

Erasmus+ Jean Monnet

Project „EUCT: European Union Cool-tour: young people as citizens and promoters of European Culture”

Nr. 101127688 – EUCT

Heritage Guardians

Educational escape room



This activity is adapted for:

- a shared room/library/spaces where silence is desirable;*
- 30-35 min game;*
- 25-30 participants, 5 teams of 5-6 persons;*
- 5 stations per team.*

It is a simpler version of an activity, for demonstration purpose.

1. The concept

Each team has its own table and its own box, so nobody walks around the room, nothing is hidden on walls, and everyone plays in whispers. Puzzles are paper-based with small objects. Each team gets 5 envelopes, one per form of heritage:

- 1. ancient monument**
- 2. natural site**
- 3. industrial site**
- 4. intangible heritage**
- 5. transnational natural site.**

Envelopes 1–4 each give one digit; envelope 5 shows the order in which to read them. The four digits open the padlock on the final box, which holds the "DiscoverEU Passport".

2. Room layout and the "quiet rule"

- 5 tables/chairs (or floor mats) in a horseshoe, at least 1.5 m apart. Teams stay seated or standing around their table/chair.
- Everything is in the team's box. No hidden items in the room, to avoid crowding and disturbing the other activity.
- No buzzers or alarms. Time is shown on a projector or other kind of timer; facilitators move slowly and speak in whispers.
- Rule for the teacher-students: *"We talk as if in a library."* Each team picks a "volume monitor".
- Facilitators: 2 people (one for the clock and hints, one for observing). Hints are small sealed envelopes, 3 per team.

3. Materials (for 5 teams)

Per team	Total
1 lidded box (shoebox) + 1 four-digit padlock	5 boxes, 5 padlocks
5 envelopes numbered 1–5, sealed with a coloured leaf sticker	25 envelopes
3 hint envelopes	15 small envelopes
4 cards for Station 4 (letters on the back)	20 cards
Caesar disc (2 cardboard circles + paper fastener) for Station 3	5 discs
Pencils, 1 red pen, 1 "Mission Log" sheet	—
Role cards for 25–30 participants; a "DiscoverEU Passport" card in each box	1 per person

Leaf stickers: one each in 4 colours (light green, dark green, rust, white-grey) on envelopes 1–4. Envelope 5 has no sticker.

4. Story and roles

Read aloud at the start (2 minutes):

"You are 12th-graders, your school's delegates to the European Youth Parliament. You are

18, and your DiscoverEU journey is knocking at the door. But a virus called *GLITCH* has

wiped the European Heritage Map from the digital archive. Each team has a box with 5

fragment envelopes. Decode them all, find the code and reopen the archive before the

session expires: you have 30 minutes. Only an envelope opened in time saves a fragment."

Roles (each person picks one, 5 per team):

- **The Cartographer** – holds the map and does the counting.
- **The Linguist** – handles codes and letters.
- **The Detective** – spots details in images.

- The Timekeeper** – watches the clock and opens hints.
- The Reporter** – notes the fact learned at each station in the Mission Log.

In teams of 6, the sixth is "The Sceptic": questions every answer before the next envelope is opened.

5. The 5 stations

ENVELOPE 1 · RUST STICKER (AUTUMN) · ~6 MIN



Acropolis – ancient cultural heritage (Greece)

Material: a top-view sketch of a temple: a rectangle with a row of columns (dots). The

short side is covered with "glitch" noise. The long side shows 17 counted dots. The card

says: *"Classical Greek architects' rule: the long side has twice the columns of the front,*

plus one."

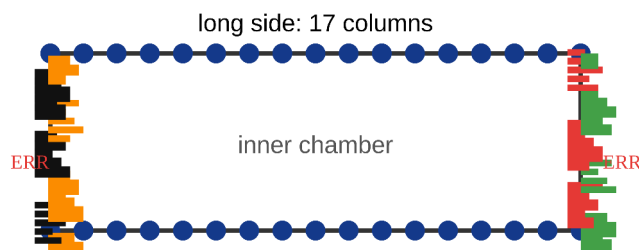
Task: How many columns does the front (short side) of the Parthenon have?

Solution: $17 = 2n + 1$, so $n = 8 \rightarrow$ digit **8**.

Hint: 1) Subtract 1 from 17. 2) Divide the result by 2.

Fact for the Log: The Parthenon, dedicated to Athena, is part of the Acropolis, a UNESCO site

since 1987 and a symbol of democracy and Doric architecture.



ENVELOPE 2 · LIGHT GREEN STICKER (SPRING) · ~6 MIN



Danube Delta – natural heritage (Romania)

Material: a simple map of the Danube's course with 10 countries marked by codes:

DE, AT, SK, HU, HR, **RS**, RO, BG, **MD**, **UA**. Card: "The Danube ends its journey in a

delta protected by UNESCO. Along the way it touches or crosses 10 countries. Cross out in

red those that are not EU member states. How many remain?"

Solution: RS, MD and UA are not in the EU → 7 remain → digit 7.

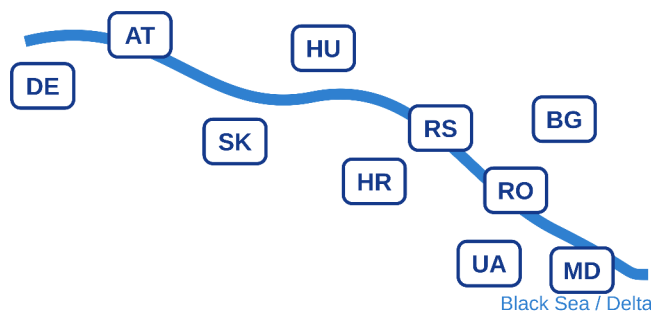
Hint: Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine – check the EU flag list on the back of the envelope (optional: the 27

member states).

Fact for the Log: The Danube Delta has the largest continuous reed bed in the world, is home to

pelicans and hundreds of bird species, and is a UNESCO biosphere reserve and World Heritage site

(1991).



ENVELOPE 3 · WHITE-GREY STICKER (WINTER) · ~7 MIN



Wieliczka Salt Mine – industrial heritage (Poland)

Material: a Caesar disc (two circles with the 26-letter Latin alphabet) and the message

VDOW IRXU. Card: "The miners left a message, but GLITCH scrambled it. Caesar shifted letters by 3 steps. How would you bring them back?"

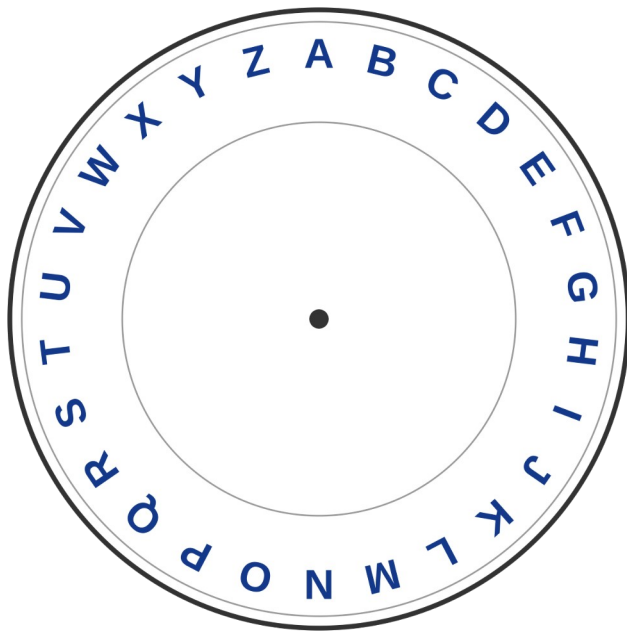
Solution: shift 3 letters back: V → S, D → A, O → L, W → T; I → F, R → O, X → U, U → R → "SALT FOUR"

→ digit 4.

Hint: 1) Turn the disc so that A sits under D. 2) Read the letter on the outer circle.

Fact for the Log: Wieliczka was on UNESCO's very first list (1978). It has chambers, chapels and

statues carved from salt, including the Chapel of St Kinga.



Message (exterior) V D O W I R X U
Real (interior) S A L T F O U R

ENVELOPE 4 · DARK GREEN STICKER (SUMMER) · ~7 MIN



Intangible heritage – song, dance, craft (4 countries)

Material: 4 shuffled cards. Front: picture + name. Back: one letter each. Cards: **Fado**

(song), **Flamenco** (dance), **Art of the Neapolitan pizzaiolo** (craft), **Căluș** (ritual

dance). A map of Europe with four countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Romania. Card:

"Match each element to its country, then line them up **from west to east**. Turn the cards over."

Solution: Portugal (Fado) – F, Spain (Flamenco) – I, Italy (Pizzaiolo) – V, Romania (Căluș) – E →

FIVE → digit 5.

Hint: Portugal is the westernmost country of mainland Europe, and Romania is the easternmost of

the four.

Fact for the Log: Intangible heritage means living traditions passed from generation to generation.

Every element here is on UNESCO's list. Bonus: Horezu pottery (Romania) is there too.

ENVELOPE 5 · NO STICKER · ~6 MIN

Primeval Beech Forests – transnational natural heritage (Carpathians and other

European regions)

Material: an image of 4 beech leaves in the colours of the year: light green (spring),

dark green (summer), rust (autumn), white-grey (winter). Card: "The beech lives by the

rhythm of the seasons. Read the digits from the 4 envelopes like a calendar year,

starting with spring. The leaf colour on each envelope tells you its season."

Solution (base version):

spring = envelope 2 (7)

, summer = envelope 4 (5),

autumn = envelope 1 (8),

winter = envelope 3 (4) → **7584**.

Hint: The order is not 1-2-3-4; look at the colours.

Fact for the Log: These beech forests form a transnational UNESCO site spanning several

European countries. Nature has no borders, and protecting it is a shared responsibility.

6. The finale

When the box opens, the team finds the "DiscoverEU Passport": a card with 5 stamps and the sentence *"Heritage doesn't belong to the past, but to those who carry it forward."* Each member writes on the back a travel wish or a heritage place from their own country.

Code variants to prevent copying between teams

Only change the stickers on envelopes 1–4. The digits stay the same (1 = 8, 2 = 7, 3 = 4, 4 = 5).

Team	Env. 1	Env. 2	Env. 3	Env. 4	Code
A	Autumn	Spring	Winter	Summer	7584
B	spring	summer	autumn	winter	8745
C	winter	autumn	summer	spring	5478
D	summer	winter	spring	autumn	4857
E	autumn	summer	winter	spring	5784

7. Timeline (35 min)

0–3 min	Story, roles, quiet rule
3–33 min	The game itself (visible clock, no alarms)
at minutes 15 and 25	Facilitator walks past teams and offers a hint on request only
33–35 min	Teams that haven't finished get the code on a card and open the box together

If a team is stuck, use the 3 hints in order 1-2-3. Fast teams complete the "Bonus task" in the box (see below).

8. Debrief and links to school (10 min, separate)

- Felt as a student:** How did it feel not to know? Who took the lead? Who stayed quiet?
- Heritage in class:** Which form of heritage (monument, landscape, tradition, industry) is under-represented in your lessons?

- Transfer:** Choose a heritage place from your town and turn it into a 5-minute "station".
- Subjects involved:** history, geography, biology, civics, foreign languages, arts, mathematics.
- Bonus task (for fast teams):** Pick a site from the European Heritage Label list and write 3 lines on the shared European story it hides.



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