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# THE EU VALUES CAFÉ

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Quiosq

The Netherlands



QUIOSQ  
HERITAGE PROJECTS

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## 1. Introduction

The EU Values Café is more than just a discussion. It is a living dialogue experience designed to spark meaningful conversations and human connection around the foundational principles of the European Union. Its core objective is to provide adults with a safe, inclusive and engaging space to explore, understand and personally relate to the EU's key values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Through a combination of informal dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and creative expression, participants are encouraged to reflect not only on what these values mean at a political or legal level, but how they shape everyday life in Europe and influence their own personal beliefs, decisions, and actions. By stepping into real-life scenarios, sharing diverse perspectives, and co-creating responses, people are empowered to see themselves as active custodians of these shared values and agents of positive change in their communities.

The core EU values (as per Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union) it is using are:

- Human dignity
- Freedom
- Democracy
- Equality
- Rule of law
- Human rights (including minority rights)

By the end of the activity, participants will:

- Be able to name and describe EU values.
- Understand how these values apply in everyday life.
- Reflect on current societal challenges from a values-based perspective.
- Engage in respectful debate and collaborative problem-solving.
- Express their views creatively.

There are several duration options:

- Standard: 90 minutes
- Mini version: 45–60 minutes (fewer tables, shorter discussion)
- Extended: 2 hours (with group projects or digital media creation)

## 2. Activity Implementation

### 2.1 Activity Objectives

The EU Values Café is designed to engage adults in an open, inclusive, and thought-provoking exploration of the core values of the European Union. Through informal discussions, scenario-based learning, and creative expression, the activity aims to:

- Foster awareness and understanding of the six foundational EU values — human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights — by connecting them to real-life issues and everyday experiences.
- Promote critical thinking and empathy by encouraging participants to reflect on diverse perspectives, question assumptions, and evaluate moral and civic dilemmas through the lens of shared European principles.
- Empower people to see themselves as active citizens who not only benefit from these values but also have a role in upholding and advocating for them in their communities, both online and offline.
- Strengthen dialogue and communication skills by providing a safe and informal environment for structured conversations, where respectful disagreement is welcomed and listening is as important as speaking.
- Encourage creative civic engagement, allowing participants to use artistic and expressive tools (e.g., posters, skits, or social media formats) to make values-based arguments and share their messages with peers in innovative ways.
- Inspire ongoing reflection and action, by helping participants identify how EU values intersect with their daily lives, and motivating them to take small, meaningful steps toward inclusion, tolerance, and democratic participation.
- Ultimately, the activity seeks to make the abstract concept of “EU values” tangible, relevant, and personally significant — turning them from distant ideals into guiding principles for young people’s everyday choices and futures.

### 2.2 Activity Description and Methodology

The activity consists of the following elements:

#### 1. Welcome and introduction (10 minutes)

- Icebreaker: “If you were a value, which would you be and why?”
- Brief intro to the EU values (can use a short video or visual handout)
- Explain the Café format and rotating table system

## 2. Café discussion rounds (45–60 minutes total)

Each table hosts 1–2 scenario discussions. Participants rotate tables every 15–20 minutes. A table host (peer or facilitator) guides the conversation.

Example scenario cards:

**Freedom table:** "A city wants to ban peaceful protests in the main square due to traffic complaints. Is this reasonable? What rights are involved?"

**Equality table:** "A job posting says 'only EU citizens may apply'. Is this fair? Who might be excluded?"

**Human dignity table:** "A local shop refuses service to a homeless person. What value is being challenged?"

**Democracy table:** "Voter turnout among young people is only 35%. Should voting be mandatory?"

**Rule of law table:** "A mayor builds a project without permits because it's 'for the people'. What's the risk?"

**Human rights table:** "A school wants to ban the wearing of all religious symbols. Is this about fairness or control?"

Each table has a flipchart where participants write down:

- The value at stake
- Key thoughts or solutions
- A personal connection or example

## 3. Creative expression (20 minutes)

Participants regroup (same or new teams) and create a visual or performance-based response:

- Poster, comic strip, rap, skit, or TikTok-style video pitch
- Must highlight how one EU value is important today
- They then present their creation to the full group in 2–3 minutes.

## 4. Wrap-up and reflection (10–15 minutes)

- Ask: "What value did you connect with most? Why?"
- Group voting: Give each participant 3 stickers to vote on their favorite value posters.
- Optional: Distribute "My EU Values Passport" where they write one value and a personal pledge on how they will promote it.

## 2.3 Tools and Resources

At least the following is required for this activity:

Space and setup:

- Several small tables or discussion areas
- Name cards or signs showing each EU value
- Comfortable, café-like ambiance: EU-themed decorations, snacks, background music

Materials:

- Printed scenario cards (2–3 per value)
- Sticky notes, flipchart paper, colored markers
- Voting dots or stickers
- “Values Passport” handouts (see below)
- Timer or bell

## 2.4 Suggested integrations

Module Fit:

The EU Values Café works best as part of a civic education, participation, or EU awareness toolkit. It serves as a dynamic, dialogue-based activity within a broader learning journey that aims to equip adults with knowledge, values, and skills for active European citizenship.

This activity is particularly well suited to complement the following toolkit modules:

- Introduction to the European Union: use the Café after participants learn about EU institutions, treaties, and basic concepts. It deepens understanding by translating abstract values into real-life contexts.
- Democratic participation and youth engagement: the activity serves as a springboard into more action-oriented modules, such as planning civic projects, joining youth councils, or organizing community initiatives.
- Intercultural dialogue and inclusion: it links naturally with activities that explore identity, diversity, and solidarity. Values like human dignity, equality, and human rights become the foundation for discussing social justice, migration, or discrimination.
- Media literacy and critical thinking: the scenarios can be tied to media narratives, fake news, and how EU values are portrayed or threatened in the public discourse. It could be followed by a workshop on spotting value-based bias in the media.

## Suggested activity pairings

To use the EU Values Café to its fullest potential, combine it with the following complementary activities:

### Before the Café

- EU values quiz or timeline game. Introduce EU values through interactive quizzes or historical events that led to their inclusion in treaties.
- Who am I? identity mapping exercise. Participants reflect on their own values and identities, preparing them to engage empathetically in value-based discussions.

### After the Café

- Mini campaign lab. Teams design a mini campaign (poster, video, slogan) to raise awareness of a chosen EU value in their local context.
- Living library or guest talks. Invite real-life “value defenders” (activists, journalists, volunteers) to speak about how they live or protect EU values.
- Debate battle. Participants take on opposing sides of a value-based issue and engage in a structured debate (e.g., “Should freedom of expression have limits?”).
- EU hackathon for social change. In small teams, participants design a local action plan or initiative inspired by one of the values they explored.

## 3. Debriefing and Feedback

Some final thought about how to enhance the activity:

- Give it a digital twist: use digital whiteboards like Miro or Jamboard for remote groups
- Turn creative outputs into Instagram reels or short podcasts
- Offer small prizes for most creative response, best teamwork, or best argument
- Use a points-based system to “unlock” facts about the EU
- Organize a closing circle: One Word (3 minutes). Go-around question: “In one word or phrase, how are you leaving this activity today?”. This helps close the session with collective energy and shared insight.
- Follow up by hosting a debate night: “Which EU value is most under threat today?”, creating a values mural with messages from the café or setting up a “Living Library” with guests who’ve defended EU values in real life

When using the EU Values Café in a multi-day training, position it early to mid-program. It builds group cohesion and sets a reflective tone, which deepens engagement in later skill-building or action-focused modules.

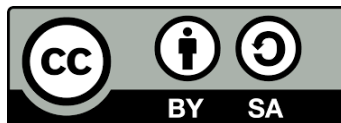
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