
European Union (Aims and Values)

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Abstract

European Union (Aims and Values) combines theoretical knowledge, practical examples, interactive learning, and assessments to give learners a deep understanding of EU governance, environmental policy, and participatory democracy. The module is built on a Literature Review conducted through Web of Science, Scopus, and Science Direct, using queries related to "European Union- Member" and "Participation," as well as "European Union" and "Aims/Values." This search was aimed at exploring the EU's approach to engaging stakeholders in policymaking, emphasizing the importance of such participation for democracy and sustainability. We selected articles and review articles in English, with no time restriction, to ensure a comprehensive and relevant content base for the course.

Keywords: European Union; Participation; Aims/Values; Online activities, Offline Activities

1. INTRODUCTION –

The EU member states have employed varying approaches, with the extent of involvement of local actors differing significantly (Rauschmayer, van den Hove, Koetz, 2009; Blondet et.al., 2017). UE member states are granted a certain level of autonomy in devising the implementation and management process for protected sites as long as they align with the policy's overarching objectives. Member states are granted considerable leeway in how they achieve the objectives of the European Habitats Directive, allowing for participatory methods to be employed to implement Natura 2000.

Despite the increased involvement of stakeholders in the development of management concepts and strategies, the selection of network sites in all participating countries has been heavily influenced by conservation science (Bouwma, van Apeldoorn, Kamphorst, 2010). The implementation of more participatory environmental governance in the Habitats Directive is a reflection of the larger changes in environmental governance in Europe that have been brought about by EU policies (Sotirov, Lovric, Winkel, 2015).

According to the studies (Blondet et.al., 2017; Dimitrakopoulos et.al., 2010), participation in environmental governance in general and Natura 2000 implementation, in particular, is a good way to make a policy more effective and legitimate in the eyes of the local population.

2. CONTEXT REVIEW

2.1. PARTICIPATION AND THE GOVERNANCE OF NATURE CONSERVATION

According to Abram and Cowell (2004) suggest that participatory methodologies are crucial for restoring confidence in the State, and can lead to better decision-making in conservation and development initiatives. One reason for this is that local involvement allows for customized and inclusive local strategies for complex environmental issues, which are not available in centralized, remote organizations.

Stakeholders' and residents' participation, due to their significant local knowledge and experience, can enhance a policy's quality and efficacy. In addition, it is expected that decisions reached through participatory procedures will possess greater legitimacy and acceptance, thereby facilitating their implementation (Koontz & Thomas, 2006). Consistent engagement in decision-making will enhance trust between the public and government officials. This will optimize decision-making in the future (Blondet et.al., 2017).

It should be noted that it does not necessarily relate to the legitimacy and efficacy of a policy. According to Dietz and Stern (2008), participatory methods could overemphasize particular subjects or concerns. The efficiency of policy implementation may not be enhanced by participation, especially in situations with frequent disagreements. It's possible for polarized environmental issues to use it as a symbolic appeasement tactic, which may be "misused" and it can worsen confrontations (Winkel & Sotirov, 2011).

This engagement needs to be taken into account concerning local practices and views of participation as well as within a specific institutional, social, and historical context and past (Blondet et.al., 2017).

2.2. PARTICIPATION IN THE EU

In recent years, the EU has taken steps to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes. For example, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) allows citizens to propose legislation and has been used successfully to bring attention to issues such as the banning of glyphosate and the protection of bees. The EU also conducts public consultations on policy proposals and invites stakeholders to provide input. Citizen participation is still seen as a secondary consideration to ensuring effective and stable governance. The EU's response to the Eurozone crisis is an example of this, as market stability and the interests of financial institutions were given greater weight than the concerns of citizens (Monaghan, 2012).

Overall, while there have been efforts to increase citizen participation in EU decision-making, it remains a contentious issue and there is a need for further action to balance effectiveness, stability, and democratic legitimacy. Moreover, the prevailing method for taking part in the decision-making process does not typically involve the active engagement of individual citizens. Instead, a preference is given to interest groups or

"organized civil society" that focus on functional representation, which is more akin to an associative model of democracy, rather than a participatory model (Monaghan, 2012; Marquand, 2011).

Some argue that simply making institutions and decisions more democratic is not enough to establish a democratic EU. They believe that a European public sphere and a common identity, or demos, are necessary to legitimize EU actions. However, there is little proof that European citizens view their relationships with each other or with EU institutions in a way that would support the formation of demos as a viable strategy. For this to work, there would need to be a sense of a European political community, even in its early stages, where the majority's decisions are accepted by the minority due to a shared sense of identity, allowing for collective self-determination and justification for EU actions.

Participatory democracy has the potential to solve these problems by empowering citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process, which in turn can lead to greater political efficacy, awareness of collective problems, and identification of solutions. However, the success of participatory democracy is ultimately dependent on the willingness of citizens to engage in the process, as well as the willingness of the EU institutions to incorporate citizen input into their decision-making process. Without active participation from both parties, participatory democracy cannot effectively address the legitimacy problem of the EU (Monaghan, 2012).

2.3. EU POLICY DOCUMENTS

The three advocacy groups for movements prioritize certain issues over others while aligning with the predominantly neo-liberal policy vocabulary of European institutions. The EU's organized civil society could benefit from institutionalized social movements, leading to a positive impact.

The neo-liberal values of the European institutions are criticized in particular, and a more interventionist role for the state is advocated in two crucial areas: to address what they see as discrimination against outlying areas and racial minorities, and to strengthen environmental regulations, in contrast to what they see as a purely market-oriented approach taken by the Commission. The data suggests that despite some deviations, there are consistent features that support the development of a model for civil society involvement in the EU. The main emphasis on participation in this model is centered around providing information and serving in a consultative capacity (Ruzza, 2007).

The EU's civil society model emphasizes its connection between different levels of government and interaction with non-state actors through horizontal governance structures. Civil society can be utilized by diverse actors to achieve various objectives. These can be classified into four categories (Pridham, 2007):

That is, civil society can be utilized by EU institutions:

- To improve output legitimacy;
- To address the globalization-driven relocation of ambits of power;
- To construct the 'European citizen';
- To construct a European public sphere;

2.4. RESPONDING TO A GLOBALIZATION-DRIVEN RELOCATION OF POWER

The creation of the EU structure acknowledges the necessity of conducting policy beyond the state. This is observable in all the policy areas scrutinized. The Europeanization of environmental policy was prompted by apprehensions regarding trans boundary pollution, preventing a competitive decline in environmental standards, and the necessity to disseminate and synchronize environmental policy cross-nationally and across policy domains, including agriculture, energy, and tourism. EU policy, already transcending state boundaries, is progressively being executed through agreements among non-state entities (Ruzza, 2007).

2.5. CONSTRUCTING THE 'EUROPEAN CITIZEN'

The presence of institutional pressure is evident in the push for European democratization that goes beyond the region's political framework and recognizes civil society as a distinct factor in promoting democracy in everyday existence. In this regard, the concept of 'social accountability' is relevant. By utilizing the financial resources and political power of EU institutions, civil society can participate in a process of societal constitutionalism to democratize public life. The social scientific perspective suggests that developing a strong community through promoting altruism, cooperation, and respect for democratic standards leads to excellent governance and increased social capital (Ruzza, 2007).

2.6. CREATING A PUBLIC SPHERE

The focus on democratization surpasses member states. The Commission endorses the role of development NGOs in project management, particularly their expertise in monitoring and evaluating EU-backed projects, and appreciates their role in promoting democracy in Europe and the developing world. The Commission also funds development NGOs. The desire for a more comprehensive democratizing function indicates a constitutionalizing aim and a persistent concern for fundamental rights realization. In our interviews, we discovered that the second dynamic was consistently expressed in strategic pro-European terms. Stronger European identities weren't always the result of the first dynamic (Ruzza, 2007).

2.7. EXPLAINING POLITICAL CONDITIONALITY: A THREE-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH

A framework in three dimensions relies on three key connections: conditionality and democratization, conditionality and enlargement, and conditionality and the EU itself. These links fluctuate when evaluating the EU's ability to encourage democratization from the outside. Ongoing democratization and enlargement processes, along with the EU's internal changes, which may or may not be driven by enlargement concerns, can alter all three (Pridham, 2007):

- Emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are driven to join Europe and its successful liberal democracies, resulting in a mutually reinforcing process with conditionality and post-communist democracy. They are willing to accept the extensive conditions of the European Union to achieve their objective, albeit under duress.

Nevertheless, the correspondence between EU conditionality and democratization is not absolute, as the timeline and scope limitations imposed on EU conditionality underscore their differences. The limitation in chronology pertains to the political milieu of the European Union during the 1990s, which disregarded primary democratization, constitutional framing, and state-related concerns, and upheld certain types of liberal democracy.

- The dynamic relationship between conditionality and expansion lies in the fact that the former is greatly reliant on the probability and impetus of an accession. If absent, the motivation to comply with conditions would be considerably lower. Conditionality has primarily resulted from external incentives, even though a few political leaders in aspiring nations are intrinsically motivated to employ European instruments to enhance their fledgling democratic norms and procedures.

The success of enlargement is heavily influenced by changes in prospects, both pre-negotiation and during negotiations, as well as the probability of success increases. The EU influences these nations during the enlargement process, but it always depends on the trade-off between compliance and the possibility of membership in terms of conditionality.

- The correlation between conditionality and the EU holds crucial importance concerning institutional responsibility for matters related to enlargement. As demonstrated by the discussion on "widening" versus "deepening," the expansion and conditionality of the EU are reliant on the system and integration process as a whole.
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The 1990s saw significant changes in conditionality ambitions, as a result of the expanding integration agenda from the 1980s and the altered international context brought about by the fall of communism, which the EU (then the EC) realized it had to address. The Commission faced challenges in their enlargement responsibility due to institutional diffusion in the EU system, involving the European Council, European Parliament, and member states.

2.8. MAIN AND VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Prioritization is a key part of this strategy (Kislitsyna et.al., 2022):

1. Ensuring fair competition, while enhancing services, market access, and investments with third-party countries to tap into growth markets.
2. The EU needs to plan for the future demand for air travel that will soon exceed the capacity of our skies and airports.
3. By adopting a mindset based on risk and performance, we can uphold EU safety and security standards.

To realize the EU's priorities, specific steps should be taken by the member states of our integration association in the following areas: (a) Promoting social progress and creating aviation jobs of high caliber, (b) Protection of passenger rights, (c) Introducing a new era of innovation and digital technologies, and (d) Moving forward with a sustainable Energy Union and proactive climate change policies.

The European Commission has the authority to conduct the following measures:

1. Suggestion for the EU Council to approve the establishment of all-inclusive air transport accords with China, ASEAN, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Mexico, and Armenia at the EU level.
2. Backing the policy of the EU to establish additional bilateral flight safety agreements with significant aviation manufacturers like Japan and China.
3. Proposing the initiation of a new aviation dialogue with significant partners such as India.
4. Considering measures to eliminate unfair practices of third countries and exploiters while negotiating effective fair competition provisions within comprehensive EU air transport agreements.
5. A proposal has been made to issue guidelines on the implementation of Regulation 1008/2008 regarding EU airline ownership and control provisions to offer more legal clarity to investors and airlines.

The perceived values of the EU measured for each of the values: "Democracy", "Liberty", "Fairness", "Rule of law (e.g., respect for independence of the judiciary, the integrity and impartiality of the electoral system)", "Respect for national authority", and "Respect for tradition" (Grosfeld, Scheepers, Cuyvers, 2022).

2.9. EU'S HIGH-LEVEL AIMS

The European Commission 2020 suggests that by adhering to the HLEG's Ethical Guidelines and Assessment List, practitioners can align their systems with European values. The AI Act's regulatory provisions will enhance its guidance by identifying the risk levels posed by different AI technologies and imposing appropriate restrictions on each level once enacted. In addition to setting standards, the EU utilizes mechanisms to steer and compensate both public and private entities. The EU provides support for AI research and development in the private sector through financing instruments such as Invest-EU, the Digital Europe program, the European Financing Fund, and Horizon Europe. A portion of this money is allocated to back companies that are developing AI technologies for oncology medical imaging (European Commission, 2020).

Efforts have been made by the EU to support and coordinate the public sector goals of Member States. As part of its Coordinated Plan, the Commission encourages the development and distribution of national AI policies, as well as investment and implementation plans. Biannual conferences are essential to coordinate efforts among Member States, establish participative and monitoring organizations, and develop uniform regulatory standards that prevent market fragmentation. The EU coordinates activities among Member States to promote cooperation, exchange best practices, and maximize investment benefits. The aim of the HLEG's Policy and Investment Recommendations is to guide Member States on where to focus their efforts. The European AI Alliance and AI Watch have already accomplished significant advancements in gathering feedback from stakeholders and tracking the progress of AI. The European AI Act is proposing the creation of a European AI Board consisting of the national competent authorities, the European Data Protection Supervisor, and the European Commission to ensure consistent implementation across the EU (Roberts et.al., 2023).

2.10. IMPORTANCE OF CORE VALUES OF ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EUROPEAN CORPORATE

Market and regulatory organizations in Europe need to acknowledge that a significantly larger group of individuals was responsible for the financial scandals, rather than solely blaming a few large corporations with flawed financial reporting and audit procedures. The financial crashes in Europe (and the US) prompted apprehensions regarding corporate governance, the function of the audit committee, and the involvement of board members in the stock market. Corporate governance and the audit committee should receive more emphasis as an effective oversight instruments in the capital market economy.

Due to financial innovation prioritizing profit over ethics through high-risk strategies, the incorporation of ethical considerations is imperative for corporate governance. Corporate codes of conduct can serve as an effective instrument to convey the "tone at the top" and establish moral principles that exceed fundamental legal conformity. A global economic plan must prioritize business ethics. It is imperative to strongly emphasize ethical codes such as integrity, honesty, objectivity, mutual respect, fairness, professional competence, due care, and confidentiality. Likewise, the European Commission and the regulatory agencies in European nations ought to enforce more explicit protocols regarding 'tone at the top' or efficient 'control environment,' answerability measures for management, and shareholder democracy, especially the revelation of data on shareholders' entitlements. Corporate governance guidelines for unlisted enterprises may require encouragement (Soltani & Maupetit, 2013).

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Literature Review incorporated in this European Union (Aims and Values) derived from the Web of Science Scopus, and Science Direct database. A search by topics for the Literature Review was conducted based on the criteria established using the query "European Union- Member" AND "Participation", "European Union" AND "Aims/Values". The aim was to identify investigations surrounding the fields of the participants to the aims and core values of the European Union. Articles (including early access) and review articles in the English language with no time restriction were additional filters adopted in the search.

	Online Activity 1: Introduction to European Values and Norms
Learning objectives and outcomes	<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the Core European Values: Participants will gain an understanding of the fundamental values that underpin the European Union and its member states. • Explore the Diversity of European Norms: Participants will explore the diversity of cultural norms within the European context and appreciate the richness of traditions and perspectives.

	Online Activity 1: Introduction to European Values and Norms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the Importance of Shared Values: Participants will analyze how shared values contribute to the cohesion and cooperation among European nations. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of the key values upheld by the European Union. Appreciation for the cultural diversity and norms within Europe. Critical thinking about the role of shared values in fostering unity. <p>After the completion of the online activity, learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate Core European Values: Express a clear understanding of the core values that define the European Union and recognize their significance in the European context. Identify Cultural Diversity: Identify and appreciate the diverse cultural norms and traditions present across different European nations, fostering a sense of cultural awareness. Evaluate the Role of Shared Values: Evaluate how shared values contribute to the overall cohesion, collaboration, and cooperation among European countries, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the importance of common values. Apply Critical Thinking: Apply critical thinking skills to analyze and discuss the implications of European values and norms in the broader context of international relations and global cooperation.
Duration:	1 hour
Number of participants:	The participants as one group
Description: (steps for participants)	<p>1.Video Presentation (10 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants start by watching the provided video: European Parliament Video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fh4uX_Grxrg&ab_channel=EuropeanParliament) Participants will be encouraged to be active viewers by asking them to note down key points, questions, or any aspects that resonate with them. <p>2. Reflective Discussion (10 minutes):</p> <p>After watching the video, we will facilitate a reflective discussion. Participants can share their thoughts on the presented values, norms, and cultural diversity within the European Union.</p> <p>We will use open-ended questions to stimulate conversation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Which European values stood out to you?" "How does cultural diversity contribute to a unified European identity?" <p>3. Online Quiz: "Values and Norms Challenge" (15 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will launch an interactive online quiz related to the content of the video and the discussed values and norms.

	Online Activity 1: Introduction to European Values and Norms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple-choice questions, true/false statements, and scenario-based questions will be included to assess participants' understanding. 4. Interactive Scenario Analysis (15 minutes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will be presented with a real-world scenario involving conflicting values or cultural differences within Europe. In breakout groups, participants will discuss and propose solutions, emphasizing the application of European values to resolve the scenario.
Reflection: (10 minutes)	Summarize key takeaways and encourage participants to share insights from the video and activities. Provide information about offline activities and preparation for the next session.
Min. training materials (online connection, PC, white board, paper/ pencils, post its etc.):	(https://quizizz.com/) . (https://kahoot.com/) . (https://youtube.com/)

	Offline Activity "Deepening Engagement: Exploring EU Realities and Negotiations"
Learning objectives and outcomes	Learning Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Real-World Insight: Participants will acquire authentic insights into the functions of the European Union through an immersive visit to the EU office in Albania. Applied Learning: Participants will actively apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context through hands-on engagement in a simulated EU negotiation. Cultural and Institutional Appreciation: Participants will cultivate a profound appreciation for EU values, norms, and cultural diversity through direct experiences and interactions. Effective Collaboration: Participants will enhance their collaboration and negotiation skills, equipping them with practical competencies for effective teamwork. Critical Discernment: Participants will develop critical analytical abilities, allowing them to assess challenges and opportunities encountered during the visit and negotiation simulation, thereby fostering a nuanced comprehension of EU processes. Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded Awareness: Participants will leave with a heightened awareness of the EU's role, values, and cultural diversity, attained through direct engagement and interaction.

	Offline Activity "Deepening Engagement: Exploring EU Realities and Negotiations"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical Competence: Participants will gain practical skills in negotiation, collaboration, and critical analysis, applicable in both academic and real-world contexts.• Informed Perspectives: Participants will form informed perspectives on EU realities, gaining insights into decision-making processes and the practical application of values in negotiations.• Knowledge Application: Participants will adeptly apply theoretical knowledge acquired in online activities to real-world scenarios, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application.• Sustained Engagement: Participants will foster a sustained interest and engagement with the subject matter, transcending the course and instilling a lasting curiosity about European values and norms.
Duration:	2 hours
Number of participants:	Participants divided in groups
Description: (steps for participants)	<p>Offline Activity 1: Simulation of EU Negotiations (1 hours):</p> <p>Objective: To engage participants in a hands-on simulation of EU negotiations, providing insights into the complexities of decision-making and collaboration.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>Introduction and Briefing (15 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begins with an introduction to the simulation, explaining the context and scenario.• Brief participants on their roles and the negotiation objectives. <p>Simulation Exercise (30 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct the negotiation simulation, assigning participants roles related to EU member states or other stakeholders.• Present a scenario involving a current or hypothetical issue requiring negotiation.• Emphasize the need for collaboration, compromise, and adherence to EU values. <p>Debriefing and Analysis (15 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A debriefing session where participants discuss the outcomes of the simulation.• Analyzing the negotiation process, challenges faced, and potential lessons learned.• Conclude with a group reflection on the negotiation experience.• Summarize key insights and relate them back to the overarching theme of European values and norms. <p>Offline Activity 3: "Cultural Exploration and Comparison"</p> <p>Research Assignment (60 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assign each participant a European country.• Task participants with researching the cultural values, traditions, and societal norms of their assigned country.

	<p>Offline Activity "Deepening Engagement: Exploring EU Realities and Negotiations"</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the use of diverse sources, including articles, books, and interviews. <p>Creation of Cultural Profiles (30 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants create visual or written cultural profiles for their assigned countries, summarizing key values, traditions, and norms. These profiles can include infographics, collages, or written summaries. <p>Gallery Walk and Discussion (30 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will organize a gallery walk where participants explore and discuss each other's cultural profiles. Facilitate a group discussion on commonalities, differences, and the richness of European cultural diversity.
Reflection:	<p>Key Insights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share one key insight gained from the EU office visit that resonated with you. How does this insight relate to the online activities on European values? <p>Negotiation Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on your role during the negotiation simulation. What did you find most challenging, and how did it enhance your understanding of EU decision-making? <p>Unexpected Discoveries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight one unexpected discovery or aspect encountered during either activity. Discuss how this element influenced your perspective on EU values. <p>Application to Everyday Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how the lessons learned from the activities can be applied to everyday situations. Provide an example of how European values might impact decision-making in your own context. <p>Personal Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how these offline activities have personally impacted your understanding of European values. Are there specific aspects that have sparked a continued interest in exploring EU realities?
Min. training materials (online connection, PC, white board, paper / pencils, post its etc.):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PC White board Presentation tool (e.g. Canva, Google slides, Powerpoint)

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