU convened the Conference on the Future of Europe, a citizen-led series of debates that ran from April 2021 to May 2022. The Conference was an unprecedented pan-European democratic exercise, enabling European citizens to discuss and shape EU common future via an innovative Multilingual Digital Platform, European Citizens’ Panels, and Conference Plenaries. Its final report lists 49 proposals and has been submitted to the Presidents

of the European Parliament, the Council and Commission, engaged in realizing the most important issues debated by European citizens.

Further reading: [Manifesto of Ventotene](#), [History of the EU](#), [European Treaties](#), [Historical archives of EU institutions](#).

1.2 EU FOUNDING VALUES AND GOALS

As its history shows, the greatest motivation for European unification is the desire for **permanent peace**. Progressive establishment of the EU has created a legal framework so that a war between its Member States is impossible. The cornerstone of European peace is unity: EU states are aware that – in order to face globalisation issue – they need to speak and act in unison, because in the globalised world democracy, justice, economic prosperity, social security, and environmental safety cannot be dealt with at national level. Unity can endure only through **equality**. This means that no EU member state has precedence over another and that all EU citizens are equal before the law and share fundamental rights (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU). That’s why EU Member States legal systems must be based on the rule of law and respect for the dignity, freedom and the right to self-development of the individual.

Peace, unity and equality guarantee EU **fundamental freedoms**: freedom of movement, freedom of establishment, freedom to provide services, free movement of goods and free movement of capital. Freedom is counterbalanced by solidarity: to grow together, EU states must equally share both the advantages and the burdens of their community. This does not mean that Member States are “dissolved” into the EU, but rather that they contribute to the common goals through their own particular qualities and diversity.

Article 2 TEU (values of the Union)

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to all Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Article 3 TEU (aims of the Union)

- (1) The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.
- (2) The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.
- (3) The Union shall establish an internal market [...] shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.
- (4) In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values [...] It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights.

Further reading: [EU aims and values](#), [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#).

1.3 EUROPEAN SYMBOLS

European anthem: Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" – expresses the idealistic vision of the human race as brotherhood

European flag: symbolises EU identity and unity

Europe day: 9 May – anniversary of the "Schuman declaration"

EU motto: "United in diversity" – tells Europeans how their unity for peace and prosperity is enriched by their different cultures, traditions and languages.

1.4 EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

Each citizen of each EU Member State is an EU citizen. European citizenship does not replace but is added to national citizenships. According to EU Treaties, EU citizenship grants the specific rights to:

- move and reside freely within the EU,
- vote for and stand as for municipal and European elections,
- consular protection of the authorities of any Member State in the absence of their embassy abroad,
- petition the EP, contact the European Ombudsman and take part in a European citizens' initiative to propose legislation.

Moreover, in the framework of EU ban on discrimination, European citizenship implies the right to be treated by all Member States in the same way as they treat their own nationals.



Homework to be presented in classroom: obtain reliable information on EU founding values/goals using the Internet sources and discuss case studies regarding EU involvement in current events (Covid pandemic, Ukrainian war).

1.5 EU INSTITUTIONS

Article 13 TEU (institutional framework)

- (1) The Union have an institutional framework which aims to promote its values, advance its objectives, serve its interests, those of its citizens and those of the Member States, and ensure the consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions.

The Union's institutions are:

- the European Parliament,

- the European Council,
 - the Council,
 - the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Commission’),
 - the Court of Justice of the European Union,
 - the European Central Bank,
 - the Court of Auditors.
- (2) Each institution shall act within the limits of the powers conferred on it in the treaties, and in conformity with the procedures, conditions and objectives set out in them. The institutions shall practise mutual sincere cooperation.

The EU institutional setting is unique and constantly evolving. It includes 7 bodies and 30 decentralized agencies that work together to address the common policies of the EU and the common interests of European people.

Four decision-making institutions lead the EU’s administration. They collectively set the EU’s agenda and provide policy direction while playing different roles in the law-making process:

European Parliament

Location: Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg

Establishment: 1952 as Common Assembly of the ECSC, 1958 as European Parliamentary Assembly of the three Communities (adopting in 1962 the name of European Parliament), first direct elections were held in 1979.

Representing the citizens of the EU Member States and directly elected by them, it is the most “federal” of the EU institutions. Its elected members (MEPs) are grouped by political affiliation, not by nationality. Their number for each country varies from 6 to 96 (the total cannot exceed 705). Together with the Council of the European Union, it makes decisions on European laws, approves the EU budget and supervises the democratic functioning of all EU institutions.

European Council

Location: Brussels

Establishment: 1974 (informal forum), 1992 (formal status), 2007 (official EU institution)

Gathering of the Heads of State or government of the EU Member States, it is the most “confederal” EU institution. Although it does not pass laws (except for Treaty amendments), it determines the EU’s general political direction, priorities and represents the highest level of political cooperation between the EU Member States. Usually, it meets four times a year and decides issues by consensus.

Council of the European Union

Location: Brussels/Luxembourg

Establishment: 1958 (as Council of the EEC)

Representing the governments of the EU Member States, it is placed somewhere in between a federal and a confederal institution. It is a gathering of national ministers in 10 different configurations depending on the policy area in discussion. As such, it coordinates policies and adopts laws jointly with the European Parliament. Each EU Member State holds its presidency on a 6-month rotating basis. Most of its decisions require a qualified majority (55% of Member States – currently 15 out of 27 – representing at least 65% of the total EU population); however, sensitive topics like foreign policy and taxation require a unanimous vote. Economy and finance ministers of the Eurozone countries coordinate their economic policy through the [Eurogroup](#).

European Commission

Location: Brussels/Luxembourg/Representations in EU Member States

Establishment: 1958

As EU’s main independent executive body representing its common interests, it is the most apparent expression of the functional approach to integration. It has the “right of initiative” to propose new laws (jointly adopted by the

European Parliament and the Council of the European Union), manages EU budget and policies (except for the Common Foreign and Security Policy), ensures the enforcements of the EU law. The Commission consists of 27 Commissioners (one from each EU country) and is led by the Commission President, who is elected by the European Parliament on a proposal by the European Council. Its representation offices provide information about the EU and facilitate its cooperation with the Member States.

The decision-making process is complemented by the three other institutions:

Court of Justice of the European Union

Location: Luxembourg

Establishment: 1952

It ensures that the EU law is enforced, that Treaties are correctly applied and that the EU Member States comply with their obligations. It also reviews the legality of the EU institutions' acts and interprets the EU law at the request of national courts.

European Central Bank

Location: Frankfurt

Establishment: 1998

Together with the European System of Central Banks, it is responsible for price stability and for the monetary and exchange rate policy in the Eurozone. It supports EU economic policies.

European Court of Auditors

Location: Luxembourg

Establishment: 1977

Acting as independent guardian of the financial interests of the EU citizens, it improves EU financial management, promotes accountability and transparency, and checks that EU funds are correctly raised and spent.

Further Reading:

- Most important advising and supervision bodies: the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and the European Ombudsman;
- [How EU officials are appointed and elected.](#)
- Setting of [EU priorities.](#)



Discuss in groups the following statements:

1. The European Council is the most political institution in EU.
 2. Democratic character of EU is reflected mostly in the European Parliament.
 3. European Commission is the most executive body in EU.
-

1.6 EU AND MEMBERS STATES RELATIONS

European unification is characterised by two different “methods”: cooperation and integration.

- (1) **Cooperation** is the tool of confederalism: Member States connect on a supranational level but their national sovereignty is fully preserved. As far as UE is concerned, this method is typical of the European Council and is used in areas that national governments are reluctant to yield (foreign policy, defence, fiscal policy etc).
- (2) **Integration** is based on the concept that to better deal with an interdependent and globalised world national sovereignties should pool to create a common sovereignty. Integration can be realised at different levels, the highest being the complete fusion into a supranational community (federalism). The EU is the most apparent example of half-way integration, where states have yielded some “areas” of national

sovereignty to a community which is superior to all of them (only in those areas) but have not been fused. In these areas European leaders consider joint action beneficial: the single market, the euro, promotion of economic growth, innovation policies (especially climate and environmental protection, research and energy) and solidarity/cohesion policies in regional, agricultural and social affairs.

The EU Treaties currently in force specify the areas in which sovereign powers have been transferred to the EU, either fully or partially, based on the **subsidiarity principle**.

Who does what? How responsibilities are shared between the EU and its Member States.

The European Union alone is responsible for:

- customs union;
- rules governing competition within the single market;
- monetary policy for countries using the Euro;
- conservation of marine biological resources under the Common Fisheries Policy;
- common commercial policy;
- concluding an international agreement when this is provided for in the EU legislation.

The European Union and its Member States share responsibility for:

- the single market;
- aspects of social policy as defined in the Treaty of Lisbon;
- economic and social cohesion;
- agriculture and fisheries, except for the conservation of marine biological resources;
- the environment;

- consumer protection;
- transport;
- trans-European networks;
- energy;
- creating an area of freedom, security and justice;
- aspects of common security challenges relating to public health, as defined in the Treaty of Lisbon;
- research, technological development and space;
- development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Fields for which the Member States remain responsible and in which the EU may play a supporting or coordinating role:

- protection and improvement of human health;
- industry;
- culture;
- tourism;
- education, vocational training, youth and sport;
- civil protection;
- administrative cooperation.

The first group encompasses **the exclusive competences** of the EU: in these areas only the EU may legislate and adopt legally binding acts, that Member States apply.

The second group lists the **shared competences**: areas in which both the EU and the Member States are able to pass laws (the latter only if the EU has not already proposed laws or has decided that it will not).

The last group deals with the **supporting competences**: the EU has no power to pass laws in these areas, it can only coordinate or complement the actions of the Member States.

The EU funds its policies through an annual **budget** which is small in comparison with the collective wealth of its Member States (no more than 1.04% of their combined gross national income). This budget is financed by the so-called EU's "**own resources**". They are drawn from:

- customs duties on products imported into the EU, including farm levies;
- a percentage of the value added tax (VAT) levied on goods and services throughout the EU;
- contributions from the Member States, according to the wealth of each country.

Further reading: [Enhanced cooperation](#) (multi-speed integration): small groups of Member States can increase their integration in a specific area (provided that it is an EU competence) without being hindered by the Member States unwilling to join them; [Areas of EU action](#), [Distribution of competences and its principles](#) (subsidiarity, proportionality, conferral); [EU budget](#).

1.7 LEGAL FEATURES

Given its peculiar institutional structure, the EU presents a special legal nature with the following features:

- Member States powers have been transferred to the Union to a more extensive degree than in traditional international organisations;
- The EU has its own legal order, independent of the Member States' ones;
- Provisions of the Union law are fully applicable in all Member States and bestow rights and imposing obligations on both the States and their citizens;
- The Union law cannot be revoked or amended by national law and takes precedence over national law in case of conflict.

The EU legal order, albeit independent of the Member States, **is limited to the EU's areas of competence**. The EU is therefore neither an international

organisation nor a federation, but an autonomous entity somewhere in between the two.

Further reading: [Types of legislation](#) (regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations etc.); [Ordinary legislative procedure](#).

1.8 THE TASKS OF THE EU

The main tasks of the European Union are:

- to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens,
- to offer citizens freedom, security and justice within its borders, while also controlling external borders,
- to work towards the sustainable development of Europe, promoting equality and social justice,
- to establish an economic union, with the Euro as its currency.

The lists of tasks of the EU are much more than the simple technical tasks usually assigned to international organisations: the EU is entrusted with actions which resemble some attributes of statehood.

Economic tasks

They are focused around the [establishment of a common market](#) among Member States. This free market area where goods and services are offered on the same conditions to all Union citizens was essentially created by 1992 through [the Delors programme](#).

The internal market is built up in the framework of the [economic and monetary union](#).

- (1) As far as economic policy is concerned, the EU does not establish a European economic policy, but coordinates and monitor national economic decisions through a [stability and growth](#) pact to avoid negative impact of Member States' policies on the single market. Due to the global economic and financial crisis, the cooperation was improved

from 2010 to 2012 with a permanent crisis mechanism focused on the [European semester](#), which aims at aligning Member States budgetary and economic policies with the goals agreed at the EU level. However, the responsibility in economic and financial policy is ultimately maintained by national governments.

- (2) As far as **monetary policy** is concerned, the EU has full and central control since the introduction of [the Euro as the single European currency](#) in Member States which met the [convergence criteria](#) (with the exceptions of Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). Over time the Euro has become a strong international currency, withstood the 2010 sovereign debt crisis, and in 2013 was backed up by the [European Stability Mechanism](#), providing Eurozone States with external financial assistance.

Further reading:

- [Other economic policy areas.](#)
- [Social dimension of the single market.](#)

Political tasks

The EU has political tasks in the areas of:

- Judicial cooperation in criminal and judicial matters in the interests of the Union as a whole ([Europol](#), [Eurojust](#), [European arrest warrant](#)),
- Common foreign and security policy.

In these areas the EU responsibilities are limited to cooperation and coordination among Member States.

Further reading: [Schengen area](#).

1.9 THE EU GLOBAL ROLE: ENLARGEMENTS AND THE COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

The more European states join the EU, the stronger its framework of peace, unity and equality becomes. In this respect the latest enlargements, leading to the reunification of a Europe divided for decades by the Iron Curtain, have

marked such a breakthrough that in 2012 the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights.

The EU is a progressive institution and is permanently open to the accession of new countries, provided that they meet the accession criteria established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993:

- (1) **Political criteria:** democracy, rule of law, stability of institutions, guarantee of human rights, respect for and protection of minorities.
- (2) **Economic criteria:** existing and functioning market economy able to cope with the EU competitive forces.
- (3) **Legal criteria:** ability to meet the obligations of the EU membership, including the acceptance of the EU goals regarding political, economic and monetary union (the so-called *acquis communautaire*).

Before a new enlargement the EU, on its turn, must assess its capacity to take the new member(s) and the proper functionality of its institutions. As of 2022 the candidate countries are: Albania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine.

As proved by the European integration process, the EU enlargements are strictly connected to the developments in global history and international relations. The EU is a major player in international trade within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, the international and military crisis of the new millennium (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Crimea, Ukraine) have highlighted the fact that EU has more influence in international affairs when it speaks with a single voice. Even if in this area each country remains fully sovereign, the EU Member States cooperate within the [Foreign and Security Policy](#) not only to safeguard the common values, interests and security, but also to secure world peace, resolve conflicts, promote democracy and foster international understanding based on diplomacy and respect for international rules. The EU's international role is also expressed by humanitarian aid and development cooperation. The EU has no standing army; however, its Member States can create ad hoc common forces for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

To fulfil this task the [European External Action Service](#), EU diplomatic service, has been established. It helps the High Representative for Foreign

Affairs and Security Policy (who is also Vice-President of the European Commission) implement the EU common policy in the foreign and security areas and ensures that the EU external action is coordinated and consistent. In fact, the EU is represented through some 140 EU Delegations and Offices around the world.

Further reading: [EU as an area of freedom, security and justice](#), [Enlargements policy and chronology](#).



Homework to be presented/discussed in classroom: short inquiries about the EU institutional/legal framework and tasks (Q&A, 5-minute essay, case studies) using institutional sites.

1.10 THE FUTURE OF THE EU

Given the peculiarities of its history and its institutional structure, the EU is inherently a **permanent “work in progress”** and the form it will finally take cannot be predicted. In any case, the extent to which Europe is willing and able to uphold its values will determine how its own citizens as well as those of other regions of the world regard it as a fair political, social and economic model.

As Schuman stated in the Declaration that started the process of European integration: “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”. The content and degree of this solidarity must constantly be adapted to the challenges posed by an ever-changing world.

In doing so, the crucial concept to be kept in mind was expressed by Jean Monnet, the mastermind of European integration, in his 1976 memoirs: “The sovereign nations of the past can no longer solve the problems of the present: they cannot ensure their own progress or control their own future. And the Community itself is only a stage on the way to the organised world of tomorrow”.

In the face of globalisation, what are the great challenges for Europe? They can be grouped in three main areas: political, democratic and economic.

- (1) **Political integration:** recent events have made apparent the need for deeper integration in areas that are traditionally reserved for national sovereignty, first of all security and defence. Will Member States push ahead with integration of states or will they make greater use of “reinforced cooperation”, which in the long run could hinder the solidarity principle?
- (2) **Democratisation:** how can such a diverse family of nations form a common political public sphere? How can its citizens develop a shared sense of “being European” which includes the attachment to their countries and their local community, allowing them to actively engage in European policy and democratically shape the political agenda? How can the EU and its Member States better inform and communicate with the public, getting closer to its citizens and renew their confidence in the European Union?
- (3) **Global economy:** globalisation forces Europe to add to the list of its traditional international competitors (Japan and the United States), new and fast-rising economic powers such as China and India. Can the EU Member States safeguard its social and environmental standards by restricting access to European markets, or should it become an effective global player by acting in unison in the economic policy?

The EU citizens have recently discussed their answers to these issues during [the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) and expressed their final proposals just when European peace, the greatest and deepest motivation for EU integration, has been threatened again due to the full scale Russian aggression on Ukraine. Clearly, Europe is at a turning point, one that demands crucial decisions and tangible actions.



Work in groups: simulate/role play (e.g. Conference on the future of Europe) your participation in European political and civic life, especially by discussing how Europe should develop in the future (competences, institutions, international role etc).

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND MATERIALS

Bibliography

- European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Fontaine, P., Europe in 12 lessons, Publications Office, 2018.
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Borchardt, K., The ABC of EU law, Publications Office, 2018.
- European Commission, European Political Strategy Centre, The European story : 60 years of shared progress, Publications Office, 2019.
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, How the European Union works : your guide to the EU institutions, Publications Office, 2014.

Useful websites

EU institutional websites and media channels:

- Your gateway to the EU, News, Highlights | European Union (europa.eu)
- European Parliament (europa.eu)
- European Commission, official website (europa.eu)
- European Commission – YouTube
- European Parliament – YouTube

EU information material (institutional and legal features, historical documents):

- Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament (europa.eu)
- Glossary of summaries – EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
- Collections – CVCE Website
- EU publications – EU publications – Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

Online courses:

- <https://start.unito.it/local/showroom/details.php?course=MAN0557>
- <https://start.unito.it/local/showroom/details.php?course=GIU0826A>

Methodological part

Aim of the class: The class related to this chapter aims at teaching pupils the ideological meaning, history, institutional structure and tasks of the European Union from a supranational point of view. Focusing on the EU values, goals and symbols, the aim of the class is to foster the sense of belonging to a supranational community and the practice of European citizenship, in particular by stimulating a discussion on its future.

List of references for students

- European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, A short guide to the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.
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- European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, EU pioneers : the trailblazers who helped build today’s Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.
- 12–15 years – European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Let’s explore Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.
- 15–18 years – European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, EU & me, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

Proposed lesson plan and methods:

- (1) **THEORETICAL PART:** General explanation, analysis of historical founding texts and cornerstones mainly by multimedia tools (infographics, videos, audios – see multimedia annexes)
- (2) **PRACTICAL PART** group works:
 - Inquiries about the EU institutional framework and tasks using institutional sites (Q&A, 5-minute essay)

- participation in European political and civic life and discussion on the future of Europe (simulation/role playing). Useful material at:
 - [Learning Corner \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Play games \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Permanent exhibition | house of European history \(ep.eu\)](#)
 - [EU publications: Maps – EU publications – Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Participate, interact, vote – your rights | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Get involved \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Ambassador school | Youth Hub | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)
- Obtain reliable information on EU – case studies:
 - [Social media accounts | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [European Parliament: our social media | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [European Commission – YouTube](#)
 - [European Parliament – YouTube](#)

CHAPTER II

– Let's talk about the European Digital Citizenship

Authors: Ksenia Naranovich, Małgorzata Molęda-Zdziech, Marta Pachocka

Keywords: society, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), information technology, digital citizenship, netizenship, equity and freedom, civil rights.

INTRODUCTION

Digital citizenship or netizenship is a relatively new concept which has grown in importance in recent decades. This is the result of the ubiquitous globalization, the enormous importance of the Internet and the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), but also of the international events of the last few years, which have accelerated the digitization processes in various areas of public and everyday lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic (from winter 2019/2020) and the full-scale Russian aggression on Ukraine (from 24 February 2022) have shown how important is digital infrastructure and how quickly societies, including the European ones, can switch to multidimensional remote functioning in everyday life (private, professional and public). That transformation proved

to be caused not by a voluntary choice but by necessity arising from the situation and accessible default arrangements.

While physical distancing and the need for quick reaction and coordination of activities during the pandemic required online mobilization, a significant part of the world population faced exclusion due to the absence of skills to use online governmental services. Increasing interest in the use of online public services (e.g., such as education, health care, labour market, etc.) during the pandemic – in connection with the restrictions on mobility and migration, not only internationally but also within countries due to COVID-19 – has facilitated the development of e-governance and nudges for online activity.

Additionally, thanks to access to the Internet, messaging applications and social media, such as Telegram, Facebook, WhatsApp, in connection with the public response to the COVID crisis, there was greater readiness to provide digital government services in response to different crisis situations. For example, in response to the needs of refugees fleeing Ukraine, Poland introduced the first digital residence permit in the world.¹

At the same time, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education responded quickly with online educational services for Ukrainian school children and students, enabling them to learn remotely despite the Russian military operations carried out on the territory of their country. Those solutions provided new perspectives of blended welfare systems and blended governmental services systems for people on the move. Thus bringing both new possibilities and new challenges in transnational functioning and migrants integration process.

Many Ukrainian children residing in Poland since the end of February 2022 continue to learn remotely in the Ukrainian public education system. However, this requires the provision of appropriate technical infrastructure (e.g. hardware, high-speed internet connection, safe and comfortable space) and above all digital competencies.

All this is not obvious and available to the same extent universally, even in the EU Member States. Moreover, using online services brings both

¹ Diia.pl application is available in both AppStore and Goole Play.

opportunities (e.g. the access to remote education for people who would not otherwise be able to use it) and risks (e.g. threats to the security of personal data). This chapter of the handbook focuses on digital citizenship in Europe, introducing and defining key concepts, discussing the most important EU documents in the area, and showing practical aspects and examples.

The aim of the chapter is to inspire greater interest in the topic and to develop digital skills, which are necessary for full participation in political and socio-economic life in the XXI century. The practical part of the chapter is designed around the materials available online to be used with the help of remote communication tools during the classes based on the chapter.

2.1 KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS – OVERVIEW

Digital

- (1) “Digital is the representation of physical items or activities through binary code. When used as an adjective, it describes the dominant use of the latest digital technologies to improve organizational processes, improve interactions between people, organizations and things, or make new business models possible”
- (2) “recording or storing information as a series of the numbers 1 and 0, to show that a signal is present or absent: digital data”
- (3) “using or relating to digital signals and computer technology: a digital recording, a digital camera, digital TV”
- (4) “using or relating to computers and the internet: The digital revolution has made it much easier for us to work from home. Social media is an essential tool in a digital world.”
- (5) “showing information in the form of an electronic image: a digital clock/display, a digital watch”

Digitization

- (1) “Digitization is the process of changing from analogue to digital form, also known as digital enablement. Said another way, digitization takes an analogue process and changes it to a digital form without any different-in-kind changes to the process itself”
- (2) “The conversion of text, pictures, or sound into a digital form that can be processed by a computer”

Digitalization

- (1) “Adaptation of a system, process, etc. to be operated with the use of computers and the Internet”
- (2) “the process of converting something to digital form”
- (3) “the process of changing data into a digital form that can be easily read and processed by a computer”

Digital transformation

“Digital transformation involves using digital technologies to remake a process to become more efficient or effective. The idea is to use technology not just to replicate an existing service in a digital form, but to use technology to transform that service into something significantly better. Digital transformation can involve many different technologies but the hottest topics right now are cloud computing, the Internet of Things, big data, and artificial intelligence”.

Digital Inclusion

Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes 5 elements:

- (1) affordable, robust broadband Internet service;

- (2) Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
- (3) access to digital literacy training;
- (4) quality technical support; and
- (5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

Digital citizenship

Digital principles

- (1) **Design With the User:** user-centered design starts with getting to know the people you are designing for through conversation, observation and co-creation.
- (2) **Understand the Existing Ecosystem:** well-designed initiatives and digital tools consider the particular structures and needs that exist in each country, region and community.
- (3) **Design for Scale:** achieving scale requires adoption beyond the initial pilot population and often necessitates securing funding or partners that take the initiative to new communities or regions.
- (4) **Build for Sustainability:** building sustainable programs, platforms and digital tools is essential to maintain user and stakeholder support, as well as to maximize long-term impact.
- (5) **Be Data Driven:** when an initiative is data driven, quality information is available to the right people when they need it, and who can use it to act.
- (6) **Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation:** an open approach to digital development can help to increase collaboration in the digital development community and avoid duplicating work that has already been done.
- (7) **Reuse and Improve:** reusing and improving is about taking the work of the global development community further than any organization or program can do alone.

- (8) **Address Privacy & Security:** addressing privacy and security in digital development involves careful consideration which data are collected and how data are acquired, used, stored and shared.
- (9) **Be Collaborative:** being collaborative means sharing information, insights, strategies and resources across projects, organizations and sectors, leading to increased efficiency and impact.

European digital rights

- (1) **People at the centre:** digital technologies should protect people's rights, support democracy, and ensure that all digital players act responsibly and safely. The EU promotes these values across the world.
- (2) **Solidarity and inclusion:** technology should unite, not divide, people. Everyone should have access to the Internet, to digital skills, to digital public services, and to fair working conditions.
- (3) **Freedom of choice:** people should benefit from a fair online environment, be safe from illegal and harmful content, and be empowered when they interact with new and evolving technologies like artificial intelligence.
- (4) **Participation:** citizens should be able to engage in the democratic process at all levels and have control over their own data.
- (5) **Safety and security:** the digital environment should be safe and secure. All users, from childhood to old age, should be empowered and protected.
- (6) **Sustainability:** digital devices should support sustainability and the green transition. People need to know about the environmental impact and energy consumption of their devices.

Digital skills / competences

Datafication

Datafication is a technological trend turning many aspects of our life into data which is reused and subsequently transferred into information realised as a new form of value. Use of digital technologies to unembed the knowledge associated with physical objects by decoupling them from the data associated with them. Datafication is manifesting itself in society in a variety of forms.

Digital Government

Digital Government refers to the use of digital technologies, as an integrated part of governments' modernisation strategies, to create public value. It relies on a digital government ecosystem comprised of government actors, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens' associations and individuals which supports the production of and access to data, services and content through interactions with the government.

Source: [Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies](#), OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, 2014.

Public value

Public value refers to various benefits for society that may vary according to the perspective or the actors, including the following : 1) goods or services that satisfy the desires of citizens and clients; 2) production choices that meet citizen expectations of justice, fairness, efficiency and effectiveness; 3) properly ordered and productive public institutions that reflect citizens' desires and preferences; 4) fairness and efficiency of distribution; 5) legitimate use of resource to accomplish public purposes; and 6) innovation and adaptability to changing preferences and demands.

Source: [Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies](#), OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, 2014.



Exercise for students:

Divide into groups and search the Internet for additional definitions of the terms indicated above and their definitions. Think about which are most understandable to you and why.

Read additional sources and think about the doubts surrounding these concepts and what they arise from.

What terms related to them are available in the indicated sources (especially dictionaries and glossaries)?

Suggest additional terms that can be added to list with the key terms. Justify your choice.

Additional sources:

- Digitization, Digitalization, And Digital Transformation_ Confuse Them At Your Peril
- What is Digitization, Digitalization, and Digital Transformation?
- Selected online dictionaries and glossaries, e.g.:
 - Gartner Information Technology Glossary
 - Oxford Learner's Dictionaries
 - Merriam-Webster Dictionary
 - Cambridge Dictionary
 - Collins Dictionaries
 - OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms
 - Glossaries from EU Institutions and Bodies
 - The United Nations Terminology Database

2.2 DIGITAL SOCIETY VS. TRADITIONAL MEANING OF SOCIETY

Digital technologies offer an unlimited scope of opportunities to humankind and we already got used to this fact. A digital society is a society adopted to the Digital Era, conscious of the benefits and risks attached to the permanent re-use of information/data. This is an Information and Communication Technologies-dependent society, where the creation, distribution, use, integration, and manipulation of information becomes the main economic, political, social and cultural activity. Manuel Castells proposed the term network society, addressing the recently gained superpower of sustaining multiple connections between individuals.

In a digital society, every aspect of our lives is profoundly affected by data's digitalization. The digitalization of data covers our communication (methods and tools), the process of socialization, how we work, learn, stay healthy and participate in political and economic life. Digitalization promises tremendous benefits: better health, more efficient mobility, efficient energy use, and flourishing companies. Digital society is a condition sine qua non for both: development of the knowledge economy nowadays as well as economic growth.

2.3 CONNECTIVITY DEPENDENCY, DIALOGUE, TRUST AND DECISION-MAKING

The growing use of digital devices and the increasing online presence are global trends. In 2023 the number of smartphone users in the world reached 6.92 billion, meaning that 86.41% of the world's population owns a smartphone, while the number of people that own a mobile phone reached 7.33 billion, making up 90.93% of the world's population. In 2021, 474 million people living in Europe (86% of the population) were subscribed to mobile services, leaving a digital footprint every minute.

With the diversity of digital activities we undertake and the amount of applications we download, the amount of data for analysis grows daily. One tends to ignore terms and conditions and neglect rules attached to free-of-charge applications, thus fuelling datafication.



Exercise for students:

Watch episode 6, season 2, of “Creeped Out” series and reconsider what holds you back from reading and analysing the terms and conditions applied to digital services you use daily.

New communication avenues and diversification of terms of data-sharing need a new type of social contract and reframing of trust between providers and users, but also between citizens, institutions and public administration involved. Not only the construction of technological solutions but also design of services and the role of citizens needed to be reconsidered. Thus, through a new type of engagement, many social issues can be revisited and readdressed. New solutions might be found and disseminated even more broadly, making policy outreach more efficient. Every further policy development in digital society may be based on better evidence. In this way, the digital citizenship concept is highly supportive in the field of social inclusion regardless of geographical location, age group or the income of an individual netizen. Digital participation thus becomes a matter of choice, while not yet obligatory. Networking has become easier and potential partnerships are just waiting around the corner... on top of a search engine lists.

Trust in providers of information and services in a digital society is one of the necessary conditions for participation. At the same time, trust in information obtained from users is a condition for the further development of digital society. It is one of the reasons why the relevance of sources and trustworthiness of agents acquiring one’s data needs to be doublechecked.

Respect and mutual trust between users in the digital world are needed to develop dialogue; however, the digital world still tends to be provocative and put trustful individuals at risk.

Decision-making processes in digital societies and within the knowledge economy are not necessarily democratic, but are created by design (not a coincidence). That is why the issues of ethics in the digital world is widely discussed.



Exercise for students:

Listen to [TEDx talk by futurist Gerd Leonhard of digital ethics and the future of humans in a connected world](#) and discuss developments in digital society within the last decade.

2.4 TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS

We are living in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, also known as Industry 4.0. Information-communication technologies are widely used in industry to facilitate work, and to develop robotics and artificial intelligence. The Internet enables computerizing production systems and communication between machines.

The fact that all the devices within the network are connected enables sharing of information about the machines themselves (almost) without the involvement of humans. This is a milestone and the next step in the automatization of production but also a lifestyle change for millions of individuals.



Exercise for students:

Watch episode 1, Volume II , of [“Love, Death & Robots” series \(Automated Customer Service\)](#). Discuss Industry 4.0 implications for humankind.

Digital devices and robots, like almost every tool, can harm or benefit users, depending on the way they are used. Patterns and habits of individuals related to the use of digital devices vary significantly and are under constant analysis of IT specialists, graphic designers, marketologists and even policymakers. Changes introduced by technologies are revised daily, leading to both progress and new challenges, undoubtedly speeding up the supported processes.



Exercise for students:

Analyse the infographic [The Mobile Economy Europe 2022](#) and discuss how digital society can impact the economic situation in Europe within the upcoming decade.

Stratification of users is a reality also in the digital world. It can be tackled by upgrading skills of use of technical devices in case of the digital divide or by learning and conscious use of technology in case of a knowledge gap.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines the digital divide as “the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technology (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities.” Better-equipped schools provide students with more opportunities to use technology enabling them to gain proficiency and the habit of upgrading their digital literacy which translates into better job opportunities. Those who had less contact with technology in schools have fewer chances to upgrade their digital skills and often fail to bridge the gap in e-readiness, which stands for the ability to sort through, interpret, and process knowledge.

With the growing use of digital technologies in everyday life on social, political and economic levels – the so-called digital revolution – the decision makers faced a big challenge how to prepare citizens to use these

technologies.

The importance of digital literacy and lifelong learning grew significantly for the EU within last decades.² Digital society is not divided by borders and is inclusive by default. Therefore, it was easy to adapt terminology and name all the participants – digital citizens.

As Sibel Somyürek explains “A digital citizen is a person who can criticize online information, can communicate via digital technologies, can produce and consume in the digital environment and complies with the ethical rules while conducting these behaviours and is aware of their rights and responsibilities.”



Exercise for students:

Find out about 9 Elements of Digital Citizenship:

- (1) Digital Access is the equitable distribution of technology. It is not limited only to understanding who has access to technology, but also what are the restrictions and consequences to those who have narrow access to technology.
- (2) Digital Commerce is buying and selling of goods online. This principle focuses on making safe and informed decisions when purchasing or downloading materials online.
- (3) Digital Communication is understanding the different modes and mediums of digital technology and when to appropriately use them. For example, understanding when sending an email is appropriate versus sending a text message.

² The EU stressed the importance of citizenship education by a series of policy initiatives such as Paris Declaration (European Commission, 2015) and the Key Competences Framework (Council, 2006).

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- (4) Digital Etiquette is understanding the appropriate code of conduct and procedures when using mobile devices. It extends beyond recognizing bad behaviour in that it actively encourages appropriate and responsible behaviour online.
 - (5) Digital Literacy or Fluency is the process of understanding technology, how to use it in its many forms, and how to adapt when new technologies are introduced. It also extends to Internet usage and how to effectively search and evaluate information online.
 - (6) Digital Health & Welfare is maintaining sound technological practices to promote physical and psychological wellness. Practicing eye safety and ergonomics, and balancing screen time and technology usage are all related to this important principle.
 - (7) Digital Law is understanding and complying with online rules and policies, and how to use technology ethically. Digital law is broad and covers topics from spam to cyberbullying.
 - (8) Digital Rights & Responsibility are the freedoms that extend to everyone online. Examples of this include the right to privacy and free speech.
 - (9) Digital Security & Privacy are electronic precautions to bolster online safety. Secure passwords, not sharing passwords, backing up data, and antivirus protection are all examples of this principle.

In your opinion what is worth adding to this list?

Due to the vast and quick spread of digital technologies, the concept of digital citizenship is cosmopolitan. Digital technology based or supported functions has changed both the habits, activities, production and consumption methods of individuals across the globe, regardless of age, social status, actual citizenship or country of residency.

2.5 THE EU APPROACH

On 9 March 2021 the European Commission presented its vision and strategy for Europe’s digital transformation by 2030 – the [2030 Digital Compas](#). It was the first time when the Commission used the term “digital citizenship” in its statement. The next step was made on 26 January 2022 when the Commission proposed an inter-institutional solemn declaration of a set of digital principles and rights.³

The above-mentioned steps were political decisions beginning the process of creating a “digital citizenship”. This new form of citizenship was understood as “the ability to participate in society online” (Mossberger, Tolbert and McNeal, 2007).



Exercise for students:

In the nearest future Europeans will benefit from European Digital Identity (eIDAS 2.0). Imagine which of your dreams or nightmares would come true when that happens. Discuss.

Watch a video to find out more about [EUROPEAN DIGITAL INDENTITY](#).

2.6 EUROPEAN CITIZENS SUPPORT FOR DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

According to a Eurobarometer survey “Digital Society and Technology” conducted in September and October 2021, European show wide support for digital principles. Majority of the EU citizens (81%) think that the Internet and digital tools will play an important role in the future. We should

³ COM (2022)27 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Establishing a European Declaration on Digital rights and principles for the Digital Decade; COM (2022)28 final, “European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade”.

underline that more than 80% EU citizens are aware of both advantages and disadvantages resulting from the use of digital tools and Internet while only minority (12%) expects more disadvantages than advantages in this area. Moreover, a large majority finds it useful and important for the European Union to define and promote European rights and principles to build a successful digital transformation.

More than half of the EU citizens surveyed have expressed concern about cyber-attacks and cybercrime. More than half of them also worry about the safety and well-being of children online. Almost half of the EU citizens surveyed have expressed concern about the use of personal data and information by companies or public administrations. About a third of the EU citizens worry about the difficulty of disconnecting and finding a good online/offline life balance. Around one in four are concerned with the difficulty of learning new digital skills necessary to take an active part in society. About one in five of the EU citizens have expressed concern about the environmental impact of digital products and services.

Table 1. Concerns about online harms and risks

Type of concerns	%
cyber-attacks and cybercrime (i.e.: theft or abuse of personal data, malicious software, or phishing)	56%
safety and well-being of children online	53%
the use of personal data and information by companies or public administrations	46%
the difficulty of disconnecting and finding a good online/offline life balance	34%
the difficulty of learning new digital skills necessary to take an active part in society	26%
the environmental impact of digital products and services	23%

Source: European Commission, Digital Rights and Principles, European Union 2021.

2.7 NEED FOR MORE KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHTS ONLINE

According to report [Digital rights and principles](#), the majority of the EU citizens think that the EU protects their rights in the online environment well, but at the same time most (76%) would consider it useful to know more about their rights in the online environment. Over 39% declare that they are unaware of the fact that the rights that apply offline should also be respected online.

The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) provides platform to broaden conscious use of the [Internet and educate on cybersecurity issues](#).



Exercise for students:

Try to identify and name more threats in digital world using this [infographic by ENISA](#).

2.8 WIDE SUPPORT FOR DECLARATION ON DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

A large majority (82%) of the EU citizens support idea of EU defining and promoting a common European vision on digital rights and principles. Almost 90% of Europeans support the following principles included in European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade:

- Putting people at the centre of digital transformation,
- Solidarity and inclusion,
- Freedom of choice,
- Participation in the digital public space,
- Safety, security and empowerment,
- Sustainability.

While ensuring the right to the protection of personal data, and the right to access to justice, the EU basic civil principles need to be protected EU. Those include above all else the principle of the rule of law and the scope of activities undertaken by the [European Parliament](#), the [Council of the European Union](#) and the [European Commission](#) in the area of protection of fundamental rights: mobility, respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression, and the lack of discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.



Exercise for students:

Finding efficient ways to reach out to different social groups online to disseminate relevant information is important. How would you get in touch with local senior citizens, feminist activists in big cities and newly arrived immigrants around the country?



Exercise for students:

Think of possible solutions to decrease alienation and provide further digital inclusion of different social groups using the [Wheel of Privilege and Power](#).

Children and the young generation are seen as the primary beneficiaries of digital technologies, as they skilfully access and navigate the Internet and the social media and use digital tools. The access to electronic devices and technologies, and to the Internet in general is still unequal, although the access to gadgets as well as a good Internet and electricity connection

are crucial for participation in the digital society. Low-speed Internet connection and low-capacity of hardware may limit participation and quality of digital interactions. Nonetheless, participation in the digital world is available 24/7, while economic differences, distances, physical limitations, and linguistic barriers are less significant than they are offline. The Internet offers plenty of opportunities for education, social networking, development of skills, as well as for organization of daily routines and entertainment.

Thanks to technologies supporting the educational process, individuals with disabilities can contact their peers and participate in educational activities. Netizens need to be conscious of risks related to the digital world: the Internet addiction, cyberbullying, hate speech, fake news, and disinformation. The EU attempts to provide safety measures for children in the digital environment while ensuring easy access to the possibilities it offers. In 2022 European Commission adopted a [new European strategy for a Better Internet for Kids \(BIK+\)](#), which aims to improve age-appropriate digital services, and ensure empowerment, respect, and protection for every child online.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed [European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles](#) on 15 December 2022.

METHODOLOGICAL PART

We encourage you to use this text as an inspiration for group work and to provide an opportunity to try working offline before immersing online to complete exercises. This experience will help students describe differences between offline and online worlds they navigate and imagine life before the development of the Internet.

EU Directives and regulations:

- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing directive 95/46/ec (General Data Protection Regulation) (text with eea relevance)
- Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services (Text with EEA relevance)
- Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 establishing a single digital gateway to provide access to information, to procedures and to assistance and problem-solving services
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children
- Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (Text with EEA relevance)

Strategies and policy papers:

- European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles
- Better Internet for Kids (BIK+)
- European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Key competences for lifelong learning, Publications Office, 2019

Literature:

- The Network Society. From Knowledge to Policy, Gustavo Cardoso, Manuel Castells, 2006.
- Monitoring the Digital Divide... and beyond, G. Sciadas (ed.), Orbicom 2003.
- Digital Citizenship: The Internet, society, and participation, K. Mossberger, C.J. Tolbert, R.S. McNeal, MIT Press, 2007.
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- Challenges in Cybersecurity and Privacy – the European Research Landscape, Editors: Jorge Bernal Bernabe, University of Murcia, Spain / Antonio Skarmeta, University of Murcia, Spain.

CHAPTER III

Being entrepreneurial and the labor market

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Keywords: entrepreneurship, labor market, free movement of people.

INTRODUCTION

Young people's views, behaviors, and values are shaped by a wide range of phenomena that fall under the umbrella of entrepreneurship. It is portrayed as a brand-new type of human activity that calls for initiative and ingenuity. It is a broad notion with a variety of meanings. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – Poland 2012 defines entrepreneurship as „any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business.”

Entrepreneurship encompasses „both entrepreneurial behaviour in already existing organizations as well as entrepreneurial behaviour leading to registration of new business entities.” Young Europeans can develop entrepreneurial skills within the framework of the European Single Market, one of the largest economic regions in the world, within the framework of

the freedom of establishment guaranteed by the internal market, also known as the freedom to conduct a business, freedom of establishment, freedom to set up and run a business. The treaty of EU states: “The Union shall adopt measures with the aim of establishing or ensuring the functioning of the internal market, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Treaties. The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Treaties.” The market in the European Union produces particular economic and legal circumstances that control how businesses operate. The single market provides extra advantages for increasing the value of businesses by facilitating the free flow of goods, people, services, and capital as well as by removing technical, physical, legal, and bureaucratic barriers. According to the principle of freedom of establishment, natural and legal persons have the right to choose the place and form of conducting business within the Union European.

Elżbieta Bieńkowska, the EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs between 2014–2019, stated that having in mind the external dimension of the internal market and access to non-EU markets as an area of great importance for industry and SMEs alike, all entrepreneurs should benefit from it. Particularly, since the EU wants to work on an integrated European strategy for SME internationalization which will add value above and beyond national trade promotion activities.

3.1 THE SPECIFICITY OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE LABOR MARKET

The labor market is specific in many ways. Its mechanisms of functioning depend on many macroeconomic factors relating to a given industry, region and the entire economy. The parties to this market are jobseekers, i.e. employees, who constitute the labor force (labor supply). On the other hand, there are job offers in the labor market, i.e. employers representing the demand for labor (Beaudry, Green, Sand, 2715).



Consider whether it is possible to be both an employer and an employee.

The atypical nature of the labor market is based primarily on the basic commodity, which is work. Within the meaning of the Polish Labor Code, work is a service performed by an employee for the benefit of the employer as part of the employment relationship between them, characterized by: voluntary, personal performance of work, subordination, remuneration, risk as a liability related to the employment of an employee. To put it simply: work is a voluntary, remunerated service provided by the employee for the employer. Voluntary work consists in both the lack of coercion, and the presence of self-will and conscious decision to work. The payment, in turn, is related to the remuneration. The wage, that is, the remuneration for work, is treated as the price of the work. The freedom of exchange in the labor market and competition are limited both by the employees and employers, through the activities of employers' unions, workers' trade unions and organizations regulating the labor market, e.g. the labor office. In addition, there are international organizations that monitor labor markets in individual countries. The International Confederation of Trade Unions publishes annual Global Rights Index reports, assessing trade union rights and human rights by country on a scale of 1 to 5+.



Read more about [Global Rights Index](#).

In the classic market model, the labor market tends to the state of equilibrium, meaning a situation in which the labor supply and the demand for labor are equal. Striving for balance in the labor market means equal

availability of work and demand for it. The imbalance in the labor market manifests itself in two different ways: unemployment or a deficit of workers. Unemployment occurs when the supply of labor is greater than the demand for it. Some of the people able to take up a job and seeking employment do not find it (with the acceptance of the salaries offered on the labor market). The imbalance in the labor market may also manifest itself in the opposite situation when the demand for labor exceeds the supply. This is when we talk about the labor force deficit and when the shortage of personnel occurs. In that situation, some employers, offering a certain level of remuneration, cannot find employees.

The social policy of the state plays a stimulating role in the labor market, as it cares for the interests of both the employers and the employees, and it strives to maintain market equilibrium. The state influences the shape of the labor market, among others by concluding international agreements on the transfer of labor, stimulating the development of small and medium-sized enterprises or supporting entrepreneurship and local initiatives to increase employment.



Find out more about [the ways of supporting entrepreneurship and setting up a business in your country](#).

Employers shape the labor market by investing in human resources (HR). The human resource management departments act as a liaison between the management and employees in a company. The main task of HR department employees, also known as HR specialists, is the recruitment of job candidates. Other tasks include:

- motivating employees to perform their duties,
- preparation and conducting of various types of training,
- recognizing people who are valuable to the team and those who slow down its work.

Investing in HR can not only increase the effectiveness of recruitment processes, i.e. accelerate the employment of an appropriate, efficient employee, but also support activities in the area of development and retention of talents in an enterprise. In smaller enterprises, all these responsibilities usually belong to one or more people, as there is no need to create a separate department for human resources management. It also happens that these responsibilities lie with the HR department. Therefore, the need to have and expand the HR department depends on the needs and size of a given enterprise (Brandl, 5).

3.2 HOW TO PRESENT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS?

The knowledge of the rules governing the labor market is a necessary condition for a conscious choice of a career path. The mechanisms of the functioning of this market depend on many macroeconomic factors relating to an industry, region and the entire economy. Due to the high instability of the labor market, it is important to know what contributes to the improvement of the competitive position of a candidate. To increase one's chances on the labor market, particularly during periods of rising unemployment, especially among young people, it is necessary to shape education and skills development. However, what is also important is the awareness of the significance of effective presentation of one's qualifications. A typical jobseeker has many opportunities to present their skills and competences. The most popular are a CV, a cover letter and an interview.

The recruitment of employees is the process of finding and attracting a sufficiently large number of candidates for selection purposes for unfilled positions. An interview is one of the methods of selecting job applicants. It is an opportunity for a candidate to present information from the CV, skills (including interpersonal), and demonstrate personality. Interpersonal skills include:

- ease of establishing contact,
- negotiation and conflict resolution,
- teamwork,
- assertive behaviour,
- free and appropriate communication with employees of various levels.



Which of your interpersonal skills make you an interesting candidate? Write them down.

The time limitations of an interview make it impossible to test all skills and competences. Therefore, employers often decide to use multi-stage or multi-dimensional recruitment. Selection tools that they use outside of the interview include CV analysis, substantive tests, psychological tests, assessment center (Tripathi, 31). Not all methods and tools that can be used in the recruitment process are universal and suitable for every industry and for every position. Therefore, it is important to tailor them to the needs of the company. The knowledge of foreign languages is also verified in the recruitment process, e.g. through a language passport, which informs about the skills of listening, reading, communication and independent expression in a given language.



Try to create your own language passport based on your knowledge of foreign languages.

This type of presentation of language qualifications is one of the five elements of Europass – a collection of documents necessary in the recruitment process. Other documents are curriculum vitae, Europass Mobility (a document confirming completion of an internship abroad or a semester of study), a certificate supplement and a diploma supplement (European Commission, 2020).

The ability to present qualifications is useful not only when applying for a job during the recruitment process, but also when meeting colleagues or acquiring potential investors when starting your own business.

3.3 BEING ENTREPRENEURIAL – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Choosing a career path is often associated with the choice between working full-time or self-employment. Running a business requires formal preparation in the form of, first, gathering necessary documentation for institutions and authorities, granting official identification of the activity, and second, creating a business plan. Each form of employment is affected by many factors that impact their attractiveness; a significant role is played by personal preferences and the current situation on the labor market.

Contrary to appearances, creating your own company is not difficult in terms of organization. However, you need to be patient and have the right tools and documents to materialize the idea. Collecting and preparing the documentation related to the establishment of an enterprise, including a business plan, is a formal preparation for starting a business. It is worth noting that the initial verification of the validity of a business idea takes place less formally than by means of marketing research. It often takes the form of sharing the idea concerns primarily family, friends, potential customers, or experts in an industry.

However, before discussing the creation of a business plan as a reflection of the reality of the idea, it is necessary to look at the formal and legal issues. When deciding to start your own business, you need to choose its legal form. The most popular form of business in e.g. Romania is a limited liability company. However, keep in mind that it differs from country to country.



Read more about starting a business in Romania: Report of World Bank Group, Doing Business 2020 Romania. Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies.

This form of doing business is also very popular in Italy. Here, however, it is necessary to mention difficulties in setting up a business that do not exist in other countries, including regionalization and cultural differences.



Read more about [setting up a business in Italy](#).

When selecting the field of business, it is necessary to check whether obtaining concessions, permits or other licenses is required. For example, in Poland, production and trade in explosives, weapons and ammunition, and providing security services of people and property, requires obtaining a license.

Other examples of a business typically requiring obtaining a permit include running a vehicle inspection station or manufacturing tobacco products. Only once the permit is granted, such a business may start operating. The next step (or the first step if a license or permit is not necessary) is to choose the legal form. During that step, in addition to your own analysis of benefits, a consultation with a solicitor is recommended in order to be more aware of the possibilities and consequences of the choice made. The type of legal form of economic activity determines the selection of the appropriate registration office.

Starting your own business requires more than just getting done with formalities. Substantive planning is equally important, including the preparation of a business plan, which is a comprehensive, long-term planning document. Its task is to indicate goals, methods and means to achieve them.

Business plan is widely used in business management, as it enables preparation and implementation of projects and plays a significant role in decision making. It sometimes is an obligatory element of the documentation to apply for funds to financial institutions. (Alonso-Vazquez, pp. 155–156). A business plan is prepared for a period of up to 2 years (a short planning horizon) or for 2–10 years (long perspective). However, usually a business plan perspective does not exceed three years as market conditions change dynamically, which makes planning in perspective of 5 or 10 years difficult.

Regardless of the type and purpose, each business plan contains the following elements, constituting the consecutive stages of the document (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of the stages of a business plan

Business plan stages	Characteristics of the stages
Identification of problems	Selection of problems that need to be solved first, presented (mainly) in the form of a SWOT analysis. The effect of the SWOT analysis is the presentation of four groups of factors describing a given venture or enterprise, i.e. strengths and weaknesses, as well as factors occurring in the environment, i.e. opportunities and threats.
Diagnosing the current situation of the organization	Strategic analysis, the main purpose of which is to formulate future strategies based on the potential of the project, stakeholder expectations and analysis of the environment.
Planning of necessary activities	Planning of tasks and resources necessary to implement the project within a specified time and within a specified budget.
Preparation of a plan and methods of action	Planning of methods of action.
Development of the plan	Implementation of the plan – previously assigned tasks.
Control	Control tasks may take place after each important task (so-called milestones) or at the end of the venture.



Try to do a SWOT analysis of your business idea. It's a really useful tool!

The structure of a business plan depends on the purposes of its use. Banks may have specific guidelines, focused mainly on the financial part. When obtaining permits and approvals from the authorities, the operational part – including the location, infrastructure and necessary resources – will also be important. However, there are structural elements that are found in all business plans, including (<https://www.forbes.com>, 2019):

- summary, which must include the identification data of the project and the main goals,
- the operational part, defining the necessary potential and resources, nature of the project, risk factors, duration, scope,
- the marketing part, based on market research and containing a description of the implemented product, target market, demand, supply (including competition assessment), price, distribution, promotion, quality and value plan for sales, cost plan for the marketing sphere,
- the financial part, specifying the schedule of the project, organizational and legal-ownership form, forms of employment, strategy and production plan (including the method of organizing the supply of materials and raw materials), costs of the management sphere,
- the management part, which includes the adopted assumptions regarding effectiveness, potential sources of external financing, risk assessment and the profit and loss account.

Being entrepreneurial doesn't have to mean starting one's own business. In quite a few positions and industries one can develop their creativity while working for a company. Working full-time means being an employee in a company and having a boss. Like any choice of a career path, it also has its advantages and disadvantages and their perception depends on many factors related to the workplace, the type of work performed, and the employee's personal predispositions. For some an important aspect in determining the career path is the constant opportunity for development and training, which should be provided by the employer, while for others the feeling of independence from the boss and flexibility of work will be the most important values. Therefore, it is necessary to look at both the benefits of

a given form of employment or self-employment, as well as the disadvantages and risks of both (bankier.pl, 2020).

One of the issues that usually is taken into consideration when deciding on the type of employment is paid leave, which usually is considered an advantage of full-time work at a company. Paid leave in the case of an employment contract is often subsidized by the workplace, but each application for a leave requires the consent of the supervisor. On the other hand, in the case of self-employment, there is no need to obtain consent of a boss and the length of duration of a leave is not regulated, but it requires financing.

Another issue that should be considered when analysing the attractiveness of both forms of employment is profitability. It should be noted, however, that determining the break-even point is a difficult and very subjective task. The main factors in the profitability analysis are the structure of costs and revenues, and the choice of the form of taxation. However, these are the choices faced by an entrepreneur, not a full-time employee, where the only determinant of financial profitability is income. The choice between one's own business and a full-time job should also be based on individual preferences and predispositions.



Think about what seems to be a more attractive form of expression of entrepreneurship – a full-time job or your own business. Which of the following issues seem most important to you when making such a choice: sense of security, sense of independence, willingness to be independent, property responsibility, working time.

Another issue worth considering when choosing between a full-time job or self-employment is working time. When working full-time, the time of starting and ending work is usually specified in the employment

contract. The exception is overtime, which is paid in the form of money or writing off hours. However, the standardized working time is not an unequivocal advantage of full-time employment, as it limits the flexibility of action in cases such as the necessity for dealing with official matters, consulting a doctor, or studying. In such a case, owning a business gives one the comfort of operating within the working hours you specify, and not someone else.

Yet another important issue when choosing between owning a business and a full-time job is the possibility of training and obtaining new qualifications. There is no clearly better solution in this respect. When working full-time, training may be financed by the employer, while the employee has a limited opportunity to select the subject of training. In the case of self-employment, improving qualifications is a matter of own choice, which involves incurring costs.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

In 2022 there was over 23 million enterprises in the EU. It is estimated that since 2008, the number of businesses increased by around 3.6 million while over 216 million people were active on the labor market (World Bank, 2022). In times of deep economic integration in the EU, it is important to be aware of the opportunities that the labor market offers.

The choice of a career depends on many personal factors, but also on specific characteristics of the national labor market. Regardless of how we choose, the development of competences is crucial. The EU creates a favourable environment for business development by providing budgetary resources and facilitating entrepreneurial activity. In the European Single Market, entrepreneurial freedom is not wrongly called the 5th freedom and remains an unchanged interest of the European Commission.

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ADDENDUM

From the earliest steps along the path of European integration, the Community and then the Union have always strived to guarantee the fundamental rights to free movement of goods, capital, services and especially people within their borders. This process cannot be reduced, by oversimplification, to the mere desire to create a free trade area. Already in 1957, the Treaties of Rome stated clearly that the goal was to lay the foundations of a broader, articulated, complex process that draws strength precisely from the protection of what will come to be called in later years „the fundamental freedoms”: the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital. European Citizenship was born in this ideal cradle around which European, national, and regional institutions are called upon to work to ensure respect for the rights that every individual has, regardless of his or her state of birth or place of residence.

Why is the freedom of movement a fundamental right?

Focusing on people’s right to freedom of movement can help understand how the Union’s policies have more complexity and depth than meets the eye. How does the right to mobility actively support every individual’s aspiration to improve his or her working, living, and social conditions? This goal is related not only to the fact that the EU guarantees the freedom to move from one state to another within the Union, but to the way in which this right is made effective.

The purpose of the Union is to ensure equal opportunities – economic, employment, social – for all its citizens. That is why it is important to guarantee freedom of movement: to give everyone the chance to take advantage of the opportunities available to them in every country. However, it is even more important to make sure that his or her personal background of knowledge and experience gives this possibility a chance to become reality.

While guaranteeing the right to mobility, in order to ensure that everyone has the same starting conditions, the Union asks its public and private

institutions – at both the European and the national levels – to strive to give each citizen those skills that can help him or her confront and make the most of the possibilities given by access to an economic and social space of continental dimensions.

Rights and duties of citizens

One of the most cited official documents on the subject is „Lisbon Strategy,” approved during the Extraordinary European Council of March 2000. It affirms the EU objective to strengthen employment and economic reforms, as well as the social cohesion in the context of a knowledge-based economy. Hence, the link between rights, guaranteed by national and European institutions, and duties of each citizen.

One of the duties of EU citizens is to use education to increase personal knowledge and skills in country of origin and in other European countries thanks to the support of the European Commission’s Erasmus program. Another duty of EU citizens is to equip themselves with tools such as knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills and soft skills that are indispensable in an increasingly integrated world. The final duty is to take advantage of the opportunities offered by teachers and educators, including those in vocational training, who can support the strengthening of one’s „toolbox.”

Why is the freedom of movement of goods, services and capital a fundamental right of the European Union?

In Article 3 of the Treaty On European Union (C326/13) we can read as follows:

The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It promotes scientific and technological progress.

The Union combats social exclusion and discrimination and promotes social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations, and protection of the rights of the child. It promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among member states. It respects the richness of its cultural and linguistic diversity and oversees the preservation and development of Europe's cultural heritage.

This article encapsulates what economic and social models the European Union wants to achieve.

First: the Union is an open space without barriers to hinder the free movement of goods and services produced by its enterprises.

Open borders are more than just a “trade issue.” The right to access without constraint or hindrance a market of continental dimensions is what can help the best, the most competitive business grow strong. This has not always been the case. In the past nation-states have prospered within their own borders through the imposition of tariffs and barriers that prevented foreign firms from competing on an equal footing with domestic ones. This policy for centuries was the reason of conflicts between nations, which protected their own industries to the detriment of their own citizens, who could not freely access imported produce. Moreover, the nationalist policy of closure protected the most fragile companies, creating the illusion of state-guaranteed competitiveness. The European Economic Community and thus the European Union, since their founding, have adopted a completely different approach. If the goal is to ensure that businesses (just as we used to say for individuals) are guaranteed the chance to seize the opportunities present by the market, artificial barriers cannot be erected. This is the high road to strengthening businesses by forcing them to compete and improve their ability to compete on an equal footing with other businesses. The ultimate beneficiaries of this process are once again European citizens in their capacities as consumers and workers.

Only competition?

Already in the Treaties of Rome in 1957 it was agreed that the free movement of goods within the Community would only be possible by ensuring the availability at the same time of economic resources capable of strengthening cohesion between European territories, thus helping the most backward areas – and the enterprises in them – to modernize plants and acquire new technologies. In other words, the Community would help them to regain competitiveness. This approach is closely linked to the way in which European institutions have since the beginning of the integration process focused on the need to strengthen two elements: traditional infrastructure (railways, roads, energy distribution networks, IT highways...) and a common system of rules, shared and equal for all the member states.

What is meant by a social market economy?

The authorship of the term „social market economy” is usually attributed to German economists who in the 1930s developed the concept of „rule-based liberalism.” This approach which was born at the worst moment in European and world history, marked by the rise of Nazism and fascism and nationalist totalitarianism, proposed an alternative vision of the economic order. An order based, to simplify, on two fundamental elements: the existence of a system of rules, capable of guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms of individuals and the justice, peace, solidarity and cohesion of society as a whole, and the ability of institutions to ensure their respect. This is the approach that from the foundation has guided the process of European integration and its current version is found in the Lisbon Treaty.

What guarantees respect for the rights of all European citizens and their equality is the agreement on a common system of values, rules, and norms. What makes it effective is the commitment and ability of institutions to enforce those rules, even when it is necessary to “force” a member state to overcome its inertia, when its policies hurt the rights of its citizens, recognized and protected by the Union. This concept applied to competition in markets translates into a simple consequence: the Union has a duty to ensure that all enterprises can compete on an equal footing, without being discriminated against or even helped, so as not to distort the mechanism of competition.

Why is the European economic and social model sustainable?

Several parts of Art. 3 of the Treaty are devoted to sustainability. It is a concept that the Union adopts across the board and applies to both the environmental and social spheres. What makes the European economic and social model sustainable is the fact that its very definition affirms the need for all European citizens, today and tomorrow, to benefit from the same opportunities. Including the next generations in the policies requires designing a development model that is able to guarantee access (and thus preservation and protection) to vital resources for all. It is a model that rewards the ability to create solidarity, that aspires to prevent the interest of one individual from asserting itself at the expense of the well-being of others and continues to guarantee all citizens equal opportunities and rights.

Further reading

Removing barriers and obstacles (regulatory, bureaucratic, cultural...) is one of the most important challenges for the European Union and its member states. Ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens means striving to implement tools and policies that can support individuals to realize themselves at work and in society. There are many EU programs that promote employment and social mobility, understood as the continuous improvement of people's well-being, expressed not only in economic terms. Below are presented some of the programs and initiatives, in some cases running for several decades, by the institutions of the Union.

European EURES Network

Launched in 1994, EURES is a free European cooperation network of employment services designed to facilitate the free movement of workers. The goal of the network is to enable European citizens to enjoy the same opportunities, despite language barriers, cultural differences, bureaucratic challenges, different labor laws as well as the not always complete recognition of educational certificates between different regions of Europe.

On the EURES portal, you can browse job vacancies and submit applications, get practical information on how labor markets work in member countries, and build your own CV.

Continue reading on [the EURES portal](#).

EUROPASS (European Qualification Network – EQF) Portal

Getting your skills known and recognized in all European countries is one of the most important challenges in building an integrated economic and social system, such as the European Union. Helping candidates „assess themselves” and find training opportunities that can help improve and increase their skills is an equally important goal. The Europass Portal aims to provide reliable information about studying and working in different European countries, providing links to useful European and national sources. The goal is to help European citizens find courses, jobs, guidance and assistance in validating and recognizing their qualifications. With Europass you can create a free profile of all your skills, qualifications and experience in one secure online location, recording your work experience, studies and training courses, language and digital skills, project information, volunteer experience and all your achievements.

Continue reading on [the EUROPASS portal](#).

Erasmus+ Program

For more than 35 years, the European Union has been funding the Erasmus program, which has enabled more than three million European students to do part of their studies at another higher education institution or organization in Europe.

Studying abroad is a key element of Erasmus+, and experience has shown that it has a positive effect on participants’ job prospects. It also offers the chance to improve one’s language skills, gain autonomy and self-confidence, and immerse oneself in another culture.

Erasmus+ offers these opportunities to everyone: students, staff, trainees, teachers, volunteers and others. Moreover, it is not limited to Europe and Europeans, but is open to people from all over the world.

Continue reading on [the ERASMUS+ portal](#).

Documentation

Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation.
COM(2020) 276 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Guided by the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Commission laid out its programme for a Social Europe right at the beginning of its mandate, with people at its heart. Since then, the Commission has prioritized work to help young people and is delivering on its promise. It is strengthening education and training, fostering youth employment, ensuring fair working conditions and improving access to social protection for all, because young people are the next generation and deserve all the opportunities to develop their full potential to shape the future of our continent.

Read the full text of the Communication [here](#).

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