



Europe:

What's it all about?



European Union

This brochure 'Europe: What's it all about?' and accompanying teachers' guide are available online at:

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Europe in everyday life



'Hi! We are Alice, Jello, Patricia, Motian and Janette from the Robert Jungk High School in Berlin, a comprehensive school with German-Polish classes on Europe. You will see us again in this magazine as we provide some important tips, interesting exercises, little quizzes and ideas for discussion. You will see, learning can also be fun!'

'Europe is somewhere else'. This statement is of course nonsense because, as EU citizens, Europe is our home. So we are right in the middle of it. Nevertheless, many people feel that Europe is a long way away, and this applies especially to the European Union, the grouping of European nations that want to build a future together. The aim of this chapter is to become a bit more familiar with the European Union. You will soon see: Europe — that is us.

Exercise

How far away is 'Brussels'?

We hear about the European Union every day on the news or read about it in the newspapers. However, many people are not interested in the EU. Why do you think this is?

- The EU is not important to our lives.
- The EU is much too complicated. The media don't report enough about the EU.
- All the important issues are decided in the Member States rather than Brussels or Strasbourg, so it is enough to get involved with national politics.
- Politics is generally boring.



Exercise

What about you?

My level of interest in the European Union is:

- very high, fairly high, moderate,
- low, very low, non-existent,

because _____

Europe — a short quiz

- How many countries belong to the European Union?
- 12 15 25
 - 28 30

How are Members of the European Parliament elected?

- They aren't. They are appointed by each country's Head of State at the suggestion of the Head of Government.
- In the parliamentary elections in each Member State, because Members of the European Parliament are also members of their national parliaments.
- They are delegated to the European Parliament by each of the national parliaments.
- In general elections with secret ballots, just like the Members of Parliament in their own countries.

How many of the EU Member States use the euro as their common currency?

- All EU Member States. The six founding countries.
- Thirteen countries. Seventeen countries.

In 2013 the EU is spending about €133 billion. What percentage of the EU countries' economic output — their gross domestic product (GDP) — do you think this represents?

- 80.9 % 50.2 %
- 15.3 % 0.99 %

The Court of Justice of the European Union upholds European law. Where is the Court based?

- In Lisbon. In Brussels.
- In Strasbourg. In Luxembourg.



Exercise

How is the EU relevant to us?

Ten examples

Our lives	Relevance of the EU	I think this is ...		
		very important	important	not important
Trade within Europe is expanding all the time. And it's not only the big corporations that are benefiting but also small and medium-sized enterprises. This all helps to safeguard jobs .	The creation of the European single market of 500 million people increased trade between the EU countries from €800 billion in 1992 to €2 540 billion in 2010.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making phone calls has become much cheaper in recent years.	The EU has liberalised the telecommunications market which means that national monopolies have been broken up and competition permitted. The EU intervenes directly where there is insufficient competition. For example, mobile calls abroad have become cheaper as a result of action by the European Parliament and the European Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flying has become much more reasonably priced in recent years, so now more young people and families with children can afford to travel by air.	Here also the EU has abolished national monopolies and has permitted competition. Now you can choose to fly from Hungary to France with a British airline. Passenger rights have also been strengthened. If you are left stranded at the airport because your plane was overbooked or you miss an appointment because it was seriously delayed, you can now get compensation for this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
So-called ' doorstep sales ', where people are talked into buying an encyclopaedia or a vacuum cleaner, for example, can be cancelled, so that the person who has been taken off guard does not lose anything. The same is true if you sign up to a magazine subscription or any sort of contract in the street	The EU has blocked such deals across Europe. Now, everyone gets the time to change their mind — even if they have already signed up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Our lives	Relevance of the EU	I think this is ...		
		very important	important	not important
The warranty period for consumer products such as electronic goods is now 2 years. This means, for example, that if a mobile phone goes wrong after 1 year, it is repaired or replaced without charge.	European regulations have created uniform time limits. The guarantee applies right across Europe. It also doesn't matter which EU country the customer bought the product in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental pollution knows no boundaries. We all need to breathe, so having clean air is obviously very important. And it has been improved in recent years.	The EU has introduced compulsory, Europe-wide quality standards for the air we breathe, and Member States must make sure that these standards are upheld.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water is for washing. But not only that: most importantly, we also drink it. Here its quality is crucial. No-one living in the EU need have any concern about turning on their taps and drinking the water that comes out of them.	For 10 years there have been EU quality standards for drinking water which all Member States must comply with.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travelling in Europe is very easy nowadays. There are no longer any border controls between most European countries.	The 'Schengen Agreement' has made border controls between its member countries unnecessary. This means, for example, that you can travel from the North Cape of Norway to Sicily without a single border control. Only the United Kingdom and Ireland are exempt. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are also not yet members of the Schengen area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EU citizens are just as able to work in another European country as they are in their own country. Anyone can decide where they prefer to live or where to look for work.	The EU has created freedom of movement within its internal market. Someone from Vienna can work in Brussels or Rome, London or Warsaw, just as easily as in Linz or Innsbruck.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unfortunately, you can fall ill or have an accident even when you are on holiday. So it's good to know that you can get medical treatment with no fuss and free of charge in any European country.	EU countries make their health insurance cover available to each other. You simply need to present your 'European Health Insurance Card' or an equivalent form, and you can concentrate on getting better instead of grappling with bureaucracy in a language you may not even speak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Exercise

What answers did your classmates come up with?

Mark each other's papers and discuss the results.

Exercise

The EU at home

Think of your daily life and your family. Where does the EU come into it? Think of some examples. Think about food and money, school and study, travel, shopping and working.



Education and studies in other EU countries

► Freedom of movement benefits not only workers but also tourists, pensioners, students and trainees.

For students, this mobility is promoted by the EU's 'Erasmus' programme. This provides students with the financial and organisational support for a spell abroad at a European partner university. There is a European points system to ensure that grades earned abroad are credited to their studies at home, so that spending a term abroad is not 'lost'.

For vocational trainees too, there is a special EU programme called 'Leonardo da Vinci' which provides money and

organisational support for a work placement away from home. Some 75 000 young EU citizens take advantage of this every year to complete part of their training in another country. The programme works in partnership with companies and institutions which subsequently advertise projects for which young people can apply (trainees and young employees, but also young unemployed people).

At the start, it might take quite an effort to get involved in a project like this in another country. But the experience that young people gain from it fully makes up for it.

Alice: 'Altogether around 2.5 million students and 300 000 trainees spent one or two terms in another EU country between 1987 and 2012 as part of the Erasmus programme. In 28 EU Member States and five other countries there are over 3 000 universities and colleges that have participated in this academic cooperation.'

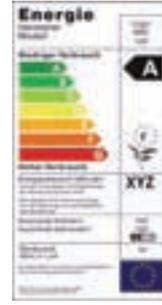
Exercise

Can you imagine spending a term or a year abroad, or even doing your whole course in another country?

Make a list of 'for and against' arguments.
Which side wins?

Arguments for a period of study abroad	Arguments against a period of study abroad
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

Now compare your results and discuss them.



Exercise

European symbols

Do you recognise the symbols and objects shown? Where can you find them? Think about what they have to do with Europe and our lives.

Europe in everyday life

► We started by asking why Europe seems so remote to many people. Different people may have different reasons.

But when we look more closely, we find that Europe, or rather the European Union, is actually all around us. It affects our lives in many areas.

Starting with money: the euro is a common currency; not all countries have adopted it, but more than half of them have. When we go on holiday to Austria, France or Spain, for example, we can pay for things in this common currency. And even in countries where the euro is not used, it is nevertheless accepted as a strong global currency. With the euro we are welcome all over the world.

Many people are so used to being able to travel anywhere in Europe that they hardly notice it. But not so long ago things were different. Then there were passport controls

and queues at the border and the customs officers wanted to know exactly what purchases you were bringing back with you.

Flying has become much cheaper. That is also down to the EU, which has abolished national monopolies. This means that there is no longer a national airline for each country, having a monopoly on certain routes and charging high prices. These days, every airline within the EU can fly wherever it wants. So, for example, you can now book a flight from Denmark to Spain with an Irish airline.

The fact that flying in the EU is safe is also due to common safety standards laid down by the EU for all Member States, which do not allow companies operating in conditions below essential safety levels to enter into European airspace.

Many of these regulations have come about thanks to the 'internal market'. If you

want to have a single market in which people can buy and produce things how and where they want, there have to be common rules.

The police forces in the EU also work closely together, and an EU body, Europol, coordinates the data. They are not supercops, charging around Europe with guns blazing, but national police officers who compile information on crime and criminals and make it available to police forces throughout the EU. This is always about serious crime. Europol is not concerned with illegal parking. It is concerned with human traffickers and drug smugglers, counterfeiters and sex offenders, stolen car dealers and Internet fraudsters, who are happy to exploit the open borders for their unscrupulous activities.

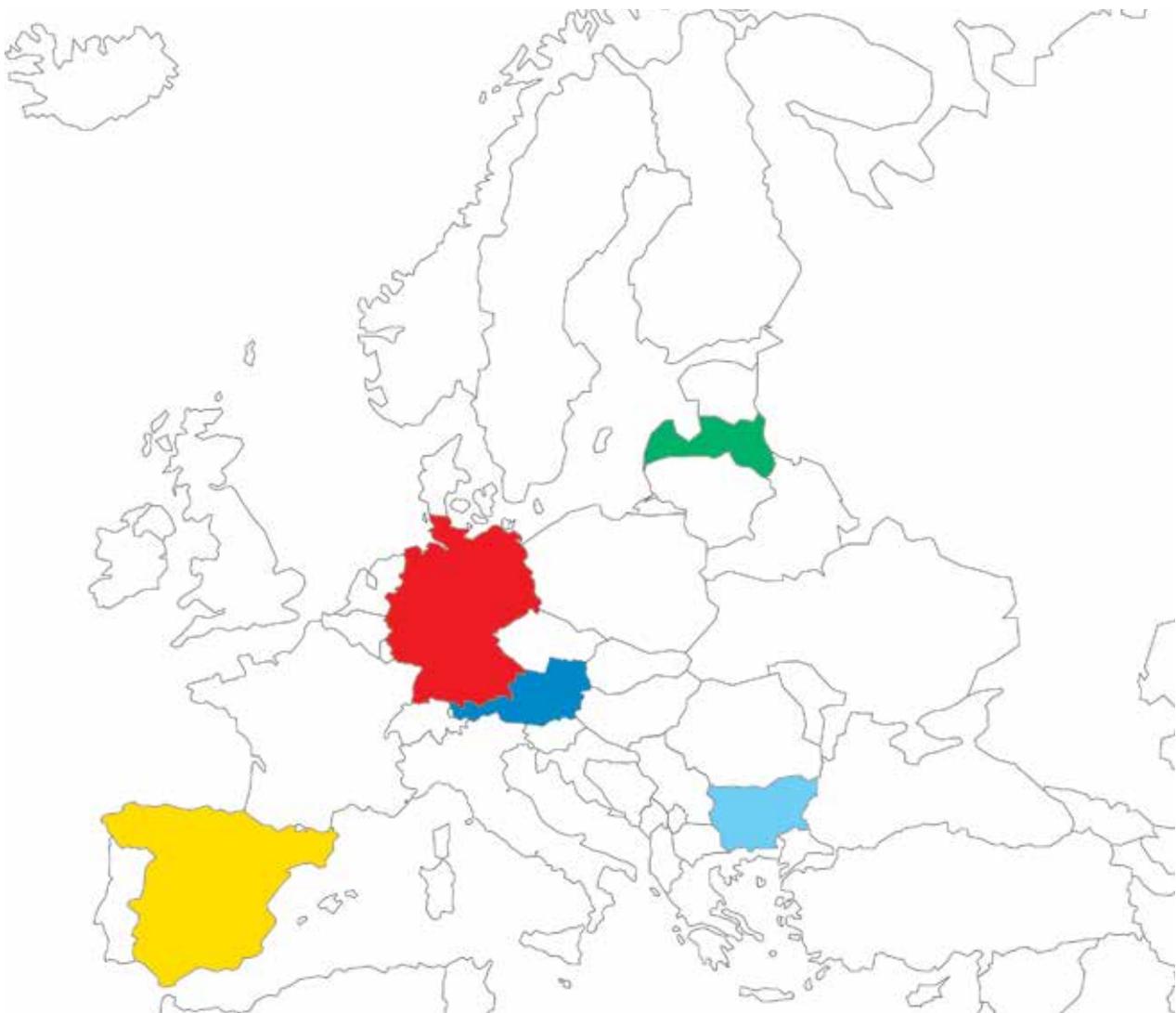
Environmental pollution does not stop at frontier signs. That is why the threat to our environment can only be tackled collectively. This

affects us directly, because we all breathe, we drink and consume water, and we eat the crops that grow in the fields. European environmental protection lays down common standards to ensure that one EU country cannot gain economic advantage over another by ignoring environmental rules and so producing cheaper goods. The requirement for fairness in the European single market safeguards jobs because it prevents unfair competition.

Many people refuse to eat genetically modified foodstuffs. But how can we know whether our cornflakes are made from genetically modified maize? The EU has forced all food manufacturers to label their products. If they contain GM ingredients, they must say so.

We could go on. But it is already obvious by now: Europe — that is all of us. And Europe affects us all.

The European Union — what does this mean exactly?



The European Union is made up of 28 countries that have joined forces to build a better future together.

Which countries belong to the European Union, and why did they join?

Exercise

Who is a member?

Here is a list of countries. They are all in Europe but they do not all belong to the European Union. Find out who is in the EU and enter them in the list below — ordered by the date they joined.

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the Vatican City.

Member States of the EU

Country	Accession	Population	Capital
	Founding member 1952/1958		
	1973		
	1973		
	1973		
	1981		
	1986		
	1986		
	1995		
	1995		
	1995		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2004		
	2007		
	2007		
	2013		

Exercise

What else do you know about these countries — or what can you find out?

Please gather your information in groups and present it systematically. What do you know about food, culture and languages in these countries? Make up a little factsheet about the countries you know better or have found out more about.



Europe — a short quiz

1. Which is the smallest capital city in the EU and how many inhabitants does it have?
2. Which EU capital city is the coldest, i.e. which has the lowest average temperature in January?
3. Which is the highest mountain in the European Union?
4. Which seas border the European Union?
5. Which EU countries have reigning monarchs — a king or queen, for example?
6. How many official languages are there in Belgium?
7. Which country in the European Union has the largest population?
8. Which EU country has the largest area?
9. Which is the most easterly capital city in the European Union?

Special question for experts

10. Why does the EU flag have twelve stars rather than one for each Member State?

Why does the European Union have so many official languages?

► As the EU is a democratic organisation, it has to address its citizens, and also the governments of the Member States and their public bodies, companies and other organisations, in their own language. People have a right to know what is being done in their name. They must also be able to get actively involved without having to learn a foreign

language first. The European Union also passes laws that apply directly to everyone in the EU.

For the citizens, and of course also for the national courts, these laws must be accessible in their mother tongue; that is to say, they must be published in every official language. The use of the of-

icial languages contributes to the transparency, legitimacy and efficiency of the EU and its institutions.

You can find an entertaining quiz on European languages on this website:
http://ec.europa.eu/languages/quiz/quiz_en.htm

Exercise

Do you speak European?

Following the accession of the country whose capital is Zagreb, the European Union has 24 official languages. Now reassemble them from the following fragments.

a – a – an – bul – ch – ch – cro – cze – da – dish – dut – eek – eng – es – ese – ese – fin – fre – ga – ga – ger – gr – gu – hun – i – i – lat – li – li – lish – lish – ma – malt – man – nch – ni – ni – ni – ni – nish – nish – nish – po – por – ri – ri – rish – ro – slo – slo – spa – swe – ta – thu – ti – to – tu – vak – ve – vi

Economic power

► The countries of the EU are not just of different sizes, some are also richer than others. There are countries where most people are very well off and others where the standard of living is much lower. This naturally raises the question of how we can actually measure this. After all, there are rich and poor people in every country. Who do we take as a yardstick, the boss or his driver, the secretary or the senior doctor?

Economic statistics have solved this problem by first measuring the economic power of a country. This is the sum of all the value generated in a country in the course of a year. Every car manufactured in this country in a year, every haircut given by a hairdresser, every litre of milk produced by a cow and then

sold is expressed in monetary terms and added up. We call the sum of these values the gross domestic product (or GDP for short). However, GDP does not tell you much about how rich a country is, because there are large and small countries. So the next step is to divide it by the number of people who live in that country. That gives us the gross domestic product (GDP) per head.

But it's more complicated than that: if we want to compare states that are not equally strong financially, we have to bear in mind that purchasing power also varies between the different countries. Anyone who has been on holiday abroad knows this. Then the prices suddenly seem very high — or possibly very cheap — compared to the prices at home. Where a loaf of bread costs one

euro in one country, you may have to pay two or three euros in another. That is why analysts look not just at how much money people have per head in a given country, but also at what they can buy for their money. That is the crucial thing. We call this 'parity of purchasing power'. This is the only way to make countries comparable.

If we then compare the economic power of the EU countries based on parity of purchasing power, the picture looks like this:

How well off are Europeans?

(Comparative gross domestic product per head of population in terms of parity of purchasing power, 2011)



The GDP per head in Austria and Ireland is thus 29 % higher than the EU average. The GDP per head in Italy is exactly equal to this average, while the figure for Romania and Bulgaria is less than half of the EU average.

The differences in 'living standards' within the EU will persist for a long time, but the European Union aims to reduce the disparities. That is why poorer regions of the EU receive money to improve their infrastructure and so enhance

their economic opportunities. We call this structural policy. The EU spends around half of its total budget on this.

The European Union — united in diversity

► As you have seen, the EU is made up of very different countries. The largest, Germany, has almost 82 million inhabitants, while the smallest, Malta, has just 400 000. Finland and Italy are members, as are Portugal and Poland. If we look at the map we can see how diverse the EU is. People speak different languages and write in three different alphabets. There are different traditions, cultures, eating habits and festivals. Their historical experiences also differ. Many EU countries have previously fought wars against each other and seized each other's territory, and there is still a lot of prejudice. How is it that the 28 countries have come together all the same?

This question can only be answered in the light of history. After the appalling Second World War, which started just 20 years after the end of the First World War, many people said that nothing like that should ever be allowed to happen again.

The idea was born in the former enemies Germany and France that they should no longer oppose each other but join together, but in a way that would also allow them to keep an eye on each other. Leading politicians who advocated this concept and made it a reality were the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman (1886–1963) and the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967).

The first body from which today's EU emerged was the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which came into being in 1952 with the aim of managing the coal reserves collectively. Coal then played the role that oil and natural gas do today — it was the most important energy source. Many people

were afraid that there could be further conflict over this raw material. The distribution of coal and the reconstruction of heavy industry were therefore placed under a common authority in which the members of the ECSC were represented. Along with Germany and France, these were Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The principle behind the ECSC was quite simple: each country had a say in the affairs of every other country, and was prepared to accept that its own actions might be subject to influence by them. None of them could then work or secretly arm against another, but they could rebuild Europe together. At the same time, the partners lost their fear of each other and peace could be assured in Europe. The first President of the High Commission of the ECSC was the Frenchman Jean Monnet (1888–1979), who was also one of the major instigators of European integration.

A few years later, this principle was extended to the whole economy, through the European Economic Community. This was established in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome and came into effect in 1958.

Mutual enmity thus turned into cooperation — and this cooperation was extremely successful. The European Community made huge strides economically. No wonder more and more countries have joined over the years. In 1973 the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark came into today's EU, then Greece joined in 1981, followed in 1986 by Spain and Portugal. After the end of the East–West conflict, the way was clear for the neutral states of Austria, Sweden and Finland, which became members in 1995, and for the countries

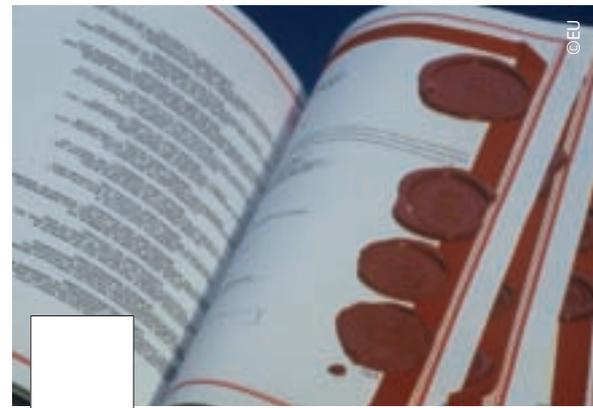
that previously belonged in the camp of the former Soviet Union. The year 2004 saw the eastern enlargement, taking in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. Malta and Cyprus also joined. In 2007 this round of enlargement continued with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, and on 1 July 2013, Croatia was welcomed as the 28th EU member.

Although there may sometimes be disputes and major disagreements, the basic principles behind the EU have remained unchanged: maintaining peace among the Member States, cooperation for mutual benefit and increasingly common external action. The importance of the EU's work for peace, democracy and human rights in Europe over more than 50 years was recognised by the Nobel Prize Committee in 2012 when it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union. The EU is the first group of countries in the world to be accorded this honour.

Exercise

History of the EU in pictures

Match the pictures from the history of the European Union to the correct captions.



1. After the Second World War, many cities all over Europe lay in ruins; here is Frankfurt am Main in Germany.
2. A symbolic act: Jean Monnet (r.), President of the High Commission of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), presents the first block of 'European' steel, so inaugurating the common market for steel in April 1953.
3. 25 March 1957: in Rome, representatives of the six founding countries, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, sign the Rome Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).
4. On 7 February 1992, the Heads of State or Government sign the Maastricht Treaty, establishing economic and monetary union.
5. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam sets the seal on the step-by-step creation of an area of freedom, security and justice; here is the treaty document with signatures and official seals.
6. With a large image projected onto the European Commission building in Brussels, the EU welcomes its new members Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.
7. On 10 December 2012, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the European Union in Oslo, Norway. The Nobel Prize Committee honoured the EU's contribution over 6 decades to the advancement of peace, democracy and human rights in Europe.

3

How does the European Union work?



The three current EU presidents. Each of the major institutions of the EU is headed by a president. From left to right: Herman Van Rompuy (European Council), José Manuel Barroso (European Commission) and Martin Schulz (European Parliament)

The EU is often compared to a nation. People say, 'In the EU things work in such and such a way, but here it's different, it works like this.' Such comparisons are natural, but they should be used with caution. The EU is not a nation but a unique grouping of nations. It also differs in structure from your own country.

The aim of this chapter is to explain the structure of the EU. What institutions are there and what do they do? What responsibilities do they have?

From left to right: the European Commission in Brussels, the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg and the Council of the European Union in Brussels.



Who holds the power in Europe? The institutions of the European Union

► Who actually holds the power in Europe? It is obvious that there is no one 'boss' who gives the orders. But someone has to say what should happen. Who decides on European matters? Is it a committee or a country — or who?

At first sight it always seems boring to deal with institutions, but institutions are the places where power is exercised. So the institutional structure of the European Union also answers the question about power. Admittedly though, the answer is slightly different in the EU than it is in an individual Member State.

The European Union is a grouping of countries and their citizens. This is

reflected in its structure. Both the states (i.e. their governments) and the populations of these countries have a say in European matters. This happens through the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.

The **Council of the European Union** (often called the 'Council of Ministers') is the body representing the governments of the EU countries. Here, the ministers from all the Member States sit down together. Depending on the topic, this could mean the foreign, interior or agriculture ministers. The Council is one of the two decision-making bodies. It discusses policy and also initiates European laws called regulations and

directives. So without the Council, nothing moves in the European Union. The Council takes its decisions either unanimously or by a majority vote. For majority decisions, around 70 % of the votes must be in favour (this is called a 'qualified majority'). The large EU countries have more votes than the small ones. From 2014 the principle of the 'dual majority' will apply, which means that a decision requires a majority among the Member States, which must also represent the majority of the population. The presidency of the Council changes every 6 months, and all members take turns on equal terms. In 2013 Ireland and Lithuania will hold the presidency, followed by ►



Janette: 'The European Parliament represents the citizens and votes on "European laws" (directives and regulations).'



Alice: 'The European Court of Auditors monitors the EU budget.'



Patricia: 'The Council of Ministers represents the governments of the EU Member States and passes "European laws".'

► Greece and Italy in 2014 and Latvia and Luxembourg in 2015.

The fundamental decisions on European policy are taken by the European Council. This is made up of the Heads of State or Government of the EU, who meet regularly at least every 3 months. It is chaired by a president elected for 2½ years by the **European Council**. Since 2009 this office has been held by the former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy.

In most cases, however, the Council cannot decide on its own. For this it needs the **European Parliament**. This represents the citizens of the EU countries and is directly elected by them. Until the end of its current legislative period, the Parliament has 766 members from all the Member States. With the re-election of the European Parliament in 2014, the number of seats will be fixed at 751 in line with the Treaty of Lisbon.

The large Member States return more members than the small ones. The Parliament cannot take decisions with the force of law for the EU by itself; it usually has to approve a resolution of the Council of the European Union for this to take effect. This is called the 'co-decision procedure'. The Parliament also has to vote to endorse the European Commission and can reject it. It also approves the budget of the European Union. So without the European Parliament, and through it the direct representation of the citizens, not much can be decided in Europe.

Another important institution in the EU is the **European Commission**. The College of Commissioners comprises one member per country, but they do not represent the views of their country of origin but rather the common interests of the European Union. Each Commission member is responsible for a specific area (rather like a minister). The European Commission ensures

that the common rules are adhered to by the Member States. That is why it is described as the 'guardian of the European treaties'. It administers the EU on the instructions of the Council and the Parliament. A special feature of the European system is that the Council and the Parliament can only decide things on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. This sole right of proposal gives the European Commission an influence on the decisions because it defines the parameters. This ensures that the common interests of the European Union are considered from the outset. Of course, the Council and the Parliament can then modify the proposal.

There is now a lot of shared law that the EU countries have drawn up together. Understandably there is also some dispute over the interpretation of these laws. Moreover, individual countries frequently fail to comply with particular provisions. That is why all



Jello: 'The European Central Bank ensures that the euro remains stable.'



Motian: 'The European Commission administers the European Union and makes proposals for "European laws".'

► those concerned can appeal to the **Court of Justice of the European Union**. This consists of one judge per Member State, but passes independent judgments based in European law. It can repeal provisions where they conflict with European law, and impose fines on Member States if they do not abide by the law.

Everyone knows that money is important. But it is not enough just to have it;

it must also keep its value. This is looked after by the **European Central Bank (ECB)**, which is the issuing bank for the euro countries. It is made up of representatives of the countries that have introduced the euro. The ECB manages the money supply and sets key interest rates.

The budget for the European Union in 2013 totals around €133 billion. Where a lot of money is being spent, it is also

essential to ensure that this happens according to the rules. This is the task of the **European Court of Auditors**, which checks that European money is being spent properly and sensibly. In this way it ensures efficient financial management. Each Member State appoints a representative.

Exercise

Who does what in the EU?

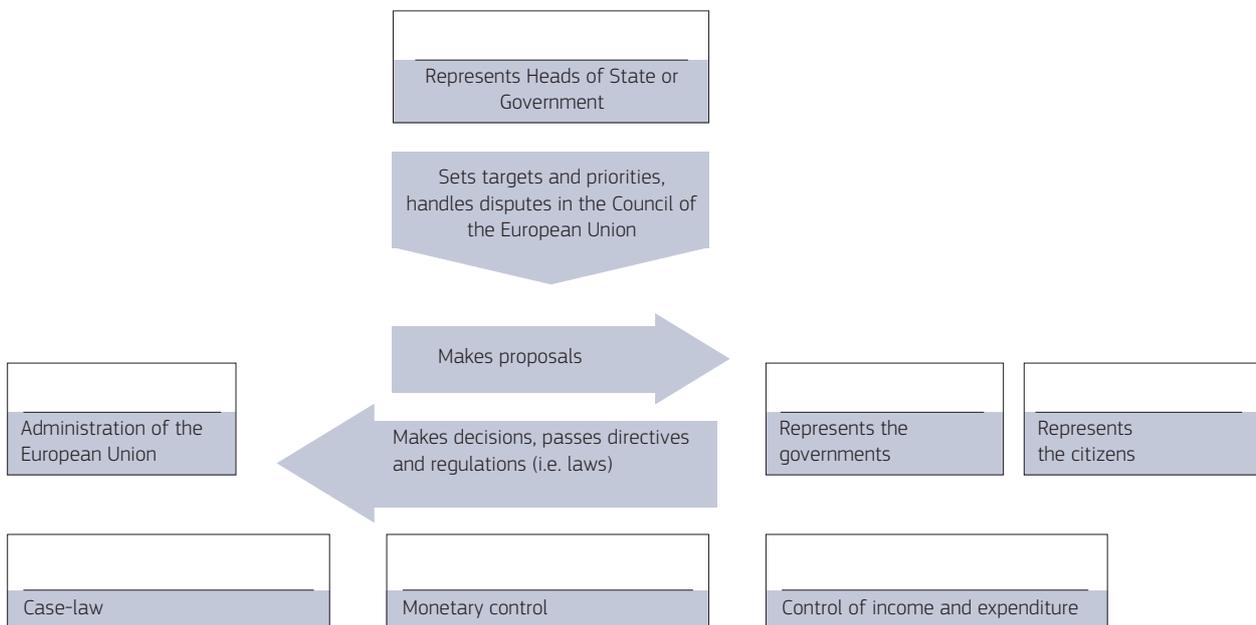
That was a lot of institutional background, but you have to know who is responsible for what in the EU. Take the test to see whether you have been paying attention. Put a cross in the box against the institution that matches the description.

Description	European Council	Council of the European Union	European Parliament	European Commission	European Court of Justice	European Central Bank	European Court of Auditors
Makes proposals for EU regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consists of one representative per Member State	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sets key interest rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitors EU spending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is elected by the population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Passes EU laws (regulations/directives)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nominates the President of the Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administers the EU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Represents the interests of citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Represents the interests of the Member States/their governments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decides on the interpretation of European laws	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defines policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Exercise

The bodies of the European Union

Please enter the responsibilities of the various institutions into another chart. We have made a start for you. You just have to match the terms to the right boxes.



The European treaties

► The European Union has its legal basis in treaties which the Member States have entered into with each other and which have been ratified by the national parliaments or by referendums. The treaties govern how decisions are taken, which institution has which powers and in which areas the EU countries act jointly. The continued development of the EU is in turn

based on further treaties. From the different treaties we can see how the European Union has changed. The current basis is the Treaty of Lisbon, which was signed in the Portuguese capital in 2007. The Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009, once all the Member States had ratified it.



Discussion



And now, back to the question we started with:

Who holds the power in Europe? Discuss this among yourselves.

The influence of the citizens

► The citizens of the EU Member States therefore influence EU policy in two ways. Firstly, when they elect their national parliament, from which their government is then formed. This is then represented in the Council of the European Union. (When the ‘bosses’ meet — i.e. the Heads of State or Government — it is called the ‘European Council’.) Second-

ly, citizens influence policy in Europe when they elect the European Parliament.

But individual citizens can also make their voices heard if they feel unjustly treated or want to remedy a European grievance. There is in fact a European citizens’ representative, also known as the Ombudsman. Any EU citizen can

complain to the Ombudsman; they can even do so by e-mail. Who can you complain to him about, where can he help and where can he not? You can find all this on the Ombudsman’s website:

<http://ombudsman.europa.eu/home/en/general.htm>

Other means of influence

► Since the Lisbon Treaty came force in 2009 there has been the option of a European citizens’ initiative. One million people, or just 0.2 % of the population, from at least a quarter of the EU states (i.e. seven countries) can ask the European Commission to look into a matter and propose a law. The proviso is of course that the matter must fall within the competence of the EU.

Demonstrations directed at EU institutions can also be used to apply pressure. Farmers, trade unions or environmental organisations can all air their concerns. The European Parliament also has a Petitions Committee.



Exercise

Find out more about the European citizens’ initiative.

The European citizens’ initiative gives you a direct influence over the business of the European Union. What initiative would you like to launch and how would you approach it? You can learn about the procedure and also about current initiatives on this website: <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>

Exercise

What is a petition?

Find out what a petition is and who can appeal to the Parliament. You can obtain more information here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00533cec74/Petitions.html>
Is there a petitions committee in your Parliament too? Go ahead and research that.

Exercise

Our representatives in Strasbourg and Brussels

The Members of the European Parliament form groupings with others of the same political persuasion. Not all the groupings include members from every country. Check out which parties from your country were successful in the last elections to the European Parliament and have their own MEPs. Then find out which EP groupings they belong to. Which party is represented in which grouping within the EP? For example, you can find this quite quickly on the Internet at: <http://www.europarl.eu>

Groupings in the European Parliament	How many members does this group have?	This group includes members of the following party from my country
 EPP – Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats)		
 S&D – Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament		
 ALDE – Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe		
 GREENS/EFA – Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance		
 ECR – European Conservatives and Reformists Group		
 EFD – Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group		
 GUE/NGL – Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left		
NI Non-affiliated		

Exercise

Find out who from your province or region is a Member of the European Parliament.

Which party do these MEPs represent?

Europe — a short quiz

Who is the current President of the European Parliament?

And who are the other gentlemen in the photos?

Herman Van Rompuy (Belgium)

José Manuel Barroso (Portugal)

Martin Schulz (Germany)

Robert Schuman (France)



President of the European Parliament

President of the European Council

French Foreign Minister 1948–52 and one of the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

President of the European Commission

How the EU works

► It has become clear that the European Union is not a nation like Lithuania or the Netherlands, for example, but that it is more than a loose alliance of European countries. To express its uniqueness, lawyers often describe the organisation of the EU as an organisation *'sui generis'*. That is Latin for 'one of a kind'. Although the Member States of the EU remain sovereign and independent, in some areas they combine their competences to equip them better to tackle the challenges they face. For this the EU has created separate insti-

tutions to which these powers are delegated. In practice, this means that decisions on certain matters of common interest can be taken democratically at European level. That is why the EU is not a federal system like the USA, for example, but it is more than a loose affiliation such as the United Nations.

In the EU, decisions are taken collectively by the national governments, which meet in the European Council, and by the European Parliament elected by the people. There are some exceptions where the Council alone deci-

des. That is especially true of foreign policy. The European Commission runs the business of the EU, and ensures that everybody abides by the European treaties. If they do not, they will be brought before the Court of Justice and may be requested to change their ways. The European Court of Auditors keeps an eye on the proper financial management of the European institutions. Every one of us can complain to the European Ombudsman if we feel we have been badly treated by a European institution.

4 What exactly does the EU do?



Some people say the European Union does not do enough; others say it interferes in everything. Aren't both views wrong? But what is the truth? What exactly does the EU do?

The EU is active in many areas of policy: in economic policy, consumer protection, foreign policy, environmental protection, internal policy and justice — to name but a few.

We will now look at some examples of policy matters in these areas. This will give you an idea of what people in Brussels and the capitals of the EU countries are working on.

The single market

- ▶ The cornerstone of economic and social policy is the single market. It is a common economic area and provides the four fundamental freedoms, which are:
 - the free movement of persons,
 - the free movement of goods,
 - the free movement of services, and
 - the free movement of capital.

Freedoms in the European single market

- ▶ The free movement of persons affects us in many ways. Whether we want to go on holiday to another EU country, work there or settle there with or without a job, we have the right to do so. And when we come back from abroad we can happily bring our purchases with us — just as we can shop in another country over the Internet. That guarantees the free movement of goods. But not only goods but also services can be given and received across borders, thanks to the free movement of services. People who prefer to invest their money in another EU country rather than their own have this option, guaranteed by the free movement of capital.



Elimination of border controls

- ▶ If you travel from the North Cape of Norway to Sicily, you can happily leave your passport at home. There are no longer any border controls within the EU at the so-called internal frontiers (for example between Finland and Estonia or Slovakia and the Czech Republic).

This freedom to travel is governed by the Schengen Agreement, which is now part of the European treaties. The United Kingdom and Ireland are not part of the Schengen area, but Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are, even though they are not in the EU. For Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania there are transitional periods before they can join.

The Schengen Agreement is named after the place in Luxembourg where it was signed.



Europe — a short quiz

What do the four freedoms mean for you in practical terms?

Match the examples to the four aspects of the single market and tick the appropriate box.

	Free movement of persons	Free movement of goods	Free movement of services	Free movement of capital
I can buy a car in Denmark and take it out duty-free.	1	0	2	3
I can travel anywhere I like within the EU.	9	6	3	7
I can deposit my money in a German bank.	2	3	1	0
I can study in Hungary.	5	1	0	9
My parents can have their bathroom renovated by a Portuguese tiler.	4	3	1	7
My parents can send money to me where I am studying in Spain.	1	2	3	9
I can order goods from Sweden over the Internet.	4	5	1	2
I can practise as an architect in Malta and have houses built in Italy.	5	6	0	8

The answers form a date in DDMMYYYY format. Find out what it is — and what happened on this day.

.../.../....

EURO-pean money

► Since 1999 there has been a common European currency, which has been in use in 17 countries of the EU since 1 January 2011. Latvia is expected to adopt the euro as its currency in January 2014, bringing the total to 18. More than 332 million EU citizens, or two thirds of the total population, have the euro as their common currency.

In the single market, workers can move around freely and goods, services and capital can be traded anywhere. Without any currency barriers, we can take greater advantage of the benefits of the internal market for companies and consumers, workers and self-employed people. It is easy to shop and compare prices across EU internal frontiers if you are calculating in the same currency. Particularly with the rise in online shopping, this is attractive even for people who do not live close to a frontier. The greater transparency of the offerings has a restraining effect on prices, which is good for anyone shopping.

Another advantage of the common currency is that you do not need to exchange (and convert) money when you travel to other countries. That saves money and time. But companies also benefit from a common currency, as they only have to calculate and bill in one currency and are not at risk from exchange rate fluctuations. Eliminating these 'transaction costs' has a restraining effect on prices. The common currency has led to lower interest rates, in turn benefiting consumers and companies alike. There is more room for investment, which then leads to growth. A stable EU currency based on the strong economics of the euro area reinforces Europe's economic standing in the world.

While the whole of the EU is a single market, only one (admittedly large) part of it has the euro as its common currency. Some countries do not want to enter the euro area just now, while others do not yet meet the strict criteria for joining. For example, a country must not have

excessive debts if it wants to join the euro area. The inflation rate must not be more than 1.5 % higher than the three lowest currency depreciation rates in the euro countries.

Despite these clear rules, the euro area slid into crisis in 2010. This topic is very complicated, but in general it is fair to say that most of the problems have arisen from the fact that the euro countries did not adhere to the standards they had agreed with each other, and ran up too much debt. The EU was and is working hard to avert the risks to the common currency. This includes guarantees to the countries that are having difficulty refinancing their debt on the international capital markets at acceptable interest rates. The euro countries have therefore set up a €700 billion 'rescue package' (the ESM, or European Stability Mechanism) to maintain stability.

At the same time, the euro countries have undertaken, in a fiscal pact, to reduce their levels of debt. The non-euro countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom, have also signed up to this international agreement. Apart from debt reduction, this is also meant to strengthen the competitiveness of the euro countries and the EU as a whole.

Part of the problem with the common currency was that the banks were not subject to sufficient control. That is why the EU has reinforced banking regulation, to prevent banks getting whole countries into trouble by speculative behaviour. The last few years have been difficult for the common currency, and managing the crisis has cost a good deal of energy. But it has also shown the determination of the euro countries to keep the common currency stable. ►



- EU Member States using the euro as of 2013
- EU Member States not using the euro

Latvia is expected to adopt the euro as its currency on 1 January 2014.

► European economic policy

In order to strengthen and stimulate the economy of the European Union, the Commission has created the 'Europe 2020' strategy for growth and employment. Among other things, this provides for investment in education and research, which is intended to help Europe to become one of the most innovative regions of the world in the future. The aim is to strengthen business and industry, which should not only be competitive but also have the least possible impact

on the environment. Other goals are to create jobs and combat poverty within the EU. As the European Union sees itself as a community of values and feels bound by the principles of equality and solidarity, it is important to it that this growth should benefit all Europeans.

Decision-making in the EU

Normally, decisions in the EU are taken by all the Member States together. But there are some matters that particularly

affect the countries that have the euro as their common currency. Their ministers meet regularly in the euro group and decide what needs to happen in the common currency area. Of course these decisions also affect the other countries in the European Union, which do not (yet) have the euro as their currency but are affected by it in the single market.

Exercise

Who should decide about the common currency?

There are differing views on the decisions taken by the euro group within the European Union, for example:

- 'It is quite right for the euro countries to decide everything amongst themselves, to maintain the security and stability of the common currency. That's the way it is and it should stay that way.'
- 'The euro countries not only have to decide on immediate monetary issues but also on the economic future of the euro area as a whole. They are the core group within the EU and should themselves decide on all issues relating to the common euro economy. That applies to things like taxes, employment and social security. That's only right, even if the decisions affect the other countries in the European Union. If they want a say in these things, they can always join the euro.'
- 'It can't be right for just 17 countries to decide for the whole of the euro area. The EU decides on many other things that do not concern everybody — matters relating to the Baltic or the Mediterranean, for example. But they still all vote on these things. Most EU countries also intend to join the currency union in a few years' time. So they must have a say now in how it should develop.'

What do you think? Discuss the different positions in groups and form your own opinion, which you can then discuss with the other groups. You can find more information about the way the euro area works on this website:

<http://eurozone.europa.eu/>.



Europe — a short quiz

Which three countries are NOT in the euro area?
Please mark them.

Austria	France	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Belgium	Germany	Malta	Slovenia
Cyprus	Greece	Netherlands	Spain
Estonia	Ireland	Poland	Sweden
Finland	Italy	Portugal	United Kingdom





Climate protection measures

► The global climate is changing and the Earth's atmosphere is warming up. This has undesirable consequences for our weather: more frequent storms and flooding, hotter summers, growth of deserts in Africa and southern Europe, melting of the polar ice caps and whole islands being submerged — we cannot be indifferent to all this. Climate change has a lot to do with harmful emissions from the industrialised countries. Unfortunately, the process can no longer be reversed, so it is all the more important to limit the rise in temperature. The next few years will decide whether we can do that. That is why rapid and consistent action is particularly important. No country can stop climate change on its own.

In 2008, the EU adopted clear goals:

- a 20 % reduction in greenhouse gases,
- an increase in the proportion of renewable energies (wind, solar power, biofuels) to 20 %, and
- a 20 % saving in energy.

This puts Europe in the forefront and it can strive to persuade the other major polluters and energy consumers such as the USA and China to take their share of the responsibility.



Exercise

Do you think this policy is right?

Which of the opinions below do you agree with?



	Completely agree	Partly agree	Slightly disagree	Completely disagree
The EU should only reduce its harmful emissions if others do so too.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EU should achieve its targets whatever happens.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EU should set itself still more ambitious targets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should not let the discussion drive us crazy. If it gets a couple of degrees warmer, that's not so tragic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EU countries will not achieve their targets anyway because they are really not interested in achieving common objectives. They are only concerned with what happens in their own countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate protection should not happen at the expense of jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should not have targets dictated to us by scientists, but should be able to implement as much climate protection as we can afford without it hurting us.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate protection creates new jobs. Companies and employees benefit from this. That's another reason to get involved in this area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The common area of justice

► Europe long ago became a single territory. Many people cross the internal frontiers of the EU countries to live and work somewhere else, or simply to look around. They get to know each other, stay on and marry. Unfortunately things sometimes go wrong and they have to divorce. Then it is important to have a uniform set of laws, because there are questions of maintenance and custody. If a man from Austria and a woman from Luxembourg live in Italy and get divorced there, they cannot each appeal to their national law. That is why cooperation between the EU

countries in the area of civil law is so important. This also governs inheritance cases and many other things that affect our day-to-day lives.

Criminals also like open borders, because they think they can avoid prosecution. But they are wrong about that, because there is now close cooperation between the police and law enforcement authorities. Europol, the European Police Office, coordinates this interaction.

European fundamental rights

Human and fundamental rights are of the utmost importance in all societies,

because they affect every citizen. In the EU, a group of democracies, fundamental rights are protected at the national level, generally by the constitution. But as the European Union itself passes laws and regulations that affect people, it is important that there is also a Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This is part of the Treaty of Lisbon. You can find the text here:

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/human_rights/fundamental_rights_within_european_union/l33501_en.htm

Exercise

Take a look at the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and compare it with your national constitution or basic law.

Which rules are identical? What is only in the Charter of Fundamental Rights? What is missing from the Charter of Fundamental Rights? Make up a list to give an overview!

Discussion

Discussion on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

How important is a European Charter of Fundamental Rights? Do we really need it in addition to national constitutional rights? If you were to draw up the Charter of Fundamental Rights, what would be different? What would you add? What would you take out?

Discuss these questions in small groups and then compare the results.

Exercise

The tree of European politics

Many leaves hang on the tree of European politics. Here are some policy areas in which the Member States cooperate within the EU.

Match the leaves to the different policy areas so they hang on the right branch.



Freedom to travel (Schengen)	Common environmental standards	Common currency	Renewable energies	Common foreign policy	Common security and defence policy	Common asylum policy
Rural development	Single market	Climate protection	Food labelling	Compulsory food standards	Reduced mobile roaming tariffs	
Common law enforcement	Structural policy to support the regions	Mandatory minimum social standards	Cooperation in civil and criminal proceedings			

Europe moves on — the enlargement of the European Union



Celebrating EU enlargement at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. In the German capital on 1 May 2004, hundreds of blue 'Europe' balloons were released to welcome Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The European Union was founded by six countries, but was always intended to be for the whole of Europe — that is to say, open to further members.

The EU now has 28 members and others are waiting at the door. What is it that makes the EU so attractive to these other countries? And what's next in the enlargement process? We will discuss these questions in this chapter.

Principles of the EU

► Way back in the Treaties of Rome signed in 1957, which established the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, the 'preamble' (the foreword to the treaty) read:

'RESOLVED by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts'

Today, Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union reads as follows:

'Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.'

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union reads:

'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'



The Treaty of Rome showing the signatures of the Heads of State or Government and representatives of the six founding members.

Exercise

Who can become a member?

What do the principles set out in Article 2 mean in practice? What does a country have to do if it wants to join the EU, and what must it never do? What do you think?

A country ...	can join the EU	cannot join the EU
... that does not have freedom of the press	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... that applies the death penalty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... that allows its citizens to protest against the government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which the parliament is elected on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which a president governs until he dies and is succeeded by his son	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which gays and lesbians have the same rights as heterosexuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which the army determines policy and may even intervene in internal affairs with military power	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which people are considered innocent until their guilt has been established by a court	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in which there is only one party which is therefore always in government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... which protects minorities, even where the majority would like to put more pressure on the minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where are the boundaries of Europe?

► The question of Europe's borders cannot be answered in terms of geography. To the east and south-east especially, Europe has no clear boundary. Even geographers were, and are, at odds as to where the continent stops. In the history of geography there have been many different demarcations, depending on the assumptions of the scholar concerned.

That means that we do not look at the map or the globe and discover Europe there, but we have a conception in our heads which we then rediscover. That is clear where there are actually distinct

natural boundaries to the continent, in the north and west. In our self-perception, Iceland is definitely part of Europe. In fact it is a long way from the European mainland in the North Atlantic.

It is obvious to all of us that the United Kingdom and Ireland are part of Europe. But the channel between mainland France and the UK is wider than the Strait of Gibraltar, which separates Spain from Morocco.

Here is what the European Commission has to say on this matter:

'The term "European" combines geographical, historical and cultural elements which all contribute to European identity. The shared experience of ideas, values, and historical interaction cannot be condensed into a simple timeless formula and is subject to review by each succeeding generation.'

Source: 'Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-07', Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 8 November 2006, COM(2006) 649, p. 19.

Exercise

Where does Europe end?

So a country that wants to join the EU must be democratic. But it also has to be 'European'.

Where are the boundaries of Europe? Take a physical map or an atlas and define the boundaries of Europe. What are the criteria for deciding whether or not a country is part of Europe? Where is Turkey? And is Iceland part of Europe? What's the position with Georgia? Or Greenland? And what about Morocco?

When you have defined the boundaries of Europe for yourself, read the text below.



Exercise

A trip to Australia

Just imagine you are going on a school exchange to Australia. Australia is a long way away and is definitely not part of Europe. But your classmates there are curious and ask you to give a short presentation to the class on the subject: 'What is Europe?'

Prepare a suitable presentation in a small group. You have just 5 minutes for your talk, so you need to concentrate on the most important and interesting aspects. How can you explain to people of your age in Australia what Europe is?

Try to give them a 'taste' of Europe. What is the particular attitude to life here, what makes you feel European? What do you like about Europe and what do you find not so good?

Here are a few keywords. Think about which points to include in your talk and which to leave out. And remember, 5 minutes is not long!

Geography

Music

Drink

Travel

History

Cinema

Freedom

Education

Differences

Literature

Leisure

Problems

Similarities

Food

Economy

Expectations

The western Balkan states

► Croatia joined the EU in July 2013. Other states in the western Balkans have been accepted in principle as candidates to join the European Union. They are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Apart from Albania, all these countries were part of Yugoslavia, which broke up in the 1990s, often after fierce fighting. Serbia and Montenegro were one country until their peaceful separation in 2006. In 1998/99 a violent conflict flared up over the status of Kosovo as part of Serbia, which was ultimately resolved by NATO action against Serbia. After Kosovo was subsequently placed under United Nations administration, it declared independence in 2008.

The EU sees EU membership for these countries as the best chance of bringing lasting peace to the region. This was confirmed by the Heads of State or Government at a conference in Thessaloniki in Greece in 2003. However, Kosovo is not recognised under international law by five EU countries.

The long road to EU accession

The western Balkan states have a long road ahead of them before they make it into the EU.

They first have to sign a stabilisation and association agreement with the European Union, binding them to con-

crete reforms. This agreement then has to be ratified in all Member States, and of course in the partner country itself, which means that the parliaments must vote it through.

Then the agreement has to be implemented. If that happens, the states concerned can apply for membership. If the European Commission takes a positive view of this, the European Council (the Heads of State or Government of the EU) will recognise them as candidates.

Once further reforms have been implemented, the negotiations can begin. These are about how quickly the candidate countries can adopt the common laws of the EU.

If the negotiations are concluded successfully, which is likely to take several years, the treaty of accession has to be ratified by the candidate countries and all members of the EU. In some countries this is done by a referendum. The European Parliament also has to vote in favour. Only then do the candidates become members of the European Union.

Where do these countries stand?

The countries of the western Balkans are at different stages on their journey. Negotiations with **Croatia** have finished and the country joined the EU on 1 July 2013. **Montenegro** has been in negotiations on accession since 2012.



The **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** is an official accession candidate, but discussions have not yet started. **Serbia** is in the same position. The other countries (Albania, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and Kosovo) are still considered 'potential candidates'. Albania has signed a stabilisation and association agreement, which has been in effect since 2009. The European Commission recommended conferring candidate status on Albania in 2012. The stabilisation and association agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina has also been signed, but it is not yet in force. Democratic development in **Kosovo** is supported by a mission from the EU.

Exercise

What's where?

Enter the names of the countries and their capital cities on the map. You can use the map on the back of the workbook to help you.



Exercise

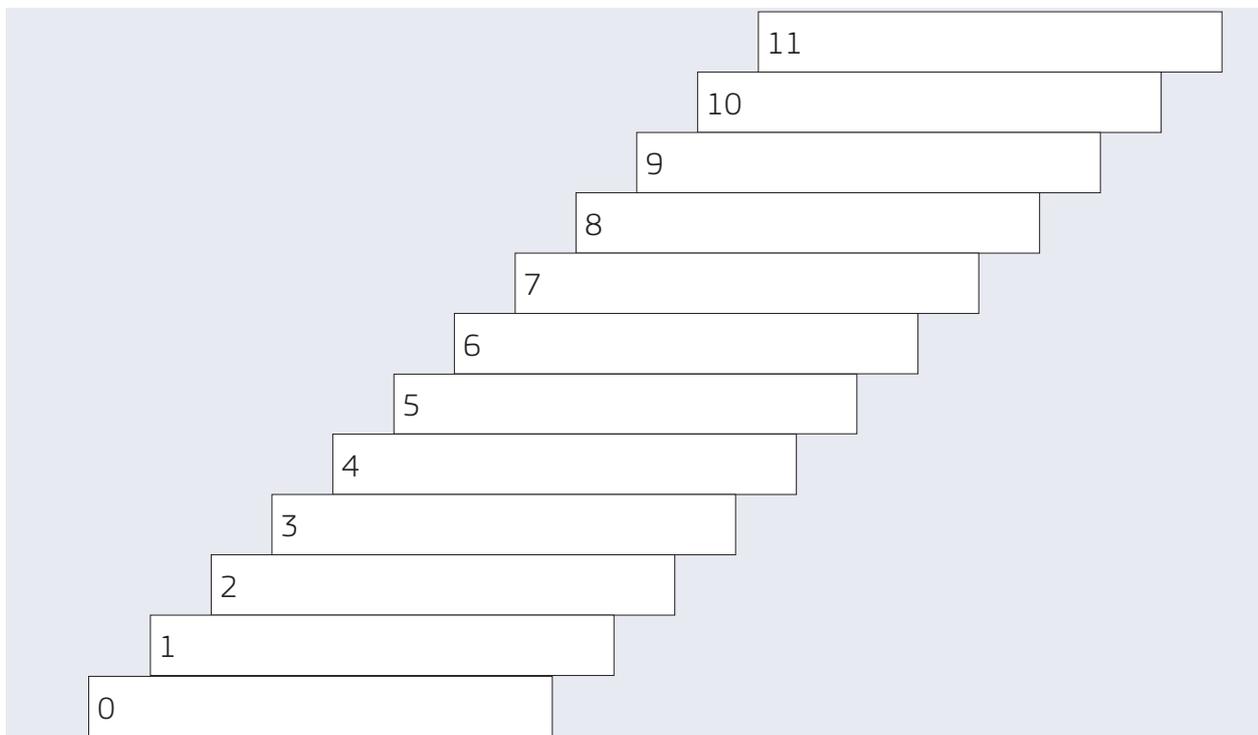
Steps towards EU membership

Did you count the steps the countries of the western Balkans have to go through before becoming members of the EU?

Put the steps below in the right place on the stairs taking the countries into the EU.



Positive response from the European Commission to the application for membership	Ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement by the Member States and the partner country	Application for membership	
Start of negotiations on accession	Implementation of the agreement	Ratification by the European Parliament	Successful completion of negotiations on accession
Ratification of the Accession Treaty in all Member States and in the partner country (by the parliaments or by referendums)	Conclusion of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement	Recognition as a candidate	Membership



Exercise

At what stage are the countries of the western Balkans?

Enter the appropriate number in the box.

	Albania
	Bosnia and Herzegovina
	Croatia
	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
	Kosovo
	Montenegro
	Serbia

Two more candidates for EU membership: Turkey and Iceland

- ▶ Turkey, a dynamic country today, is a close partner of the EU in many areas. For example, the EU is Turkey's largest trading partner. This close cooperation with the EU started around 50 years ago. There has been a customs union with Turkey since 1995. The actual accession process started in 1999 and was unanimously supported by all the Member States. Nowadays, opinions are divided on whether the process will ultimately lead to accession. EU membership remains a strategic goal for Turkey.



Iceland, in the far north, has been a member of the European Economic Area since 1993, in which most of the rules of the EU single market apply. The country is a stable democracy and already has close ties to the EU. It is already part of the Schengen area, which provides its citizens with the maximum freedom of movement because there are no longer any border controls. Iceland applied to join the European Union in 2009. The accession negotiations have been in progress since July 2010.

What next?

- ▶ It is clear that the debate on enlargement is anything but simple. On the one hand, the European Union has never seen itself as an exclusive club, but has always wanted to be open to all European countries.

In the past, the addition of new members helped to maintain peace and stability in Europe. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU's enlargement policy extended the area of democracy and the

market economy to the countries of central and eastern Europe. Nine countries that belonged to the former Soviet bloc are now members of the EU, plus Slovenia, and since 2013 Croatia, which were part of the former Yugoslavia (which also collapsed), and the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus.

On the other hand, it is still unclear (and cannot be decided once and for all) where this Europe ends, and how far the policy of promising membership to

countries and ultimately accepting them should go.

This policy will continue to be pursued with the countries of the former Yugoslavia and with Albania, which is also part of the region we now call the 'western Balkans', and with Iceland and Turkey. They have a prospect of membership even though it could be a long time before some countries are able to realise their ambition.

Europe and the wider world



We Europeans are not alone in the world. We don't even make up the majority of the world's population, not by a long way. So we can't just look after ourselves, but also need to pay attention to the other continents. We need them as partners for our own well-being, because they buy our products and offer their goods, and because they provide us with the raw materials that we do not have.

But there are also problems that we cannot ignore. These include wars and underdevelopment, which deprive many people of a decent life. And environmental pollution and climate change do not stop at the borders of the European Union.

Exercise

The continents of the world

If we disregard Antarctica, we can divide the world into six continents: Africa, Asia, Australia/Oceania, Europe, North America and South America. There are other divisions, which group North and South America together or combine Europe and Asia into Eurasia. But we will stick with the six continents (excluding Antarctica). Look for the missing information and enter it into the table below.

Continent	Area	Percentage of the earth's surface	Population	Ranking by population	GDP(*) per head in USD	Ranking by GDP(*)
Africa						
Asia						
Australia/Oceania						
Europe						
North America						
South America						

(*) GDP: Gross Domestic Product.

Europe's interests in the world

- ▶ So Europe is a relatively small continent, but economically significant. This gives rise to duties and interests that we want to impress upon others.
- It protects Europe's interests and averts terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration.
- It helps to maintain a habitable environment (climate policy, environmental protection).
- It influences others to make and maintain peace (for example, in the Middle East or Africa).
- It helps other countries to develop and to overcome poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment.
- It stands for democracy and the rule of law throughout the world.



Exercise

Global challenges

At the end of 2003, the European Union agreed on a security strategy defining the most important issues. This set out global challenges facing the EU.

Take a look at the challenges and match the proposed solutions from the European security strategy to the different problem areas.

Global challenges	Proposed solution
Wars and civil conflicts	
Poverty	
Disease	
Underdevelopment	
Scarcity of resources	
Europe's energy dependence	
An ageing population in Europe	
Terrorism	
Spread of weapons of mass destruction	
Organised crime	
Threat to the natural environment	

Proposed solutions from the European security strategy

Development aid for Africa	Remission of debt for underdeveloped countries	Support for democracy in other countries	Safeguarding the world's water resources
Establishment of healthcare systems in underdeveloped countries	Fighting international terrorism	Climate protection	Peacekeeping by military intervention
International arms control and disarmament agreements	Dialogue with the Islamic world	Energy cooperation across European borders	Managed immigration
Fight against the pollution of the oceans	International police cooperation	Opening of European markets to products from developing countries	Security on the Internet

Fortress Europe?

► A major issue within the European Union is migration. Migration basically means ‘movement’ and describes the situation where people leave a place to settle somewhere else. In fact our official debate is about immigration, or migration into Europe. There is **legal immigration** into the Member States of the European Union, that is to say, people from non-EU countries come to us officially and with a permit to work, study or simply to live here (as the spouse of an EU citizen, for example). Many of these people come because they hope for a better life in the European Union. But they are also important to us, which is why we sometimes advertise directly for them. That is because immigrants bring their skills and willingness to integrate into our economy. The arrival of young people is especially important to us because our societies are getting older on average — with all the problems that entails for pensions and social security funding.

In order to make it easier for qualified people from outside the EU to relocate to the European Union, a ‘Blue Card’ has been introduced. In this way they can work from 1 to 4 years in the EU. Until now, most well-educated migrants from non-EU countries have gone to the USA.

As well as legal and desirable immigration, there is **illegal immigration**, where people come without a permit. These people are then breaking the laws of the EU countries, but they are often the victims of gangs who take every last penny from them to smuggle them into Europe. For many people in the world, Europe seems like a paradise to which they try to escape. We have all seen the pictures of Africans adrift at sea in fishing boats, who are then picked up by Italian, Maltese or Spanish border patrols.

Nobody knows how many people are living in Europe illegally. According to

estimates from the European Commission, the figure could be around 4.5 million.

The European Union is making great efforts to block illegal immigration. These include tighter controls at the external borders and closer collaboration with the countries of origin. At the same time, intensive efforts are being made to provide citizens of non-EU countries with legal opportunities to come and live in the EU. Through its development policy cooperation with the poorer countries of the world, the EU is attempting to help improve living conditions in the countries of origin of the illegal immigrants to the point where they no longer have to leave their own countries.

The EU and its cooperation partners

► The EU maintains relations with many countries around the world, including extensive contacts with developing countries in Africa and Latin America and with the large and small countries of Asia. We do not have space to talk about these different relations here, but you can find out more on the European Union website: http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/index_en.htm

A particular focus of EU foreign policy is development policy cooperation with countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Economic partnership agreements are being signed with the 79 current ACP states, which are intended to help these countries to integrate into

the global economy and take effective steps to combat poverty at home.

The European Union and its Member States are the world’s largest donors of development aid. More than half of the money that goes to poor countries comes from here. Of course, development policy involves more than just providing clean water and paved roads, important though they are. The EU also promotes development through trade, by opening its markets to exports from developing countries and by encouraging them to increase trade among themselves.

Exercise

EU development cooperation

Here are various areas of EU development policy cooperation. Please match the picture numbers to the captions and the associated development policy measures. Note that the matching captions and measures may not be right next to each other.



No	Caption	No	Measure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support for medical facilities with ambulances in Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotion of human rights and democracy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training of forestry workers in Papua New Guinea	<input type="checkbox"/>	Expansion of infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Delivery of rice in the port of Zanzibar for distribution to the needy	1	Promotion of renewable energies/energy supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	Removal of landmines in Laos	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construction of wells in Dhaka, Bangladesh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conflict resolution/peacekeeping
<input type="checkbox"/>	Granting of small loans to garment workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health promotion
1	Electricity generation from wind power, Bolivia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental protection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Observing elections in Nigeria	<input type="checkbox"/>	Measures to generate economic growth
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support for schools, here in Eterasama in the Chapare region of Bolivia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provision of a basic education for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Road building in Benin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eliminating poverty

Discussion

Discussion about migration

About 214 million people around the world live in a country which is not their original home. Could you also imagine turning your back on your homeland for ever? What reasons might you have for doing that? And why would you go to another country even though you were not wanted or even barred from entry? Discuss this in groups. Find out what reasons people have who come to us from the south and the east, and bring this information into the group discussion.

Europe and the wider world

- ▶ Europe is not an island but part of a world that is growing closer and closer together. That is why the EU also has a responsibility to engage at the international level. It does this to safeguard its own interests, to exert a positive influence on global development and to help other people who do not have such good and secure lives as Europeans.

For example, the EU is very heavily involved in climate protection and is striving to persuade the other countries that puff large quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to engage in a common strategy. We are talking about places like the USA and China. Other environmental protection issues also play a major role and can only be resolved together. Examples are the pollution and overfishing of the world's oceans.

The EU stands for democracy all over the world and tries to exert its influence to persuade other countries to respect democratic fundamental rights and freedoms and grant them to their citizens.

The EU is working very actively to achieve the United Nations 'millennium goals', which basically aim to halve absolute poverty by 2015. This means people who have less than one US dollar a day to live on.

Europe cannot control the fate of our planet alone, but nothing can progress without Europe either. We live in a world in which we cannot live well while others are struggling.

The future of Europe



'Where do you want to be living in 2030 and what would you like to be doing?'

The European Union is more than an economic grouping. It is community of values, that is to say, a grouping of states and citizens who share basic convictions and live by them.

Many of the issues in the 21st century are different from those in the 20th century. Peace among the Member States has been secured and old enmities have been turned into stable friendships or at least into peaceful partnerships. But the EU faces fresh tasks that have to be addressed if we are to safeguard the fundamental values for the citizens of Europe in the new century also.



Exercise

The year 2030 and me

Where do you want to be living in 2030 and what would you like to be doing?

Everyone will surely answer this question differently. But whether your wishes come true depends not only on your personal abilities and good luck but also on the political situation.

In 2030 I would like to live in _____ and work as a _____

_____ I see my personal situation like this:

To achieve these goals, I want the following from my country's politicians today:

This is what I want from European policy-makers today:

Europe in the globalised world

► It is clear that the national economies of the European countries face great challenges. These come partly from globalisation, namely the expansion of the market economy to cover large parts of the world. Goods, capital, ideas and information cross borders very quickly; they are available everywhere — and create worldwide competition.

This has direct implications for us: for a company in France, what matters is no longer just what its competitors at home or over the Pyrenees in Spain have to offer. It also has to consider

what is being manufactured, and at what price, in China, the USA or India, and it must be able to match this price — either by offering its products just as cheaply or by producing goods that are more expensive but also better.

On the other hand, our living conditions are changing for reasons that have nothing to do with globalisation. Citizens are getting older and societies are ageing too. The first is a very good thing because it means we are living longer. But it also means that the costs of healthcare are increasing and pensions have to be paid for longer.

At the same time — and this is not so good — the number of newborns is decreasing. In recent decades, many people have opted for smaller families or have even chosen not to have any children at all. This also raises an economic problem as fewer and fewer young people will be around to support more and more old people.

The European Union of the future

There is currently much discussion within the EU and the Member States about how the EU should look in the future. Many people are debating the future of Europe. And naturally, the EU's top politicians are also thinking about it. Here are some examples. Please analyse them — and then discuss what you think of them.

1. José Manuel Barroso

President of the European Commission, speech given at the Brussels Think Tank Dialogue — 'The state of the EU in 2013: Heading towards federalism or fragmentation?' Brussels, 22 April 2013:



'I agree that, at times when Europe often seems to shift between integration and fragmentation, we need to come clear about our political plans, options and intentions. It is a fundamental choice we have to make if we want the European idea and the European values to succeed both within and beyond our borders.

I for one have not been afraid to use the forbidden word: federalism. To begin with, it has precisely the opposite meaning of what a lot of people suspect or fear. Federation is not a superstate, but a democratic federation of nation states that can tackle our common problems, through the sharing of sovereignty in a way that each country and each citizen are better equipped to control their own destiny. It implies an explicit acknowledgement that we cannot unite Europe against the Member States, so we need to build it with the Member States. I believe in a Europe where people are proud of their nations but also proud to be European and proud of our European values.

The European Union as we know it today already has a number of undeniably federative elements: a supranational European Commission with a mandate

to promote the general European interest, a directly elected European Parliament, an independent European Central Bank and a European Court of Justice based on a system of law, the primacy of which is recognised over national law. All of these institutions have supranational powers which have increased over time.

This division of power between the central level and the component states is never set in stone and will always be disputable and disputed. Even in established federal states, from the USA to Germany, there is an ongoing debate about subsidiarity, about what the federal government can and must do, and about where its power ends, and should end.

For the next decades, I believe the European Union will be more forward looking and more outward looking.

It will be a powerful instrument for European citizens and Member States to unite their efforts in shaping globalisation and in defending our common values. The world is changing very fast and, together, European Member States can play a fundamental role. Only united and with stronger common institutions will we be able to tackle the challenges of economic and financial crises, of resource scarcity and climate change, of the situation in the world about poverty and underdevelopment. And, together, we will also create better conditions to protect our shared values and to keep, while reforming, our social model, our social market economy and the most important features of the European way of life.'

Source: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-346_en.htm

2. Martin Schulz

President of the European Parliament, has written in a book about the European Union:



'I am convinced that Europe needs to grow closer together if it is not to founder. Coming out of the mouth of a European politician, this call may not surprise many people — after all the public have been bored often enough with sermons telling them that our Community is like a bicycle ride: if we stop pedalling, the bike will topple over. But that is not what I mean. European integration does not necessarily have to be taken further to prevent the EU from collapsing. It is quite possible to conceive of a situation that could be accepted as a stable end-point of unification. But we have not yet reached this situation. The increased cooperation that I have in mind is based on the sober admission that we have not done a proper job in some places as we built the European edifice. For example, we have a common currency, but no common fiscal and financial policy. That was bound to go wrong, and now the much-quoted markets demonstrate every day how Europeans are pitted against each other time and again because of this error. We have also taken a wrong turn in European spending policy. Instead of investing in future growth areas, we are shovelling our money into subsidy pits and keeping industries of the past alive artificially. Just as bad is our positive babel of voices in foreign and security policy, which makes us an international laughing stock.



Jello: 'Decide on your own answer and discuss your results in class.'

Above all, we also need some institutional clarity in the EU in the medium term, as even specialists now find it hard to distinguish the specific competences of the President of the European Parliament, the Commission President, the Council President and the President of the European Council. What we urgently need is a true European government, elected and supervised by parliament.'

Source: (Martin Schulz: *Der gefesselte Riese: Europas letzte Chance*, Berlin 2013)

3. Herman Van Rompuy

In a speech in Copenhagen, President of the European Council, spoke about regaining the trust of citizens:



'The banking and public debt crisis has affected public confidence in the strength of our economies. "Can Europe remain an attractive and competitive continent in a world which is changing so quickly?" Yet there is also an anxiety related to the European project. "Can the European Union offer the right

answers?" The fact is that all our economies have to adapt to a changing world.

To remain competitive, we Europeans must work more, better; be innovative and creative, and we can no longer afford to live beyond our means. Reforms must be done — EU or no EU. A public deficit of 15 % and a public debt of 160 % of GDP are unsustainable — EU or no EU. The competitiveness of our economies must increase — EU or no EU.

But in the public eye, even when the decisions are taken by national leaders, the blame often falls on the Union. The truth is, we did not change in good times, or not enough, so we have to change in bad times. However, we are ►



What would it be like? A video looking at how our life would be if the European Union did not exist. The video can be found here: http://bit.ly/Debate_Europe

► still better off changing together! All Europe’s political leaders know this, and act accordingly, as I witness at every summit. But how can we convince citizens? That is the ultimate challenge.

Jobs, growth, and their prerequisite, political and financial stability: these are the main ingredients to bringing back people’s confidence: their confidence in the strength and resilience of our continent, of Europe’s economies, and their confidence in the European project. Once again, the two are closely linked.

There is another way for politicians to regain the confidence of the public. Leaders must tell the truth.

One such truth is that the impact of reforms on growth and jobs takes time. Another, that the ultimate answer to the crisis does not lie in the creation of financial instruments (funds and bonds), but in changes in the real economy. Yet another, that the cost of non-Europe would be unbearable.

Those who pretend that their country can succeed on its own do not just sell illusions, but lies! Populism and nationalism cannot provide answers to the challenges of our times. Politicians must set out clearly what is at stake. They also have to speak out loudly their European convictions. How can you ask to favour the European cause if the lea-

ders themselves do not have the courage to defend and promote European integration? It is as simple as that. We need European policies, but also European language.’

(‘Beyond the institutions: Why Europe today?’ Speech by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, at the Europe Conference in Copenhagen, 11 May 2012.)

Source: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/130149.pdf

And now it's YOUR turn.

- How do you see things? The development of the European Union particularly affects the younger generation, who will live and shape their lives in the 21st century. What do you want? What is important to you?

Take the views of the European leaders as a basis for tackling these questions. Each make up your own list of priorities. What are the three most important points for you? And three more things you definitely do not want.

The list could look like this:

I definitely want:	I certainly don't want:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Compare your priorities with each other and discuss what sort of Europe you want.

Here are some suggestions: What must the EU be like if it is to take on these challenges? Think about the things you discussed before in the exercise on the common currency ('Who should decide about the common currency?', page 28).

Size

- The EU needs to get bigger. It must have more countries than today to carry the necessary weight.
- The EU must not take on any more members because it will become too diverse and lose its ability to act.
- The EU needs to slim down. To strengthen its cohesion, the countries that do not want to develop the EU further should leave the EU.

Responsibilities

- The EU must acquire more rights from the Member States in order to act effectively, which means that more decisions should be taken centrally for the whole EU in Brussels and Strasbourg.
- The EU should stick to its current division of responsibilities between itself and the Member States, because this is well balanced.
- The EU needs to return responsibilities to its members and concentrate on the essential thing, i.e. a functioning single market. Environmental protection, consumer protection and foreign policy should be handled by the Member States.

Military

- The EU needs to establish a separate European army to give some force to its demands and be able to conduct its own military action in the Balkans or Africa, for example.
- The EU is a civil power and should keep its fingers out of military matters.
- The EU should retain its current cooperation with NATO and only

deploy its strike forces in limited actions where NATO is not interested.

Decision-making

- In the EU, decisions should be taken by the European Parliament alone, because its members have been elected by all of us.
- Decisions in the EU should be taken jointly by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.
- Important decisions should be subject to a Europe-wide referendum held on the same day throughout the EU.

Voting procedure

- In the EU, majority decisions should generally be taken, because almost 30 states would seldom agree and then only after lengthy proceedings.
- In the EU, unanimous decisions should generally be taken, because no sovereign state should be overruled.
- In the EU, day-to-day issues should be decided by a majority and questions of principle by unanimous approval, because that would strike a good balance between efficiency and consideration for all.

The euro

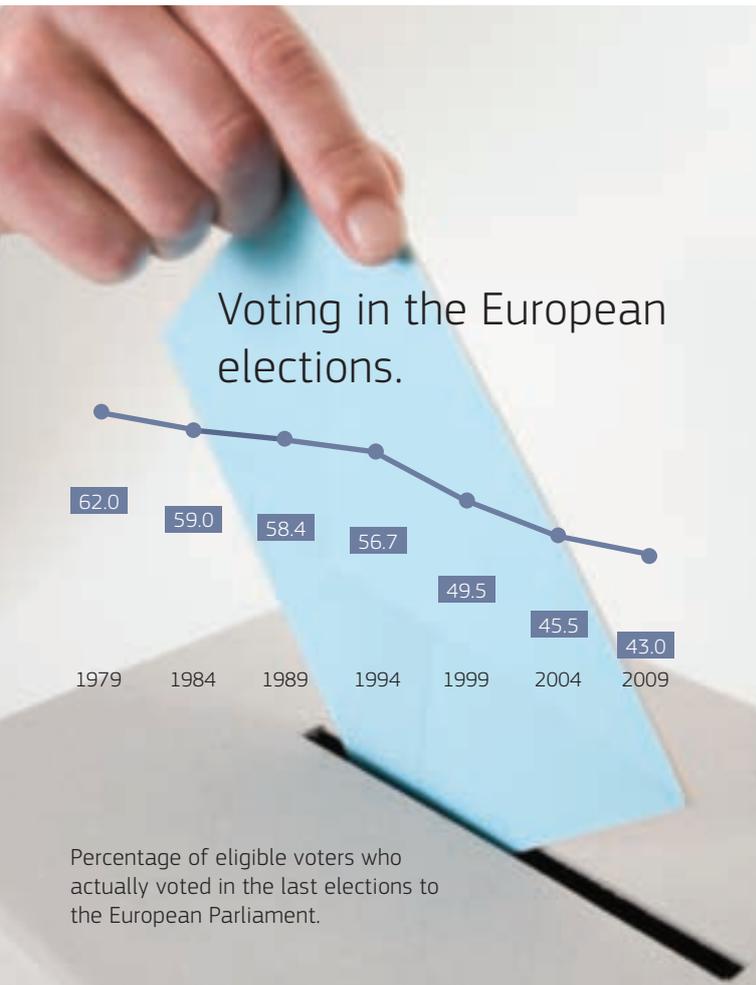
- The more countries adopt the euro as their currency, the closer Europe will grow together. So we should urge as many countries as possible to adopt the common currency and assist them financially where necessary.
- Only countries that adhere to the conditions of the currency union should be members of the euro area. They should be constantly monitored for compliance with the rules.

- A common currency is not good for Europe. Particularly in crises, it is clear that the EU cannot agree on a consistent policy. A national financial and monetary policy could act faster and better. So the EU should return to the national currencies, which still does not rule out cooperation.

Jobs

- The European Union should actively create jobs. EU-funded infrastructure projects, preferably international, such as road and bridge building to connect EU Member States together, could generate a lot of jobs.
- The countries themselves know best how to create jobs at home. The EU does not need to concern itself in this.
- Jobs don't actually need to be created, we have enough vacancies in Europe. With freedom of movement and better information, jobseekers can find a job much faster.

The Union of citizens



► As we have seen, Europe's citizens are represented in the EU by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament is elected for 5 years by all those eligible to vote in the European Union. You get the vote at 18; in Austria even at 16. The passive voting age varies between Member States. While you can be elected to the European Parliament at 18 in Finland, Denmark or Germany, for example, the threshold is 21 in Lithuania, Poland and the United Kingdom. In Cyprus, Italy or Greece you actually have to be 25 before you can become an MEP. EU citizens living in another EU country (for example Austrians in Hungary) can vote there. The Parliament is an important decision-making factor in European policy. Together with the Council, the Parliament forms the legislature for the European Union. That means that nothing happens in Europe without the European Parliament.

Although the European Parliament has important functions and directly represents the citizens, interest in European elections is relatively low. The influence of the European Parliament has risen sharply since 1979. The Parliament has a say in more and more matters. But although the European Parliament has more to say than 30 years ago, election turnouts have fallen. On average across the EU, only 43 % of citizens voted in the last elections to the European Parliament in 2009.

Exercise

Why is voter turnout so low?

- Discuss your thoughts and ideas in a small group and then ask people who were eligible to vote in 2009, such as your parents, acquaintances or people on the street, whether they voted in the elections to the European Parliament. If not, why not? Collect your results on a poster, and enter arguments 'for and against going out to vote' side by side in a table. Can you think of any other arguments? Then add them.

Exercise

And what about you?

What will you do?

Please explain your decision. What would have to happen for you to change your mind?

In the early summer of 2014, I will be		eligible to vote		not yet eligible to vote
I will/would		go out to vote		stay at home

The European Union — an alliance with a future

- ▶ The European Union was founded after the Second World War with the aim of replacing the centuries of enmity between the European countries with friendship and cooperation.

Over 50 years later, it is fair to say that this goal has been achieved. Of course there is still mutual prejudice, but nobody is threatening anyone else with war. Differences of opinion are aired in conference chambers and generally settled with a compromise that all the countries involved can live with.

The European Union has therefore achieved its original aim of securing peace among the Member States. But this has not made it redundant, be-

cause the values that it stands for still apply.

Europe faces new challenges — from averting climate change and helping to bring about globalisation to fighting international terrorism. It is completely clear that no individual country in Europe can tackle these tasks alone. But together we are more than half a billion well-educated people with a strong economy behind us. Together we can achieve something. The European Union helps us by shaping our personal lives in line with our own aspirations.

Of course there will always be discussion and argument about how the EU should develop in the future. There is no

magic solution and the ideas in the different Member States vary widely.

So the EU is a 'work in progress'; it is an institution that is changing. If it is to develop in the direction that we, the citizens of Europe, believe is right, we must get involved. The first step is to participate in the elections to the European Parliament. The higher the turnout, the more the Parliament can make its views and influence felt. If we don't want others to decide for us, we must do it ourselves. The European Parliament can help us to do this.

Europe and us

- ▶ A good way of learning about the European Parliament is to invite your MEP to your school and ask him or her about it. Of course a discussion with a Member of the European Parliament is not the only way to find out about Europe or to get personally involved.

'We hope you have found this brochure interesting. If you want to know more, we have put together a few tips on the next page. Bye!'



Here are a few tips for things to read or do if you want to find out more about Europe.

- **Kids' Corner.**
Games and quizzes about Europe for children and young people:
Homepage: <http://europa.eu/kids-corner>
- **Teachers' Corner.**
Teaching material about the Union and its activities:
Homepage: http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/index_en.htm
- **European Youth Portal.**
European and national pages about education, jobs, travel and much more for young people:
Homepage: http://europa.eu/youth/EU_en
- **Europe Direct.**
EU information centres all over Europe. You can ask your questions by telephone or e-mail, or visit a centre near you:
http://europa.eu/europedirect/meet_us
- **The history of the European Union.**
Information and videos about the founding fathers of the EU:
Homepage: http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm
- **Your Europe.**
Help and advice for EU nationals and their families:
Homepage: http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm
- **Debate on the future of Europe.**
Information portal on the European debates:
Homepage: <http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/>



Exercise

Click on the Internet addresses above.

Split into groups to do this. Each group should take an Internet address and find out what sort of information and suggestions it contains. What did you like about the pages and what didn't you like? Then present your findings to the others. So everyone looks into one thing — but gets to know all of it.

Have fun!

Getting in touch with the EU



ONLINE

Information in all the official languages of the European Union is available on the Europa website: europa.eu



IN PERSON

All over Europe there are hundreds of local EU information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest to you at: europedirect.europa.eu



ON THE PHONE OR BY MAIL

Europe Direct is a service which answers your questions about the European Union.

You can contact this service by freephone: **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(certain mobile telephone operators do not allow access to 00 800 numbers or may charge for these calls), or by payphone from outside the EU: **+32 22999696**, or by e-mail via europedirect.europa.eu



READ ABOUT EUROPE

Publications about the EU are only a click away on the EU Bookshop website: bookshop.europa.eu

You can also obtain information and booklets in English about the European Union from:

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There are European Commission and Parliament representations and offices in all the countries of the European Union. The European Union also has delegations in other parts of the world.

Europe: What's it all about?

'Europe is somewhere else.' This provocative statement opens the first chapter of this brochure. It is, of course, not true. Being right at the heart of Europe, we naturally have many questions about what 'Europe' means and what it does. For example, who governs Europe? What does the European Union mean for our everyday lives? Where is this continent heading in a globalised world? What is the future for Europe? All of these questions and more are broached here. The brochure is aimed at students aged between 13 and 18, and offers them the chance to read, learn and discuss the topics interactively. The brochure is accompanied by a teachers' guide.



Member States of the European Union (July 2013)
Candidate and potential candidate countries

