

**mucf**

Swedish Agency for  
Youth and Civil Society

# The European Barometer



# The European Barometer

In this exercise, participants take a position on a number of “pointed” statements about their own relationship with the EU, about why the EU exists, and about what the EU does and what it should do. The purpose of the exercise is to identify different European challenges and to highlight different perspectives with respect to these issues.

The exercise is designed so that the statements are read to the participants. They then work in silence to take a position on the statement by positioning themselves in the room according to a barometer that gradually extends from “I completely agree” to “I don’t agree at all”. As the exercise progresses, the discussion leader compiles opinions, reflections and question marks.

The advantage of the exercise is that everyone can take part and say what they think. The exercise also shows that several different perspectives can be held on an issue, and that nothing is right or wrong.

## Who for?

The exercise is suitable for collaboration between 5–40 participants of upper secondary school age – in the classroom, at the recreation centre, or the youth centre.

## Time required

Approximately 15-40 minutes, depending on how many statements are discussed and how much discussion is allowed.



## This is how the exercise works

### Preparations

- Print the set of cards with statements (below) and cut them out.
- Use all of the statements or mix them together and allow the element of chance to determine which statements will be chosen. Or compile a selection of the statements that suits your particular group or your context. Add your own statements if you wish!
- Make sure that there is enough space in the room for participants to move around.
- Mark the centre of the location/room, using masking tape, for example. This forms the centre of the barometer.
- Set up a sign/sheet of paper at one end of the barometer saying “I totally agree”, and one at the other end saying “I don’t agree at all”.
- Have a whiteboard or flipchart available (or attach some sheets of paper onto the wall) if you want to write down some of the results of the discussions.

### Instruction to the participants

- After you have read out a statement, the participants should position themselves in the room along the barometer. They must not be allowed to be exactly in the centre, but they must decide which side to take. You will then ask each participant to give a justification for his/her position on the barometer. During this part of the exercise, the participants are allowed to change places on the barometer if they change their mind after hearing the other participants giving a justification for their opinion.

### Implementation

- **Read out one statement at a time.** When the participants have taken a position along the barometer, ask them why they are standing where they are. Start at one end of the barometer, then take the other end, and finally ask the participants close to the centre.
- **Promote discussion.** Allow the participants to comment on each other’s positions. Compile the comments from everyone. If a statement is ambiguous, allow each participant to interpret the question the way the participant wants, and then explain why he/she chose to stand where he/she is standing.
- **Change places.** After they have listened to the arguments of the other participants, ask whether any of the participants wants to change places. Allow the participants who want to change places to give a justification for why they want to change places.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** Ask the participants to give examples, or ask them to develop their reasoning. Take notes on a whiteboard or flipchart if you wish.
- **Summarise.** Summarise the comments and arguments from the participants after each statement and discussion.

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– Statement about the EU



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Freedom of movement makes it possible to work or study in another EU country on equal terms as its own citizens. **I think that's great!**

**Follow-up question** – Do you want to make use of freedom of movement? Why/why not? So what would you like to do?

Young people have been able to visit Europe by taking part in student and youth exchanges, internships, projects and volunteering through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the EU's programme for education and youth. **I would like to go somewhere as a volunteer in the European Solidarity Corps!**

**Follow-up question** – Why/why not? So what would you like to do?

**I believe that by going to another country and getting to know people from other countries you will develop as a person.**

**Follow-up question** – What do you learn and how do you develop by going to another country?

Over the past year, 21 per cent of Sweden's young people have participated in a voluntary activity (the Eurobarometer) 478, 2019). 34 per cent of Europe's young people have been volunteers. **I believe that you learn more from being a volunteer than from going to school!**

**Follow-up question** – Can you make a difference to society as a volunteer? Why do you think that only one in five young people in Sweden has been a volunteer?

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The EU received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for its work for peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights. The EU decided that the prize money of 930,000 euros should go to children who lack the opportunity to grow up in peace. **I think the EU deserved to get the Nobel Peace Prize!**

**Follow up question?** – Why do you think the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize - how has the EU worked to achieve peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights?

The EU's motto "united in diversity" highlights the cooperation between the EU countries. Advocates of the motto say that the countries cooperate but at the same time maintain their different cultures and remain united despite their differences. Critics claim that the collaboration will lead to the disappearance of the diversity of cultures, languages and traditions. **I think the same as the critics!**

**Follow-up question** – Or not? What advantages do you see in the EU's motto?

The EU has a common internal market with free competition, which has led to lower prices and a wider range on offer to consumers. With a single internal market, the EU is the third largest economy in terms of world trade after the United States and China. **I think that the most important thing about European cooperation is that Europe grows and becomes strong economically!**

**Follow-up question** – Or not? What are the other important foundations for Europe?

EU cooperation has allowed EU member states to decide to transfer a certain amount of political power in certain areas to the EU in order to resolve common problems and to be able to take more forceful joint action. **I think it's wrong for countries to hand over some of their power to the EU!**

**Follow-up question** – In which issues can it be acceptable for countries to hand over power to the EU? What problems do you think need to be resolved at international, national and local level and why? Can the EU become more democratic? If so, how?

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Almost all decisions in the EU are taken jointly by the Council of Ministers, in which all Member States are represented, and by the European Parliament, which is elected by EU citizens. **This is democracy in the true sense of the word!**

**Follow-up question** – Do you intend to vote in the next European parliamentary elections (2024)? Why/why not?

Lobbying is said to take place on a large scale in the EU. Lobbying is an attempt by companies, organisations, municipalities and other organisations to influence politicians in a particular direction so that the decisions taken in the EU will be of benefit to them. **I think lobbying is undemocratic!**

**Follow-up question** – is it important that associations working for children's rights, for example, try to influence EU politicians with their issues through lobbying? If you consider this to also be a form of lobbying, do you want to remain in the same place as before?

The EU has a so-called transparency register in which organisations can apply to register. Commission staff, for example, are not allowed to have meetings with organisations on the formulation of EU policies unless they are registered in the register. **This is a good way to ensure transparency and democracy!**

**Follow-up question** – Do you think it is possible to check whether the rules are being followed?

The EU has decided to ban single-use plastic products such as plastic plates, straws, and plastic cutlery. **That is wrong, I don't think that the EU should interfere in the environmental legislation of the individual Member States!**

**Follow-up question** – Do you think it would have any significant impact on the environment if, for example, it was only Sweden that banned single-use plastic products?

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The EU has set common targets for emissions and seeks a common line in UN climate conferences.

**It is impossible for Sweden to tackle climate change without the EU!**

**Follow-up question** – Should there be different targets for different countries, such as where the countries that emit more should also reduce more?

It is the Member States themselves that decide on their foreign policy, and not the EU. At the same time, 61 per cent of people in Sweden think that the EU should prioritise protecting human rights in the world.

**I think the EU should be tougher on countries that don't respect human rights!**

**Follow-up question** – in which issues should the EU be a strong global stakeholder? And what should the EU do to achieve this?

**It is not possible to influence the EU!**

**Follow-up question** – If you believe it is possible to influence the EU, what should you do to achieve this?

**It is easy to use the internet and social media to organise and collaborate with young people in other countries who are passionate about the same issues.**

**Follow-up question** – How can you collaborate, for example, with others on an important issue? Have you ever done that?

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**I know what rights I have as a European citizen!**

**Follow-up question** – How should you spread such knowledge?

The EU regulates how companies and organisations are allowed to handle your personal data through the data protection regulation, GDPR. Non-compliance with the data protection regulation can result in a fine of up to 20 million euros! **I think it is good that the EU has created the protection of personal data!**

**Follow-up question** – Why do you think the EU takes steps to protect personal data? Isn't it enough for the Swedish government to do it?