
Introduction

Why offer a programme of study centred on Europe?

Many will agree that learning about Europe is an important goal for all students. A programme of study on Europe for Transition Year students is particularly important to address the skills required and hopefully to be acquired during the year. It will help students develop an awareness and understanding of a wide range of issues relevant to all of us concerning European and global society and the opportunities, rights and responsibilities involved.

It is hoped that this programme will increase student's self-esteem, confidence and sense of achievement. It will facilitate students in sharing views, opinions and developing their own personal beliefs. It is hoped also that this programme will enable students to respect and value different cultures and attitudes. It is hoped that as a result of this study horizons will be broadened and more will be learned about other cultures.

What will my students learn from using the activities in this resource?

This programme has been developed with the assistance of practising teachers who understand the curriculum and demands of the classroom very well. While this resource is written for teachers, it is naturally a resource geared towards the learner. Therefore, the overall aim of this resource is to enable teachers to increase students' capacity to actively engage with the European dimension of their lives.

The overarching aims of the resource are:

- » To enable students to explore the idea of Europe and how it works in today's world and how it might evolve in the future;
- » To increase students understanding of the European dimension of life by accessing and presenting information;
- » To support students to actively engage as 'citizens of Europe' by promoting awareness about various European issues of concern or interest to themselves;
- » To promote interaction with other European students and offer guidelines for the development of links with other schools.

Throughout this resource there is an emphasis on the development of key skills. Those skills which are perhaps focused upon throughout the resource are:

- » Effective collaboration and working with others
- » Communication skills
- » Personal effectiveness
- » Critical thinking
- » Information processing
- » Learning to learn
- » Reflection and debate

It has been widely acknowledged during the writing process that each school is unique and has its own requirements and specific students needs. Accordingly, this resource has been developed to allow teachers to dip in and out and use the resource to teach any lesson according to the student learning needs at that time. A flexible approach to the materials and lesson structure is advised.

About this resource

THE RESOURCE IS STRUCTURED INTO FIVE KEY PARTS. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THESE FIVE MAIN SECTIONS IS OUTLINED BELOW.

Part I – Exploring Europe

This section offers a set of 13 lesson plans which enable teachers to introduce the idea of Europe. It offers a historical perspective, as well as a geographical and cultural one. The lessons also aim to raise awareness of some of the key institutions and structures of the European Union and highlights how dynamic modern Europe is and how it continues to change and evolve. The students will also be encouraged to consider possibilities of how Europe may develop in the future.

Part II – Investigating Europe

This section of the resource includes 10 themes for further investigation by students, either on their own or in pairs. Each theme offers a key research area. For each theme, the student and teacher can readily see what the research area is about, what tasks are involved and what resources and preparation they will need to carry out. This is particularly useful for the research topics that require the use of the Internet.

It is suggested that if teachers are offering this resource as key TY module then the students should be encouraged to undertake a minimum of three investigations and that this work be presented in the form of a portfolio (for assessment).

Part III – Investigating the European Union

This section of the resource provides an insight into the institutional process of Europe, the role the Irish play within that process as well as examining the functions of the European Parliament.

Part IV – Europe Alive

This section of the resource offers 5 templates for students to take on a more active approach to the idea of Europe by creating awareness amongst others about ideas relating to the changing face of Europe, our own sense of identity as perceived through national anthems, as well as other themes. Similar to what has been stated in the 'Investigating Europe' section above, teachers who are offering this resource as a key programme of study should encourage their students to present their work for assessment in the form of a report for their portfolio.

Part V – Linking with others

This section offers a set of guidelines for teachers interested in extending students learning through contact with other schools in Europe.

Part VI – Appendices

The final section of the resource includes a number of key documents referred to throughout the resource, such as; sample checklists, resource and publications list, sample assessment forms and key human rights documents.