



Democracy & Active Participation

Key Stage 4

Learning for Life & Work

Democracy & Active Participation

Aim: To understand how to participate in and influence democratic processes and raise awareness of some key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy.

Session 1

Characteristics of democracy

Session 2

Active participation

Session 3

Young people's participation



Teaching Plan Outline

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|---|---|------------------|---|
| Title | Democracy and Active Participation | | |
| Aim | To understand how to participate in and influence democratic processes and raise awareness of some key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy. | | |
| Duration | 4 class periods | Resources | Resource 1 'Summary of Institutions' Internet access |
| Learning intentions (KS4 statements of requirement) Learning for Life & Work – Local & Global Citizenship Personal Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the basic characteristics of democracy. • Investigate various ways to participate in school and society. • Investigate why rules and laws are needed, how they are enforced and how breaches of the law affect the community. • Investigate an issue from a range of viewpoints and suggest action that might be taken to improve or resolve the situation. | | |
| Skills & capabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Self-management • Working with Others | | |
| Cross-curricular skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Using Maths • Using ICT | | |
| Links to other curricular areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE English Language* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressing ideas & information clearly - Forming independent views & challenging what is heard or read on the grounds of reason, evidence or argument • GCSE Maths* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select & apply mathematical techniques & methods in mathematical, everyday & real-world situations - Reason mathematically, make deductions & inferences, & draw conclusions - Interpret & communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information & context. • GCSE History* | | |
| Assessment for Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing learning intentions • Sharing & negotiating success criteria • Giving feedback to pupils • Effective questioning to probe student understanding • Opportunity for peer assessment | | |

* more specific information about cross-curricular links is provided below.



Session 1: Characteristics of democracy

This lesson is an opportunity for pupils to examine the principles of democracy through analysis of the key democratic institutions that underpin local, national and international law. By reviewing the basic organisations of local government, the Northern Ireland Assembly, UK Parliament, the European Union and the UN Declaration on Human Rights, students will have the opportunity to develop an understanding of democracy and look for examples of democratic processes closer to home.

Activity 1: Characteristics of democratic institutions

(Small group activity and group feedback to whole class)

1. The class should be split into groups of 4 or 5 and given one of following institutions to research online or using the information provided (see Resource 1 – Summary of Institutions):

- Local councils
- NI Assembly
- UK Parliament
- European Union
- UN Security Council

Each group will present their findings to the rest of the class – ‘each one, teach one’.

Information gathered will include:

- (a) Why do they exist
- (b) How they are elected
- (c) Who elects them
- (d) What decisions do they make
- (e) Where do they sit
- (f) When/how often are they elected
- (g) How are laws made
- (h) Who usually votes
- (i) Why doesn't everyone vote

2. Additional resources (including whiteboard materials) to consider using also can be found at the UK parliament website – ‘An Introduction to Parliament’ and ‘Elections and Voting’.

<http://www.parliament.uk/education/online-resources/>

Activity 2: Images of democracy

(Small group internet based activity and peer assessment)

1. Ask groups to search online using Google images or You Tube and search the term ‘democracy’ – select an image/clip which best captures ‘democracy’ and present the reasons why. Peer assess each group's presentation. If internet access is not available, please refer to Resource 2 – Images of Democracy.

2. Close session by summarising learning by highlighting key characteristics and concepts of democracy:

- Participation rights
- Freedom of expression



Free, fair and regular elections, secret ballots, right to vote
Party system
Parliament
Elected government/majority rule
Accountability of government
Law and justice, everyone treated equally and fairly, trial by a jury of peers
Protection of basic human rights: freedom of speech, religion, freedom to organise and participate fully in political, economic and cultural life.

Activity 3: Why is democracy important?

(Teaching session, individual written task, teacher-led question and answer session and homework activity)

1. Briefly review learning from Activities 1 and 2, refresh basic characteristics of democracy.
 2. Examine democratic principles and processes based on a case study from any of the following: the suffragette movement; an autocracy or an emerging democracy. This could tie in with GCSE History. Introduce case study scenarios (see Resource 3 – Case Study Scenarios) and task students with writing their own case study exploring democracy from the perspective of a suffragette or a citizen in an emerging democracy or an existing autocracy.
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Session 2: Active participation

This lesson will consider how politically motivated and active young people are in Northern Ireland and encourage students to realise opportunities to become involved themselves in a range of different ways. They will be asked to interpret online data from the Young Life and Times survey (or from Resource 4 'Worksheets' attached) and draw conclusions on participation in Northern Ireland 16 year olds. The second aspect of this lesson will consider alternative ways of participation and democracy which is relevant to their lives including lobbying, petitioning, boycotts and school/youth councils.

Activity 1: Analysing Survey Results

(Small group activity and group feedback to whole class)

1. Split the class into groups of 4 or 5 and using an internet accessible PC, look up the Young Life and Times online
 - How interested in politics are young people in Northern Ireland, how, if at all, has this changed over time?
 - By examining the results, what do you think are the reasons why young people in Northern Ireland aren't interested in politics?
 - What percentage of young people took action on an issue that was important to them by either raising money for charity, boycotting a product, signing a petition or attending a demonstration?
 2. Each group is then asked to report their results to the class.
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Session 3: Young people's participation

Activity 1: Local action

(Teacher-led question and answer session)

1. Take a straw poll of class to gauge level of involvement of students in a range of different aspects of participation. Ask for a show of hands for:

- Anyone campaigning or taking action on a social issue important to them – ask for volunteers to describe action or cause they have supported
- Anyone signed a petition or boycotted a product recently – if yes, ask for examples
- Anyone a member of school or group youth council, youth parliament – anyone can talk of examples of where they have made a difference.
- Anyone conducted research into an issue and had to present information/findings to decision makers to prove their point?

Activity 2: Global action

(Small group activity)

1. Split the class into groups of 4 or 5 and using an internet accessible PC, look up Young Life and Times online 'Environment and global issues' or use Resource 5 worksheets attached.

- What are the main environmental and global issues of concern for 16 year olds in Northern Ireland?
- List these concerns in order of priority as reflected in the survey results.
- How do the views of males and females differ?
- As a group, discuss and rank the issues in order of importance (1 most important)

Activity 3: Adopt a cause

(Small group activity and peer assessment)

1. Spend 5 minutes in groups to discuss and select an issue that is important and students wish to promote as a group – this could be an environmental campaign, something relating directly to life at school, an equality issue or a neighbourhood problem, or indeed something that has international significance. Once the topic has been agreed, the group will have to spend time developing a strategy of action to raise the profile of their issue and present this strategy document to the rest of the class. The strategy should incorporate the following components:

- Mission statement
- Aims and objectives including key information points about problem/campaign/issue and what the campaign hopes to achieve
- Step by step plan of action which should reflect what they have covered in previous sessions including advertising, recruitment, petitioning, lobbying strategy, demonstrations, boycotts, conducting further research into the issue.

2. Strategies should be presented to the rest of the class by the campaign team.



3. Peer assess each group's presentation by highlighting 2 aspects that are good and identify one area to improve on.

Further information, action research or case studies:

- Ideas for research - Participation works website
- Construct a profile of democratic action that young people are taking that relate to your lives
- Describe an example where this has come into conflict with the state – where does democracy end and autocracy begin – Fight the War Coalition.
- Choose one or more campaigns as a class you are going to try to encourage people to support
- Review UN Millennium Goals and report on their progress



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Resource 1: Summary of institutions

Local government

In Northern Ireland some functions, which in other parts of the UK would be undertaken by councils, are provided by government departments or agencies. In most cases these bodies engage in consultation. The consultative role covers functions such as planning, roads, water and conservation.

Local Councils in Northern Ireland have 3 main functions:

1. Direct service provision: Each council is responsible for the provision of a range of services within its own area.
2. A representative role: Councillors are appointed to represent their councils, or elected members in general, on a number of public bodies, such as – Education & Library Boards, Health & Social Services, Road Safety Committees, etc.
3. A consultative Role: In Northern Ireland some functions, which in other parts of the UK would be undertaken by councils, are provided by government departments or agencies. In most cases these bodies engage in consultation. The consultative role covers functions such as planning, roads, water and conservation.

Elections to the district councils take place every four years. The number of councillors varies from council to council depending largely on the size of the council area. Councillors are elected using the single transferable vote system. To be elected a candidate must reach a set of votes known as the quota. The votes are counted in stages. In the first round only first preferences are counted. Anyone who reaches the quota is elected. Any votes received over the quota are not needed by the elected candidate and so are transferred to the second preference.

If not enough candidates have then reached the quota, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and all of their votes are passed to the next preference on the ballot papers. This process is repeated until enough candidates have been elected to fill each seat in the ward.

Local Government Statistics

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Number of Councils | 26 |
| Number of Councillors | 582 |
| No Eligible Electorate | 1,142,433 (2005 Elections) |
| Total Population | 1,702,600 (2004 Estimate) |
| Head Population per Councillor | Approx 3000 citizens |
| Local Government Spending | £364m (04/05) (~ 4.5% of Public sector spending) |

Councils are currently responsible for:

Refuse Collection and Disposal
Recycling and Waste Management
Civic Amenity Provision
Grounds Maintenance
Street Cleansing



Cemeteries
Public Conveniences
Food Safety
Health & Safety
Environmental Protection
Environmental Improvement
Estates Management Building Design and Maintenance
Building Control-Inspection and Regulation of New Construction
Dog Control
Enforcement Byelaws Litter etc.
Sundry Licensing
Sports and Leisure Services
Forum Leisure Complex
Sports and Recreational Facilities
Parks, Open Spaces, Playgrounds
Community Centres
Arts, Heritage and Cultural Facilities
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
Councils have a role in:
Economic Development
Community Development
Community Safety Sports Development
Summer Schemes
Tourism

Councils are currently not responsible for (however may be consulted on):

Education
Personal Social Services
Roads
Public Housing
Fire Service
Police Service
Trading Standards
Drainage Water
Sewerage
Libraries
Planning
Street Lighting
Collection of Rates
Transport

There are changes planned for local government, with a reduction of council areas from 26 to 11.



The Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly was established as a result of the Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998, an outcome of a long process of talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish Governments.

The Agreement was endorsed through a referendum held on 22 May 1998 and subsequently given legal force through the Northern Ireland Act 1998 leading to the creation of a series of interrelated bodies. The Northern Ireland Assembly has full legislative and executive authority for all matters that are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government Departments and are known as transferred matters. The UK parliament based in Westminster is still responsible for excepted matters and some reserved matters.

The Belfast Agreement led to the creation of:

- A North/South Ministerial Council to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish Governments to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland. All Council decisions must be agreed by both sides.
- A British-Irish Council to exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Administrations. Membership comprises representatives of the British and Irish Governments, devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales together with representatives of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.
- A British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference comprising senior representatives from both Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on matters of mutual interest.
- A consultative Civic Forum, comprising representatives of business, trades unions and other civic sectors in Northern Ireland to act as a consultative mechanism on social, economic and cultural issues.

The First Minister and Deputy First Minister acting together nominate Ministers to attend the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council and to report to the Assembly following each meeting of these bodies. They also ensure that the Executive is represented at meetings of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister, acting together, also make arrangements for the operation of the Civic Forum. These arrangements require Assembly approval.

The Assembly was elected on 25 June 1998 under the terms of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998. The New Northern Ireland Assembly met for the first time on 1 July 1998 in Castle Buildings on the Stormont Estate. The then Secretary of State the Rt Hon Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP appointed Lord Alderdice as Initial Presiding Officer for the first sitting of the Assembly with the intention that the Assembly would then elect a Presiding Officer.



At the first meeting of the Assembly, the Rt Hon David Trimble MP was elected as First Minister (Designate) and Mr Seamus Mallon MP as Deputy First Minister (Designate). The refurbishment of the Assembly Chamber in Parliament Buildings was completed during the summer months, and since the second sitting on 14 September 1998 the Assembly has met in that Chamber.

How the Northern Ireland Assembly operates

The Northern Ireland Assembly consists of 108 elected Members - six from each of the 18 Westminster constituencies. Its role is primarily to scrutinise and make decisions on the issues dealt with by Government Departments and to consider and make legislation.

A First Minister and a Deputy First Minister are elected to lead the Executive Committee of Ministers. They must stand for election jointly and to be elected they must have cross-community support by the parallel consent formula, which means that a majority of both the Members who have designated themselves Nationalists and those who have designated themselves Unionists and a majority of the whole Assembly, must vote in favour.

The First Minister and Deputy First Minister head the Executive Committee of Ministers and acting jointly, determine the total number of Ministers in the Executive.

The parties elected to the Assembly choose Ministerial portfolios and select Ministers in proportion to their party strength. Each party has a designated nominating officer and the d'Hondt procedure is used for the appointment of Ministers. Statutory Departmental Committees are also established to advise and assist each Minister in the formulation of policy for his/her Department and to scrutinise the work of that Department.

The Speaker

The Office of the Presiding Officer of the Assembly, known as "the Speaker", who presides over the proceedings of the Assembly, is Chairperson of the Business Committee and Chairperson of the Assembly Commission.

The Speaker has a scrutiny role in relation to the competence of legislation prior to the First and Final Stages of a Bill. He selects amendments to Bills and Motions for debate and selects questions for oral answer. Following the first reading of a Bill the Speaker sends a copy to the Human Rights Commission and on the completion of all the Stages of a Bill he sends it to the Secretary of State requesting Royal Assent.

The Speaker receives VIP visitors from the British Isles and overseas to Parliament Buildings, including Heads of State, Ambassadors and senior politicians. The Speaker also hosts and attends a range of events designed to promote an understanding of the Assembly as an institution and to develop links with the wider Northern Ireland community as well as within the UK and internationally.



UK Parliament

The main work of Parliament is to make laws, debate topical issues and look at how taxes are spent to help run the country. The issues that are discussed in Parliament affect us all: health, the environment, transport, jobs, schools, crime.

Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected and represent our views in the House of Commons. This part of Parliament has the greatest political power. The second part of Parliament is the House of Lords, whose unelected members complement the work of the House of Commons. The third and final part of Parliament is the Monarch, the Queen, who signs the laws that Parliament votes for.

The Houses of Parliament, also known as the Palace of Westminster, is in the centre of London. The UK Parliament has devolved some of its powers to other national and regional bodies. In Scotland, for example, there is the Scottish Parliament which has elected members who make some decisions for Scotland. Wales and Northern Ireland have their own assemblies and there is also a London Assembly.

Parliament and government

People sometimes confuse Parliament and government. Both have important powers, but each is responsible for different areas of our democracy.

Government: running the country

The government is in charge of managing the country and deciding how our taxes are spent. Different government departments run different things. For example, there is a department in charge of health and another in charge of transport.

Led by the prime minister, the UK government is formed by the political party (or coalition of parties) with the greatest representation in the House of Commons. The prime minister selects a team of MPs and members of the House of Lords to help run the country.

Not every member of the Commons or Lords is selected to join the government. All the other MPs and members of the House of Lords carry out the work of Parliament.

Parliament: lawmaking...and more

Parliament doesn't get into the business of running the country, but it is responsible for approving and changing the country's laws. Most new laws presented to Parliament are suggested by the government. To pass a new law both the House of Commons and the House of Lords must agree it is a good idea.

Members of Parliament are also responsible for keeping an eye on the work of government, to make sure it's doing a good job. For example, members of both the Commons and the Lords will look at how the government is spending the money it receives from people when they pay tax.

Select committees

One way members of Parliament scrutinise the government is by regularly meeting in small groups called select committees. These committees can make recommendations to the



government on particular issues such as education, the environment and laws proposed by the European Union (EU).

For example, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords have committees set up to examine laws proposed by the EU. As a member of the EU, the UK agrees it should obey EU laws. Select committees in both House of Parliament play an important role in checking proposals to make sure the likely effects of new EU laws are considered before they are passed.

Select committee recommendations will be given to the head of the government department in charge of that particular issue. Heads of government departments are called ministers.

Question time

You can see government ministers sitting next to the prime minister in the House of Commons at prime minister's question time which happens every Wednesday and is shown on the television and the web.

Every government minister has to hold a question and answer session in Parliament on a regular basis. This is usually once every month rather than every week like the prime minister.

Members of Parliament can use these question times to find out what the government is doing or suggest ways of doing things better.

General elections

Candidates across the country compete for a seat in the House of Commons. Political parties compete for a chance to run the country.

What is a general election?

Elections give people a chance to make decisions about how their country is run. Holding fair and free elections is the most important ingredient in making any country a democracy. In the UK, general elections take place every four or five years and involve the whole of the country.

General elections are actually made up of 650 individual elections that take place on a single day, all across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The UK is divided into 650 areas called 'constituencies', and on polling day an election is held in each one. Every eligible resident gets to go out and vote for one of the would-be representatives, called candidates, from their area of the country. The candidate with the most votes in each area wins a place, or 'seat', in the House of Commons.

Vote for me, vote for me!

To get votes, candidates campaign in their constituency. They announce a set of ideas that say will guide them when making decisions if they are elected. They often join together with other people who share the same ideas to form a political party. A vote for a political party is also a vote for that party's guiding principles.



Britain's three biggest political parties are the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. Normally these big parties will support a candidate in most constituencies across the country. There are several smaller political parties too. Candidates who don't belong to a political party are called 'independents'.

Counting the votes

Candidates and parties campaign until polling day. Then it's decision time, and citizens have to make up their minds. Every eligible resident gets to cast one vote for a candidate in their local constituency. The candidate with the most votes becomes the local Member of Parliament, or MP, for that area. He or she will represent everyone in the constituency in the House of Commons.

Under this system of electing representatives every citizen gets one vote, and the most votes wins. The system is known as 'first-past-the-post'.

The big prize: government

While candidates compete with each other, the political parties are also chasing a big prize: a chance to form the government. The government is responsible for running the country day-to-day. Political parties try hard to win the general election so they can put their ideas and election promises into action.

Under the UK's system of government, political parties aim to win as many constituency elections as possible. If one party can win more than half the seats in the House of Commons (326) then its leader gets to become prime minister and form a government. All the other parties become the 'opposition'. The party that wins the second largest number of seats becomes the main opposition party. Its leader becomes the 'leader of the opposition'.

Why is 326 an important number? For a government to carry out its plans it needs the approval of a majority of MPs in the House of Commons. By winning a majority of the seats in the Commons, a political party can be confident it will have enough support for its ideas and plans during votes.

No overall majority = hung parliament

In the 2010 general election, however, no single party won more than half the seats in the House of Commons. The Conservative Party, led by David Cameron, won the most with 306. The Labour Party, led by Gordon Brown, came second with 258. The Liberal Democrats came third with 57 seats. This election result is known as a hung parliament, where no single party is able to claim more than half the seats in the Commons.

So what happens? There are two main possibilities:

- Two or more parties can agree to work together to govern the country.
- The party with the most seats can try to govern with a minority of seats in the Commons. If the party can't get enough support on an important vote, however, it risks defeat, which may force a general election.



In the 2010 election, after several days of negotiations, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg and David Cameron agreed their parties would work together. By joining forces, the two parties combined have a majority of seats in the House of Commons, enough to form a government. This is called a **coalition government**.

Parliament has the power to make new laws and change old ones.

Parliament's parts

The UK Parliament can be found in Westminster, London. It has three parts:

- The **House of Commons** is made up of 650 Members of Parliament (MPs). We vote for our MPs and whoever wins represents everyone in our local area (called a constituency) even if we voted for someone else.
- The **House of Lords** has over 700 members, who are not elected but who have been selected by the prime minister and appointed by the Queen.
- The **monarch**, the Queen, opens and closes Parliament every year, asks the winning party in a general election to become the government and officially signs all the laws that Parliament votes for.

How are laws made in Parliament?

Acts of Parliament are laws of the land that affect us all. For example, laws determine at what age people can drive cars or vote in elections.

A proposed new law is called a **bill**. Bills must be agreed by both Houses of Parliament before becoming laws. This often means that a bill is passed backwards and forwards between the House of Commons and House of Lords, each making changes, until they are both happy with the exact wording.

This makes sure that the bill is properly thought through and that all the consequences of the new law is considered.

Once both Houses have agreed on the bill it can be approved by the Queen. This is called Royal Assent and means the bill becomes an Act of Parliament and therefore officially a new law.



European Union

The European Parliament (EP) is elected by the citizens of the European Union to represent their interests. Its origins go back to the 1950s and the founding treaties, and since 1979 its members have been directly elected by the people they represent.

Elections are held every five years, and every EU citizen is entitled to vote, and to stand as a candidate, wherever they live in the EU. The latest elections were in June 2009. Parliament thus expresses the democratic will of the Union's citizens (more than 490 million people), and represents their interests in discussions with the other EU institutions. The present parliament has 736 members from all 27 EU countries.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) do not sit in national blocks, but in seven Europe-wide political groups. Between them, they represent all views on European integration, from the strongly pro-federalist to the openly Eurosceptic.

Jerzy Buzek was elected President of the EP on the 14th of July 2009 and will hold that post for two and a half years (until January 2012).

Where is Parliament based?

The European Parliament has three places of work: Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg and Strasbourg (France).

Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the 'General Secretariat'). Meetings of the whole Parliament, known as 'plenary sessions', take place in Strasbourg and sometimes in Brussels. Committee meetings are also held in Brussels.

What does Parliament do?

Parliament has three main roles:

1. **Passing European laws** – jointly with the Council in many policy areas. The fact that the EP is directly elected by the citizens helps guarantee the democratic legitimacy of European law.
2. Parliament exercises **democratic supervision** over the other EU institutions, and in particular the Commission. It has the power to approve or reject the nomination of commissioners, and it has the right to censure the Commission as a whole.
3. **The power of the purse**. Parliament shares with the Council authority over the EU budget and can therefore influence EU spending. At the end of the procedure, it adopts or rejects the budget in its entirety.

These three roles are described in greater detail below.

1. Passing European laws

The most common procedure for adopting (i.e. passing) EU legislation is '[codecision](#)'. This procedure places the European Parliament and the Council on an equal footing and it applies to legislation in a wide range of fields.

In some fields (for example agriculture, economic policy, visas and immigration), the Council alone legislates, but it has to consult Parliament. In addition, Parliament's assent is required for certain important decisions, such as allowing new countries to join the EU.



Parliament also provides impetus for new legislation by examining the Commission's annual work programme, considering what new laws would be appropriate and asking the Commission to put forward proposals.

Plenary sessions are normally held in Strasbourg (one week per month) and sometimes in Brussels (two days only)

2. Democratic supervision

Parliament exercises democratic supervision over the other European institutions. It does so in several ways.

When a new Commission takes office, its members are nominated by the EU member state governments but they cannot be appointed without Parliament's approval. Parliament interviews each of them individually, including the prospective Commission President, and then votes on whether to approve the Commission as a whole.

Throughout its term of office, the Commission remains politically accountable to Parliament, which can pass a 'motion of censure' calling for the Commission's mass resignation.

More generally, Parliament exercises control by regularly examining reports sent to it by the Commission (the annual general report, reports on the implementation of the budget, etc.). Moreover, MEPs regularly ask the Commission questions which the commissioners are legally required to answer.

Parliament also monitors the work of the Council: MEPs regularly ask the Council questions, and the President of the Council attends the EP's plenary sessions and takes part in important debates.

Parliament can exercise further democratic control by examining petitions from citizens and setting up committees of inquiry.

Finally, Parliament provides input to every EU summit (the European Council meetings). At the opening of each summit, the President of Parliament is invited to express Parliament's views and concerns about topical issues and the items on the European Council's agenda.

3. The power of the purse

The EU's annual budget is decided jointly by Parliament and the Council. Parliament debates it in two successive readings, and the budget does not come into force until it has been signed by the President of Parliament.

Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control (COCOBU) monitors how the budget is spent, and each year Parliament decides whether to approve the Commission's handling of the budget for the previous financial year. This approval process is technically known as 'granting a discharge'



The United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. Due to its unique international character, and the powers vested in its founding Charter, the Organisation can take action on a wide range of issues, and provide a forum for its 192 Member States to express their views, through the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and committees.

The work of the United Nations reaches every corner of the globe. Although best known for peacekeeping, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance, there are many other ways the United Nations and its System (specialized agencies, funds and programmes) affect our lives and make the world a better place. The Organisation works on a broad range of fundamental issues, from sustainable development, environment and refugees protection, disaster relief, counter terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, to promoting democracy, human rights, gender equality and the advancement of women, governance, economic and social development and international health, clearing landmines, expanding food production, and more, in order to achieve its goals and coordinate efforts for a safer world for this and future generations.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 192 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. The Assembly meets in regular session intensively from September to December each year, and thereafter as required.

All members of the United Nations are represented in the General Assembly. Each nation, rich or poor, large or small, has one vote.

Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established by the UN Charter, is the principal organ to co-ordinate the economic, social and related work of the United Nations and the specialised agencies and institutions. Voting in the Council is by simple majority; each member has one vote.

International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice, located at the Hague in the Netherlands, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It settles legal disputes between states and gives advisory opinions to the UN and its specialised agencies. Its Statute is an integral part of the United Nations Charter.

The Security Council has primary responsibility, under the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is so organised as to be able to function continuously, and a representative of each of its members must be present at all times at United Nations Headquarters.



When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before it, the Council's first action is usually to recommend to the parties to try to reach agreement by peaceful means. In some cases, the Council itself undertakes investigation and mediation. It may appoint special representatives or request the Secretary-General to do so or to use his good offices. It may set forth principles for a peaceful settlement.

When a dispute leads to fighting, the Council's first concern is to bring it to an end as soon as possible. On many occasions, the Council has issued cease-fire directives which have been instrumental in preventing wider hostilities. It also sends United Nations peace-keeping forces to help reduce tensions in troubled areas, keep opposing forces apart and create conditions of calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought. The Council may decide on enforcement measures, economic sanctions (such as trade embargoes) or collective military action.

A Member State against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council may be suspended from the exercise of the rights and privileges of membership by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. A Member State which has persistently violated the principles of the Charter may be expelled from the United Nations by the Assembly on the Council's recommendation.

A State which is a Member of the United Nations but not of the Security Council may participate, without a vote, in its discussions when the Council considers that that country's interests are affected. Both Members of the United Nations and non-members, if they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Council, are invited to take part, without a vote, in the Council's discussions; the Council sets the conditions for participation by a non-member State.

The Presidency of the Council rotates monthly, according to the English alphabetical listing of its member States.



Resource 2: Images of Democracy

These images are taken from the UN Democracy Photo Challenge – Your Voice. Your Photo.

<http://www.democracyphotochallenge.america.gov/index.html>



Kaylene George, South Africa

"Democracy is...in our hands."



Mustafa Kia, Afghanistan

"Democracy is voting for who you want as your president."



Mikas Aleya C. Matsuzawa, Philippines

"Democracy is... accessible and quality education for all. It is education as a right."



Venkatesh Hamyanaik, Australia

"Democracy is... freedom without boundaries!"



Kaveh Baghdadchi, Iran

"Democracy is the state of being free to act and look different from the way others do."



Resource 3: Case Study Scenarios

Task students with writing their own case study exploring democracy from the perspective of a suffragette or a citizen in an emerging democracy or an existing autocracy

Scenario 1

You are a member of the United Nations and have been sent out to monitor the establishment of an emerging democracy. You must trace the establishment and development of the key democratic institutions – Iraq / Afghanistan could be useful examples.

Scenario 2

You are suffragette or a man not eligible to vote – you are going to campaign outside the Houses of Parliament, write your protest speech highlighting why you should be given the vote.

Scenario 3

The global context of elections – you recently voted for the pro-democracy candidate, who has won the majority vote but the military and existing ruling party have claimed election victory and have put the pro-democracy candidate under house arrest, all foreign journalists have been banned from reporting to the outside world. You must write an online blog explaining what has happened and attempt to draw international attention and support for democracy in your country. Examples to draw on could include Zimbabwe, Iran and Burma.

Scenario 4

You are an ex-pat member of the Chinese community living in Northern Ireland, you are trying to support pro-democracy campaigners back home in China, you must plan out a campaign slogan and media awareness strategy to encourage support from your school, your NI Assembly member, your local MP and MEP.



Resource 4: 'Politics' Young Life & Times Survey Results

Answer the following questions by investigating the survey results on Politics (2003 onwards) available at: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/results/yltpolatt2.html>

1. How interested in politics are young people in Northern Ireland, how, if at all, has this changed over time?

- **POLITICS:** *How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics?* [2004](#) [2005](#) [2006](#) [2007](#)
- **KNOWPOL:** *How much do you feel you know about politics in Northern Ireland?* [2004](#) [2005](#) [2006](#) [2007](#)
- **POL67A, POL67B, POL67C:** *What three social and political issues interest you most?* [2004](#)

2. By examining the results, give some reasons why young people aren't interested in politics.

- **SCHLPOL:** *Should schools be required to provide lessons and discussion about politics?* [2004](#)
- **ACTPOL:** *Is being active in politics a waste of time?* [2004](#)
- **SAYRUN:** *Do you want a say in how the country is run?* [2004](#)
- **POLVIEWS:** *Do politicians or parties represent your views?* [2004](#)
- **LANGPOL:** *Is the language politicians use easy to understand?* [2004](#)
- **INVPOL:** *When people like you get involved in politics, can they change the way things are run?* [2004](#) [2007](#)
- **VOTELECT:** *Is it worth voting at elections?* [2004](#)

3. What percentage of young people took action on an issue that was important to them by either raising money for charity, boycotting a product, signing a petition or attending a demonstration?

- **SPONEVNT:** *In the last 12 months have you taken part in a sponsored event?* [2004](#)
- **DEMOPART:** *In the last 12 months have you taken part in a demonstration, picket or march?* [2004](#)
- **PETITION:** *In the last 12 months have you signed a petition?* [2004](#)
- **POLBADGE:** *In the last 12 months have you worn a political badge?* [2004](#)
- **CAMPBEF:** *In the last 12 months have you campaigned for a group or charity?* [2004](#)
- **FUND:** *In the last 12 months have you helped raise funds for charity?* [2004](#)
- **BOYCOTT:** *In the last 12 months have you boycotted certain products?* [2004](#)
- **POLIPART:** *In the last 12 months have you joined a political party?* [2004](#)
- **NONEFAB:** *In the last 12 months have you done none of the above?* [2004](#)
- **OTHEROPT:** *In the last 12 months have you taken part in other political activities?* [2004](#)
- **PERSPOLI:** *Have you ever been involved in any political activities?* [2007](#)



Resource 5: 'Environment & Global Issues' Young Life & Times Survey Results

Answer the following questions by investigating the survey results on the environment and global issues (2003 onwards) available at: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/results/yltenv.html>

1. What are the main environmental and global issues of concern for 16 year olds in Northern Ireland?
2. List these concerns in order of priority as reflected in the survey results.
3. How do the views of males and females differ?
4. As a group, discuss and rank the issues in order of importance (1 being the most important, 5 being the least important).

- **INTDEV:** *Are you interested in finding out about children's lives in developing countries?*
- **INFODEV:** *How do you find out about what is happening in developing countries?*
- **DEVCONCN:** *How concerned are you about people not having enough to eat?*
- **HELPDEV:** *Can you personally or your family do anything to help children in developing countries?*
- **HELPDEVM:** *How do you think you can help people in developing countries?*
- **MDEATHS:** *In 2005, which led to the most child deaths globally?*
- **ENVIMP1:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: air pollution*
- **ENVIMP2:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: global warming/climate change*
- **ENVIMP3:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: damage to the ozone layer*
- **ENVIMP4:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: noise pollution*
- **ENVIMP5:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: water pollution*
- **ENVIMP6:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: litter*
- **ENVIMP7:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: waste management e.g. recycling*
- **ENVIMP8:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: using up natural resources*
- **ENVIMP9:** *Are these environmental issues important to you: loss of plants, animals and habitats*
- **ENVACT1:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: air pollution*
- **ENVACT2:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: global warming/climate change*
- **ENVACT3:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: damage to the ozone layer*
- **ENVACT4:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: noise pollution*
- **ENVACT5:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: water pollution*
- **ENVACT6:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: litter*
- **ENVACT7:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: waste management e.g. recycling*



- **ENVACT8:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: using up natural resources*
- **ENVACT9:** *Can you make a difference through your actions to: loss of plants, animals and habitats*