



European Union

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Introduction to the European Union

The European Union was introduced to the “European Communities”, a predecessor to the EU with the Maastricht treaty in 1992. The EU was founded on the 1st of November, 1993. Although, according to other sources, it has been first introduced with the “Schuman declaration”, which was created in 1950, and states about new plans for the European continent. Today, the European Union is a confederation, with many large institutions, trying to replicate the United States of America or the United Nations with “common justice” and offices, that can enforce the same rules to each member state.



Quick facts about the European Union

- The EU's area is **4 233 000 km²**
- There are **24 official languages** in the European Union. The most commonly used are English, French and German.
- EU countries have in common. It's their passports. All countries of the European Union have a **red passport** with the words "European Union" at the top, followed by the country of which the person is a citizen.
- The highest peak of the **European Union** is Mont Blanc with a height of 4809 m.



The European Commission

The European Commission is the European Union's highest executive body, which has decision-making power on many issues. It proposes EU legislation, monitors compliance with EU legislation and represents the EU vis-à-vis Member States externally. For the most part, it manages the EU budget.

It's headquarters are both in Strasbourg, France and in Luxembourg city in Luxembourg, since they are switching **every few days**, and costs them €103 million (2014 prices).

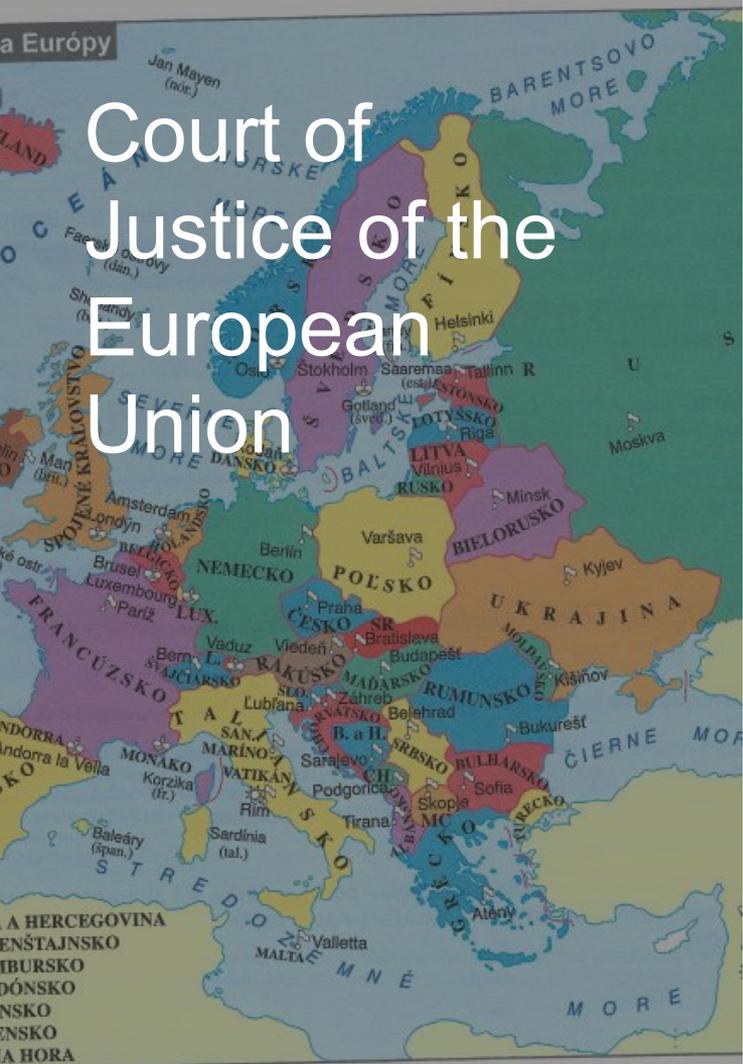


The European Parliament



The European Parliament is one of the governmental bodies of the European Union. The first direct elections to the European Parliament were held in June 1979. Members are elected by proportional representation in a secret election by all EU citizens over the age of 18.

It's headquarters are in Maastricht, in the Netherlands.



Court of Justice of the European Union



The Court of Justice of the European Union is one of the institutions of the European Union. The Court of Justice of the European Union consists of the following judicial bodies: Court of Justice, General Court. The Court of Justice of the European Union is based in Luxembourg. It is currently chaired by Koen Lenaerts and vice-chaired by Antonio Tizzano. The General Court is also based in Luxembourg.

The EU provides funding for a range of projects and programs. The European Union shall apply strict rules to ensure strict control as well as a transparent and accountable use of funds. Most notable grant systems are:

- European Regional Development Fund
(Európsky Fond Regionálneho Rozvoja)
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
(Európsky poľnohospodársky fond pre rozvoj vidieka)
- Cohesion Fund
(Kohézny Fond);

of which you may have heard from the news.

Dotations of the European Union





European Union and the Nature

The European Union's main goal is to protect all animal and plant species facing particular threats in Europe and work with [CITES](#) to fight illegal wildlife trade across the world. The EU promotes nature-based solutions as a cost-effective alternative to traditional infrastructure. It's good for society, the economy and the environment. The EU is also taking several measures to protect forests and to value the ecosystem services they provide.

Free movement

As previously mentioned, the European Union was founded mostly for the easier movement of people, things, or to solve conflicts between member countries. Although free movement has been a disputed topic quite often a few months ago, EU citizens can now freely travel anywhere.





Problems of Europe

Europe is one of the most developed areas in the world with a high standard of living. Nevertheless, our continent also has various problems. Some of them occur in only a small number of countries, but several are common to practically the whole of Europe. Among the problems that the people of Europe perceive most include:

- Large economic differences between regions
- Ethnic tensions and conflicts
- Population aging
- Illegal Immigrants



Large economic differences between regions

Large economic differences in Europe are usually depicted by the strength of the economy and the living standards of the population. They are mainly caused by historical development, lack of natural resources and the level of built infrastructure (quality of transport connections, services, etc.) .

In general, the countries of the western and northern parts of Europe have developed economies and their people have a high standard of living. The lagging parts are mainly the east and southeast of Europe. However, there are also large regional differences within countries.



Ethnic tensions and conflicts

Many European countries have a very diverse ethnic composition. The current borders of states do not always correspond to the representation of nationalities. Therefore, tensions arise in many regions, which can sometimes lead to armed conflict. The biggest conflict at the end of the 20th century was the civil war during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Due to the problems between the two ethnically and linguistically different groups of the population, tensions remain in Moldova. The situation has improved compared to the past in Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) and in the north of Spain in the Basque Country.



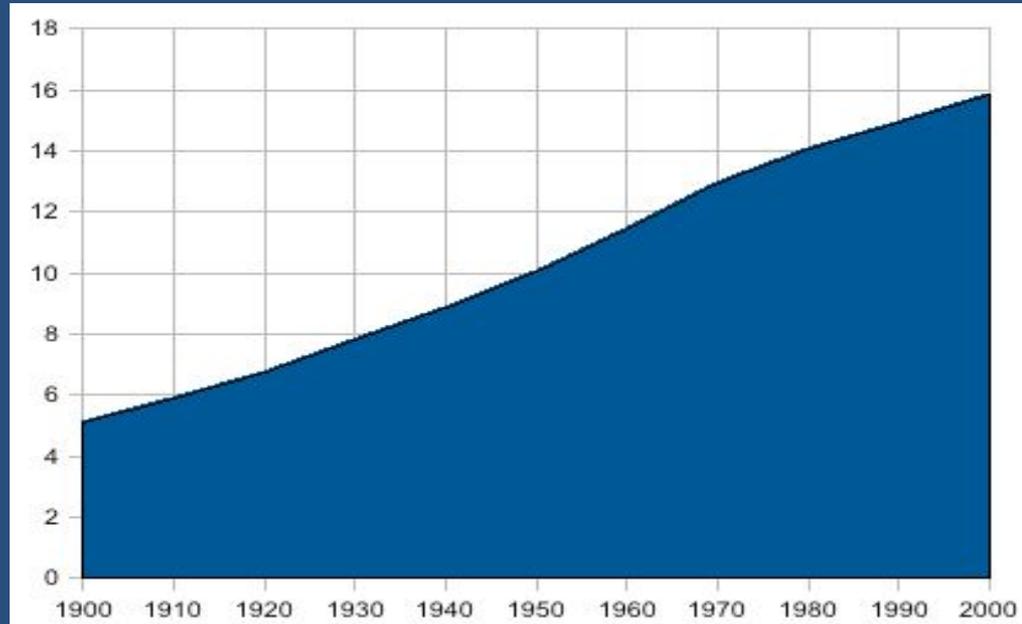
Why do ethnic tensions and conflicts happen?

Ethnic conflicts often arise in countries with large numbers of immigrants. Many live in isolated communities on the outskirts of large cities, unable to find work and integrate into society. Several areas of Europe are examples of trouble-free coexistence between different nations. For example, the relationship between Finns and Swedes as minorities in both countries, the broad rights of German-speaking Tyroleans in northern Italy, the extensive autonomy of the Catalans within Spain.



Population aging

The aging of the population presents many problems, which are related to securing sufficient funds for pensions for current and future seniors, health care and services. This problem does not only affect Europe only, but it is also currently a big problem in the whole world.



Illegal Immigrants

For many European countries, the large group of illegal immigrants coming from predominantly poor or conflict-affected regions, especially Africa and Asia, is a major problem.

The most known country for keeping out immigrants is Hungary, where the semi-authoritarian prime minister Viktor Orbán imposed the strict rules in late 2014, and they are active till today. Now, they are being sanctioned and losing their EU dotations because the un-acceptance of the immigrants.





Different perspectives

The “against” side

People, who are against the European Union are usually called Eurosceptics.

The most notable person, who is against the European Union in Slovakia may be Štefan Harabin, candidate for president in 2019, ex-president of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic and ex-minister of jurisdiction. He is well known for his extreme-rightist opinions.

Other well known Eurosceptics can be Viktor Orbán, Hungarian Prime Minister or Václav Klaus, former Eurosceptic president of the Czech Republic.



Štefan Harabin: I am following the situation in Slovakia and within the European Union, and without barriers it can be called the "Dictatorship of Permitted Opinion" from Brussels. Politicians are forcing certain solutions at Union level, which are then adopted by the individual representatives of the Member States, solutions that are often in conflict with Union law itself and the national law of each country.



Opinion of Štefan Harabin

Viktor Orbán does not like the fact that the former Warsaw Pact countries will not receive as much support and opportunities as the Western states, but they want to determine more than Orbán is tolerable, who is not ashamed of these views and is therefore unpopular in the European Union. He strongly supports the family and has implemented many support programs for families with children, unlike the EU.



Opinion of Viktor Orbán

In late 2016, there was a survey about the current opinion and happiness of Slovaks to the European Union. As many as 62.1 percent of respondents in the survey said that they would vote for Slovakia to remain in the EU. 22.6 percent of the participants in the survey would be in favor leaving, 15.3 percent of the respondents could not decide.

After the presidential elections in 2019 though, everything changed, now the “want to leave” side has above 50% of votes.

Every respondent agrees with the fact, that Euro should stay the currency in Europe, but all countries should be independent.



Opinion of regular (Slovak) citizens

But... How has the European Union changed the world?

The European Union helped to develop Europe, either economically or industrially. EU countries agreed on peace, which has been going on for over half a century. The EU launched a single European currency: the euro. The 340 million EU citizens in 19 countries now use it as their currency and can enjoy its benefits. The EU also contributed to the free movement of people inside their boundaries.



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dvmUG7uk5kYBAZ7PhkgihbC5N2QZKoktR14uhSFIUx8/edit?usp=sharing>

Bibliography

To view my bibliography, please click the link above.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vDSvt8byMuofonXvpc7SUIYiutPKbXDLI1sVrkNHtnk/edit?usp=sharing>

OPVL Analysis

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Reflection

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Thank you for paying attention, please ask questions, if you have any!