



17 European Union nations have adopted the euro as their common currency: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain



The European Central Bank sets the monetary policy of the euro-zone.



The 1985 Schengen Agreement is a formal recognition of a borderless zone among EU citizens (with Ireland, UK, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland opting out). The Schengen Area currently consists of 25 European countries covering a population of more than 400 million people.



Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) sit in seven Europe-wide political groups. They represent all views on European integration, from the strongly pro-federalist to the openly Eurosceptic. Center-right parties triumphed over their left-wing opponents in the 2009 European Parliament elections.



Free trade among EU members means there are no trade barriers within the EU.



Unified tariffs on goods imported from outside the EU means that products carry the same tariff no matter which port they enter the EU (i.e., cars from Japan which have import duties on arrival in Germany can be shipped to any EU nation and sold there in the same way as a German car). No further duty is charged.



The College of Europe has two campuses—in Belgium and Poland. Students come from over 50 different countries and usually speak three to four languages and participate in postgraduate programs.



The Erasmus Project (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is an EU student exchange program. Erasmus students contribute to a new European identity among young people.



Free movement of persons is a fundamental right guaranteed to EU Citizens in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.



Eurocorps is a military force that consists of up to 60,000 soldiers from the armies of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Spain.



Growing up in the era of the euro, today's teenagers do not remember national currencies. Their generation has taken a big step away from their parents and grandparents, who might be nostalgic for the lira, the mark, or franc.



An army of bureaucrats – in 2008, 170,000 people have jobs in EU institutions.



In the first decade of the twentieth century, two of the EU's founding members—France and the Netherlands—refused to ratify the EU Constitution. The voters in these two countries rejected the Constitution.



The EU Court of Justice is made up of judges from each member state. It is responsible for ensuring that EU nations follow the laws agreed to in Brussels and that laws of the EU are interpreted and applied in the same way throughout the EU.



In 2004 ten new countries joined the EU—Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta.



Accession talks for a nation to join the EU require the unanimous vote of EU members for negotiations to begin. The nation must accept the total body of EU law. Finally, all member states must unanimously agree on granting membership.



License plates for countries in the European Union have a blue strip on the left that has the country code in white (i.e., for Germany, "D" for Deutschland). The flag of the EU is above the country code.



The passports issued by the EU's 27 member nations share certain features—the color (burgundy) and the words, "European Union." There is no "EU Passport," although sometimes this term is used to describe a passport from any EU nation.



"Generation E" – E is for Europe, a continent that has been essentially without borders for most young people's adult lives. To them, traveling from Sweden to Spain is as easy as it is for U.S. college students to take a spring break drive to Florida. National borders have little meaning for young people. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A25821-2003Jul21?language=printer>)



Euro-zone problems have led to the collapse of market confidence in several EU nations. Some observers say that the euro-zone's difficulties are the result of government irresponsibility.



France began deporting Romanian and Bulgarian Roma in a crackdown on illegal camps in the country in October 2010.



In March 2011, Malta asked to activate a “temporary protection” mechanism allowing refugees from Libya to be granted fast-track asylum procedures anywhere in the EU. But neither the European Commission nor other member states are willing to proceed with it. (<http://euobserver.com/9/32103>)



The rate at which asylum seekers are entering Europe for economic reasons has created “a ticking time-bomb,” a senior Brussels politician warned in August 2004. He argued that the EU would have to crack down on the problem. He went on to call for common European border controls and said member states should send more aid to troubled nations to stem the flood of economic refugees. (<http://news.scotsman.com/politics/Asylum-problems-an-EU-timebomb.2557516.jp>)



Only 34 percent of European Union citizens say they will vote in the European Parliament elections on June 4-7, according to a survey that suggests less voter turnout than the record low of 46 percent in 2004. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,619104,00.html>



On May 9, 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presented the “Schuman Declaration,” which is considered the beginning of what is now the European Union.



All EU member states have abolished the death penalty. Article 2 (2) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that no one shall be condemned to the death penalty, or executed. Its abolition is a key objective for the EU’s human rights policy. Abolition of the death penalty is also a pre-condition for entry into the Union.



Unrest in Libya has sparked migrant debate in the EU. As violence continued across Libya, European officials debated how to handle a possible influx of migrants from the North African country. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/Libya-Unrest-Sparks-Migrant-Debate-in-the-EU-116886823.html>



Bailouts in Greece and Ireland and the prospect of further liabilities have triggered a furious reaction from taxpayers in the contributor states, especially Germany. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/danielhannan/100077330/now-the-eu-wants-to-harmonise-pensions-national-budgets-and-public-sector-wages/>



Ireland’s borrowing costs recently rose dramatically in rumor-driven markets as speculation mounted that Portugal was also edging towards a bailout from its European partners. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/mar/22/portugal-edges-towards-eu-imf-bailout>



“Sharing a currency means that the decisions of one affect all,” said European economic affairs chief. “What happens with pensions or debt in one country may affect the economy in another country, in good times and in bad times.” <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/BUSINESS/11/16/ireland.economy/index.html>



The European Court of Justice enforces EU law. It is the highest court in the EU – higher than supreme courts of member nations. It decides cases between member states, institutions, and individuals in disputes on EU law.



European laws take precedence over national laws of EU member nations.



In 2007 the European Union celebrated the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome and a declaration was presented during a special ceremony in Berlin.



In December 2008 the EU Parliament and Council of Ministers agreed to climate and energy policy, known as the 20-20-20 program. The targets are: 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions based on 1990 levels by 2020; 20% of EU energy needs met by renewable sources by 2020; and 20% reduction in energy use through improved energy efficiency by 2020.



The integration of the former communist nations of Eastern and Central Europe into the EU presents many serious challenges and opportunities including immigration policies, eliminating corruption, and others.



Calling for better integration of its 10 million to 12 million Roma citizens, the European Union conceded recently that its 27 member states were doing too little to tackle discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance against the minority group. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/06/world/europe/06iht-union06.html>



CE CE marking certifies that a product has met European standards for consumer safety, health, or environmental requirements. It indicates compliance with EU laws and allows for the free movement of products within the European market.



A European political party is a type of political party that operates transnationally in Europe and in the institutions of the European Union. The parties are regulated and funded by the European Union and are usually made up of national parties.



Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan recently criticized German Chancellor Angela Merkel for opposing his country's EU membership aspirations. The premier caused outrage in Germany at a similar speech three years ago when he said immigrant families must integrate into Germany but retain their Turkish identities. http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/europe/news/article_1622206.php/Turkey-s-Erdogan-criticizes-German-EU-opposition-Roundup



Today the EU faces an influx of refugees from Tunisia and other African nations. Few EU members are willing to share the burden of accepting these refugees. "We must work at a European level," said Alain Lamassoure, a French member of the European Parliament who complained about a lack of solidarity among EU states.