

1. THEMATIC WALK - “What’s going on in Europe?”

The First World War involved different cultures and people from all over Europe. Each nation declared war for its own reason and through its own conditions.

We try now to simplify the complex web of alliances and movements during that period (1914-1918):

- **Austria-Hungarian empire** had lost its role as the most powerful nation in Central Europe, because of the birth of two new nations, Italy and Germany. To guarantee the ancient prestige, the Empire had to sign an alliance with the other two, the Triple Alliance and started to be interested in Balkan affairs.
- In the Balkans the political situation was worrying. After the Balkan wars – 1912/1913 – **Serbia**, protected by Russia, had extended its domination, and represented an example for the Serbian nationalists under the Austro-Hungarian throne.
- With the assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the war began. The Empire together with Germany declared war to Serbia, allied with Russia, very interested in the Balkan zone, because of the coastal outlet.
- **Germany** was considered the natural and first enemy of **France**, because of the Alsace and Lorraine matter. Moreover, the new emperor Wilhelm II had lost the young friendship with **England** and **Russia**, because of his warlike politics. At that time, these three nations had signed an alliance in 1904-1907, the Triple Entente.
- The political situation in the rest of the Balkans was difficult too, with Bosnia and Herzegovina only just annexed by Austria-Hungary; Bulgaria and its declaration of independence; Albania and its internal rebellions; moreover, Japan was coming out of the war against China signing an alliance with England, and the Ottoman Empire was slowly falling down.
- The ideal conditions for a war were ready in Europe since the first year of the 20th Century: problematic internal politics, economical rivalry between nations, warlike behaviour and militarism that accepted and actually sustained methods and values of war. The beginning of the conflict was welcomed with enthusiasm in each European capital.

QUESTIONS:

1. Make a list of all the nations involved in the First World War, when and why.
2. Role Game: each student chooses a nation and writes a speech to declare its reasons for a war.