

Best Practices in Teaching EU Matters

(3 best practices per Country)

Indicatively max 2-3 pages per best practices

1. Basic Information

1. Title/Name of the Best Practice: Optionality Laboratories on Europe and Geopolitics
2. Country/Region of Origin: Italy, Lombardy, Brescia
3. Institution/Organization Implementing the Practice: Canossa Campus
4. Kind of activity: Part of formal curriculum (24 regular classes, held every Thursday for two hours each, from October until May)
5. Target Audience: students (16-19) of general schools and VET schools
6. Duration of the activity: 50-hours
7. Accessibility: Free for students enrolled in the school courses. The school's curriculum offers an optional program for students in the Third and Fourth Years, featuring a variety of subjects, including a Laboratory on Europe and Geopolitics. This allows each student to make an informed choice and fully seize the opportunity to pursue their interests, nurture their passions or explore new fields.
8. Year of Implementation: 2024 - 2025
9. Contact Information: Lucia Dusi / EU Project manager / lucia.dusi@canossacampus.it

2. Description of the Practice

- **Objective:**

The objective of the Laboratory on Europe and Geopolitics is to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of EU dimension and its impact on global economic, political and social dynamics. The workshop aims to foster critical analysis skills for interpreting current events, encourage thoughtful engagement with complex issues such as migration, resource control, space exploration, democracy, EU values and provide students with the tools to critically analyze and debate global challenges and their far-reaching implications. Through interactive learning methods and group discussions,

students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to engage with and understand the complexities of international relations and global themes.

- **Description of Activities:**

Provide a brief overview of what is the best practice about (methodology or activity). Describe how to implement the best practice (Step-by-step instructions): (max 2000 characters)

The Laboratori di opzionalità at Canossa Campus are an innovative educational initiative made possible by the organizational autonomy of Italian schools, as established by Law No. 59 of March 15, 1997 (the Bassanini Law) and regulated by Presidential Decree No. 275 of March 8, 1999 (Regulation of School Autonomy). These optional laboratories, integrated into the curriculum for Third and Fourth Grades, allow students to choose subjects that match their interests, passions or curiosity about new areas. Offered every Thursday morning from October to May, participation is mandatory, with grades contributing to overall evaluations. For the 2024-2025 academic year, eleven subjects are available, including interdisciplinary options like Geopolitics, developed under the [Jean Monnet Project \(European Values and Migration \(EUAMI\)\)](#)

The Geopolitics laboratory stems from meticulous planning conducted in the final months of the preceding academic year. During this phase, the school identifies a guiding theme - "EU Values and Migrations" - supported by EUAMI funding and teacher training. This groundwork enabled the creation of the Geopolitics laboratory, integrating European studies and cross-disciplinary themes into a rich learning experience.

A team of dedicated teachers collaborates to design engaging curricula, enriched through partnerships with external experts to ensure high-quality and diverse content. Once finalized, the laboratories become an integral part of the curriculum. Their consistent schedule fosters student commitment, while mandatory attendance and grade integration reinforce active participation.

- **EU Citizenship Focus Areas:**

(e.g., EU institutions, Civic participation, European values and Fundamental Principles, European Identity and Cultural Diversity, EU Law and Policies, Sustainable Development and Green EU, Social Inclusion and Equal Rights, Democratic Participation and Elections in the EU etc.)

This program focuses on fostering EU citizenship by aligning with key areas such as civic participation, inclusion and sustainability, while equipping students with knowledge of EU policies, values and international relations. It engages with critical topics including migration, human rights and democratic participation, exploring the implications of international elections on European and global policies. The program also delves into issues such as migrations and its causes. Through multidisciplinary, participatory, and

experiential learning approaches, it promotes awareness of sustainable development, encouraging students to critically analyze and contribute to global discussions.

Strong points	Weak points
The program is rich in interactive activities, including collaborations with experts outside the school	School and educators need significant time and resources to plan activities,
Practical application of theory through the analysis of real-world events	Maintaining laboratories year after year is challenging, requiring instructors to invest significant effort in designing and updating programs to keep content relevant and aligned with current events
Part of schools formal curriculum and the laboratory is part of the student evaluation	
Incorporates modern approaches like use of podcasts	
Participation in this laboratory counts as credit towards eligibility for international mobility programs (the school holds an Erasmus+ accreditation)	

3. Pedagogical Details (if these data are available)

- **Teaching Methodology:**

(e.g., *project-based learning, role-playing, simulations, etc.*)

The teaching methodology in the Geopolitics Laboratory leverages storytelling and expert involvement to create an immersive and experiential learning environment. Each session begins with a testimony or specific story to captivate students and ground their understanding in personal and tangible experiences. For instance, Anna Pozzi, a journalist and expert on Africa, presented students at Canossa Campus with an enriching opportunity to explore the complexities of the African continent. Her workshop challenged stereotypes, revealing the continent's rich cultural, geographical, and demographic diversity. Through her discussions, she addressed critical challenges such as conflicts, terrorism and climate change, highlighting how these factors drive migration. She also examined the exploitation of Congo's mineral wealth, drawing attention to how European consumer habits, such as purchasing electronics and batteries made with these resources, exacerbate the region's instability. Concluding with a call for reflection, she urged consideration of how European policies and consumption contribute to Africa's humanitarian crises. This example, like others, enables students to

delve into complex historical, social, and cultural contexts. The methodology not only humanizes abstract topics but also provides a practical framework to understand global dynamics, such as migration and coexistence, fostering profound engagement and comprehension through meaningful connections to real-life examples.

- **Resources and Tools Used:**

(e.g., digital tools, printed materials, case studies, etc.)

A variety of resources and tools are employed to enrich the learning process and ensure ongoing engagement. Podcasts are utilized to disseminate information and support continuous learning. Case studies and analyses of current events are incorporated to provide students with a deeper understanding of contemporary issues such as migration.

- **Innovative Aspects:**

(What makes this practice innovative or unique? New approach (methods/procedures), combining or adapting existing methods/procedures, using in a new learning setting, for new target groups)

This practice is innovative in its ability to transform a temporary initiative into a permanent educational tool. Developed under the framework of a Jean Monnet project, the laboratory exemplifies how a project can be effectively integrated into the school curriculum, creating lasting impact

- **Adaptability to VET Settings:**

(Is it feasible for VET schools in other regions to adopt this practice?)

It can be integrated into curricular hours by linking its content to subjects such as social studies, economics, or environmental science. Alternatively, it can be offered as an extracurricular activity, appealing to students with a specific interest in geopolitics and related fields. Establishing the program as a Geopolitics Club may require a thorough review of the existing curriculum to ensure alignment with the school's vocational objectives. Regardless of the chosen format, the program fosters essential skills like critical thinking, digital literacy, teamwork, and effective communication, making it a valuable addition to vocational education settings.

4. Outcomes and Impact (if these data are available)

- **Measured Outcomes:**

(What results have been achieved? Include data or qualitative feedback if available.)

As this is the first year of this laboratory, it is too soon to present definitive results or measurable outcomes. However, it is anticipated that the program will enhance participants' awareness of EU-related issues and global geopolitics, promoting a deeper understanding of European values, international relations, and sustainable development.

- **Student/Teacher Feedback:**

(Summarize feedback or testimonials from participants.)

Initial feedback from students has been positive, with many expressing enthusiasm for the topics covered and appreciation for the engaging format of the activities. However, this feedback may be biased, as the students who opted for this course likely had a pre-existing interest in geopolitics and related themes.

- **Evidence of Success:**

(Any external validation, awards, or recognition received?)

The program has not received any external validation/awards. But it has been created under the framework of a Jean Monnet project.

5. Inclusivity and Accessibility (if these data are available)

- **How Inclusive is the Practice?**

(Does it address diverse learning needs and cultural differences?)

The practice is highly inclusive, as it brings together students from diverse educational backgrounds, including those from lyceum and professional courses. By allowing students from different curricula and types of schools to freely choose and participate in specific laboratories, the program ensures that all learners, regardless of their academic or vocational focus, have equal access to the experience.

- **Accessibility of Resources:**

(Are the materials and tools readily available and easy to use?)

Not yet

6. Alignment with EU Citizenship Education Goals (if these data are available)

- **Relevance to EU Citizenship Topics:**

(Explain how this practice promotes understanding of EU-related themes.)

This practice actively promotes understanding of EU-related themes by focusing on critical topics such as European values, international relations, sustainable development, and global geopolitics. By engaging students in discussions and activities centered on global challenges, it helps foster a deeper appreciation of what it means to be an informed EU citizen. Participants are encouraged to critically analyze issues such as democracy, human rights and environmental policies, which are integral to the EU's foundational principles.

- **Policy Alignment:**

(Does the practice align with EU and national education policies?)

The practice aligns with both EU and national education policies by integrating key objectives of citizenship education, such as promoting active participation, critical thinking and awareness of global and European challenges.

7. Additional Notes or Recommendations

Launching the program as an after-school activity provides a flexible and low-risk way to introduce it to students. By piloting the initiative outside regular curricular hours, schools can gather valuable feedback and make adjustments before considering full integration into the curriculum.

- **Challenges in Implementation:**

Time constraints in VET programs often limit flexibility, making it difficult to incorporate the program into curricular hours without sacrificing other subjects. While extracurricular hours provide an alternative, they may result in lower participation rates. Resource needs, such as guest lectures, present another obstacle. Additionally, teacher expertise is crucial, yet many educators may require specialized training to effectively manage complex geopolitical topics. Curriculum compatibility is another concern; integrating the program as a Geopolitics Club or elective requires thorough review to ensure alignment with the school's educational goals and to avoid overlaps with core subjects.

- **Suggestions for Improvement:**

Partnering with local businesses, NGOs or academic institutions can significantly enhance the program's resources and impact. These partnerships can provide access to guest speakers, mentorship opportunities, and specialized resources that enrich the learning experience for students.

- **Additional Resources (if applicable):**

<https://canossacampus.it/area-campus-opzionalita/>

<https://canossacampus.it/euami/>