

# EU Lesson Plan Template

**Title of Lesson Plan:** Social Protections and the European Union

**Grades:** 6

**Description:** In this lesson, students will explore the commitment of the European Union to improving the quality of life of its residents by studying the social welfare system of Denmark.

**Time:** 60 minutes

## Objectives:

1. Students will explain how governments deal with issues of justice and injustice.
2. Students will identify the relationships between people and their governments.
3. Students will list the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the EU.
4. Students will compare the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the EU to citizens in the United States.

## Materials Needed:

1. Venn Diagram Handout (attached)
2. Denmark Social Protection Overview (attached)

## Background Resources for Teacher Reference:

Website detailing EU Social Protection Policies:

<http://www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/s02309.htm>

Website detailing rights of Danish Citizens:

<http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/>

## Directions:

1. Begin by asking students to brainstorm a list of all of the challenges that individuals and families must face in order to survive. Place an emphasis on finding a good job, taking care of children, fighting against unexpected illnesses, taking care of older relatives, paying for college etc.
2. Ask students whether or not every family is capable of meeting these challenges equally in the United States. Draw attention to the fact that some families are better prepared than others.
3. Introduce the following quote---which describes the EU's Social Protection philosophy---to students: *One of the core principles of the European Union is a sense of commitment to improving the quality of life for residents in all of its member nations. Their hope is to limit the impact that unemployment, poor health, invalidity, family situations and old age have on people. Their goal is to "guarantee access to services that are vital to the preservation of human dignity."*

4. Explain that the EU places great value on increasing the quality of life in all member nations---including those that are still developing. As a result, the EU requires member nations to develop a system of "social protections" that are offered equally to all residents.
5. Work with students to brainstorm initial reactions to this idea. Consider asking these questions: ***What are the advantages of requiring nations to develop social protections for their residents?*** [equal coverage for all, increased quality of life for all, less disparity between the rich and the poor] ***What are the disadvantages of requiring nations to develop social protections for their residents?*** [increased taxes are required to pay for services, government gets more power and control over life]. ***How does the United States provide social protections for residents?*** [there are some social protections for poor people, but the majority of social protections are provided by employers and vary greatly depending on where someone works.]
6. Explain that students will be studying the social protections that Denmark---an EU member state since 1973---offers to its people and comparing those protections to those offered in the United States.
7. Break students into groups of 4. Hand out worksheet detailing the social protections in Denmark and the United States. Have each group member select one category to study: Healthcare, Raising Children, Elderly Care, the Work World.
8. Allow students to work in like-category groups to study their assigned topics. Have each group generate three unique facts about their topic to be shared on a classroom Venn diagram.
9. After like-category groups have generated their unique facts, ask students to return to their original groups and report out on the social protection that they studied. While members are reporting out, ask groups to complete the Venn diagram [attached] highlighting similarities and differences between the social protections offered to citizens in Denmark and the United States.
10. As a whole class, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the system of social protections in Denmark [Strengths: equal access to protections for all residents regardless of social standing, lifelong protections, services allow for a stress-free life. Weaknesses: much higher taxes, greater demand for services can lead to limited access, government is much larger and has more control over the lives of people.]
11. As a whole class, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the system of social protections in the United States [Strengths: few limits on access as long as you can afford the services, much lower taxes, much smaller government. Weaknesses: quality of protections varies depending on social standing, families must worry about how to provide these services]

### **Assessment:**

Ask students to respond to the following questions in a short paragraph:

"The EU expects member nations to develop a system of social protections that help residents with challenges like day care, healthcare, education and unemployment. The

goal of this requirement is to improve the quality of life for all residents. On a scale from one to ten, rate Denmark's efforts to meet the EU's expectations for social protections. Be sure to defend your rating with 3-5 detailed, elaborate sentences. Also, be sure to include specific strengths and weaknesses in Denmark's social protection system."

**Extension:**

Ask students interested in further study to work on the following task:

"As the EU continues to add new member nations from Eastern Europe, concern is spreading in Western European countries about the impact that new waves of immigrants will have on the social protection systems designed in nations like Denmark. Spend some time exploring the Migrant World feature on the BBC News website ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/special/migration/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/special/migration/default.stm)) to learn more about this issue. Find a creative way to share what you learn."

**Educational Content Standards**

This lesson meets the following objectives from the North Carolina Standards for sixth grade social studies:

**9.03** Identify the ways in which governments in selected areas of South America and Europe deal with issues of justice and injustice, and assess the influence of cultural values on their practices and expectations.

**10.01** Trace the development of relationships between individuals and their governments in selected cultures of South America and Europe, and evaluate the changes that have evolved over time.

**10.02** Identify various sources of citizens' rights and responsibilities, such as constitutions, traditions, and religious law, and analyze how they are incorporated into different government structures.

**10.03** Describe rights and responsibilities of citizens in selected contemporary societies in South America and Europe, comparing them to each other and to the United States.

Bill Ferriter  
Salem Middle School

# Social Protections and the European Union

## Case Study: Denmark

*One of the core principles of the European Union is a sense of commitment to improving the quality of life for residents in all of its member nations. Their hope is to limit the impact that unemployment, poor health, invalidity, family situations and old age have on people. Their goal is to "guarantee access to services that are vital to the preservation of human dignity."*

*As a result, all member nations are required to develop a system of protections for their people---and to offer those protections to citizens of any EU country that moves to their land. The chart below details the system of protections that are offered in Denmark and compares them to the system of protections offered in the United States.*

Denmark System of Protections	United States System of Protections
<p><b>Healthcare:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Denmark has a healthcare system that is run by the government.</li> <li>2. Residents get free visits to doctors and hospitals.</li> <li>3. Most prescriptions for medicines are paid for by the government. There are some restrictions, though, depending on how many medicines a person is taking.</li> <li>4. Children get free dental care until the age of 18. Adults must pay for their dental visits.</li> <li>5. Sometimes you may not be able to get an appointment right away. Visits are scheduled according to need.</li> <li>6. For some treatments, you might be placed on a long waiting list. Some Danes will go to private doctors and hospitals to get treatment quicker. When they do, however, they must pay for this treatment.</li> <li>7. When parents have children who are seriously ill, they are given reimbursement for the hours that they miss from work while their children are sick.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Healthcare:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The United States does not have a healthcare system that is run by the government.</li> <li>2. Instead, people generally get healthcare from the company that they are working for.</li> <li>3. Healthcare is not free in the United States. The amount of money that you pay for doctor visits and medicines depends on the type of plan that is offered by the company you work for.</li> <li>4. Many people in the United States who are unemployed--or who don't work full time for a company--may not have any healthcare coverage at all, or may have very basic healthcare.</li> <li>5. You can generally get any medical treatment that you want quickly---as long as you can afford it.</li> <li>6. When parents have children who are seriously ill, they can take a certain amount of time off from work without losing pay. The amount of time allowed is determined by the company they work for.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Raising Children:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Denmark tries to make having children easy and affordable for families.</li> <li>2. Mothers are given one full year off from work at full salary whenever a child is born.</li> <li>3. Pre-school and day care for children between the ages of 3 and 5 is nearly free for all residents. Parents pay a fee based on the amount of money that they make at their jobs. Almost 90% of children between the ages of 3-5 go to pre-school.</li> <li>4. After-school care is offered for free to all students and families.</li> <li>5. Parents must put their children on a waiting list to get into day care centers. Sometimes, their child</li> </ol>	<p><b>Raising Children:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When children are born, mothers and fathers can take 12 weeks of work and receive their full salaries. Some companies may allow mothers and fathers to take more than 12 weeks off, but they are unlikely to be paid for this time.</li> <li>2. Pre-school and day care is provided for free for a very small percentage of Americans who earn low wages. Most Americans, however, must pay the full cost of day care and pre-school for their children.</li> <li>3. Families who need after-school care for children must purchase it from individuals or businesses.</li> <li>4. While there may be waiting lists for day care and after-school care programs, parents will</li> </ol>

<b>Denmark System of Protections</b>	<b>United States System of Protections</b>
<p>may not get a spot in the day care center that was their parents' first choice.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. College tuition is also free for all residents. Students must pay for food and housing while in college, but they can generally get loans and grants to pay for these costs.</li> <li>7. The Danish government sets a "student intake level" for all education programs. This level determines how many Danish college students can study to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists etc.</li> </ol>	<p>always be able to choose the program they want their child to enter---as long as they can afford it!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. While there are many grants and scholarships available for students interested in going to college, the majority of Americans end up paying for their own college education.</li> <li>6. There are no limits on the number of students that can study to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists etc. Students choose what they want to study and colleges set entrance requirements for each of their programs.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Elderly Care:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People in Denmark can retire at the age of 65.</li> <li>2. All residents are eligible for a pension from the government. A pension is a sum of money that helps elderly people to pay for their bills after they retire.</li> <li>3. Elderly people who need help with things around the house can get that help for free.</li> <li>4. Elderly people who need a lot of help can get a spot in an elderly community for free. There are often long waiting lists for these spots, however.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Elderly Care:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People in the United States can retire at the age of 65.</li> <li>2. All residents are eligible for something called "Social Security," which provides a small sum of money to help elderly people pay for their bills.</li> <li>3. Most residents also save money while working to help pay bills after they retire. The quality of your life after retiring really depends on how much money you save before retiring.</li> <li>4. Most elderly people who need help with things around the house must pay for those services.</li> <li>5. Elderly people who need a lot of help can get spots in elderly communities, but must also pay for those services. The quality of the services that you receive depends on how much you can afford to pay.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Work World:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employees in Denmark pay very high taxes on the salaries that they earn. Most people give 60% of their salaries back to the government in order to help pay for the services offered to everyone by the country.</li> <li>2. An employee can be fired at any time with little or no notice. Unemployed workers, however, are given financial support that is nearly equal to their original salary by the government.</li> <li>3. Unemployed workers are also given training to prepare them for a new career.</li> <li>4. Unemployed workers must take jobs that are offered to them on one day's notice. If they turn down a job, they lose the support of the government.</li> </ol>	<p><b>The Work World:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employees in America also pay taxes, but not nearly as many taxes as Danes. The amount of money that an employee pays in taxes depends on how much money they earn. The poorest Americans pay about 10% of their salaries in taxes. The richest Americans pay about 35% of their salaries in taxes.</li> <li>2. While employees can be fired in America with little or no notice, there are generally more rules protecting workers that make firing someone difficult.</li> <li>3. Unemployed workers are eligible for limited financial support and training from the government.</li> <li>4. Unemployed workers have the freedom to take jobs that interest them, but benefits only last between 15 and 30 weeks.</li> </ol>

## **Social Protections and the European Union**

Venn Diagram

*Working in a group of four, complete the Venn diagram below comparing the social protections offered to residents of the United States and residents of Denmark.*

**Denmark**

**The United States**

