

EUROPE AND EUROPEANS

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION



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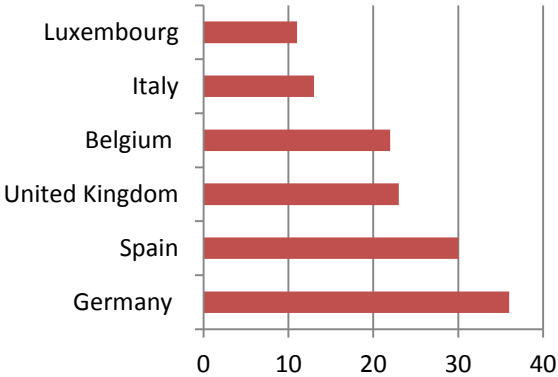
SURVEY ON 80 PEOPLE AT OUR SCHOOL (young people and adults)

I- What do you know about the European Union?

Questions asked	N° of correct answers	N° of false answers	No answers
How many countries are part of the EU in 2012? <i>27 countries</i>	73	7	0
Which year was the Treaty of Maastricht signed ? <i>February 7th, 1992</i>	52	26	2
Which year was the Euro officially launched ? <i>January 1st, 1999</i>	69	11	0
How many stars are there on the European flag ? <i>12 stars</i>	41	38	1
Is Turkey part of the EU ? <i>Turkey first applied to membership in 1987 but has not yet been awarded the membership.</i>	68	12	0

II – Where have you travelled within the EU?

Country	Number of people	Country	Number of people
Germany	36	Bulgaria	1
Spain	30	Cyprus	1
United Kingdom	23	CzechRepublic	1
Belgium	22	Denmark	1
Italy	13	Estonia	1
Luxembourg	11	Finland	1
Greece	5	Hungary	1
Malta	5	Latvia	1
The Netherlands	4	Lithuania	1
Portugal	4	Romania	1
Austria	3	Slovakia	1
Poland	3	Slovenia	1
Republic of Ireland	2	Sweden	1



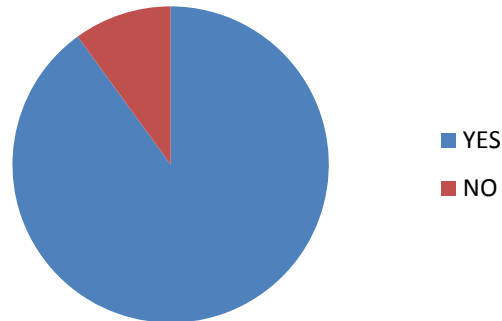
III- According to you, what is “being European”?

- No answer
- Being born in the European Union
- Sharing a common culture
- Sharing the same currency
- Living in a democratic country

IV- What common values do we share?

- The Euro
- Human Rights and democracy
- History and Culture
- Unemployment
- Wars

V- Do you feel European?



VI- What are the advantages of being a member of the European Union?

- *United we stand, Divided we fall*
- No borders (for travelling)
- The Euro (for travelling)
- Mix of different cultures

VII- What are the drawbacks of being a member of the European Union?

- The Euro (is accused of causing the fall of people's purchasing power)
- Loss of national sovereignty
- Too much competition between the member states

EU LANDMARKS

European enlargement



From 6 to 27 members and beyond

- 1951

In the beginning, six countries – Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – founded the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, followed by the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1957. Five successive enlargements have followed since then.

- 1973

Denmark, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the EU.

- 1981

Greece became a Member State

- 1986

Spain and Portugal became members

- 1995

Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU.

- 2004

Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU.

- 2007

Romania and Bulgaria were the last to join.

Institutions of the European Union

The **European Parliament**, in Strasbourg, represents the EU's citizens and is directly elected by them. The European Parliament has three main roles:

- debate and pass European laws, with the Council
- scrutinize other EU institutions, particularly the Commission, to make sure they are working democratically
- debate and adopt the EU's budget, with the Council.

The European Parliament has three places of work – Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg and Strasbourg (France).

- Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the 'General Secretariat').
- Meetings of the whole Parliament ('plenary sessions') take place in Strasbourg and in Brussels. Committee meetings are also held in Brussels.



The **European Council** sets the priorities of the EU – but has no powers to pass laws. This body brings together national EU leaders. Each government defends its own country's national interest within the Council. Led by its President – currently [Herman Van Rompuy](#) – and comprising national heads of state or government and the President of the Commission, it meets for a few days at a time at least every 6 months.



The **Council of the European Union** is where national ministers from each EU country meet to propose laws and coordinate policies.

What does it do?

- Coordinates the broad economic policies of EU member countries.
- Signs agreements between the EU and other countries.
- Approves the annual EU budget
- Develops the EU's foreign policies.
- Coordinates cooperation between courts and police forces of member countries.



The **European Commission** promotes the interests of the EU and its members are appointed by national governments.

It aims at:

- proposing new laws to Parliament and the Council
- managing the EU budget and allocating funding

enforcing EU laws (together with the Court of Justice)



The **European Central Bank**, based in Frankfurt, is responsible for framing and implementing the EU economic and monetary policy. Its purpose is to :

- Set key interest rates for the eurozone and control the **money supply**
- manage the eurozone's **foreign-currency reserves**/ buy or sell currencies when necessary to keep **exchange rates** in balance
- help to ensure **financial markets and institutions** are adequately **supervised** by national authorities, and that **payment systems** function correctly
- authorize central banks in eurozone countries to **issue euro banknotes**
- monitor price trends** and assess the risk they pose to price stability.



The **Court of Justice** interprets EU laws to make sure it is respected in the same way in all EU countries. It also settles legal disputes between EU governments and EU institutions. Individuals, companies or organizations can also bring cases before the Court if they feel their rights have been infringed by an EU institution.



The powers and responsibilities of all of these are laid down in the Treaties, which are the foundation of everything the EU does. The Treaties also lay down the rules and procedures that the EU institutions must follow. The Treaties are agreed by the presidents and/or prime ministers of all the EU countries, and ratified by their parliaments.

Important dates

18 April 1951

Based on the [Schuman plan](#), six countries sign a treaty to run their heavy industries – coal and steel – under a common management (CECA). In this way, none can on its own make the weapons of war to turn against the other, as in the past. The six are Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

25 March 1957

Building on the success of the [Coal and Steel Treaty](#), the six countries expand cooperation to other economic sectors. They sign the [Treaty of Rome](#), creating the European Economic Community (EEC), or '[common market](#)'. The idea is for people, goods and services to move freely across borders.

7 February 1992

The [Treaty on European Union](#) is signed in Maastricht. It sets clear rules for the future [single currency](#) as well as for [foreign and security policy](#) and closer cooperation in [justice and home affairs](#). Under the treaty, the name 'European Union' officially replaces 'European Community'.

1 January 1993

The [single market](#) and its four freedoms are established: the free movement of goods, services, people and money is now reality.

26 March 1995

The [Schengen Agreement](#) takes effect in seven countries — Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. Travelers of any nationality can travel between all these countries without any passport control at the frontiers. Other countries have since joined the passport-free Schengen area.

1 January 1999

The [euro](#) is introduced in 11 countries (joined by Greece in 2001) for commercial and financial transactions only. Notes and coins will come later. The euro countries are Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland. Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom decide to stay out for the time being.

1 January 2002

Euro notes and coins arrive. More than 80 billion coins are involved. Notes are the same for all countries. Coins have one common face, giving the value, while the other carries a national emblem. All circulate freely.

13 December 2007

The 27 EU countries sign the [Treaty of Lisbon](#), which amends the previous Treaties. It is designed to make the EU more democratic, efficient and transparent, and thereby able to tackle global challenges such as climate change, security and sustainable development. The Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by all EU countries before entering into force on 1 December 2009.

SYMBOLS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European flag

The **flag of Europe** consists of a [circle of](#) 12 golden stars on an azure blue background. It is the [flag](#) and emblem of the [European Union](#) and the [Council of Europe](#) (CoE).

The stars are intended to represent the union of all the peoples of Europe, even those outside the [European integration](#).

Twelve is the symbol of unity (12 months, 12 apostles...).

The flag was designed by [Arsène Heitz](#) and [Paul Lévy](#) in 1955 for the CoE as its symbol.



The European anthem

The melody used to symbolize the EU comes from the Ninth Symphony composed in 1823 by Ludwig Van Beethoven, when he set music to the "Ode to Joy", Friedrich von Schiller's lyrical verse from 1785. The anthem symbolizes not only the European Union but also Europe in a wider sense. The poem "Ode to Joy" expresses Schiller's idealistic vision of the human race becoming brothers - a vision Beethoven shared. In 1972, the Council of Europe adopted Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" theme as its anthem. In 1985, it was adopted by EU leaders as the official anthem of the European Union. Without words, in the universal language of music, this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity. The European anthem is not intended to replace the national anthems of the EU countries but rather to celebrate the values they share.

Europe Day

The ideas behind the European Union were first put forward on 9 May 1950 by French foreign minister Robert Schuman. This is why 9 May is celebrated as a key date for the EU.

European Motto

"*United in diversity*" is the motto of the European Union.

It signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages.



The euro (€) is the official currency of 17 out of 27 EU member countries. These countries, known collectively as the Eurozone are :

[Austria](#),[Belgium](#), [Cyprus](#),[Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Malta](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovakia](#), [Slovenia](#) and [Spain](#). Over 327 million people use this currency every day.

Comenius school partnerships

The Comenius project is a project sponsored by the European Union based on the cooperation between European schools.

It aims at favouring the linguistic, intercultural and personal competence as well as multiculturalism.

Every year, the EU through the Comenius programme links 11.000 institutions, 100.000 teachers and 750.000 students in Europe.



Source : <http://europa.eu>