

EU in Practice: Product Safety & the CE Mark



*A companion learning toolkit
for educators*



Overview

This toolkit accompanies the EU in Practice episode on CE marking, helping learners understand how European product safety systems work in everyday life.

The activities encourage learners to explore how invisible regulatory systems shape trust, safety, and markets across Europe.

Target Audience

Suitable for:

- Upper secondary school (15–18)
- Vocational education and training
- University introductory courses
- Youth work and civic education programmes

No prior EU policy knowledge is required.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, learners should be able to:

- Recognise the CE mark and understand what it represents
- Explain why shared product safety rules matter in a single market

- Understand how trust in products depends on regulatory systems
- Reflect on how invisible governance systems shape everyday life
- Practice identifying responsibility within complex systems

Session Length

Flexible depending on use:

- Short session: 45–60 minutes
- Full workshop: 75–90 minutes

Materials Needed

- EU in Practice explainer video (CE episode)
- Printed or digital activity sheets
- Everyday products (optional but recommended)
- Whiteboard or digital collaboration tool

Activity 1 – The Symbol Hunt

Duration

10–15 minutes

Instructions

Ask learners to look for the CE mark on objects around them.

Possible items:

- phone chargers
- headphones
- power adapters
- laptops
- toys
- small appliances

If physical objects are not available, learners can check items in their bags or search product images online.

Questions

Learners answer on Activity Sheet 1:

1. How many products around you have the CE mark?
2. Did you ever notice it before today?
3. What did you think it meant?

Debrief

Ask learners:

- Why do you think most people ignore this symbol?
- What does it say about systems that work quietly?

Key insight:

The CE mark is designed to be visible but not intrusive.

Activity 2 – What Happens Without Shared Rules?

Duration

15 minutes

Scenario

Divide learners into groups and present this scenario:

A company designs a toy and wants to sell it across Europe. Each country requires different safety tests, certifications, and approvals.

Group Task

Groups discuss:

1. What problems would manufacturers face?
2. What problems would consumers face?
3. How would this affect prices, innovation, and trust?

Debrief

Introduce the idea that:

Fragmented rules make markets smaller and less predictable.

Explain how CE marking helped create the European single market for goods.

Activity 3 – The Product Safety Investigation

Duration

20 minutes

Case Study

Provide learners with a scenario:

A charger sold across several EU countries overheats and causes fires.

Consumer authorities detect the problem.

Group Task

Each group answers:

1. How might regulators discover the problem?
2. What should happen next?
3. Who should be responsible for removing the product?
4. How can information spread quickly across countries?

Debrief

Explain that Europe uses product safety alert systems that allow authorities to coordinate quickly across the EU.

Key insight:

Safety systems are not just about preventing risks. They are about responding quickly when risks appear.

Activity 4 – Designing Trust

Duration

15 minutes

Reflection Exercise

Ask learners to think about everyday products they trust.

Examples:

- food packaging
- medicines
- electronics
- toys

Questions

1. Why do we trust these products?
2. What would change if safety systems disappeared?
3. Who should be responsible for ensuring product safety?

Discussion

Guide the group toward the idea that:

Trust in markets is not automatic, it is built through systems.

Closing Reflection

Ask learners to complete the sentence:

“After this activity, I realise that the CE mark is not just a label. It is _____.”

Allow several responses.

Key Takeaway

The CE mark is not just a symbol.

It represents a system that:

- protects consumers
- enables trade
- supports innovation

- and quietly connects European markets.

Extension Activities (Optional)

Research Task

Investigate another invisible EU system, such as:

- Roaming without borders
- The European Health Insurance Card
- Food safety networks

Creative Task

Design a poster titled:

“The Systems You Don’t Notice.”

Include examples of invisible infrastructure in everyday life.

Educator Guidance

The purpose of this toolkit is not to teach detailed regulatory law.

It is to develop systems literacy – the ability to recognise how institutions, rules, and cooperation shape everyday experiences.

When learners begin to notice these systems, they develop a deeper understanding of how governance works in practice.

EU in Practice Learning Series

This toolkit accompanies:

- the EU in Practice article
- the explainer video
- other episodes exploring everyday European systems

Educators and youth workers are encouraged to adapt and share these materials freely.

Because understanding how systems work is an essential part of civic literacy.