



Case Study 1

Title	European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)
EU value	<p>Human Dignity</p> <p>The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights. Proclaimed in 2017, the EPSR serves as a guiding framework to ensure that social rights are upheld across EU Member States, emphasizing the intrinsic value and dignity of every individual.</p>
Related policy	<p>European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)</p> <p>The EPSR encompasses 20 key principles structured around three main categories:</p> <p><u>Equal Opportunities and Access to the Labour Market</u>: ensuring that everyone has the right to quality education, training, and lifelong learning.</p> <p><u>Fair Working Conditions</u>: promoting secure and adaptable employment, fair wages, and healthy work environments.</p> <p><u>Social Protection and Inclusion</u>: guaranteeing access to essential services, adequate income support, and protection against poverty and social exclusion</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission – Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)</p> <p>DG EMPL oversees the development and coordination of social policies. It is supported by the European Parliament, which engages in legislative processes to support the EPSR's objectives and the Council of the European Union, which works collaboratively with Member States to adopt measures aligning with the EPSR.</p>
Case description	
<p>The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) promotes human dignity by ensuring that all EU citizens have access to fair working conditions, social protection, and equal opportunities. Through the 2021 Action Plan, the EU committed to reducing poverty and social exclusion by at least 15 million people by 2030. Programs like the Youth Guarantee support young people's right to work or study, while improved access to unemployment benefits and healthcare ensures basic dignity for all. These initiatives reflect the EU's commitment to a fair, inclusive society where everyone can live with respect and purpose.</p>	
Education insights	<p>Educators can utilize the EPSR as a case study to explore the concept of human dignity in social policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facilitate conversations about the importance of social rights in promoting human dignity and how these rights impact daily life. ✓ Assign students to investigate how different EU countries implement the EPSR principles and the outcomes of these implementations. ✓ Simulate EU policy-making processes where students assume roles of various stakeholders to understand the complexities of upholding social rights.
Sources	<p>https://ec.europa.eu/info/european-pillar-social-rights_en https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en</p>



Case Study 2

Title	The Digital Services Act – Balancing Freedom and Accountability in the Digital Sphere
EU value	<p>Freedom</p> <p>This EU Value includes different forms of freedom, such as the freedom of expression and access to information, which are fundamental principles enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Digital Services Act (DSA) reflects the EU's commitment to upholding these freedoms in the digital environment by ensuring that online platforms are transparent, accountable, and do not suppress lawful speech. By protecting users from illegal content while preserving open discourse, the DSA supports a democratic digital space where fundamental rights are respected.</p>
Related policy	<p>Digital Services Act (Regulation (EU) 2022/2065)</p> <p>Adopted in October 2022, the DSA modernizes the EU's approach to digital governance. It creates a harmonized legal framework for online services operating in the EU, focusing on accountability, risk mitigation, and user empowerment. The DSA directly supports the EU's broader Digital Strategy and reinforces the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission – Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) and the European Parliament</p> <p>DG CONNECT led the drafting and negotiation of the DSA, while the European Parliament played a key role in shaping its provisions to align with EU values. Together, these institutions worked to ensure a regulatory framework that balances the protection of users with the responsibility of platforms.</p>
Case description	
<p>The DSA aims to create safer digital environments by imposing clear responsibilities on digital service providers, especially large online platforms. It introduces due diligence obligations related to illegal content, disinformation, and systemic risks, while explicitly safeguarding freedom of expression. The DSA prohibits blanket content takedowns and mandates transparency in content moderation decisions. It also grants users the right to challenge platform decisions and ensures independent audits of platform practices. As a cornerstone of the EU's digital transformation, the DSA strengthens democratic resilience by fostering trust and accountability online without curbing legitimate speech.</p>	
Education insights	<p>Educators can use this case to explore the intersection between free speech and content regulation in digital contexts. Possible classroom activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Debate on how the DSA balances the right to freedom of expression with the need to prevent harm online. ✓ Analysis of real-world scenarios where platforms apply or do not apply DSA rules, assessing the impact on both users and content providers. ✓ Role-play simulating a European Parliament hearing on digital governance, allowing students to defend different stakeholder perspectives.
Sources	<p>https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/learning-materials/digital-services-act-dsa-explained_en DSA Summary – EUR-Lex: Regulation (EU) 2022/2065</p>



Case Study 3

Title	2024 European Parliament Elections – Engaging a New Generation of Voters
EU value	<p>Democracy</p> <p>Democracy is a foundational value of the EU. It ensures that power is exercised through elected representatives and that all citizens have a say in EU decision-making. The 2024 European Parliament elections exemplify how the EU safeguards democratic legitimacy through regular, free, and fair elections. This value is especially crucial in a time of increasing political disillusionment and digital misinformation.</p>
Related policy	<p>Electoral Participation and Civic Engagement</p> <p>The EU actively promotes electoral participation through initiatives aimed at increasing voter turnout, especially among historically underrepresented groups like youth, mobile citizens, and minorities. The 2024 elections focused on reducing the “democratic deficit” by addressing low engagement levels and ensuring that citizens are well-informed about the electoral process.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Parliament – Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)</p> <p>The DG COMM of the European Parliament plays a central role in strengthening EU democracy by keeping citizens informed, engaged, and empowered. For the 2024 elections, DG COMM coordinated a Europe-wide campaign in all official languages, leveraging both traditional and digital media channels.</p>
Case description	
<p>The 2024 elections were marked by a large-scale communication initiative led by the European Parliament’s DG COMM, notably the “Use Your Vote” campaign, which placed special focus on young and first-time voters. The campaign used social media, influencers, interactive digital content, and partnerships with educational institutions to strengthen awareness of voting rights and the importance of democratic participation. It also addressed voter apathy and misinformation, key challenges for democratic resilience in Europe.</p>	
Education insights	<p>This case is ideal for exploring how EU institutions actively support democracy beyond voting logistics. Teachers can design activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Data analysis projects on youth voter turnout in Poland and across EU countries. ✓ Debates or essay assignments on how institutional communication can affect political engagement. ✓ Assessment, from the students' perspective, of the channels and content used by the parliament in the “Use your vote” campaign and creation of content for the future campaign
Sources	<p>https://elections.europa.eu/en/ https://elections.europa.eu/en/use-your-vote/</p>



Case Study 4

Title	European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)
EU value	<p>Democracy</p> <p>European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a pivotal instrument of participatory democracy within the European Union, directly aligning with the EU's foundational value of democracy. It empowers citizens to actively engage in the legislative process, reinforcing the principle that the EU's functioning is grounded in representative democracy.</p>
Related policy	<p>European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)</p> <p>Established under Article 11(4) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 24(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the ECI allows EU citizens to directly request the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence. To launch an initiative, organizers must form a committee comprising at least seven EU citizens residing in seven different member states. Once registered, the initiative must gather at least one million signatures from citizens across a minimum of seven member states within a 12-month period. If successful, the European Commission is obliged to examine the proposal and provide a formal response, detailing any intended actions or reasons for inaction.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission's Secretariat-General</p> <p>ECI is managed by the European Commission's Secretariat-General, specifically within Directorate A: Policy Priorities and Work Programme. This directorate oversees transparency, citizen engagement, and relations with other institutions. It ensures that the ECI process aligns with democratic principles and that citizen proposals are properly registered, processed, and responded to.</p>
Case description	
<p>Since its inception, the ECI has served as a conduit for citizens to influence EU policy directly. Notable initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Right2Water": Advocated for the recognition of water and sanitation as human rights, leading to increased dialogue on water policy within the EU. • "Ban Glyphosate": Called for the prohibition of glyphosate-based herbicides, prompting the Commission to reassess its stance on pesticide regulation. 	
Education insights	<p>Educators can leverage the ECI as a case study to foster civic engagement and understanding of EU democratic processes among students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guide students through the process of developing their own mock initiatives, from identifying issues to strategizing signature collection, to comprehend the complexities of participatory democracy. ✓ Facilitate classroom debates on the efficacy of tools like the ECI in enhancing democratic participation within the EU, encouraging critical thinking about citizen influence on legislation.
Sources	<p>ECI Portal ECI Toolkit for schools</p>



Case Study 5

Title	Equal Pay Transparency Directive – A Milestone for Gender Equality
EU value	<p>Equality</p> <p>Equality is a founding principle of the EU. It ensures that all citizens are equal before the law, and that no one is excluded or disadvantaged based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. Gender equality has played a particularly central role in the European integration process. As early as 1957, the Treaty of Rome introduced the principle of “equal pay for equal work”, establishing a legal commitment to address discrimination in the workplace. Since then, the EU has developed a comprehensive legal framework to combat gender inequality. The Equal Pay Transparency Directive (2023) represents a major advancement in implementing this value.</p>
Related policy	<p>EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025</p> <p>It sets out key actions to combat gender-based violence, close gender pay and pension gaps, promote women's leadership, and ensure gender mainstreaming in all EU policies. The Equal Pay Transparency Directive is a flagship initiative of this strategy, aiming to make workplaces fairer and more transparent across the EU.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission – Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)</p> <p>DG JUST is the European Commission's main body responsible for upholding EU values such as equality, justice, and the rule of law. It plays a critical role in designing, drafting, and enforcing legislation that ensures fair treatment and legal protection for all citizens. In the case of the Equal Pay Transparency Directive, DG JUST led the policy development, public consultation, and legal drafting process. It worked closely with stakeholders - governments, businesses, trade unions, and civil society - to create binding rules aimed at closing the gender pay gap, which remains a persistent form of economic inequality in Europe.</p>
Case description	
<p>In March 2023, the European Parliament and the Council adopted the Equal Pay Transparency Directive, which aims to close the gender pay gap across the EU by introducing binding measures that increase transparency around pay structures and salaries. Employers are now required to report on gender pay differences, inform job applicants about pay ranges, and provide explanations if unjustified pay gaps exceed 5%. The directive also strengthens the right of individuals to access information about pay levels and introduces penalties for non-compliance. This legislative achievement marks a concrete result of the EU's commitment to the value of equality, particularly in the workplace.</p>	
Education insights	<p>This case provides a powerful entry point for teaching the concept of legal and institutional measures for equality. Teachers can use it to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discuss the gender pay gap: How is it measured? Why does it persist? ✓ Investigate wage equality in local contexts ✓ Research on how the national government is implementing the directive in its national law
Sources	<p>https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en</p> <p>https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1635</p>



Case Study 6

Title	LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025
EU value	Equality
Related policy	<p>LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>On November 2020, the Commission presented the first-ever EU Strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) equality. The Strategy sets out a series of targeted actions around four main pillars, focused on: tackling discrimination; ensuring safety; building inclusive societies; and leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission – Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)</p> <p>The European Commission is the main EU institution responsible for the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025. The Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) leads its implementation. This includes developing policies, funding initiatives, monitoring progress, and coordinating with Member States and civil society to promote the rights and equality of LGBTIQ people across the EU.</p>
Case description	
<p>The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy has resulted in several significant initiatives that demonstrate its practical application. One key development is the proposal for EU-wide legal recognition of parenthood, ensuring that when a family is legally recognised in one Member State, that status is upheld across the entire EU. This move protects the rights of children in rainbow families and ensures that they are not subject to legal uncertainty or discrimination when crossing borders.</p> <p>Another crucial area of action has been the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive, with the aim of strengthening protections and support systems for victims of hate crimes, including those motivated by bias against sexual orientation or gender identity. This reflects the EU's broader objective of ensuring access to justice and safety for all, regardless of identity.</p> <p>In addition, the European Parliament's 2021 declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone has been a powerful political and symbolic step, especially in response to growing anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric and policies in some Member States. This declaration sends a clear message of solidarity and reaffirms the EU's commitment to ensuring that LGBTIQ people can live freely and openly across the Union, without fear of repression or exclusion.</p>	
Education insights	<p>Educators can leverage the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy to foster understanding and inclusivity within the classroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Incorporate discussions on LGBTIQ rights and the EU's role in promoting equality into subjects like civics, social studies, or ethics. ✓ Assign projects where students assess the impact of specific initiatives under the strategy, encouraging critical thinking and awareness of ongoing social issues.
Sources	<p>https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en</p> <p>https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/753174/EPRS_STU(2023)753174_EN.pdf</p> <p>https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/eu-lgbtiq-equality-strategy-first-year-implementation-evaluation/</p>



Case Study 7

Title	The European Disability Card – Advancing Human Dignity Across Borders
EU value	Freedom (of movement) + Equality
Related policy	<p>Union of Equality Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030</p> <p>This strategy outlines the EU's commitment to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, emphasizing the need for mutual recognition of disability status and the removal of cross-border barriers. The EDC is a key initiative under this strategy, aiming to facilitate free movement and equal access to service</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission – Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)</p> <p>DG EMPL oversees the development and implementation of policies related to employment, social affairs, and inclusion, including initiatives like the EDC that promote the rights and integration of persons with disabilities.</p>
Case description	
<p>Launched as a pilot project between 2016 and 2019, the EDC was implemented in eight EU Member States: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia. The card provides a standardized format for recognizing disability status, allowing holders to access various services, such as transportation, cultural events, and recreational activities, under the same conditions as nationals with disabilities in the host country. Building on the pilot's success, the European Commission proposed legislation in September 2023 to establish the EDC across all Member States, aiming for mutual recognition and broader implementation. This move seeks to enhance the mobility and autonomy of persons with disabilities, ensuring their rights are respected throughout the EU.</p>	
Education insights	<p>Educators can utilize this case study to discuss the importance of human dignity and the EU's role in promoting inclusivity. Classroom activities might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discussion on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities when traveling within the EU and how the EDC addresses these issues. ✓ Investigation on the implementation status of the EDC in different Member States and its impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. ✓ Simulation of a scenario where students advocate for the adoption of the EDC in a non-participating Member State, emphasizing the value of human dignity.
Sources	<p>EC – European Disability Card and European Parking Card for persons with disabilities European Parliament Think Tank – The European Disability Card and European Parking Card European Disability Forum – EU Disability Card</p>



Case Study 8

Title	Enforcing Rule of Law through Budget Conditionality
EU value	<p>Rule of Law</p> <p>The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice - its judgments have to be respected by all. The Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism, introduced in 2021, makes the EU budget a tool to defend those values.</p>
Related policy	<p>Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism</p> <p>This mechanism allows the European Commission to propose the suspension of EU funds when a Member State's rule of law deficiencies threaten the proper use of the EU budget. It ensures that EU taxpayer money is protected from misuse and that independent judiciary systems are in place to provide oversight.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission - Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG)</p> <p>DG BUDG, is the main authority responsible for the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism. It identifies breaches that risk the EU budget, assesses evidence, and proposes financial measures such as suspending or reducing funds. The Commission also monitors the implementation of corrective actions. The Council of the EU supports this process by approving measures via qualified majority vote, while the European Parliament ensures democratic oversight and advocates for the mechanism's enforcement.</p>
Case description	
<p>Hungary is the first EU country to face action under the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism. In April 2022, the European Commission launched the procedure due to concerns over corruption, weak judicial independence, and flawed public procurement posing risks to the EU budget. Despite proposed reforms, Hungary's response was deemed insufficient. As a result, in December 2022, the EU suspended €6.3 billion in funds. The case illustrates the mechanism's role in safeguarding EU finances and upholding democratic standards, with funds potentially restored if Hungary fully addresses the issues. Poland and Slovakia have also raised concerns due to rule of law challenges, but as of now, the mechanism has not been formally triggered against either country.</p>	
Education insights	<p>This case offers rich opportunities for critical classroom discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Should funding be conditional on democratic standards, or does that infringe national sovereignty? ✓ How does conditionality strengthen the EU's capacity as a value-based union, not just a market-based one?
Sources	<p>https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/rule-law-conditionality-regulation_en</p>



Case Study 9

Title	EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)
EU value	<p>Democracy + Human rights</p> <p>Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and the right to get access to justice.</p>
Related policy	<p>EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024)</p> <p>This Action Plan is the EU strategy designed to promote and protect human rights both globally and within the EU. The plan addresses systemic human rights violations, especially in authoritarian regimes, using sanctions and diplomatic efforts; it aims to protect civil society organizations and human rights defenders, ensuring they can operate safely.</p>
Responsible institution	<p>European Commission - DG for International Partnerships (DG INTPA); European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI); European External Action Service (EEAS)</p> <p>The DG INTPA manages development policies, funding, and international collaboration to support human rights; DROI helps shape EU human rights policies, monitors global issues, and ensures EU foreign policies align with human rights principles; EEAS as the EU's diplomatic body, is responsible for executing foreign policy, promoting human rights, democracy, peace, and security globally, and engaging in human rights dialogues with non-EU countries.</p>
Case description	
<p>Key elements of the plan include supporting human rights defenders, advocating for democracy, and combating violations like human trafficking. The EU works closely with third countries through diplomacy and development aid, while using legal mechanisms like infringement procedures to hold member states accountable for human rights breaches, as seen in the European Commission's actions against Hungary's anti-LGBTQ+ law. Internally, the plan ensures that the EU's policies align with human rights standards, with mechanisms like the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) providing funding and support to civil society. Externally, the EU incorporates human rights clauses into trade agreements to ensure that partner countries adhere to basic rights standards. Despite challenges, the action plan has led to tangible results, such as the EU's role in advocating for political prisoners. However, there are ongoing efforts to address internal and external human rights issues, with the EU continuously assessing its progress and adapting to new global challenges</p>	
Education insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assign students to research specific EU human rights policies or cases, such as the EU Strategy on Combatting Human Trafficking or support for refugees. Students can create presentations or posters to share with the class, encouraging them to explore how EU policies impact citizens and their rights in real life ✓ Ask students to design awareness campaigns focused on one of the EU's human rights priorities while discussing how these rights relate to their own lives
Sources	<p>https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0005</p>