

EUROSCEPTICISM LESSON

TEACHER'S VERSION

Lesson Information

Objectives:

The primary objective of this lesson is to give students an overview of the current state of Euroscepticism in EU member states. It aims to establish the role of culture, politics, and history in the rise of Euroscepticism and allow students to engage with written and audiovisual material to reach conclusions about the benefits and drawbacks of leaving the European Union.

Description:

The purpose of this lesson plan is to introduce students to Euroscepticism within the European Union and the potential consequences for individual countries, the Union itself, and the EU's relationship with its allies and trading partners. This lesson will teach students how to think critically about the benefits and downsides of EU membership, the role of politics and culture in national outlook, and the economic consequences of disentangling one member state from the others.

Suggested Courses:

- ☞ CIE3M - The Individual and the Economy, Grade 11
- ☞ CLN4U - Canadian and International Law, Grade 12
- ☞ CPW4U - Canadian and International Politics, Grade 12
- ☞ BBB4M - International Business Fundamentals, Grade 12

Time Requirement: 75 minutes (one class period)

Materials:

- ☞ Teacher's Version: Lesson Plan
- ☞ Student Version: Handout
- ☞ Internet connection, computer, projector/screen

Warm Up

Format: Pairs

Activity: Brainstorming

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:

Introduce the concept of Eurocepticism. Explain that Eurocepticism is the feeling of distrust and opposition to the European Union and its policies.

Arrange the students in pairs and provide each student with a worksheet.

Ask them to read the definition of Eurocepticism and identify the countries in Europe with the highest and lowest levels of Eurocepticism. For this task, they may use a computer, tablet, or smartphone to find online statistics. Allow a maximum of 5 minutes for this task.

Once students have identified the countries with the highest and lowest levels of Eurocepticism, ask them to brainstorm some of the factors driving Eurocepticism in Europe. Possible factors include economic policies and immigration, which can be used as examples. Allow another 5 minutes for this task.

Lead a class discussion and sharing of ideas for approximately 5 minutes. Write some main points or key suggestions from the discussion on the board.

Answer Key:

Highest Levels of Eurocepticism	Lowest Levels of Eurocepticism
1. Austria	1. Lithuania
2. Sweden	2. Ireland
3. Cyprus	3. Estonia
4. Czech Republic	4. Malta
5. Denmark	5. Latvia

Possible factors driving Eurocepticism:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ☞ Immigration (example) | ☞ Anti-establishment sentiment |
| ☞ Economic policies (example) | ☞ Opposition to EU membership fees |
| ☞ Bureaucracy | ☞ Eurozone crisis |
| ☞ Sovereignty fears | ☞ Xenophobia |
| ☞ Austerity | ☞ Power imbalance between members |

Activity 1: Useful Vocabulary

Format: Individual

Activity: Defining terms, research

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:

Provide the students with the worksheet of useful vocabulary. Allow the students to work individually with access to the internet or a suitable textbook. Give the students approximately 10 minutes to research the terms and write a short definition of each term.

Once the students are ready, elicit suggested definitions from the class. Make corrections where necessary and elaborate on points which the students do not understand. If appropriate, ask students to provide examples of each term.

Suggested answer key:

- ✎ **Eurosceptic** – Eurosceptic is a term used to describe an individual or group who is critical of the European Union and its policies and who would like to see less integration or even the complete dissolution of the EU.
- ✎ **Europhile** – A person who is enthusiastic about the European Union, European culture, customs, and politics, and seeks to promote closer ties between Europe and other countries.
- ✎ **Brexit** – The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, which began on 31 January 2020. The decision to leave the EU was made in a referendum in June 2016 and the UK officially left the EU on 31 January 2020. Brexit has significant implications for trade, economics, and the movement of people between the UK and the EU.
- ✎ **Fiscal Union** – An economic and political union between two or more countries in which a central government is given authority to make decisions regarding taxation, public spending, and the management of a common currency. It is an agreement between countries to have a unified approach to their economic policies and to coordinate their fiscal policies.
- ✎ **Schengen Area** – An area in Europe consisting of 27 countries that have agreed to allow free movement of their citizens within their shared borders. It includes most EU member states, as well as a number of non-EU countries. The Schengen Area eliminates

internal border checks, allowing citizens to move freely between countries without the need for passports or other documents.

- ☞ **Sovereignty** – The supreme power or authority of a state or nation, vested in a governing body that has the right and power to govern without interference from outside sources. Sovereignty can refer to the right of a people to self-determination, self-governance, or the power of a government to make laws, levy taxes, and enforce them within its territory.
- ☞ **Single Market** – An area where goods, services, people, and capital can move freely between participating countries. This allows for the establishment of a unified economic area that shares common regulations, legislation, and standards. The Single Market is a key feature of the European Union, which has allowed for the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital throughout its Member States.
- ☞ **Nationalism** – An ideology that promotes the idea of a nation as a community of people with a shared history, language, culture, and/or ethnic identity, who share a sense of loyalty, pride, and responsibility towards their nation and its interests.

Activity 2: Reading Activity

Format: Individual

Activity: Reading, multiple choice questions, short answer questions

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

Give the students the article and questions on the handout. Allow them approximately 10 minutes to read the article and take notes, and a further 10 minutes to answer the questions. Answer clarifying questions if any concepts are unfamiliar to the students.

Allow 5 minutes to check the answers as a class.

Answer Key:

- 1) The video lists several motivations: concerns about sovereignty; loss of national identity; cost of EU membership; fears about the impact of the EU on jobs and wages; perception that the EU is too powerful and unaccountable; the EU is making decisions without the consent of the people.
- 2) Right-wing populism is the political position linked to Euroscepticism.
- 3) The Brexit referendum was in 2016.
- 4) Denmark's four opt outs are The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU); the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); Justice and Home Affairs (now PJCC); the citizenship of the European Union.
- 5) Danes have a more positive view of the European Union because of the disastrous repercussions of Brexit and the recent security issues Europe is facing with respect to the conflict in Ukraine.
- 6) The main point of contention between Hungary and the European Union is the refugee crisis/refugee quotas.
- 7) Hungary's political elite/the government are the most Eurosceptical.
- 8) Ireland has received over €30 billion in structural funds.

Activity 2: Reading Activity – Text

Breaking the Union: Euroscepticism and the Future of Europe

What is Euroscepticism?

Euroscepticism is the belief that the European Union (EU) is an inefficient and undemocratic institution that has too much control over its member states and that the European project should be reconsidered, or even abandoned. It has become a major political issue in European countries, as the EU continues to expand its powers and responsibilities.

Euroscepticism is a multi-faceted phenomenon, with a wide range of views and motivations behind it. These range from **concerns about sovereignty** and the **loss of national identity**, to worries about the **cost of EU membership**, to **fears about the impact of the EU on jobs and wages**. There are also political considerations, such as the **perception that the EU is too powerful and unaccountable**, or that **the EU is making decisions without the consent of the people**.

The rise of Euroscepticism has been driven by a range of factors, including the economic crisis of 2008, the migration crisis of 2015, and the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016. In many countries, Euroscepticism is linked to a rise in **right-wing populism**, as parties such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and Alternative for Germany (AfD) have emerged as major political players.

The impact of Euroscepticism has been felt across Europe. In the UK, **the 2016 referendum on EU membership** saw a majority of people voting to leave the EU. In other countries, such as France and Italy, Eurosceptic parties have made gains in recent years, but have yet to translate these into major electoral success. Among the member states, opinions on and support for the EU vary widely based on the benefits and drawbacks that individual countries have experienced and on the political influence of the ruling elite.

Denmark

Since joining the European Union in 1973, Denmark has always maintained a cautionary approach to the Union and has chosen to opt out of a number of important policies and acts encouraging greater unification introduced in the subsequent decades. Following the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty by a referendum in 1992, Denmark negotiated four opt-outs from the treaty: **the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Justice and Home Affairs (now PJCC) and the citizenship of the European Union.** The Danish people accepted the treaty after the opt-outs were granted, in a second referendum held in 1993. This means that Denmark is not obligated to replace the Danish krone with the Euro, is not involved in the European Union's foreign policy on defence matters and does not contribute troops to EU missions. Denmark is also not required to participate in the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Convention, and the citizenship opt-out means Denmark does not accept the European citizenship granted by the Maastricht Treaty.

Despite a generally high level of Euroscepticism in Denmark, in recent years this has been in decline. **The disastrous repercussions of Brexit and the recent security issues Europe is facing with respect to the conflict in Ukraine** has encouraged Danes to think more critically about their cautious approach to EU membership. In a referendum in June 2022, Denmark voted to remove its opt-out on security and defence, opening the door to a greater level of integration in the future.

Hungary

The main source of Euroscepticism in Hungary is the country's strained relationship with the European Union. Hungary has long been a difficult partner for the EU, especially when it comes to the issue of immigration and refugee policy. **Hungary has refused to accept EU-imposed refugee quotas and has been highly critical of the EU's handling of the refugee crisis.** This has led to tensions between Hungary and the EU, thereby contributing to a feeling of distrust and alienation among many Hungarians. In addition to the refugee crisis, Hungary has also been critical of the EU's handling of the financial crisis and its austerity measures. Hungarians feel that the EU has imposed harsh economic policies on the country that have not been beneficial to its citizens. This has further contributed to a sense of Euroscepticism in the country.

Euroscepticism in Hungary's government is a growing phenomenon that is causing tensions between the nation and the European Union. The government, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has adopted an increasingly hostile stance towards the EU, due to its view that Brussels is encroaching upon its sovereignty and attempts to impose its will on the nation. The

government has taken a number of steps to limit the power of the EU, including introducing a new constitution that limits the authority of foreign courts and institutions. The government has also been accused of undermining the rule of law and democratic values, which has further heightened the anti-EU sentiment in the country.

Despite the prevailing **negative view of the country's political elite**, surprisingly, the general public in Hungary are mostly supportive of the European Union. Despite some early decline in popularity following Hungary's accession to the EU in 2004, fuelled in part by the economic crisis of 2008 and the election of Orbán's government in 2010, Euroscepticism among the general population peaked in 2012 and has steadily declined ever since. Hungary, therefore, maintains a delicate balance between people and regime, making the possibility of a future referendum on leaving the EU less likely than in some other countries.

Ireland

The Republic of Ireland has been a committed member of the European Union (EU) since 1973 and is now seen as one of the most pro-EU countries in the bloc. The Irish people have consistently voted in favour of the EU in referendums and Eurobarometer polls.

A key factor in Ireland's strong support for the EU is the country's commitment to the single market. This allows for the free movement of goods and services across the EU, which has been incredibly beneficial for the Irish economy. The country also benefits from other EU policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, which provides subsidies for Irish farmers.

In addition, the EU has been a major source of funding for Ireland. Since the 1990s, **the EU has provided the country with over €30bn in structural funds** to help stimulate the economy. This money has been used to improve infrastructure, create jobs, and provide support to small businesses.

Where will it lead?

The future of Euroscepticism is uncertain. The UK's departure from the EU is likely to have a major impact on the European project and could lead to further fragmentation and weakening of the EU's authority. However, there are also signs that support for the EU could be increasing in some countries, as the economic and political benefits of EU membership become more apparent. Whatever the future holds, Euroscepticism is likely to remain an important factor in European politics.

Activity 2: Video Activity

Format: Individual, groups (3-4)

Activity: Listening, note taking, discussion

Time: 20 minutes

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzjuA0IbjAU&t=1s>

Instructions:

Pass out the handout for the video activity. Tell the students that they will watch a video and take notes on what they hear. They should use the section headings on their handout to guide their notes.

Play the video once from the beginning until 11:30. Allow the students to take as many notes as they can.

Once the video is finished, place the students into groups of 3-4. Ask them to discuss the notes they took and brainstorm suggestions on how Michel Barnier could improve the Brexit negotiations. Allow the students 5 minutes for this task.

Use any remaining time to gather and share the ideas of the groups.

Activity 2: Video Activity – Transcript

Euroscepticism and the European Union

Frédéric Lavoie: My name is Frédéric Lavoie, and I am a Research Assistant at the Jean Monnet Network on Transatlantic Trade Politics. This is part of a series of interviews for that Network called the Transatlantic Trade Videos. We are here today with Elvire Fabry, who is a Senior Research Fellow at the Jacques Delors Institute in Paris, France, and is cooperating with the Network as a member of the University of Antwerp team. Welcome, Doctor Fabry, and thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.

Dr. Elvire Fabry: Hello.

FL: So, to get into our questions: first, the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union – the EU – has inarguably been a traumatic event for the two sides, requiring months of difficult negotiations to untangle decades of economic and legal cohabitation. How has the EU managed to keep a united front through all of this?

EF: Well, you're very right that this has been a particular worry for the 27 member states of the EU. Since the beginning, they were very aware that the first threat that they were facing was the risk of division, and that the British government could take use, and benefit off that division. Because, of course, member states have different interests, different levels of in economic integration with the UK – and of course we think about Ireland, but there is also Germany, the Netherlands, which have specific economic interest with the UK. And the British government understood very well that they could, by succeeding to divide member states, he could also win some specific concessions from those capitals.

And I think it's interesting, at this point, to look back at the way the European Commission has handled this negotiation, because it has been quite different from other negotiations. Of course, negotiating the process of Brexit – first the withdrawal of the UK and then the future relation – was very specific: it has nothing to see with any other trade negotiation. And there were so many issues that needed to be covered, that settling down the right method to negotiate and to process was very complex and we saw that it took many years.

I think that it's interesting at this point to have a look at what I called, but others also called, the Barnier method – Barnier, the name of the chief negotiator. Michel Barnier, who was a former Foreign Affairs – French Foreign Affairs Minister – and who was heading all the process of negotiation for the 27, in the name of the European Commission, and in the name of the 27. And the task force that he's been building to negotiate this process. And I think that, if we try to

understand the methods and how he succeeded to build this cohesion, we can think about three things: transparency, task force, and the way he's been leveraging the weight of the single market.

First, about transparency: from the beginning of the negotiation, one thing that is very interesting is that he didn't only focus on the mandate that was given to him to negotiate the withdrawal of the UK, but he really started building strong political support between the 27 capitals. And one thing that helped that was the transparency that he brought on the different steps of the negotiation, through different things: through the publication of many documents related to the negotiation; through a very strong engagement in the different capitals. He had made, himself, so many trips in the different capitals, not only to discuss with the different administrations at different levels, but also with the national parliaments, with the different stakeholders – different levels of stakeholders: trade unions, think tanks, all the different levels of leaders who could contribute to disseminate quite far even in the public opinion, an understanding of what was happening, what was going on, and how the European Commission was handling, managing with this negotiation.

Another thing was very clear, a very clear presentation of the method used by the 27, with important focus on the sequencing of the negotiation: no negotiation before the activation of Article 50 of the Treaty of European Union; first, negotiate the withdrawal and then, future relations; the link between the four freedoms of the single markets. All different elements that helped, that contributed to a better understanding of the priorities of the European Commission and the way it has, from the beginning, it has insisted on some red lines and at the defense of the common interests of the 27. We have seen that, during those several years, the British government has had tried in many ways to reinforce bilateral relations with the different capitals – and not only between Berlin and Paris, but not only: Dublin, of course, but also in the Netherlands – and that although this transparency between the 27, this constant communication has helped really building that cohesion.

Then, the role of the taskforce that was created as soon as in 2016 was also important. It has contributed – I mean for Michel Barnier, it was very important because it provided him with a sort of overview of all the different issues that had to be tackled, and with the possibility to use the contribution and expertise of different services of the European Commission, and which contributes to establish a broad overview of the different elements of the negotiation. While the British government wanted to slice down the different elements of the negotiation, and which could have provided more space for more compromise on the side of the member states.

And, finally, I think a third element that was important, it was the way this negotiation was built on, and then a broader understanding of the way the single market is functioning, how it has matured, it has grown up, and really building on the weight of the single markets. In a way, this

long negotiation that was closely followed by the medias and then the public opinion, has contributed to develop some pedagogy on the way the single market is functioning – more specifically, the functioning of all this trade dimension which has some technicalities, and allowing the public to understand what is a certification, the conformity checks, what are tariff quotas, how a trade union functions, what is mutual recognition rule of origin – all those elements have been explained in a very pedagogical approach, and it has contributed to allow citizens to perceive really what is the reality of the EU, after so many decades of building, and what is the role of norms. For so many years, European norms and regulations have been criticized for, in a way, imposing harmonization, but the result today is, precisely, that that block of harmonization norms is a very strong leverage for the Europeans, and has contributed to reinforce what is now called the Brussels effect. The attractiveness of European norms, to get access to the single market, is that it's an incentive for firms to align on those norms, if they want to access the single market. Progressively, when negotiations were moving on, the way the European Commission has approached this negotiation had also some influence on all the negotiations, and even the review of some agreements, like it was the case for Switzerland, but also in relation with other partners, like with China, with a much more focused approach on the level playing field and the way Europeans wanted to preserve, like in the case of the UK, preserve some level playing field and avoid some unfair competition at the doorsteps of the EU, or increase the level playing field with a challenging partner like China.

Consolidation: Essay Task

Format: Individual, homework

Activity: Essay

Time: 1 hour

Instructions:

Students will write an essay of 500-700 words on the following topic:

Greece has held a referendum and has decided to leave the European Union.

Use your own knowledge and research from the Internet to write an essay discussing the following points:

- ☞ Potential reasons why the people voted to leave the EU,
- ☞ The short- and long-term effects on the Greek economy,
- ☞ Some suggestions on how to mitigate the problems that their exit from the EU will cause.