

Template for Classifying Best Practices in Teaching EU Matters

1. Basic Information

Title/Name of the Best Practice: **Activate students with current news**

Country/Region of Origin: **Estonia**

Institution/Organization Implementing the Practice: **VET Schools**

Kind of activity: **Lesson warm-up session**

Target Audience: **VET school students**

Duration of the activity: **Approximately 20 minutes at the beginning of the lesson**

Accessibility: **Free**

Year of Implementation: **Continuously used by the teacher**

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2. Description of the practice

Objective

To engage students, spark interest in socio-political events related to Europe, and foster a sense of belonging to the European Union.

Description of activities

When a significant event related to European Union policy occurs, the lesson begins with students and the teacher watching a news report about it together.

Sometimes, newspaper articles from online sources (e.g., www.postimees.ee) are used, or students visit the library to read printed newspapers.

This is followed by a discussion where every student has the opportunity to express their opinion.

The teacher usually selects the news topic, but if a student finds something interesting, their suggestion may also be used. This encourages students to actively follow current events.

EU citizenship focus areas:

The news topics can cover all areas related to the European Union, such as EU institutions, civic initiatives, European values and principles, European identity and cultural diversity, EU law and policies, green development and sustainability, social inclusion and equal rights, democratic participation and elections in the EU, Estonia’s role in the EU, and the EU’s impact on Estonia.

Strong points	Weak points
Relevant and up-to-date	Discussions might be time-consuming
Requires no additional funding	
Encourages interest in European affairs	
Develops students' self-expression and critical thinking skills	
Teaches students to justify their opinions	

3.

Pedagogical details

Teaching methodology

Classroom or library reading followed by group discussion

Resources and tools used

Various online news portals: www.err.ee, www.etv.ee, www.jupiter.ee, www.postimees.ee

Printed newspapers at the school library

Innovative aspects

Actively engages students and fosters an interest in societal issues.

Strengthens the understanding that Estonia is part of the European Union.

Encourages open discussion, helping students grasp the principles of a democratic society.

Adaptability to VET settings

If digital tools and a good internet connection are available, this practice can be implemented in all vocational schools.

4. Outcomes and impact

Measured outcomes

There are no directly measurable results.

Student/teacher feedback

Students actively participate in lessons and feel confident expressing their opinions.

Evidence of success

As this method had proved its success, teacher uses it continuously

5. Inclusivity and accessibility

How inclusive is the practice?

This practice includes all students. Even those with different worldviews and cultural backgrounds can express their opinions, and no one is criticized.

The method is democratic and can be used with all kinds of students regardless their abilities.

Accessibility of resources

Current news related to events in EU and democracy are easily accessible. Some of the news portals are subscription-based and it might hinder the usage. Still, in Estonia the national public broadcaster ERR offers free access to news in various formats (text, video, audio).

6. Alignment with EU citizenship education goals

Relevance to EU citizenship topics

The goal of citizenship education is to equip students to navigate a changing world independently and within their immediate surroundings, guided by universal human and democratic values. Students should understand the causal relationships in societal development and recognize their role as responsible and environmentally conscious members of society.

This practice supports the achievement of these objectives through practical examples. By following current events, students gain a better understanding of how society functions. Specific events help illustrate topics related to the European Union, such as the EU as an institution, its significance and impact on our society, cultural diversity, civic responsibility, and democracy.

The opportunity to express personal opinions and engage with diverse perspectives enhances students' understanding of democracy and cultural differences.

Policy alignment

This practice aligns with the education policies of the European Union and Estonia, as it enables students to understand the functioning of the EU, their opportunities and responsibilities within it in the context of a democratic society, and to gain an overview of important international events and their broader impact on society.

7. Additional notes or recommendations

Challenges in implementation

In the polarized societies, where politicians, relatives and other adults set the example, it might be difficult to maintain mutually respectful environment inside classroom.

Students might have been exposed to the extreme ideas that does not respect the values of democracy, inclusion and human rights.

If the discussion gets too opinionated, it might be difficult to stop it and continue with other activities teacher has planned for the class.

Suggestions for improvement

To alleviate the challenges mentioned it could be safer to start with less polarized topics with the new group. Discuss about respecting others and understanding their viewpoints.

According to the topics related to the planned class, teacher could search for news stories that are related to the topic. These can be EU institutions and policies, democratic principles etc.

Additional resources

None