ESC4SDG

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Case Study

ESC4SDG Project

Escape Games and Gamified Challenges for Sustainable Development Goals

Erasmus+ KA220-SCH | Project No 2025-1-LT01-KA220-SCH-000356191

0. Case details

Title of the escape room	Lessons of Inequality in Interwar Europe
Country	Siauliai University School, Lithuania
Subject(s)	History
Grade / age group	10th grade (2nd year of Gymnasium, 16 years old)
Number of students	25
SDG addressed	Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10) Reduce inequality within and among countries

1. Pedagogical purpose

Subject and curricular unit / content	Students analyze the causes of the rise of totalitarian regimes and discuss how economic inequality (the post-war crisis and the Great Depression) became one of the main factors leading to the establishment of totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy, and Russia.
Learning outcomes (2–3, observable)	1. Students will be able to explain how the implementation of SDG 10 in a country helps prevent the rise of dictatorship. 2. Students will be able to assess the importance of reducing economic inequality in safeguarding democracy within a country.
Key competences	1. Civic Competence: Students understand the importance of preserving democracy. 2. Cognitive Competence: Students understand past and present global processes that impact people's lives.

2. SDG and playable problem

SDG chosen	
Specific SDG target	SDG Target 10.2: Promote universal social, economic, and political inclusion

Problem presented to students	Can today's growing economic and social inequality among people, along with recent events in various countries (such as current protests in Italy, France, Poland, etc.), create conditions for the rise of radical parties aiming to establish dictatorships, as occurred during the Interwar period?
Curricular justification	Students analyze the rise of interwar totalitarian regimes driven by inequality within countries. They also examine current European events, realizing that the issues relevant in interwar Europe have not disappeared and remain pressing today. Students come to understand that social justice and equality within a country are essential prerequisites for ensuring peace and safeguarding human rights.

3. Narrative and structure · MOOC Task 3

Students' mission	Based on historical sources, students analyze the causes and manifestations of the post-war crisis and the Great Depression, and discuss how these conditions enabled the rise of radical parties (e.g., the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Fascists in Italy, and the Nazis in Germany). They examine the goals and targets of SDG 10, discussing the mistakes made by interwar politicians that failed to prevent the establishment of totalitarian regimes. Finally, students formulate arguments on why tackling inequality within a country is crucial today and how it helps prevent the rise of dictatorships.
Students' role	Political scientists
Narrative context	The economic crises that arose in Interwar Europe after World War I, along with the Great Depression of 1929, deepened economic and social inequality among people across nations. Democratic politicians often failed to manage these crises due to frequent government turmoil, internal disagreements, and political infighting, in which politicians frequently blamed one another for unmade decisions. These situations led to the consolidation of dictatorships, as people came to believe that only a "strong hand" could solve the mounting problems; consequently, they supported radical parties promising salvation. Students must not only examine the mistakes made in the past, but also—drawing on contemporary contexts and SDG 10—discuss why it is vital not to repeat these same mistakes, as doing so is essential for preserving democracy within countries.
Opening story (max. 10 lines)	In Europe, economic crises following World War I left a vast majority of people unemployed. Men who had fought in the war and risked their lives were often left living in extreme poverty, unable to support their families. Politicians and governments proved incapable of solving these domestic issues due to endless infighting and mutual accusations. Capitalizing on public anger and rising inequality, leaders of radical parties rose to power and established dictatorships, which ultimately resulted in the total abolition of human rights. Today, the divide between different social groups is growing once again. Across Europe, ongoing strikes and protests aim to reduce this disparity as frustration with governing authorities mounts. Can reducing inequality protect modern democracy from collapse? As young political researchers, your task is to prepare several arguments addressing this question.

Type of structure	Students cannot proceed to the next stage until they identify the causes that allowed totalitarian regimes to establish themselves in various countries. In the next stage, they analyze the SDGs and identify at least one mistake made by politicians that prevented democracies from being preserved. In the final stage, they formulate arguments for the discussion space.
Final goal of the game	Once students present at least two arguments explaining why tackling inequality within a country is vital today and how it helps prevent the rise of dictatorships.

4. Challenges and cognitive progression

At least three challenges, from basic to high cognitive level (Bloom's taxonomy). Add rows if needed.

Challenge / level	Description	Learning evidence	Planned hint	Solution
1. Basic (remember / understand)	Students search for evidence that factors caused by the economic crisis were among the main causes behind the consolidation of totalitarianism.	Students review and read all the provided historical sources, then complete the multiple-choice tasks beneath each source	Keywords in the text are highlighted to make it easier to find the correct answers.	Students find at least two causes (e.g., poverty, unemployment, etc.)
2. Intermediate (apply / analyse)	After reading the provided historical sources, students offer ideas on how to prevent dictatorships based on the SDGs, but fail to provide examples of historical events to support their opinion.	Students review and read all the provided historical sources, then provide well-reasoned answers to the questions beneath each source	Historical event examples are provided alongside detailed explanations.	Formulates and records at least two well-supported arguments.
3. High (evaluate / create)	After reading the provided historical sources, students clearly articulate and provide concrete examples of how to prevent dictatorships using the SDGs as a framework.	Students review and read all the provided historical sources, respond to the questions beneath each source with well-reasoned arguments, and support their opinion with specific historical events.	Examples of historical events are provided.	Students present and write down at least two arguments, supporting their opinion with detailed examples (e.g., expanding social guarantees, developing public works programs, etc.)

5. Assessment and inclusion

Mini-rubric (3 observable criteria × 3 performance levels)

Criterion	Developing	Achieved	Excellent
1. Historical Analysis	Recognizes two consequences of the economic crisis in interwar sources, but fails to connect them to the establishment of dictatorships.	Identifies 2–3 causes of inequality and correctly explains how they weakened public trust in democratic institutions.	Thoroughly analyzes interwar sources, identifies more than two causes of inequality, and accurately explains which specific factors fostered the consolidation of totalitarian regimes.
2. Links to the SDGs	Using clue words/keywords, students identify the connection between past events and the provisions of SDG 10.	Correctly compares the errors made by interwar politicians based on the targets of SDG 10, identifying at least two fundamental past mistakes.	Provides a well-reasoned comparison between interwar policies and Target 10.2 of SDG 10, highlighting equal opportunity as a core guarantee of societal resilience against dictatorships.
3. Civic Argumentation	Conclusion provided without supporting argumentation.	Formulates a clear conclusion supported by at least two arguments.	Justifies a clear conclusion by providing concrete examples from historical events.

Self-assessment mechanism	Completes a reflection answering guided questions to evaluate acquired knowledge, challenges faced, and solutions implemented. Upon completing all tasks, students receive a final award (e.g., a medal).
Inclusive adaptations (UDL) – at least 2	1. Historical sources are provided with visual materials. 2. Texts are provided with audio narration (audio-enabled)

6. Implementation in the classroom

Implementation	Timing: 1:30 hours (90 minutes total). 15 minutes are allocated for task introduction and rules. 20 minutes for task completion, 5 minutes for reflection, and 10 minutes for a teacher-led discussion of the tasks. (Note: The remaining time can be flexibly used across collaborative group work and interactive stages). Lesson Workflow & Rules: 1. Students are introduced to the topic and the core guiding question. 2. Students are divided into mixed-ability groups of 3–4 learners. 3. Students complete tasks sequentially; completing each task correctly unlocks the next one (3 tasks in total). A robust discussion space is crucial so students can collaborate during the tasks, allowing the teacher to step in at any time to guide those who stray from the topic. 4. Students complete the reflection and receive a final reward.
Difficulties	1. Students may take too long to complete tasks and run out of time. 2. Not all students may actively engage in the group work.
Areas for improvement	1. A brief theoretical introduction prior to the tasks to ensure students are familiar with core background information. 2. Provide clear hints/scaffolding for students who struggle with the tasks, while awarding bonus points to those who finish early, as well as granting extra points for peer-to-peer support (helping a classmate).

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