

# How to understand United Europe

**Basic Information:  
History, Values,  
Experience**



**EUbyCITIZENS**





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# INTRODUCTION

Today, in most European countries' schools, European issues still do not seem to occupy the place they should. Generally speaking, our education systems adopt a national viewpoint even though, in countries that have become members of the European Union, laws and programmes originating in Europe increasingly regulate people's lives.

## ***Why should European issues be included in curricula?***

There are two main reasons:

- Firstly, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht instituted a new political entity for Member States – the European Union. At the same time, the Treaty introduced European citizenship, specifying that, *“Any person holding the nationality of a Member State is a citizen of the European Union.”* Citizenship of the EU is additional to national citizenship; it does not replace it.

However, this legal nicety is meaningless if citizens are incapable of taking their full responsibilities and playing an active part in public life. This requires a minimum amount of training and knowledge. Citizens must know their rights and duties. They must also have some idea (even if rudimentary) of the institutional framework and the main rules and regulations that affect their everyday lives. More importantly, they must understand the objectives that underline the building of the EU and the reasons for setting up the resulting organisations.

Democracy cannot exist unless citizens are aware of the main issues. **People are not born citizens, aware of their responsibilities; they become citizens. Europe needs this awareness from its entire population.**

- Secondly, European citizens need a minimum of knowledge to understand what makes Europe tick, for their own benefit and interest. Whether they like it or not, and whether they love Europe or not, they now live in a European framework. They travel, work and get married in Europe. No matter the industry, everybody is subject to European regulations so everybody needs suitable education at school, from Year 1 to Year 12.

It is true that some centres of excellence (universities, prestigious colleges, private schools etc.) provide this education, wholly or in part. There is, though, a risk of creating a social divide between those who receive proper education on European issues and can therefore develop and evolve easily within the European framework, and those who are not so lucky. The latter know nothing about Europe and its cultures, do not understand what is sometimes referred to simply as “Brussels,” do not speak any other languages and seldom travel.

**The European team at the Maison de l'Europe in Paris, composed of people coming from nine partner countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain), seeks to define the essential knowledge that every European citizen should have.** There is no intention to interfere with the drafting of curricula for classes or the choice of teaching methods. Relevant authorities in each country remain responsible for these tasks. Instead, our mission is to consider the required results, then define what every citizen should know by the end of his/her schooling, whatever the sectors, subjects and classes passing knowledge on to him/her.

**This document has been designed primarily for teachers and other players in the educational and social sectors,** in the widest sense of the term, whether or not they work within a formal teaching structure and whatever subject they teach (history, geography, modern languages, literature, citizenship, the so-called “exact” sciences etc.). It is up to them to see how, in their lessons or through other school and extracurricular activities, they can help to give their pupils the basic knowledge young people need if they are to become fully-fledged European citizens.

### ***The choice of priorities***

The authors of this brochure decided to focus on three areas:

- 1- European history and the building of the EU**
- 2- The values at the basis of Europe**
- 3- Experiencing Europe as a living entity**

It is a fairly unusual choice and may come as a surprise. We wanted to insist on the aspects that explain **the reasons** for things. In a short document, it is impossible to cover every topic so we have deliberately limited descriptions of European institutions and European achievements in the fields of economics, law and politics to a minimum. This type of information is easily found in the many publications that have appeared to date.

On the other hand, it seemed useful to us to insist on certain things and to **put them in perspective**. Where do we come from? Where are we going? Experience has shown us that what most annoyed citizens was their ignorance of the reasons why Europe was built and the reasons for the decisions and actions that impact everyday life in Europe. We have so often heard somebody say, *“I know nothing about Europe! What use is it, anyway?”*

**1 – History** provides a means of distinguishing between **Europe** and the **building of the EU**. Europe's origin dates back several hundred years and is defined mainly by the culture, philosophy and lifestyle of the various peoples living on neighbouring territories who, over time, moved towards a common future and, in some cases, frequently battled. The European Union's origin, on the other hand, dates only from the end of the Second World War, making it close to seventy years old.

Secondly, a historic approach highlights the **EU's meaning**. What are we trying to do by building this new Europe? What were the objectives in the 1950s? What are today's objectives? Some people rather hastily answer that, since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, we have been trying to build a great single market, whose main feature is the free circulation of goods, services, capital and, of course, people. However, this purely economic view is biased. By gaining greater understanding and control of its overall development, we will become more aware of the real project for Europe, which goes beyond economics to include every aspect of society.

The building of the European Union is a comprehensive project based on a social model, in which economic issues (the economy remains an important component) exist side by side with social and humanist concerns. It is a way of defining the individual's place within society. Because of this, the project for a European Union naturally includes a political dimension, in the noblest sense of the word. History allows us to understand the ways and the reasons why we have reached this point. It explains how this "model" is under threat and why it is so important to preserve it today.

**2 – The study of values** and, more widely, the **culture** that form the basis of European philosophy (what some call "European civilisation") is fundamental. It is based on ideas, ways of thinking and lifestyles that make up the European identity. It has taken centuries to forge this complex identity and it is undergoing constant change. If only the fratricidal wars that have torn us apart throughout history and the totalitarianism seen in Europe during the 20th century should teach us something.

Today, our action within the structure that we have created and that we call the European Union is designed to determine whether, in a world undergoing such endless movement and change, we shall succeed in preserving these fundamental values, our culture in the widest sense of the term, what we might call our model for society.

**3 – Finally, we ask ourselves, "How can we experience Europe?"** In other words, what practical knowledge does the "ordinary citizen" require to live within this new European framework?

To answer this question, we have established a list of priorities:

Know how to **play an active part in public life** in Europe. In a democratic society, a person is only really a citizen if he or she plays an active part in public life, and there are numerous mechanisms that allow for such individual involvement in European public life. Of course, you have to know about them before you can make use of them. For many years, the building



of the EU seemed to be restricted to a small group of experts. Without underestimating the quality of their work, democratic principles and the desire for efficiency now require citizens as a whole to feel involved, and to use the means at their disposal to ensure that their voices are heard.

Know the **European organisations** and **institutions**, as much as possible. The aim is not to turn everybody into an expert in European decision-making procedures but to give everybody at least basic knowledge of the system. The same applies to policies implemented by the European Union, in its areas of expertise delegated by Member States.

Know about a few **achievements** and certain European **programmes**, exemplifying the practical usefulness of actions implemented by the EU. This is the case for programmes geared toward young people, through which they gradually learn new things e.g. cultures, languages and interesting work methods. All these actions and programmes eventually teach us to live together despite our differences.

\*

This booklet will have achieved its aim if it helps to fulfil the wish once expressed by Bronislaw Geremek, a great Polish intellectual and politician, ***“We’ve made Europe; now let’s make Europeans.”***

**Catherine Lalumière** – President, La Maison de l’Europe de Paris

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## **PART ONE**

# **FROM SHARED CULTURAL ROOTS TO THE REALITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**



The idea for Europe's institutional integration is the culmination of a long history, and the project's reasons and meaning cannot be understood without an awareness of its origins.

For centuries, **Europe's history was marked by longstanding rivalry, endless conflict and devastating wars on the one hand, and by constant community building, scientific discoveries and artistic creation on the other.**

After the horrors of the First and Second World Wars, a paradigm shift occurred in 1945 in Western Europe. People began to talk of peace, reconciliation, friendship and the implementation of common projects and aims within a European framework. It was a considerable change, which profoundly altered the lives of Europeans and the place of Western Europe in the world.

Eastern Europe could only join this project after the collapse of the communist dictatorships, which took place after 1989.

**We shall look at European history from four distinct points of view:**

### **1 – Europe's Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian origins**

This first part is a reminder of European civilisation's roots shaped by the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, as well as the great empires and monotheistic religions – Christianity in particular – in the Middle Ages. These origins continue to influence the political, social, economic, religious and cultural dimensions of the European social model today.

### **2 – Europe, a perpetual melting pot of cultures**

The focus of the second part is the growth of European civilisation in the Early Modern Age. Starting in the 15th century, new economic developments accompanied the spread of Europe's global influence, while religious wars and dynastic conflicts continued to tear the continent apart. Ideas of liberty, equality, tolerance and rule of law launched by philosophers in the Age of Enlightenment paved the way for the triumph of modern democracy.

### **3 – The age of nations and the by-products of nationalism**

This third point discusses the major political, economic, social and cultural transformations of the 19th century, when industrialisation gradually altered the previous primarily agrarian economies and societies; nation states became stronger; European great powers expanded their colonial possessions all around the world. The rise of nationalism, along with increasing inter-state and inter-ethnic tensions at the end of the 19th century, led Europe to near self-destruction in the first half of the 20th century with two World Wars, in 1914-18 and 1939-45, and the emergence of brutal totalitarian systems.

#### **4 – The paradigm shift: a new structure for Europe**

The fourth part emphasizes the post-war search for long-lasting peace and prosperity through the idea of a European unity, based on the cooperation of equal states and free individuals. This new tendency towards European integration emerged from the US-sponsored Marshall Plan and the establishment of common institutions such as the Council of Europe (1949), the ECSC (1950-1) and the ECC (1957-8). This new framework of European cooperation marked a paradigm shift, with shared sovereignty replacing hostile rivalry between the states. As a result, Europe's destiny seemed transformed forever. However, the European Union is now at a crossroads. Quite apart from its economic and human importance, can it confirm its political weight at a time of globalization and nationalist revival?

# 1 - THE ORIGINS OF EUROPE

**The name “Europe” pulls its origins from an ancient myth. “Europe” was a Phoenician princess (Phoenicians lived in present-day Lebanon) whom Zeus, the master of Olympus disguised as a white bull, kidnapped and brought to Crete. The etymology is said to come from the word εὐρύς, “wide” and the ὤψ, “eye.”** One may say a concept of open-mindedness, as well as the meeting of East and West lies behind the notion of Europe.

Since prehistoric times, the geographical area known as Europe has seen many civilisations living at the same time or succeeding each other, among them the Celts, Greeks and Romans. Through them, Europe has absorbed traditions and ideas from Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as Jewish and Christian moral codes. Germanic and Slavic migrations toward the end of Antiquity led to an encounter with Greco-Roman heritage. Through these subsequent contributions, Europe has built up its cultural and linguistic diversity.

## GRECO-ROMAN ROOTS

**The word “Europe” is Greek in origin.** Used in Herodotus’s writing to talk about the “west,” gradually, it acquired geographical, political and cultural significance. Since it was formally accepted as a tolerated religion in 313 AD, Christianity has continued to promote the term “Europe.” At Charlemagne’s court, clerks rediscovered the Classics and they described the emperor as “*pater europae*” (the “Father of Europe”). During most of the Early Middle Ages, the term “Europe” existed side by side with “the West.” The Roman Empire, which collapsed in the West in 476 AD, remained an essential model for all the princes and popes of this period aiming to establish their worldly power and restore unity among the “Europeans of the West.” Finally, the use of the adjective “European” became more commonplace at the beginning of the early modern era. During the Age of Enlightenment, “Europe” became a subject of intellectual reflection by leading writers and philosophers such as Emmanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire and Saint-Pierre.

Apart from this awareness of the distance separating Europe and Asia, both geographical and spiritual, Athens under Pericles (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) created a political and social model that has continued to be seen as a benchmark of democracy, based on a sense of citizenship and logical thinking (philosophy, with its great masters Socrates, Plato and Aristotle). The distinction between science and religion, the emergence of notions such as reason and progress, and the city as a social space where decisions were taken jointly, were among other major contributions made by Greek civilisation to Europe, despite the facts that ancient Greece was marked by rivalry between city-states and that citizenship was not granted to all.

More so than the Greeks and Romans, the area of Celtic civilisation corresponds even closer to the boundaries of the modern European Union. It was highly developed in Northern and Western Europe but was gradually replaced by Roman colonisation and Germanic invasions. Although the Celts did not fully develop the art of writing, several traces of their presence have survived until our time through oral tradition and are preserved in languages and folklore from all over Europe.

**The Romans adapted, propagated and passed on** the knowledge and skills developed by the Greek civilisation. They brought progress, along with suffering, particularly **through military campaigns** against the Celts and Germans in Central and Western Europe. They also provided the bases of our road and waterway networks, the legal system and civil law in continental Europe, as well as territorial structure. Last but not least, they erected countless similar buildings from Spain to Romania, from England to Greece and even beyond Europe. The influence of Roman civilisation was visible beyond the regions conquered by the Roman Legions. Trade along the Amber Road to the Baltic Sea, for example, contributed to strong Roman cultural influence in the region.

With the **Romanisation** of many provinces conquered over centuries, the Roman Empire marked the first successful attempt to integrate large parts of Europe legally, culturally and economically. **In 212 AD the Edict of Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire regardless of their ethnic origin.** This was a foretaste of the legal form of citizenship in Europe. Until modern times, Latin had remained the main language for intellectual debate and legal documents.

Greek heritage was also spread by Byzantium (Eastern Roman Empire) and its capital Constantinople, until its collapse as late as 1453. The Greek language was dominant among intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Constantinople was a major centre of intellectual life, not least through its contacts with non-European, e.g. Arab and Persian, civilizations.

## MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND CHRISTIANITY

Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the **4<sup>th</sup> century under Emperor Constantine** and then spread throughout Europe. Thanks to the missionaries, the Christian faith greatly expanded during the Middle Ages, shaping **European civilisation to an important extent.**

**Western Christianity**, through the universally accepted authority of the Pope in Rome, **gave rise to the notion of a “Western World” in the Middle Ages.** In 800 AD, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor. This was the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire, a medieval ambition to unite all Christians in one community of peoples. The Empire, subsequently ruled by German kings, existed side by side with two other major civilisations: the Arabs, present in Spain and North Africa, as well as the Byzantines in the Balkans and modern-day Turkey, enjoying a more advanced level of economic and cultural development than Latin-based Europe.



The times between the fall of Rome in 476 and the beginnings of Europe's global expansion in 1492 are referred to as the Middle Ages.

The Carolingian Empire was divided in 843 AD, between Louis the Pious' three heirs, giving birth to the future nation-states of France and Germany as well as a short-lived kingdom of Lotharingia (modern Italy, Switzerland, Holland and Belgium). Medieval kings gradually imposed their authority on lesser lords, bishops and barons, e.g. in France, England and Spain. In Germany, the feudal princes maintained their land and their power in spite of the Emperor's overlordship. Italy saw the rise of principalities and towns that jealously guarded their independence (e.g. Venice and Florence etc.), standing up to the Pope and the Emperor. While independent towns and the Empire claimed to be modelled on ancient Greek and Roman patterns, centralised governments were gradually established in a number of European kingdoms, including peoples in Eastern Europe newly converted to Christianity from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards (e.g. Bulgaria, Serbia, Poland or Kievan Rus').

Thanks to their knowledge of writing and languages, monks maintained medieval Europe's connection to its ancient heritage and circulated major classic works by making handwritten copies. They cleared the forests and cultivated much of the land. They preserved the Romans' winegrowing techniques and perfected the Germanic and Celtic methods of brewing beer. They also made use of medicinal plants in accordance with books written by the ancients.

First the Benedictines, then the Cistercians set up a network of monasteries stretching all over Europe, from Ireland to Rome, from Portugal to Poland. Christian monks set up religious communities in Northern Europe, which had not previously been exposed to Roman influence and which had had no direct bonds to ancient civilisations. Christianity spread from Byzantium to most Slavonic peoples, e.g. the Balkans and Rus', thanks to the mission of the Greek monks Cyril and Methodius, who transformed the Greek alphabet in order to write down Slavic texts.

Cultural changes and a sense of belonging encouraged people to go on pilgrimages to honour the saints. Nowadays, cultural routes created by the Council of Europe enable people to follow the "*Camino*," or the trail to Santiago de Compostela, e.g. from Hungary. These **cultural and religious networks** spread and circulated knowledge across thousands of kilometres, at a time when roads were few and far between.

Christians fought non-Christians and unorthodox Christians whom they considered heretics. The expansion of Christianity led to numerous acts of brutal violence. One such enterprise was the violent conquest of Saxony by Charlemagne in the 8<sup>th</sup> century; others included the crusades in the **Near East from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries** and the Reconquista of Spain from the **Arab** kingdoms that ended in 1492 with the capture of Granada. Nevertheless, the period of Arab rule over Spain has left Europe a rich heritage in mathematics, astrology and architecture. The expansion of religious chivalric orders, especially the Teutonic Knights, in the pagan territories of Central Europe (Prussia and modern day Baltic States), was another expression of a violent crusading spirit that acted in the name of Christian civilisation, considered superior to other cultures.

Apart from its political dimension, medieval universalism was equally evident in its economic, social and cultural aspects. While the Roman civilisation was built upon urbanisation, the Middle Ages brought a more primitive rural economy that dominated until the **13th century**. **A more sophisticated** medieval economy then developed around towns located on riverbanks and seashores, which became major commercial hubs. Some rose to prominence thanks to the existence of episcopal sees, with their monumental religious buildings and famous relics. Expert artisans, associated in specialised guilds that spread their expertise throughout the continent, built the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals. Byzantine style churches prevailed in the Balkans.

Throughout the Middle Ages, knowledge and religion worked hand in hand. The first universities, founded with the Pope's permission, trained Europe's intellectuals. Throughout the continent, students and teachers enjoyed a particular privileged status, spoke a common language (Latin) and travelled from one university to another between Salamanca in Spain, Oxford in England, the Sorbonne in Paris, Bologna in Italy and Prague in Bohemia etc. **Mobility was the norm** rather than the exception.

Gradually, students and teachers created courses that lay outside the objectives set by the Roman Church. The principle of "*Credo ut intelligam*" (I believe in order to understand) gradually gave way to "*Intelligo ut credam*" (I understand in order to believe).

In the Orthodox world, monasteries preserved cultural heritage; yet universities came into being much later and were less numerous. The Mohyla College in Kiev became the first Orthodox academy in 1658 and the University of Moscow was founded as late as 1755.

Cultural influence was accompanied by economic development. **International trade developed** and the German Hanseatic League was set up around the North Sea and the Baltic, an association of medieval trading towns subject to identical rules. It was managed from Lübeck but extended from Cologne to Riga. It established its major hubs in foreign ports like Bruges, London, Bergen, Stockholm and Novgorod. It continued to dominate trade in this region until the beginning of the 16th century. At the same time, central European towns adopted the legal framework of Magdeburg law. In the South, the great mercantile families of Florence, Venice, Dubrovnik and later, Nuremberg and Augsburg, formed relations with the Ottomans, India and China (**Marco Polo**). Not only did they trade in goods; they also set up a banking system providing financial services to European monarchs. Furthermore, in 1416, modern-day Dubrovnik abolished slavery and slave trading.

## 2 - EUROPE, A PERPETUAL MELTING POT OF CULTURES

Three major events marked the arrival of modern times – the fall of Constantinople in 1453 at the hands of the Ottoman Turks; the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the Reformation culminating in Martin Luther's publication of his 95 theses (1517). Thanks to another major progress, the invention of the printing press, it also became easier to spread new ideas.

### INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND CREATIVITY

The Fall of Constantinople and the end of the Byzantine Empire had a crucial impact on the Orthodox world. The Orthodox Church played an important role in preserving cultural heritage in its polycentric formation, favouring the emergence of nationhood. Moscow claimed the status of the "Third Rome" and actually became the new political and religious centre of Orthodoxy in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

The exodus of Greek scholars to Italy led to a rediscovery and the spread of ancient Greek culture, as the starting point for the Renaissance.

Humanism (Erasmus, Pico della Mirandola), which placed human beings at the centre of the universe, emerged when philologists rediscovered ancient texts. Those writings presented an optimistic vision of mankind as having three independent dimensions (the soul, the mind and the body), making individuals capable of great individual achievements.

As a result, artists' genius and their intrinsic value began to be recognised. From the **14<sup>th</sup> century** onwards, literature was no longer written solely in Latin but also in the national languages that were beginning to emerge. Among the writers of that time were Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, whose works became familiar to intellectuals from all over Europe. Italian culture influenced the whole of Europe. Its impact can be seen in Shakespeare's sonnets and Dürer's paintings. Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary and Croatia, developed one of the most renowned Renaissance libraries.

Mercantile towns, located in Northern Italy and the Netherlands, were prosperous and supported their artists. The courts of popes, emperors, kings and princes competed to attract the very best Renaissance masters and their masterpieces.

After the Church-imposed restrictions on loan interest rates had been lifted, the banking system finally flourished. The discoveries made by Portuguese and Spanish seafarers paved the way for Europe's colonial expansion, carried out behind the façade of spreading Christianity. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch invented the bond market and the stock market as a crucial channel to raise medium-term and long-term funds, especially for the needs of the Dutch East India Company.

What with great geographical discoveries and the forming of colonial empires, Mediterranean and Baltic trade went into decline. After the discovery of new trade routes to America and Asia, new colonial powers emerged – Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France and England. Eastern Europe was not involved in overseas colonisation mainly because of its geographical position. Instead, it became a producer of agricultural products for Western European markets. For the same reason, these countries continued to uphold the feudal system and there was a certain degree of economic stagnation east of the River Elbe. Correspondingly, Russia expanded into Siberia and gradually brought large parts of Asia under its rule.

Western European countries spread their influence throughout the world and, as a result, enjoyed unprecedented economic development. They made decisions, directly or indirectly, that sealed the fates of people from other continents, leading also to the African slave trade and the extermination of most of the indigenous peoples of America.

Developed by Gutenberg in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, **printing** spread very quickly, bringing about significant changes. It contributed to a faster circulation of the written word and translations of key texts into national languages. Culture and knowledge became more accessible. Those who had long opposed the Pope, (Wycliffe, Hus, Calvin) were now able to spread their ideas more easily through the Ottoman Empire. The leading figure of Protestantism, Martin Luther, completed his German translation of the Bible in 1534 and encouraged people to read the word of God independently, without resorting to priests as intermediaries. This period also saw the beginnings of modern schooling, with teaching carried out in **national languages**. The view of the world promoted by the Roman Catholic Church was challenged by the Reformation and by the scientific discoveries of scholars like Copernicus or Galileo.

## WARS OF RELIGION, DYNASTIC CONFLICT AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN STATE

**The Renaissance saw the birth of nation states**, the rise of national languages and identities, and wars of religion among Christians. At the same time, it allowed for unprecedented cultural debate and the birth of an all-European “Republic of Letters” that extended far beyond national borders.

The year in which Christopher Columbus reached America, 1492, coincided with the **final victory of the “Catholic kings” over the Arabs in Andalusia and the end of the Reconquista in Spain**. As a result, Moslems and Jews were forced to leave Spain or convert to Roman Catholicism.

The 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were marked by cruel wars of religion between Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians **and people’s sense of religious identity was often used by rulers to consolidate their power**. Meanwhile, in southeastern Europe, Orthodox people were often subjected to forceful conversion to Islam. The Inquisition was created as part of Counter-Reformation, leading to the judgement and persecution of non-Catholics.

The principle of *"cujus regio, ejus religio"* (*"Whose realm, his religion"*), as formulated by the Treaty of Augsburg (1555), according to which subjects were obliged to adhere to their sovereign's religion, helped to pacify the continent but it also prevented freedom of religion and caused massive movements of population. Many Jews or Protestants found refuge in the Protestant German principalities, the Netherlands, the Republic of Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Balkans were marked by a mass scale migration of Slavic people into the Austrian Empire.

Thereafter, the Thirty Years War in Central Europe (the German Holy Roman Empire and lands between the Baltic and the French frontier) became one of the major conflicts in modern Europe. Between 1618 and 1648, Germany lost about one-third of its population. Behind the smokescreen of religion, this was actually a power struggle. Sweden and France sought to weaken the all-powerful Habsburgs reigning on large parts of Central Europe, the Netherlands and Spain. The Catholic kingdom of France even signed an alliance with Protestant Sweden and the Muslim Ottomans to achieve its political goals.

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 marked the birth of international law, and for the first time the principle of protection for religious minorities was agreed upon by the signatories. Lawyers like Grotius and philosophers such as Leibniz laid down the rules for international law that were later developed by Emmanuel Kant in his writings on "perpetual peace."

Weakened by the Thirty Years War and political division, modern Germany did not return to the concert of great powers until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of Prussia under the Hohenzollern dynasty.

These were wars between dynasties and not between nations. The 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of two different approaches to ruling: the French Jean Bodin formulated the principle of sovereignty or the king's absolute power, whereas the German Johannes Althusius defined the principle of subsidiarity, a ground for the federal system.

Much of Central Europe (e.g. Bohemia and Hungary) was integrated into the Habsburg Empire. Italy, on the other hand, became the battlefield for supremacy in Europe between the French and the Habsburgs.

This period of history was defined by these **rivalries between great dynasties of reigning monarchs**. After Venice and the Italian Republics in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Habsburg Spain dominated Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since it had obtained considerable wealth from the discovery of America, with its gold and silver mines.

The Habsburgs preserved their Empire and expanded it through marriages. The King of France successfully imposed this domination with the largest army ever seen at that time. The treaty of Utrecht introduced the principle of "balance of power." As a result, in the **17<sup>th</sup> century** most of the **courts in Europe** gradually adopted the same etiquette as the court of Louis XIV. For her part, the Queen of England successfully fought against Spain (The Great Armada) and built her own powerful navy, thus laying foundations for the future British maritime empire.

The **English Parliament**, based on the *Magna Carta* (1215) tradition, developed from permanent meetings of the clergy, nobility and representatives of English towns and regions. In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a constitutional monarchy was established with a king who would “reign but not rule.” Through acts like *Habeas Corpus* in 1679, Parliament introduced the guidelines for a rule of law designed to counterbalance any arbitrary actions taken by the monarch. English parliamentarianism was regarded as an example throughout Europe. Parliamentary traditions were strong in many other parts of the continent: the old Diet of the Holy Roman Empire became the German Reichstag in 1489, Polish-Lithuanian Parliament elected their king in 1573 and the States General of the General Provinces (the Netherlands) proclaimed a Republic in 1588.

During the Age of Enlightenment in the **18<sup>th</sup> century**, French philosophers like Rousseau, Voltaire or Montesquieu popularized the idea of republican values (liberty, equality, fraternity) instead of monarchy, while the king’s “subjects” began to be considered as “citizens.” In Central Eastern Europe, a system of Enlightened Absolutism developed. Rulers of the Russian Empire (Peter the Great), the Habsburg Empire and Prussia, applied the principle of enlightenment in their states without consulting their subjects. As a result, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned by the three expansionist powers. The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789 promoted the expansion of republican ideas throughout Europe.

For the first time, revolutionary France mobilised masses of citizen soldiers against the surrounding monarchies. The battle of Valmy (1792) was a victory for the “motherland” threatened by armies of foreign soldiers, considered as mercenaries paid by their princes. The successful leaders of the revolutionary regime in France tried to spread their political model and belief of emancipation throughout Europe and its colonial dependencies, supported by the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789). Moreover, it inspired a nationalist revival and uprisings among the oppressed nations e.g. in the Ottoman Empire.

**Napoleon** was both an embodiment and a rejection of this sentiment. On the one hand, among his numerous military successes, he gave Europe the famous “Napoleonic Code,” a legal framework derived directly from the Roman law. He also played a crucial role in the emancipation of the Jews and the emergence of national feelings in Italy, Germany, Greece, Serbia and Poland. At the same time, he also roused Spanish patriotism against the French occupying forces and the permanent expansion of the Napoleonic Empire. The whole of continental Europe was affected by the Napoleonic Wars and the continental blockade (a large-scale embargo against British trade).

Exiled to a remote island after his defeat at Waterloo in 1815, Napoleon claimed he had always wanted peace in Europe. With the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment in mind, he declared himself to be in favour of a united Europe with a European university, the Napoleonic Code as European law, a single currency, a common system of weights and measures and European awards for science.

### 3 – THE AGE OF NATIONS AND THE BY-PRODUCTS OF NATIONALISM

Industrialisation brought further political change in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, driven by social and economic transformation.

Great Britain, France and Belgium were the first three states to be affected by this revolution. Thereafter, industrial centres such as Manchester, the Ruhr and Wallonia grew at an unprecedented pace. Agricultural labourers left villages and moved to the cities to work in factories and mines, often in very difficult conditions. Rural exodus began to change the countryside.

Progress in technology (expansion of railways, steamships, the press and the telegraph) made communication easier. Thanks to the mechanisation of agriculture and the spread of potato crops, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the end of famine outbreaks that had been characteristic of everyday life in Europe over previous centuries.

The end of the 19th century saw the formation of workers' movements and unions. Their claims ranged from reforms to proletarian revolution. Their leaders frequently met and exchanged ideas. Movements were also organised on an international scale. Political books were translated. Karl Marx's criticism of capitalism (expressed most clearly in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* and in *Capital*) reverberated throughout the continent.

#### DEMOCRACY AND NATIONS

The Congress of Vienna (1815) tried to re-establish a pre-revolutionary order, now to be based on international balance of power and reactionary policies at home. However, from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalist and liberal movements had sought independence and national unity based on the ideas promoted by the French Revolution. At the time, nationalism and liberalism went hand in hand. A few seemingly unsuccessful, revolutionary waves passed throughout Europe, cumulating in the Spring of Nations in 1848. A sentiment of fraternity and solidarity, permeated with a veritable European spirit, emerged in the nations fighting for democracy and civic liberties.

In 1834, Giuseppe Mazzini founded the Young Europe organisation. He dreamed of a Europe in which free "brotherly nations" would form a community. Fifteen years later, at an international peace conference in Paris, Victor Hugo declared his wish to see a "United States of Europe."

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Paris and London became crucial centres of liberal thought, attracting many intellectuals and leaders from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Spain and Italy, who escaped persecution at home. The repeated failures of the revolutionary movements led to a large number of political exiles.

In some cases, liberal and national revolutions succeeded in national unification and the creation of new nation states such as Italy and Germany. The German Customs Union (*Zollverein*) provided an example of mutually beneficial economic cooperation, which led to Germany acquiring the status of a global power. The multinational Habsburg monarchy reacted to the growth of nationalism by seeking compromise, resulting in the birth of Austria-Hungary.

This period was marked by the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire, also known as the Eastern Question. After the Russian intervention and the Peace Congress of Berlin (1878), Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Romania gained independence, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire still occupied Bosnia Herzegovina –eventually incorporated in 1908. After 1878, Austria-Hungary's and Russia's imperial ambitions, combined with the Balkan nations' national aspirations, created a tense political situation in the region. The idea of Pan-Slavism, promoting solidarity between all Slavic people under Russia's guidance, gained popularity among the local elites.

Despite these conflicts, international cooperation strengthened during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. New projects for transnational laws were created between international organizations.

## THE BY-PRODUCTS OF NATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tensions grew higher between European states competing with each other at every level, including military potential. These rivalries surfaced through colonial wars fought far from Europe, in an attempt to extend their global empires.

Provoked by Bismarck, France declared war on Prussia in 1870 and was defeated at Sedan. As a result, the German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles in January 1871. In the aftermath, two alliances were forged: the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) and the Entente (France, Russia and Great Britain). Their colonial and national rivalries would all culminate in what they called the “Great War.”

The **First World War** has been defined a “European civil war.”

The war was triggered by the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian-Serb and member of a Pan-Slavic organization, on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo. The attack set the alliance system in motion, causing a conflict of global dimension. New improvements in weaponry (e.g. artillery, aviation and gas) caused damages and human losses on an unprecedented scale (an estimated 17 million deaths). This was the first “total war” as whole societies were bitterly affected. Major battles such as Verdun in 1916 (an estimated 700,000 soldiers killed) remained engraved in popular memory, and in the post-war years, produced two diametrically opposed policies – a thirst for revenge and a desire for peace.



The USA joining the war in 1917 contributed significantly to the Entente victory. The war resulted in the collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires. The Versailles Peace Settlement of 1919 and 1920 imposed economic, territorial and military sanctions on the defeated countries, considered by most of them as unacceptable. The sanctions led to significant territorial changes on the European map and the creation of new independent states e.g. the Kingdom of Serbs-Croats and Slovenians (future Yugoslavia), Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Austria. This settlement, which was supposed to ensure long-lasting peace in Europe, soon turned out to be a failure.

In Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, monarchies disappeared and were replaced by republics. These often proved to be short-lived and fell prey to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Tsardom also fell in 1917 as a result of the Russian Revolution. A few months later, Lenin seized power and created the first communist regime. Following his death in 1924, Stalin gradually transformed the Soviet Union into a global superpower, at the cost of millions of human lives.

The League of Nations founded in 1920 and based in Geneva was unable to maintain peace for long. Despite its universal purpose, it remained almost exclusively under European influence, with the USA refusing to join, the USSR excluded and the colonial system still in place. In 1929, the first global financial crisis originated in the USA and affected the whole of Europe.

In 1922, Mussolini was the first right-wing dictator to seize power and set up a fascist regime. This provided a benchmark for Hitler and a number of future dictators. In 1933, after the electoral success of the Nazi Party, President Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler the Chancellor of Germany. Hitler soon consolidated his power, banning political parties, persecuting minorities, setting up concentration camps for political opponents and introducing a racist system.

After a rapid rearmament in contravention of the Versailles Peace treaty, Germany annexed Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia. These policies were allowed for by Great Britain and France as part of their “appeasement” policy, in an effort to avoid a new military confrontation at all cost. Hitler also assisted Franco in fighting a bloody civil war (1936-39) and establishing a right-wing dictatorship in Spain.

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 marked the beginning the Second World War. Following this military invasion, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany.

**The Second World War's consequences were horrifying for Europe and the world.** Because of bombing raids over cities, summary executions, deportations and extermination on a massive scale, the number of civilian victims greatly exceeded the number of military deaths.

In accordance with their racist ideology, the Nazi regime organised throughout Europe a systematic extermination (genocide) of peoples and groups designated as “inferior.” Some of their allies actively participated in the genocide. Many victims were forced into ghettos, starved to death, exterminated by shooting or other methods. Many more were deported to death camps located mainly in Nazi-occupied Poland as a part of the “final solution.” This led to a systematic extermination of an estimated six million Jews (Shoah) and millions of other innocent victims.

The attitudes of other Europeans varied. Some risked their lives to actively help the victims; others remained totally passive. Some watched the tragedy with satisfaction or directly participated, driven by a feeling of anti-Semitism and racism as well as an opportunity to get hold of property.

Many forms of resistance developed against Europe’s occupation by Germans and their allies, especially after 1941, deepening the feeling of solidarity and encouraging support for a democratic culture, whatever country one came from.

In 1939, the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany to divide East and Central Europe into their spheres of influence. However, after the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941, the Soviets became allies of the Western Powers. The Red Army’s involvement in the war was decisive in Europe, helping to ensure Allied victory. In the aftermath, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, who had suffered painful losses as a result of the brutal German occupation, found themselves subjected to the Soviet Union, against the wishes of most of their citizens. Soviet domination and the Iron Curtain prevented these countries from involvement in European integration until 1989.

## 4 – A PARADIGM SHIFT: A NEW STRUCTURE FOR EUROPE

In the 1930s, the first elements of a European mindset began to develop in the League of Nations, where the future founding fathers of Europe met: Jean Monnet, Paul-Henri Spaak and Joseph Bech. It was then that Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann reached an agreement on Franco-German reconciliation, which proved to be the starting point for European integration.

Aristide Briand suggested to the assembly of the League of Nations the establishment of a “federal link” within a “European community.” He could foresee a European customs and excise union but hesitated on the means of limiting national sovereignty. These promoted ideas were the direct source for concepts that guided European integration after 1945. The reconciliation process was limited to the western part of the continent. The League of Nations was dissolved in 1946 and its areas of competence transferred to the United Nations (UN).

While numerous authoritarian and totalitarian regimes were being established during interwar Europe, intellectuals such as Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi were seeking to design a European entity. They succeeded in spreading the European idea among economic and political elites but it did not yet affect the general public.

It was during their exile in London and the USA that certain Europeans, many of whom were closely involved in building post-war Europe, began to reflect on Europe’s future. A Polish-Czechoslovak and a Yugoslav-Greek agreement were signed and were meant by some to be the core of regional confederations. These plans failed, mainly as a result of Soviet pressure. Yet, an important example of a successful federation was socialist Yugoslavia, albeit under Tito’s authoritarian leadership (1945-80). The signature of the agreement on the Benelux Union in London in September 1944 was the only real achievement during the war. While Norway, Denmark and Finland fell victim to foreign invasions during the Second World War, Sweden remained neutral and continued its endeavours to build a welfare state.

Some critics of European integration pointed to the failure of the League of Nations and the intensity of Nazi propaganda in favour of a New European Order under Hitler. Contrary to this view, antifascist Resistance members in various movements were in favour of a united, democratic Europe. Using the 1941 *Ventotene Manifesto* as their basis, members from several countries formed a circle of resistance, led notably by Altiero Spinelli, and signed a manifesto in Geneva in 1944 in favour of a federal Europe.

## PEACE, PROSPERITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

At the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, Allied powers (the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union) discussed European borders and the future status of Germany. The United Nations Organisation was founded in San Francisco in 1945; the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted in 1948. Yet Europe soon became a battleground for American and Soviet influence.

European integration, limited to the western part of the continent, began during the Cold War as background, with fear of a gradual spread of communism in Europe. It therefore received durable support from the USA. The USA launched the Marshall Plan in 1947, requiring European cooperation as a pre-condition for receiving financial assistance. This allowed for the setting up of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 and the European Payments Union (EPU) in 1950, as a first step towards the contemporary European monetary union.

The rejection of the Marshall Plan by the USSR contributed to a long-lasting division between East and West in Europe. The Soviets decided to bring the countries in which they exercised authority together under the umbrella of COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance). Founded in 1949, it included Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. In particular, it provided the USSR with justification for the exploitation of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It was dissolved in 1991, after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Several western countries led by the USA, also set up a military alliance – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. The European Defence Community, an early attempt to create a European security system, failed in 1954, but most European countries remained linked to the Atlantic Alliance. In response, the Soviet Union set up the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance of the Communist bloc. Socialist Yugoslavia remained beyond Soviet influence. While receiving western financial aid, it sought its own path to communism (workers' self-governance) and became the leader of the Non-Aligned movement.

Sponsors of the European idea came from all the main political groups – Christian, Liberal and Socialist. The main opponents of the European idea were to be found among the Communists and Nationalists. However, the pro-European movement was split into Federalists who wanted immediate supranational integration and Functionalists who aspired to gradual, pragmatic integration. It was the Functionalist model that finally prevailed and shaped the European Union as we know it today.

European integration was founded upon values representing a clear rejection of the previous totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and ideologies.

The creation of **the Council of Europe** in 1949, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1950, and, most importantly, the setting up of a European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, signalled the West European countries' determination to work together, based on the fundamental principles that became the basis for building a European community.

In 1949, the three western powers combined their zones of occupation in Germany to form the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), as a member of the European democratic community. In response, the USSR set up the Democratic Republic of Germany (East Germany) along Communist lines.

The Schuman Plan put together by Monnet was a token of France's determination to ensure long-term peace in Europe and a historic reconciliation with Germany. The plan led to the setting up of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. After failed attempts at both political and military integration in 1954, pro- Europeans decided to relaunch the building of a European community based on economic integration.

A crucial breakthrough in this respect was the signing in 1957 of the **Treaty of Rome** (European Economic Community and EURATOM), by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Another instance of economic cooperation in Europe was the creation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

From the outset, the treaties left the door open to other European countries wishing to join the community. Because of the Iron Curtain, only countries in Western Europe could gradually join the group of the six founding members of the EEC. This was the case for Southern Europe in the aftermath of its democratisation in the 1970s.

Although the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 were brutally crushed by Moscow, from 1989 onwards the communist regime fell in Eastern Europe (the peaceful "*Solidarnosc*" revolution in Poland and the fall of the Berlin Wall).

These events also put an end to a divided Europe and a divided Germany. Promptly, the countries of Central Europe joined the Council of Europe. The accession of ten countries to the European Union in 2004 was a strong political act aiming at a reunification of Europe. Other countries followed this trend in 2007 and 2013. A reunified, reconciled Europe could play a more important role on the world stage.

At that same time, Southeastern Europe saw a return to historic conflicts that had been held at bay by the Cold War. The Wars of Independence in Yugoslavia (1991-5), which involved Bosnians, Croats, Serbs and Slovenians, had their roots in 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism. In the aftermath of the wars, five independent states emerged: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia.

However, ethnic tensions with the Albanian minority had spillover effects in Serbia and later in Macedonia, which resulted in NATO bombing Serbia and Montenegro in 1999, UN (later EU) protection of Kosovo and EU missions in Macedonia. Montenegro became an independent state after a referendum in 2006. Kosovo proclaimed its independence in 2008, yet only some UN and EU members recognize it.

It was a shock for young people in Europe who had known nothing but peace since the end of the Second World War. The European Union accepted to play a role in ensuring the stability of the Balkan region through an approach called the Stabilisation and Association Process, as a key instrument towards EU membership. Slovenia (2004) and Croatia (2013) became EU member states and the rest of the western Balkans is advancing towards an enlargement process.

## CONCLUSION: EUROPE AT A CROSSROADS

Unfortunately, the history of Europe has been mostly tragic for its citizens, even if it has also led to worthwhile exchanges and discussions in the artistic and intellectual fields. Millions of ordinary people have been frequently affected by bloody war and brutal persecution. Historians have calculated that before the 20th century, there was an armed conflict every seven years in Europe. Therefore, peace is often seen as an asset of inestimable value and a core reason for the creation of a united Europe.

In the past, people have often suffered famine alongside war. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Europe needed to import wheat. After 1945, products such as butter, sugar and coffee were rationed Europe-wide using a system of coupons. Little wonder, then, that the launch of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1957 was welcomed so warmly. It was designed to maintain prices sufficiently high to give farmers a decent income and ensure self-sufficiency in food for Europe.

Likewise, the setting up of a European Common Market by the Treaty of Rome (1957) significantly improved the standard of living for Europeans, though it has not been without problems and inequalities.

Since the 1950s, Europeans have set up organisations (Council of Europe, EU etc.) designed to end power struggles between the states and replace them by on-going negotiations and shared sovereignty. The decision-making process in Strasbourg and Brussels may often seem long and troubled, but it is based on discussion and compromise as an alternative to war.

Long-lasting peace and self-sufficiency in food, however, are not enough to ensure human dignity and a fair society. The guarantee of human rights, democracy and freedom of circulation has become the foundation stone of European policy. It has marked Community method as a paradigm shift that has changed Europe's destiny.

Today, Europe stands at a crossroads. A mere customs and excise union, and a common market do not require countries to share values or a political project. On the other hand, a political union, shared defence responsibilities and active citizenship cannot exist without these common values. These choices are even more important now that the world is undergoing profound change. Increasingly sophisticated technologies, borders that are no longer barriers, the emergence of new powers, demographic issues and the need for greater environmental protection have also significantly changed the framework within which the European Union is developing.

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## **PART TWO**

# **BUILDING A EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND EUROPEAN VALUES**





Studying history helps us understand how the rejection of extreme nationalism, an ideology that led to the tragedy of warfare, has encouraged European integration. However, the ideal of peace that has prevailed since 1945 cannot solely explain the purposes of a political construction. This desire is based on mutual trust and a genuine sense of community, which enable Europeans to share a set of core values beyond diversity. The ideal of shared values as the basis for community is always difficult to put into practice. However, it represents Europeans' ambition to continuously rebuild democracy, liberty, dignity and the rule of law.

Europe's identity is reflected in its set of values. They cannot be interpreted separately; they are interconnected and based on the concept of what it means to be human. The European identity is very complex, neither simply geographical, nor ethnic or linguistic.

Despite the diversity of individual experiences, the values create a sense of belonging: Europeans share **a set of beliefs and ideas** considered important and desirable. European identity is not about to supersede national identities: "united in diversity" is the motto of the EU.

Sharing a common history, with its cultural, social and political processes, does not guarantee on its own that people are willing to live peacefully together.

Europe defines itself by its humanistic views: its appreciation of the individual and their rights.

These values are fundamental, since Europeanness is all about the shared determination to build a democratic and prosperous society.

## **The second section describes:**

**1 – The values** considered some of Europe's major achievements, showing what makes them European and why they unite Europeans;

**2 – The importance of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, drafted in 2000 and now an integral part of the Treaty of Lisbon.

# 1 – WHAT VALUES DEFINE EUROPE?

Since the end of the Second World War, the founding fathers of European community emphasised their respect for the values that had been denied by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

These values have developed throughout the centuries as the concept of “Europe” has been taking shape. They are the result of many cultural, religious and intellectual influences – Greek and Roman heritage, Arab-Muslim philosophy, the Christian tradition with the links it has maintained with its Jewish origins, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism and other progressive views of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All this is contained in European mentality and lifestyle. It forms the common core of European civilisation.

Since 1949, these values have been stressed by the Council of Europe and its Member States. In 1950, the Council adopted the first major European legal document of the post-war period: **the European Convention on Human Rights**<sup>1</sup>. The solemnity and short timing of this text reflect the importance the founders of “Europe” then attached to the statement of such principles.

Similar principles inspired Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet for the Declaration of May 9th 1950<sup>2</sup>, then for the Treaty of Rome that set up the EEC and in later Treaties (Single European Act, Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice).

The Lisbon Treaty confirmed an awareness of the need to clearly restate these values.

It specified that the European Union’s values are those *“of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of people from minority groups. They are common to all Member States, in a society characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and equality between men and women”* (art.2 TFEU).

Respect for these values is a mandatory criterion for EU membership (Copenhagen and Madrid criteria).

Since the values are contained in the Lisbon treaty, European institutions and Member States, when they implement EU policies and regulations, are expected to comply with them.

The main values are as follows:

*Individual freedom and responsibility, the cornerstones of democracy*

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1 <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/fr/Treaties/Htm/005.htm>

2 Robert Schuman dans sa Déclaration du 9 mai 1950

The basic ideas for citizenship and democracy were born in Ancient Greece, which was then the cradle of European civilisation<sup>3</sup>. Citizens were free to express their opinions, debate, associate, take part in decision making, elect public officials and exercise justice. Today, we enjoy freedom of association and freedom of expression. Although modern European democracy differs significantly from the Ancient model, the principles of individual freedom and responsibility are still at its core.

## SOLIDARITY, HUMAN DIGNITY AND JUSTICE

Universal human dignity was a notion forged by Christian philosophy<sup>4</sup>. **A person**, unlike an individual human, exists only through relationships with other people. **This ideal of basic human solidarity** has led to modern concepts of equal dignity, right to integrity, non-discrimination and a search for fairness and social justice.

Europe does not have a monopoly on respect for human life. However, when we consider the requirements introduced by its current laws, it is clear that **human beings constitute an absolute value** for Europe, entailing, for example, a ban on torture and the death penalty.



Other characteristics should be added to these, mainly humanistic ideas e.g. self-criticism, respect for diversity, open-mindedness and a desire to learn about and from others.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Chapter on "History."

<sup>4</sup> For example, St. Thomas Aquinas

## 2 – THE EUROPEAN UNION CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS: A LEGAL INSTRUMENT TO SERVE CORE VALUES

The Charter is a catalogue of values shared among EU Member States and, for the first time, it brings together in a single document civil, political, economic and social rights.

The Preamble states its aim: *“it is necessary to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments by making those rights more visible in a Charter.”*<sup>5</sup>

Now integrated into the **Lisbon Treaty**, it has acquired a binding force for EU Member States. Citizens may use all the rights listed in the Charter, in national courts and in the European Union Court of Justice. It is now a major instrument of integration and European policies.

### SIX MAIN CATEGORIES OF RIGHTS DEFINED BY THE CHARTER:

#### 1- Dignity

The first of these rights is dignity. This supports the absolute value of each person, considered to be unique and irreplaceable. Such a concept prevents any kind of authority from exercising absolute or abusive power over individuals:

- The right to life and ban on the death penalty,
- The right to physical and mental integrity,
- The prohibition of eugenic practices and reproductive human cloning (this would call into question the absolute value of each individual, deemed unique),
- The prohibition of trafficking in human beings and body parts etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Text of the Charter:  
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:0389:0403:FR:PDF>

## **2- Freedoms**

This confirms the respect for personal beliefs, freedom of lifestyle and the need for education in order to be able to exercise such liberty:

- The right to liberty and security for every person,
- Respect for private and family life, right to build a family,
- Freedom of expression and information,
- Protection of personal data,
- Freedom of conscience, thought and religion,
- The right to education i.e. free provision of schooling, professional training and continuing education
- The right to property
- Right to asylum
- Etc.

## **2- Equality**

This category reflects a considerable advance in human rights regarding the equal value of each individual:

- Right to non-discrimination on grounds of gender, race, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, religion, wealth, disability, age, sexual orientation etc.
- Respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity,
- Equality between men and women, including measures to discriminate positively in favour of the under-represented sex,
- Children's rights,
- Older persons' rights to a dignified, independent life,
- Etc.

#### **4- Solidarity**

If respect for diversity is one of the founding principles of Europe, unity is another, with its implicit requirement for solidarity. The category therefore underlines major advances in social rights:

- Right of workers to information and consultation,
- Protection in case of unfair dismissal,
- Fair working conditions i.e. conditions that maintain the health, safety and dignity of the workers,
- Ban on children working until they reach the age at which schooling is no longer mandatory,
- Right to parental leave,
- Access to services of general economic interest (i.e. public services),
- Environmental protection,
- Consumer protection,
- Etc.

#### **5- Citizens' rights**

- This relates to the implementation of real, active European citizenship thanks to:
- The right to vote in elections for members of a European Parliament that is increasing the scope of its powers,
- The right to a European citizen initiative, enabling one million citizens in at least one-quarter of Member States to lobby the European Commission directly and submit a proposal for a law,
- The appointment of a European ombudsman,
- etc.

## 6- Justice

Laws introduced to protect citizens against any injustice:

- Right of appeal,
- Presumption of innocence,
- Ban on double jeopardy,
- Etc.

This Charter is a manifestation of Europeans' ability to unite in recognising common values that support the building of a political Europe, while respecting the diversity of individuals.

All the rights listed in it can be invoked by citizens of the EU and must therefore be upheld by national and European judges (European Union Court of Justice – EUCJ).

## SCOPE OF THE CHARTER

1) The Charter of Fundamental Rights is applicable to any **person** under the authority of the European Union, and not only to EU citizens (except Section 6, which applies only to citizens).

Note that the wording used is “rights of the **person**.” The authors of the Charter avoid the expression “Rights of Man” which may introduce some ambiguity as regards women.

2) The Charter applies to EU institutions and Member States when they implement EU law. Such cases fall under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Individuals can also appeal to the European Ombudsman<sup>6</sup> Candidate states and potential candidate states have to comply with the Charter in order to become Members of the EU.

In principle, in all other cases, individuals residing in any country part of the Council of Europe may appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

In practice, the Charter will influence all the decisions made by the EU and Member States. The two legal documents, the European Convention on Human Rights (of the Council of Europe) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights (of the EU) are interlinked, mutually strengthening each other.

3) Note that certain States (the United Kingdom and Poland) have decided not to commit to some of the Charter's provisions. For reasons related to their own history, culture or specific interests, they have been granted certain exceptions i.e. the right to “*opt out*.”<sup>7</sup> However, these exceptions are fairly limited in scope and they are still bound by articles 2 and 3 of the TEU<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 3

<sup>7</sup> Note that States have opted out for different reasons and that their decisions relate to quite distinct points. In the case of the UK, the decision related to economic and social rights. Poland has not signed up to the rights of sexual minorities. And the Czech Republic has opted out to the provisions on property rights.

<sup>8</sup> Citer les articles 2 et 3 TUE

## 3 – VALUES IN PRACTISE: CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE

One might view European values as a coherent set of concepts underlining a clearly defined human ideal, which we would have to strive for.

Within this ideal, however, practising these values can lead to them entering into conflict with one another. Such conflicts may be perceived as hurdles; yet they are opportunities to make decisions, in a given context. These potential choices shape our European model of society.

Here is an example:

### DIGNITY AND FREEDOM

*“One person’s freedom ends where another person’s freedom begins.”*<sup>9</sup> This well-known principle clearly defines how the freedoms of individuals living in the same society can coexist. However, this idea does not solve every issue the concept of freedom entails.

Do limits only apply to interactions with other people? Can we, as individuals, groups or majorities, do anything as long as we do not restrict somebody else’s freedom?

This apparently theoretical question requires formal answers concerning issues such as, for example, ethnicity and gender, religious beliefs, prostitution etc.

**In this respect, dignity is seen as a concept that limits the use of individual freedom.**

Generally speaking, dignity is an idea inherent to each individual, a feature specific to the essence of mankind, implying unconditional respect. However, it also implies that we cannot reject it.

It often implies choices. For example, when exercising their freedom of expression, individuals may hurt human dignity. We then have to choose to which of the two values we want to give preference. This is a fundamental choice that defines the type of society we want to live in.

**Is it more important to protect freedom of expression, even if individuals express opinions that may be offensive?**

Ultimately, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, like all crucial texts on principles and values, is a living text. Hard though it is to reconcile these values, it is up to Europeans to decide whether these principles should live or die.

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9 John Stuart Mill quotation



Similarly, we need to live in societies that are safe from security threats and terrorism. The measures taken by a political community, a member state or the European Union to protect citizens might be in conflict with our values regarding personal freedom. Therefore, we need to strike for a crucial balance between safety and liberty, when a smart security order would not harm liberties enjoyed by the citizens.

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Official Journal of the European Community, JO C 364/1 du 18.12.2000, p 1-22, website:

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2000:364:0001:0022:FR:PDF>

## **The European Court of Human Rights - ECHR:**

- Website: [www.echr.coe.int](http://www.echr.coe.int)

The **European Declaration of Human Rights** is available on the same website.

## **The European Union Court of Justice - EUCJ:**

- Website: [www.curia.europa.eu](http://www.curia.europa.eu)

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**“Pour l’Europe”**, Robert Schuman, Ed. Nagel, 2000.

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**PART THREE**

**EXPERIENCING EUROPE**



A multitude of events has transcended and transformed the cultural, social, economic, legal, security and spatial realities of Europeans. Today, our life is shaped by the fast pace of globalization and the challenges it brings. However, at the same time it opens Europeans to the possibility of fruitful cooperation, communication and enriched experiences in living, working or travelling across Europe.

The European Union is unique because of its variety of cultures, languages and systems that all contribute to building an integrated society, where education and critical thinking are encouraged. European communities embrace their differences: they come together, collaborate to resolve challenges, recognise diversity and multiculturalism.

The European Union has long been the most successful model of regional integration, though shaken by economic, political, and environmental crises, and including those related to human migration. Throughout its history, while facing multiple challenges, the EU has been able to recover and to move ahead.

Therefore, as the EU's experience demonstrates, historical reconciliation is essential in developing the necessary political will for cooperation and, ultimately, integration, which makes it attractive for Europeans.

A number of institutions have been set up to guarantee democracy and fundamental rights, others to ensure the free movement of goods, capital, services and people, to maintain peace and agreement between States, and all of this based on common values and interest.

As members of this community, we need to understand what we have in common, which implies the need for active participation. Finally, assessing what has been achieved and what still remains to be done within the European Union helps us broaden the perspective of the current challenges and possible opportunities they give rise to.

Therefore, throughout the next pages we will examine the daily life of Europeans, while exploring fundamental freedoms; the functioning, structure and influence of civil society organisations, associations and unions; EU institutions, their areas of competence and decision-making processes, and finally the achievements and values that the European community represents.

# 1 – PUBLIC LIFE IN EUROPE

It is the citizens who are building the European society of the future. However, a living democracy needs active citizens who are interested in public life, in obtaining information, understanding and debating issues and influencing public decision-making.

European Union citizenship entails political, economic, social and civil rights. It is an extra layer, which complements national citizenship. Any person holding the citizenship of an EU Member State is automatically granted EU citizenship.

## REPRESENTATIVE, PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

Being a EU citizen means **exercising one's right to vote** and being able to stand for two types of election:

- **Municipal elections:** any EU citizen who has reached voting age is allowed to vote and stand for a candidate in municipal elections in their countries of residence, subject to the conditions set by individual countries. For example, a Hungarian can vote in mayoral elections in the Cypriot town to which they have moved and can be a candidate in the town's local elections.
- **Elections for the European Parliament:** any EU citizen who has reached voting age can vote and stand for European elections. Since 1979, EU citizens have directly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as their representatives in the European Parliament every five years. Although they are elected at the national level, MEPs form transnational political groups. In this way, the European Parliament embodies the democratic will of some 500 million Europeans.

The **Treaty of Lisbon** (enforced in December 2009) introduced additional mechanisms, also through the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, to encourage **citizen participation** in the democratic life of the European Union:

- It created a **citizens' initiative right** in order to reduce the distance between EU citizens and institutions. Legislation proposals can be submitted to the European Commission if the EU citizens proposing the legislation have collected one million signatures from at least one-quarter of Member States. The introduction of this right gives civil society the ability to play a role in the decision making process. For instance, the first successful citizens' initiative "Right2water" emphasized the need to provide all citizens with clean drinking water and sanitation.

- It recognised the importance of **consultation** and **dialogue** between civil society organisations (CSOs) and EU institutions.

Anybody residing in the EU, whether or not they hold EU citizenship, also have common economic and social rights that are guaranteed, in particular, by the Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted in December 2000 (see the Section on “Values”).

- **Social rights:** every resident of a Member State can, for example, travel throughout EU territory to seek a job. Residents also enjoy the same health insurance as a citizen of the Member State in which they live. Another example: women and men have equal rights in terms of access to education, professional development, wages and access to health care etc. However, exercise of these rights comes with restrictions. Although any citizen can be a civil servant in their state of residence, that is not the case in areas of employment that affect its sovereignty (justice, security, intelligence and defence, diplomacy etc.).
- **Economic rights:** Any EU resident can enjoy the benefits of the Single Market, e.g. free movement of goods, services and capital. Any citizen and company can buy EU origin goods in any EU country without custom duties. Residents can set up businesses and subsidiaries in any Member State. They can also borrow from a finance institution in another EU Member State in order to benefit from a more favourable interest rate. Economic actors must be treated without discrimination by the public authorities in any Member States.

Political, economic and social rights of any EU resident can be defended in the Court of Justice of the EU. Similarly, any resident can file a complaint with the European ombudsman regarding maladministration of EU institutions.

The overall aim of these mechanisms is to engage citizens more closely in the decision-making process in Europe. To achieve this, citizens need to actually embrace these opportunities.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations (associations, movements, interest groups etc.) add to the democratic vitality of the EU. They have a significant impact on the decision-making process and create space for more citizen engagement.

Involving civil society participants provides an opportunity to exchange views on current issues. Civil society representatives can offer expertise in a number of fields such as social, educational, environmental and cultural issues. Civil society vivifies participative democracy.

The European Commission regularly launches **public consultations** on numerous subjects (e.g. consumer protection, mobility, environment, health etc.) before proposing new legislation. During these consultations, stakeholders can take a stand on various policies. This stimulates the debate that feeds into further actions of the Commission.

Specific examples demonstrate how strongly civil society can influence decision-making. Environmental protection organisations and the chemicals industry lobby group were crucial in the case of the **REACH regulations** (a system of registering, testing and authorising chemical substances). Industrial, unionist and environmental interest groups confronted each other over a considerable period of time to highlight their positions. Since being brought into effect in 2007, the European Chemicals Agency now monitors the marketing of chemical products and it is the responsibility of the manufacturers to prove that their products are not harmful or that there exists no alternatives.

### **Websites about civil society organisations:**

**[http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/civil\\_society/](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/civil_society/)**

- » A web site that provides information on issues concerning the Commission's consultation and dialogue with civil society.

**<https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/>**

- » A network gathering European Platforms and networks of civil society organisations, in various areas of citizen action and concerns.

## **SOCIAL PARTNERS**

**Social partners** take part in social dialogue through their European federations e.g. the European Trade Union Confederation, "BusinessEurope" (the employers' organisation) and the European Centre for Public Employers and Services of General Interest.

- **the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)**, set up in 1973, represents most national confederations and trade union federations within the EU and in certain non-EU countries. It coordinates their work on a European level in terms of improving social standards and opportunities for workers.

Other trade union structures operate under the umbrella of the ETUC, e.g. Eurocadres, the European Federation of Retired and Elderly Persons (EFREP/FERPA), UniEuropa and numerous InterRegional Trade Union Councils (IRTUC).

**[www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)**



- **BusinessEurope (The Confederation of European Business)**, founded in 1958 under the name “Union of European Community Industries,” represents employers’ organisations in the EU and certain non-EU countries.

**[www.business-europe.eu](http://www.business-europe.eu)**

- **European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of general interest (CEEP)**, founded in 1961, represents the interests of public entities and the public or private companies providing services of general economic interest (e.g. healthcare, education, housing, transport, water etc).

**[www.ceep.eu](http://www.ceep.eu)**

In 1985, with the launch of the bipartite social dialogue between trade unions and employers promoted by **Jacques Delors**, then President of the European Commission, social dialogue on a European scale developed into a genuine negotiating arena.

The treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam strengthened the position of social partners and social dialogue has become an essential part of the **European social model**. The directives on parental leave, part-time work and fixed-term contracts have all resulted from social dialogue at the EU level.

The Treaty of Lisbon further facilitated social dialogue. It recognised, for example, **the tripartite social summit on growth and employment** that brings together representatives from the European Commission, the Council of the EU and social partners.

The **European Economic and Social Committee**, which represents social partners and civil society, and the **Committee of the Regions** consisting of local politicians from various Member States are also involved in social dialogue in a consultative way.

Given the importance of European legislation in the economic sector, the social partners, Chambers of Agriculture and Chambers of Commerce and Industry all have European delegates, as have major associations, leading companies and education or research centres. In addition to these professional bodies or interest groups, any citizen can contact local information centres that are run by institutions or CSOs.

## LOCAL INFORMATION CENTRES AND PLACES FOR DEBATE ON EUROPE

The Youth Information Centres throughout Europe are linked through **Eurodesk**, a network providing information on the possibilities Europe offers to its young people.

**<https://eurodesk.eu/>**

The European Commission accredits and supports hundreds of **Europe Direct Information Centres, EU Info Centres, Team Europe and European Documentation Centres**.

**[https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)**

Throughout Europe, there are many SCOs working on a daily basis to explain and instigate debate on current European policies and issues.

The European Movement International also lists member associations working to promote the building of Europe.

There is a **TV channel** specialising in European issues called **Euronews**, working in thirteen languages.

**<http://www.euronews.com/>**

The Franco-German channel ARTE also broadcasts a wide range of programmes on Europe from an intercultural perspective. Thanks to their correspondents in Brussels, Strasbourg and the main European capitals, numerous media outlets in Member States keep a permanent watch on European affairs.

**<http://www.arte.tv/guide/en/?country=FR>**

## 2 – EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS: THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Although the history of European integration has been a long process, the setting up of supranational organisations is recent.

After the Second World War, the determination to end the incessant conflicts between Europeans led to the setting up of a number of organisations based on cooperation. The Council of Europe and the European Union have proved to be the two most significant because of their general competence and political dimension.

### THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Set up in 1949, this first European organisation<sup>10</sup> was designed to strengthen and protect the principles of a Europe determined to turn its back on war and totalitarianism.

Ever since, it has affirmed itself as an international, intergovernmental organisation through its decisions by unanimous agreement. In 1950, it adopted the **European Convention on Human Rights**, a text of significant importance setting out the fundamental principles of a humanistic Europe.

The **European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)** is part of the Council of Europe but is independent. It was set up to ensure compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights (see Chapter 2 “Values”).

Its rulings have had a considerable influence on Member States. The Council has also set the binding standard for the death penalty ban in its Member States.

The Council of Europe also works to encourage freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly, equality and the protection of minorities. It has launched campaigns on issues such as child protection, online hate speech and the rights of the Roma, Europe’s largest minority.

The Council of Europe’s offices are in Strasbourg. In 2016, its membership comprised 47 States including all EU Member States.

As regards human rights, the Court of Justice of European Union (cf. below) has always taken into consideration the rulings of the ECHR.

**[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

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<sup>10</sup> The Council of Europe should not be confused with the European Council which is part of the European Union. It brings together the Heads of State and Government of the EU Member States.

## FROM ECSC TO EU

Keeping in mind that the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation, the supporters of a united Europe deemed it appropriate, in 1950, to set up a more integrated supranational organisation.

Intergovernmental: cooperation  
Supranational: integration

After the Second World War, the concept of the **European Coal and Steel Community** (ECSC) was developed by Jean Monnet and then proclaimed by Robert Schuman in his declaration of 9 May 1950.<sup>11</sup> The aim was to create a common market for coal and steel, two key resources for the economy at the time, mainly to control weapon production, in order to prevent further war between France and Germany. It derives from a principle set out by Robert Schuman: *“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.”*<sup>12</sup>

Even if the area of competence may seem fairly limited today, it was the first time that in 1951, with the **Treaty of Paris**, states (Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) willingly delegated some competences to the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, a supranational institution, an ancestor of the European Commission.

Looking to widen the institution’s scope and following the failed project for the European Defence Community (EDC), **the European Economic Community** was established by the **Treaty of Rome in 1957**. It reaffirmed the principle of political integration. However, the treaty was meant first and foremost to **set up a common market** that would later become a Single Market. Its purpose was to encourage the free movement of goods, services, capital and workers.

As far as citizens were concerned, the signature of an agreement setting up the **“Schengen Area”** in 1985 made it simpler for people to travel from one Member State to another. As of 2016, not all EU Member States are signatories of the agreement. Some, like the UK and Ireland, have not wished to sign; others are not yet accepted (Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Croatia). On the other hand, some non-member countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) have signed it.

The process of integration continued with the adoption of several treaties by Member States:

- **1986: signature of the Single Act (date of effect: 1987)**

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<sup>11</sup> This is why Europe Day is now celebrated on 9 May.

<sup>12</sup> See chapter History

The aim of the Single Act was to establish the Single Market. It also introduced new areas of competence.

- **1992: signature of the Maastricht Treaty (date of effect: 1993)**

The Treaty of Maastricht created the European citizenship and the European Union as we know it.

- **1997: signature of the Treaty of Amsterdam (date of effect: 1999)**

The Treaty of Amsterdam widened the EU's areas of competence and consolidated its social dimension. It gave greater powers to the European Parliament.

- **2001: signature of the Treaty of Nice (date of effect: 2003)**

Looking toward the future membership of a dozen countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the Treaty of Nice was designed mainly to improve the institutions' functioning. It was only partly successful.

- **2005: failure of the Constitutional Treaty**

Since many Member States were not satisfied with the Treaty of Nice, a Convention on the Future of Europe was set up. It led, in 2003, to a draft Constitutional Treaty that was not adopted, because of the negative results of referenda in the Netherlands and France.

- **2007: signature of the Treaty of Lisbon (date of effect: 2009)**

After the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, an intergovernmental conference was convened to draft the Treaty of Lisbon, which included the universally accepted parts of the previous draft: the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the extended competences of the European Parliament, the introduction of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a possibility of further EU enlargement, a possibility to leave the EU...

The EU had 28 Member States<sup>13</sup> in 2016, after seven successive enlargements. Besides Member States, seven other countries<sup>14</sup> are in the process of become a Member State.

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13 **Member States by order of entry in the EEC and European Union:** France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, 1973: Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom; 1981: Greece; 1986: Spain, Portugal; 1995: Austria, Finland, Sweden; 2004: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Cyprus; 2007: Bulgaria, Romania; 2013: Croatia

14 **Five candidate countries:** Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey. **Two potential candidates:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence)

# EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE LISBON TREATY

There is no single leader representing the European Union. There is no hierarchy between the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.

The EU's institutional structure, resulting from all the signed treaties since the Treaty of Rome (1957), aims to reconcile the different objectives and interests of Member States. Various political and economic crises have sometimes hindered progress towards deeper integration.

Following the order as it appears in the Treaty of Lisbon to describe the various bodies within the EU, we shall look at:

- the European Parliament,
- the European Council,
- the Council of the European Union,
- the European Commission,
- the Court of Justice of the European Union,
- the European Court of Auditors.
- the European Central Bank,

**[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)**

## **The European Parliament**

According to the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament (EP) consists of **750 members and one president**, elected directly by citizens in each of the Member States, every five years.

The political groups formed within the EP after the European elections cover the full spectrum of political tendencies present in the EU. With the European Parliament, citizens are not only represented by their national governments on the Council of the EU, but also by politicians organised along the basis of political affinities and not by nationality.

Since its first election by universal suffrage in 1979, the European Parliament's powers have continued to grow and contribute to increase the representation of citizens at the European level. For example, it now plays a crucial role in the following aspects:

- democratic control: the President and members of the Commission cannot hold office without approval by the EP
- legislative: “codecision procedure” with the Council of the EU in a number of significant legislative fields
- budgetary: the Parliament has the possibility to adopt or to reject the projected budget sent by the Commission

The Treaty of Lisbon also strengthened the role of national parliaments. In compliance with the “principle of subsidiarity,”<sup>15</sup> the EU can only intervene in areas in which it has greater efficacy than Member States. National parliaments can contest European legislation based on this principle.

Yet the challenge facing the European Parliament is to strengthen trust between citizens and EU institutions.

**[www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)**

### **The European ombudsman**

The position of the European ombudsman was established by the Treaty of Maastricht. The first ombudsman was elected by the European Parliament in 1995 and like the Members of Parliament, the ombudsman has a five year mandate and can be re-elected. His/her role is to act as a mediator between European citizens and institutions. Any company, association or other body with its statutory head office on EU territory can also call upon his/her services.

**[www.ombudsman.europa.eu](http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu)**

### **The European Council**

The European Council brings together **Heads of State or Government**, in other words, the political leaders of the Member States. As specified in the Treaty of Lisbon, it “*gives the European Union the impetus required for its development and defines the guidelines and general political priorities*” through its resolutions. Although it does not pass specific legislation, it shapes future EU policies. It is the Council of the EU and the European Parliament (see below) that deal with the legislation.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. section on the EU’s areas of competence.

One major innovation was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon: the position of **President of the European Council**, appointed by the European Council for a period of two-and-a-half years, renewable once only.

The **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**, a position also introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon – shares with the President of the European Council the duty of representing the EU at external meetings. The EU's "Minister of Foreign Affairs" also holds the position of Vice-President of the Commission and is in charge of the European External Action Service, as the actor of the EU diplomatic missions in non-EU countries.

[www.european-council.europa.eu](http://www.european-council.europa.eu)

[www.european-council.europa.eu/the-president.aspx?lang=fr](http://www.european-council.europa.eu/the-president.aspx?lang=fr)

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en)

## **The Council of the European Union**

Usually referred to as the "Council", it was set up by the Treaties of Rome. Each Member State is represented by a ministerial level expert, specialised in the policy area being discussed (agriculture, transport...). Its decision-making process has changed as the Community has become more and more integrated. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced a double majority system, to facilitate the legislative process. A decision is ratified if it receives a favourable vote from 55% of Member States corresponding to at least 65% of the EU's population. This system has been used since 1 November 2014.

The Council reflects the positions of the individual Member States.

Every six months, one EU Member State takes over the presidency of the Council of Ministers. This system gives every country a chance to play a major role on the European stage by shaping EU agenda.

[www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu)

## **The European Commission**

Having evolved from the High Authority of the ECSC, the European Commission has been the first supranational institution within the European multi-level decision-making structure. It consists of **one Commissioner per Member State, sworn to represent the general interest of the EU as a whole and not their individual state.**<sup>16</sup> Each one exercises a mandate with the assistance of the Directorates General (DG). They are administrative branches that deal with specific fields of activities.

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<sup>16</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon stipulated that their number will be limited to two-thirds of Member States, unless the European Council unanimously decides otherwise. Yet, in 2009 the European Council decided that the number of the Commissioners would continue to be equal to the number of the Member States.



A President heads the Commission and enjoys a majority support in the European Parliament.

The Commission's competences are:

- to promote the general interests of the EU,
- normative: to advance integration thanks to its monopoly of legislative initiative,
- "guardian of the treaties," and if necessary, taking legal action against companies or States in the EU Court of Justice (see below),
- executive: to provide administrative and financial management
- international: to represent the EU at the international level.

**[www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu)**

### **The European Union Court of Justice**

The rule of law principle is of particular importance in opposing authoritarianism and arbitrary decision-making. Rules create obligations, not only for citizens but also for Member States and for the EU itself.

The Court of Justice, based in Luxembourg, is the EU's judicial authority. It has supranational power in its defence of respect for European law and the interpretation and application of the Treaties. Cases can be brought before it by a Member State, institution or natural or juristic persons. National judiciaries can also consult it, on the correct interpretation of a given EU decision or action.

Since its establishment in 1952, the Court has played an extremely important role in drafting European law based on the notion of general European interests. It has often set new standards in its application of the rules. It has also made a substantial contribution to the draft of the law on competition.

**[www.curia.europa.eu](http://www.curia.europa.eu)**

### **The European Court of Auditors**

Legal control of the EU's actions also extends to financial issues. This is why the Court of Auditors was set up in 1977, to monitor the European Union's accounts. It has no judicial power, yet it reports financial irregularities to the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and the other institutions.

**[www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu)**

## The European Central Bank (ECB)

Set up in 1998, it manages the single European currency, the euro, introduced in 1999. By 2017, nineteen Member States had given up their national currencies in favour of the euro. European treaties guarantee its independence. However, the Treaty of Lisbon underlined that *“its main objective was to maintain price stability and, without prejudice to this aim, to support the EU’s general economic policies in accordance with the principle of an open market economy in which competition is unrestricted.”*

The ECB should not be confused with the **European Investment Bank (EIB)**, which was founded to provide loans that would fund public and/or private projects useful to the economic development of the EU, its Member States, as well as enlargement and partner countries.

**[www.ecb.int](http://www.ecb.int)**

## CONSULTATIVE BODIES

Without being recognised as “institutions” *per se*, two **consultative bodies** contribute to the democratic life of the EU: the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

### European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Set up in 1957 when the Treaties of Rome were signed, the EESC is a consultative body representing employers and workers’ organisations and other interest groups (e.g. consumers). Its members are appointed for five years. Together they make up the organised civil society.

Its main purpose is to fulfil a **consultative function** for the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in regard to policy assessment. To this end, it draws on the expertise and practical experience of its members. It can express opinions, either on its own initiative or at the request of other EU institutions.

**[www.eesc.europa.eu](http://www.eesc.europa.eu)**

### Committee of the Regions (CR)

Founded in 1994, its aim is to involve local and regional bodies in the decision-making process at the EU level. Its members are the holders of **regional and local authorities**, appointed for five years by the EU, their names put forward by the Member States.

The CR has to be consulted regarding any EU decision on issues affecting local and regional powers e.g. regional policy, the environment, education and transport. It provides its opinions in the same way as the EESC.

This body has a twofold purpose. It acts as a relay for the EU in local networks and it carries the opinions of politicians who are close to their constituencies back to the European level.

Most regions are represented in Brussels, individually or collectively, to promote their interests in European institutions.

**[www.cor.europa.eu](http://www.cor.europa.eu)**

# 3 – EUROPEAN UNION AREAS OF COMPETENCE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Member States decide the areas of competence of the EU through a complex mechanism. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced some important clarifications in this respect in the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) contains a comprehensive list for each category of competence. Generally speaking, there are three major areas of competence:

- **Competence exclusive to the EU**

The EU can legislate in these areas and Member States cannot do so unless mandated by the EU. These areas are, for example, the customs union, the common commercial policy or monetary policy for the Member States in the euro zone.

- **Shared competence**

In these areas, the States can legislate like the EU. However, if the EU exercises its competence in a shared area, the States cease to do so and cannot begin taking action again until the EU has waived its rights in the matter. This is the case, for example, of the Single Market, the environment, energy, agriculture, freedom, security and justice.

- **Support or coordination**

In these areas, the EU may intervene to coordinate or supplement the action of Member States, without affecting their sovereignty. This is the case for culture, tourism and education, for example.

The Treaty on the European Union (TEU) also specifies **three major principles**:

- **Principle of conferral**

The principle of conferral (or attribution) underscores **limitation**. The EU can only intervene (notably in the sense of legislating or taking mandatory decisions) in those areas of activity that have been expressly **delegated** to it in treaties.

Since the Treaty of Rome, there has been an **extension of the Community areas of competence** and a strengthening of its powers.

- **The principle of subsidiarity**

This principle was introduced by the European Single Act and was consolidated by the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. It means that the EU can only intervene if Member States cannot satisfactorily achieve the aims of a potential action and if an action at European level is more relevant. This principle only matters when the EU does not have exclusive competence.

The Treaty of Lisbon strengthened this principle thanks to the power it granted to national parliaments to monitor compliance.

- **The principle of proportionality**

It implies that EU action must not exceed, **in content or form**, what is required to achieve the treaty's objectives. The EU must not, therefore, adopt measures that are more restrictive and/or more detailed than what is strictly necessary to achieve the objectives given for the legislation.

Last but not least, it is clear that whatever the form or level of involvement, the European Union plays a role in almost every area of our daily lives. Indeed, a certain number of specific policies have been established, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, the Social Policy, the Energy Policy etc.

## DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

It is important to know about the European institutions and the EU's fields of action, but this is not enough to understand the mechanisms and principles that underline, on a daily basis, the adoption of a wide range of decisions.

Two types of logic, the supranational and the intergovernmental, coexist within the European Union. Intergovernmental logic refers to decision-making that stresses the national level, while the principle of supranationality refers to a representation of interests that lie beyond the national level. The way in which laws are adopted depends, among other things, on whether certain issues are more supranational or intergovernmental in character.

- **Ordinary legislative procedure (codecision)**

The idea of the ordinary legislative procedure is based on absolute equality between the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. In this procedure, the Commission is responsible for drafting a legislative proposal (regulations, directives and decisions) submitted to both institutions. They must then reach an agreement to adopt the text.

- **Consultation procedure**

This procedure concerns a limited number of legislative areas, such as internal market exemptions and competition laws. Using the consultation procedure, the European Parliament plays a less significant role than in the ordinary procedure. This procedure requires the Parliament to agree to or to reject the proposed amendments to the draft forwarded by the Council. The Parliament's opinion does not bind the Council and acts solely as a consultative body.

- **Consent procedure**

In the consent procedure, the Parliament accepts or rejects the proposed act but cannot amend it. When the Parliament rejects the act, it cannot be adopted. The consent procedure gives the Parliament a right to veto. The European Parliament will follow this procedure for the accession or withdrawal of a EU Member.

- **The open method of coordination (OMC)**

This method corresponds to a purely intergovernmental process of coordination. It was introduced to enable Member States to coordinate their policies without complying with restrictive standards. The European Parliament and the Court of Justice play virtually no part in the OMC process.

- **Enhanced cooperation**

The principle of enhanced cooperation was introduced to respond to the challenges arising from the increasing number of Member States and the difficulty of reaching compromise in areas that require unanimity. This mechanism can be used to establish cooperation in an area, even if not all States wish to take part. A minimum of nine EU Countries is necessary to establish such cooperation. It has been criticised because it might risk dividing the EU, but the underlying idea is that cooperation will gradually pull in States that were initially reticent. This procedure has been used for divorce law and patents. It is also approved for a financial transaction tax.

# 4 – EUROPEAN UNION ACHIEVEMENTS

Building a European community has produced a long-lasting peace and a number of political, economic and social achievements that every European citizen can benefit from today. From the fight against discrimination to workers' rights, from agriculture and rural development to transport, from healthcare to consumer protection, it is a long list.

Among the most representative examples of these achievements are:

## EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy. The EU has set five objectives to be reached by 2020:

### 1. Employment

- 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed

### 2. R&D

- 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D

### 3. Climate change and energy sustainability

- greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if conditions are right) lower than 1990
- 20% of energy from renewables
- 20% increase in energy efficiency

### 4. Education

- Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%
- at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third-level education

### 5. Fighting poverty and social exclusion

- at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm)

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en)

## MOBILITY AND TRAINING

Europe has a long history of cross-cultural mobility in particular among merchants, craftsmen and students. Continuing this tradition, the EU has developed programmes accessible to all, especially young people. They have been designed for school pupils, students, trainees, young volunteers, teachers, trainers, artists etc. They aim for a vocational qualification while developing an awareness of Europeanness.

The Bologna Process, launched in 1999, aims to promote exchange between university students, teaching staff, and researchers. It brings the university systems closer together to achieve common benchmarks. It has led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and a common system of credits for courses of study, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). In all, it has promoted the widest possible mobility for students.

### Erasmus +

Since 1987, the Erasmus mobility programmes have welcomed more than three million European students away from their national campuses in thirty years. In 2017, no less than thirty-three countries were involved in the programme, which has produced innovative teaching and training methods, new services to assist students, and innovation in research and cooperation between universities and the business sector. Teaching and other staff in higher education establishments can also take advantage of the Erasmus programme. For many of those who have benefitted from it, the exchanges help to develop a European citizenship still in its infancy. The programme has been extended to include other countries in Eastern and Southern partnership and Western Balkans.

A number of previous EU mobility programmes were combined to form the new Erasmus + programme in 2014. It continues to open cultural borders based on the continent's history, increasing the knowledge and mutual understanding among Europeans in their daily lives.

On a side note, it is worth mentioning the **European Solidarity Corps**. This initiative belongs to the Erasmus + programme. It allows more young people to take part in a range of solidarity activities either by volunteering or by taking up work experience. It aims to address challenging situations, such as rebuilding homes after natural disasters.

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en)

The **European Voluntary Service (EVS)** is part of the Erasmus +. It offers opportunities to young people aged 17-30 and helps them to travel abroad to participate in volunteering projects. An EVS lasts between 2 weeks and 12 months.

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals/young-people/european-voluntary-service\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals/young-people/european-voluntary-service_en)



Moreover, participants in the Erasmus + programme receive an individual certificate called **Youthpass** that enables them to validate acquired experience through the validation of apprenticeship results.

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

[https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en)

## **Europass**

Europass consists of five documents to make one's skills and qualifications understandable in every European country (CV, language passport, Europass mobility, diploma and certificate supplement). It can be used by all ages and at all levels by school pupils, apprentices, teachers, instructors, salaried workers, human resources executives, head hunters, jobseekers etc.

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/curriculum-vitae>

## **CITIZENSHIP**

The Commission's ***"Europe for Citizens"*** programme is designed to promote European citizenship. It is first based on town twinning, a system that has long played an important role in this respect. Again, it means to involve citizens in building a Europe united in its cultural diversity and open to the world. Its ambitious aim is to forge a European identity founded on the common values, history and culture already recognised.

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship>

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index_en.php)

## **CULTURE**

The ***"Creative Europe"*** programme focuses on projects and initiatives designed to enhance Europe's cultural diversity and to develop its common cultural legacy, through cross-border cooperation between stakeholders and institutions in the cultural and audiovisual media sector.

To encourage cultural exchanges, the European Union has developed mobility programmes that enable artists and professionals in this sector to travel abroad.

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/>

## EVERYDAY LIFE

Although one may fail to notice this, the building of a European community has significantly changed the daily lives of an increasingly large number of people in the European Union. Here are a few examples of these improvements.

### **Travelling across borders**

Today, it is possible to travel freely without having to show one's passport in Member States of the EU, which are part of the Schengen Agreement (signed in 1985), as well as in Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. Once you legally enter the Schengen Area, you are free to move to any Schengen country without border control.

### **European Health Insurance Card**

Thanks to this card, EU citizens have the right to be treated by doctors in any EU country they visit and the expenses are covered by their national health insurance.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=509&langId=en>

### **End of roaming charges (“roam like at home”)**

Faced with the determination of the European Commission, Council and Parliament, mobile phone operators decreased their rates by more than 90% since 2007 for outgoing and incoming voice calls, outgoing texts and data download. From 15 June 2017, no extra roaming fee may be charged: Europeans pay the same price at home and when they travel.

### **Cheaper air travel**

Launched at the end of the 1980s, the deregulation of the transport sector was a colossal task because the sector was either in the hands of national monopolies or subject to pricing regulations. The resulting deregulation was spectacular for air travel. The number of airlines increased and ticket prices plummeted, mainly thanks to the prices charged by “low-cost” carriers. The decrease in costs is not limited to ticket prices, however.

## **Consumers' protection**

Consumers need a guarantee that their rights will be upheld in case of any problems when buying goods and services from other EU countries. EU policy guarantees a high level of consumer safety.

For example, today's passengers benefit from the guaranteed reimbursement of a trip's cost and/or accommodation if their flight is delayed, cancelled or overbooked.

**[https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/consumers\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/consumers_en)**

## **Single emergency phone number**

Since 2000, people can simply dial 112 from a landline or mobile wherever in the EU, without the code for a country or town. The call is free and emergency switchboard operators can speak the local language, as well as English and French, and quickly locate the position of the person requiring assistance.

## **ATM withdrawals**

Since 1 July 2002, the cost of withdrawing money from an ATM and using credit cards is the same for national and cross-border transactions, although currently only within the euro zone.

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All these concrete examples show the undeniable progress achieved through the actions of the European Union.

Although it may sound as a cliché, having overcome a number of crises and challenges, the European Union has nevertheless allowed Europeans to experience a greater degree of peace and prosperity than at any past time. Its achievements were unlocked by embracing the common values of democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights.

We must bear in mind that the European Union remains an organisation based directly or indirectly on universal suffrage. As such, it naturally reflects the political trends that result from citizen voting and that are expressed in the actions of parliamentarians and national representatives.

Yet peace, European values and achievements are continuously challenged and should not be taken for granted. It is our responsibility to preserve and shape Europe's positive heritage and pass it on to next generations.









