

## The Rule of Law – Why Rules and Laws Matter

### Lesson plan

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<b>Title of activity:</b> The Rule of Law – Why Rules and Laws Matter	<b>Subject area:</b> Citizenship Education / Social Studies / History
<b>Grade level:</b> Lower Secondary Education (approx. 13 years)	<b>Duration:</b> 1 lesson period (50–60 minutes)

**Context:** applicable in all EU countries (general, non-country-specific explanation)

**Learning Objectives:**

After this activity, pupils will be able to:

- understand why societies need rules and laws;
- be familiar with the basic principles of the democratic rule of law;
- experience that everyone is equal before the law;
- think critically about justice and decision-making;
- be introduced to how laws are made.

**Teaching method:**

Active and experiential learning  
 Cooperative learning (working in small groups)

**Teaching techniques:**

Group work  
 Short pitch (explanation of legislative proposal)  
 Role play/simulation  
 Voting procedure (ballot papers)  
 Class discussion  
 Reflection questions

**Materials / Resources / Technology use:**

- Board or digital screen
- Paper and pens (or tablets/laptops)
- Democracy worksheet (Appendix 1)
- Template for group work on mini party programme (Appendix 2)
- Ballot paper The rule of law (Appendix 3)
- PPT The rule of law (Appendix 4)

## The Rule of Law – Why Rules and Laws Matter

### **Activity Description:**

#### **Motivational phase: Introduction – 'Life without rules?' (5 min)**

Educational discussion

PPT The rule of life (Appendix 4)

Let pupils experience why rules and laws are necessary.

#### **Teacher:**

"Imagine: tomorrow there are no more rules."

"Not at school." "Not on the street." "Not online."

"What would happen?"

#### **Pupil:**

"Everyone does what they want."

"There's a fight."

"The strongest win."

"No one feels safe."

#### **Teacher:**

"Would that be fair to everyone?"

"What will happen then?"

#### **Pupil:**

"No."

"Some people have more power." Abuse of power, chaos, arbitrariness,

"You are not protected."

#### **Teacher:**

"What can we conclude from this?"

What is needed?

**Pupil:** rules, agreements

**Teacher: In this lesson, we will discover:**

**Why society needs laws and how those laws come about?**

**LEARNING PHASE: What is the Rule of Law and how are laws created?**

**What is the Rule of Law? (5 min)**

Educational discussion

**Teacher:** Can you translate this concept? Rule? Law?

**Pupil:** "Rules?", "Laws?", "Court?",...

**Teacher: (explanation, interactive):** "Rule of Law

To govern a country, clear agreements are needed that everyone must comply with. We also call these agreements laws.

**Teacher:** "Who do laws apply to?"

**Pupil:** "Everyone."

## The Rule of Law – Why Rules and Laws Matter

**Teacher writes key words on the board:**

**-Rule of law**

**-laws apply to everyone**

**Teacher:** What happens when someone breaks the rules/does not comply with them?

**Pupil:** They may receive a sanction, fine or penalty.

**Teacher:** Rules are enforceable. A sanction can be imposed. By whom?

**Pupil (possible answers)** "A judge." "The court."

Teacher notes down key words:

Enforcement, monitoring and sanctions are carried out by independent persons.

Example: competent courts are independent.

**How are laws made? (EU-wide, schematic) (10 min)**

**Teaching method: lecturing**

**PPT: Appendix 4**

**Worksheet Rule of law: Appendix 1**

The teacher explains that in democratic countries (EU), laws are usually created as follows:

From bill to law

**Phase 1 – Problem or idea**

There is a problem or an idea in society.

Example: The use of e-scooters is increasing the number of accidents.

**Stage 2 – Bill**

Politicians (members of parliament) draft a bill: a plan for a new regulation.

For example, scooters may travel at a maximum speed of 25 km/h and wearing a helmet on a scooter is mandatory.

**Phase 3 – Discussion in Parliament**

Parliament discusses the proposal. They listen, debate and sometimes make amendments.

**Phase 4 – Voting**

Members of Parliament vote.

Majority in favour → the proposal goes ahead.

No majority → the proposal is rejected.

**Phase 5 – Ratification**

After approval, the law is officially confirmed (by the government/head of state, depending on the country).

**Phase 6 – Implementation**

The law is published in the official gazette and enforced. Everyone must comply with and obey the law.

## The Rule of Law – Why Rules and Laws Matter

What happens if you do not comply with the law: you may be subject to sanctions.

**Teacher:** We are now going to experience for ourselves in class how this works in practice.

**As a follow-up to the Democracy@school lesson, we are organising a mini-parliament@school.**

**Duration: 7 minutes preparation, 3 minutes presentation per group.**

**Working method: cooperative learning**

**Group work: see worksheet Democracy@school: the rule of law (Appendix 2)**

**Teacher:** During the previous lessons, you worked in groups to develop recommendations for your school's management. The headteacher agreed to the following rule that you proposed:

**Rule:**

.....

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**Teacher:** Now you are going to develop this rule into a 'real law'.

We will work in the same groups as in the Democracy@school project. Each group will fill in one sheet. The group chair will explain the bill.

**Teacher:** You will write a bill in which you answer the following questions:

What does this rule mean in concrete terms?

When do you break the rule?

What is a fair penalty?

Who monitors this?

Is the penalty the same for everyone?

**After the presentation, the teacher will post the bill on the board.**

**After all groups have explained their bill, the teacher summarises the proposals.**

**Meanwhile, the teacher draws a table on the board with:**

**Name of party and keyword of bill**

**After the presentation of all bills, a class vote is held on each proposal.**



**Ballot paper in Appendix 3.**

**Which proposals receive a majority of votes?**

**Who will determine the penalty/sanction for non-compliance with the rule/law?**

**Synthesis: link back to diagram showing progression from bill to law.**

**(but with attention to the specific situation of schools)**

**FINAL PHASE (5 min)**

**Reflective teaching and learning discussion**

**Teacher:** "Who can explain in one sentence what the Rule of Law means?"

**Pupils:** "That rules and laws apply to everyone", "That no one is above the law", "That rules are fair", Rules are enforceable. Anyone who does not comply with them will be punished.

The selected legislative proposals are compiled and given to the headteacher. Who knows, they may even be incorporated into the school rules!

**Feedback:**

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=wxLA5YicUUGxofy7tigPKdAUtP7RNGxKioYHLGL7ZVBUODJYUVkxSzBEWkUwMFIEVjhPTDNMSzkwQS4u>