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Preface

Introducing Europe without simplifying it!

The fact sheets you have before you have a common theme: paving the way to a Europe which is more accessible and easier to understand, less like the cliché of a bureaucratic institution and closer to the everyday reality of its citizens.

Even if we do not always realise it, Europe influences our lives every day to a significant extent. For example, the fuel in our vehicles meets European standards. The bread which we buy – and which we pay for in euros of course! - has been baked according to manufacturing rules laid down in line with European food safety. We travel from one country to another without border controls. We can enjoy unforgettable experiences in other countries thanks to a great many cross-border education and training programmes funded by the European Union. There are a great many more ways in which Europe manifests itself in our everyday life, and this is why it is so important to know and understand Europe better.

These sheets have therefore been designed and written for everyone who is keen/required to gain a clearer understanding of Europe, whether as a student, teacher, coordinator or simply a citizen. All of these groups will most likely find it very useful to remind themselves of a number of key reference points.

These concise summary sheets, which are illustrated with concrete examples, sum up over 50 years of European construction and draw the reader's attention to the role played by Belgium, one of the six founding States of this unprecedented European construction. The aim is therefore to introduce Europe without simplifying it.

We would like to invite you to (re)discover the European Union – the major outlines of its history, how its institutions function, its values, its ambitious achievements and the concrete measures it takes for citizens. We will also acquaint you with the enlarged Europe, which must face up to the challenges of globalisation and make its voice heard in the international arena in order to protect the environment and extend its development aid. Over 50 years after it was established, the European Union is adapting to the successive enlargements it has undergone by devising for itself a new style of policy making in order to make its functioning simpler and clearer. The Treaty of Lisbon opens up the way for integration of the European Union of the 21st century, which will keep step with citizens’ and global concerns.

In order to maximise educational potential, we have also provided boxes entitled ‘Did you know?’ and ‘Discuss in class’, which expand upon the theme covered in each sheet with questions and/or suggestions for debates. Some sheets also have links to Internet sites for reference purposes.

The sheets can also be downloaded as PDF files from:

Happy reading!
The Second World War remains the largest and most deadly conflict in mankind’s history. When the atrocities ended in 1945, Europe was left in a state of shock: millions were homeless, the economy was in tatters and more than half of the industrial infrastructure had been destroyed. The shock of two World Wars in fewer than thirty years finally led the intellectuals, the politicians and the philosophers to overcome old differences and start “thinking of Europe” and how to work on its reconstruction.

The birth of the six

Within this framework, the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, presented a plan, later referred to as the Schuman Plan. This plan set out that European countries should develop together economically and politically. This union would allow prosperity to be increased and peace to be assured. Six European countries - France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy - reacted enthusiastically to this proposal. Together, they decided to commit to economic cooperation, in particular in the cross-border markets of coal and steel.

In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded and with it came the first form of European integration. It is not surprising that these should have been precisely steel and coal, two base materials of every war industry.

Living in a community

Under the influence of the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, the six founding States went even further. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed, forming the basis for two Communities:

• Firstly, the European Economic Community (EEC).
• Secondly, the Treaty of Rome also set up the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) in order to promote research and development on atomic energy.

The aim of the Treaty of the Rome was the creation of a common market, in other words, a zone for the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital.

In 1965, a treaty was signed to merge the executive bodies of the three communities (ECSC, EEC and Euratom) by setting up a single Council and Commission.

Realising the advantages of this cooperation, other countries decided to join the six founding States. In 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom became members, followed by Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986. Europe’s “Twelve” was born!

Adapt in order to grow

With the Member States cooperating ever more closely and more and more countries applying for membership, more and more treaties were signed over the years and the Treaty of Rome was adapted. The aim: to improve and strengthen the running of the Union.

The Single European Act (concluded in 1986) completed the Treaty of Rome with a series of objectives that revolved around the main aim of a large single internal market (doing away with internal borders and introducing the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons). This objective was achieved in 1993.

And the cooperation was to go even further. In 1992, the Member States concluded the Treaty on the European Union, more commonly known as the “Maastricht Treaty”, named after the town in the Netherlands where the Treaty was signed. This Treaty that created the European Union was needed to organise a future economic and monetary union based on the single currency, to consolidate a common external and security policy and to strengthen cooperation in terms of justice and internal affairs. So the focus was no longer exclusively on economic cooperation.

In 1995, Finland, Austria and Sweden joined the EU to form the Europe of the “Fifteen”. A little later, two other treaties were signed: the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the Treaty of Nice (2000).

The Treaty of Amsterdam placed employment and the rights of citizens at the heart of the EU, lifted the remaining obstacles to the free movement of persons, improved security, aiming to increase the profile of the EU on the world stage and to reform the European institutions with a view to opening up to a large number of countries in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

The Treaty of Nice established the new foundations for the operation of the European institutions with a view to the fifth enlargement of the EU. So, in 2004, the European family increased substantially, taking in 10 new Member States: Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

A Union of so many members and with such a broad jurisdiction could no longer operate in the same way as a community of 6 Member States with limited objectives. With this in mind, a draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was drawn up. In addition to the objective of making Europe function better, this Treaty also aimed to bring together in a single document the various treaties that had been signed over almost 50 years. Signed in Rome in October 2004, this Treaty was not to be ratified following referendums rejecting the constitution in France and the Netherlands.

The most important aspects of the Constitutional Treaty would, however, be taken up again in the Treaty of Lisbon.

The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007, the year in which Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, which was now made up of 27 members. This treaty adapted the European Union's
institutional architecture and decision-making process in order to make it more democratic and effective. It came into force on 1 December 2009.

**How much has been achieved in under a century!**

We can now describe Europe as follows: 27 Member States where we pay for lunch in Euros in Finland; travel from one country to the next without any border checks and if one region in Europe has floods, the other Member States offer financial support for its reconstruction.

Today, one thing is clear: there has never been as much peace or prosperity in a Europe that was torn apart by internal wars under a century ago.

With the Treaty of Lisbon having come into force on 1 December 2009, the European Union can now dedicate itself completely to taking on concrete challenges presenting direct interests for the citizens, such as improving growth and competitiveness; creating more and better jobs; strengthening the internal market; curbing climate change, and taking account of sustainable agriculture etc.

**Did you know?**

In the 19th century, Victor Hugo launched the idea of the "United States of Europe", which was taken up by the former Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, as the title of his book on the future of the European Union.

At the Messina Conference in 1955, Paul-Henri Spaak, an eminent Belgian statesman was nominated Chairman of the preparatory committee charged with drafting a report on the creation of a common European market.

9 May is an annual celebration of Europe – “Europe Day”. Europe Day is the anniversary of Robert Schuman’s founding ECSC speech in 1950.
The “Union” of 27 Member States is a unique government model. The Member States remain sovereign and independent countries. They agree, nevertheless, to contribute with some of their expertise to tackle common problems, such as pollution or crime, which they know does not stop at borders.

This shared sovereignty is exercised through community institutions that the Member States have set up and to which they delegate part of their decision-making powers.

The founding treaties outline the powers, scope of activities and responsibilities of these institutions.

The decision-making institutions

- **The European Council**
  The European Council gathers together the heads of State or Government and the president of the European Commission in Brussels at least four times a year. The European Council establishes the trends of general policies and gives the required push to the development of the EU but does not legislate. These meetings are events that are currently extensively commented on and relayed by the media. The Lisbon Treaty came into force on 1 December 2009, providing for the creation of a President of the European Council with a two and a half year mandate that can be renewed once. This position, held by the Belgian, Herman Van Rompuy, allows the European Council which, through the Lisbon Treaty, becomes a fully separate institution, to have a high profile and to remain in place.

The European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission form the famous “institutional triangle” that defines the various policies and decides on the legislative acts that are applied across the Union.

- **The European Parliament**
  **Action:** unlike national parliaments, the European Parliament does not draft “European laws” but examines the Commission’s proposals. They adopt them in the vast majority of cases in conjunction with the Council or they issue their advice. The joint decision procedure allows them to take part in approving laws on an equal footing with the Council of the European Union. The Parliament also plays an essential role with regards to the budget. Furthermore, it exercises control over the Commission: it approves the nomination of its members and has the power to discharge it.
  **Composition:** the Parliament represents the citizens. It is the only European institution whose citizens can elect their members directly. All the member countries have a fixed number of MEPs. The number of MEPs depends on the size of the country’s population. So, Belgium has 22 MEPs out of a total of 736. In the Parliament itself the MEPs are not grouped by country, but by political party.
  **Headquarters:** the European Parliament has its headquarters in Strasbourg. Certain sessions and meetings of the parliamentary commissions are still held in Brussels. The European Parliament has its secretariat in Strasbourg.

- **The Council of the European Union**
  **Action:** the representatives of the governments of the Member States, in other words the Ministers, meet and pass laws. The Council of the European Union makes decisions in various areas in conjunction with the European Parliament. The Council also decides on foreign policy and coordinates the action of the Member States in areas such as economic policy or employment. It also ensures the decisions of the European Council are executed.
  **Composition:** The Lisbon Treaty, which came into force on 1 December 2009, brought changes to the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It introduced the principle of team presidency between three States. These three Member States establish a common working programme covering an 18 month period, which allows for greater continuity to be ensured. Each one of these 3 States presides over the work for a period of 6 months. There are ten sector formations in the Council of the European Union:

- General Affairs
- Foreign Affairs
- Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN)
- Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)
- Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
- Competitiveness (domestic market, industry, research)
- Transport, Telecommunications and Energy
- Agriculture and Fisheries
- Environment
- Education, Youth and Culture

The General Affairs Council is presided over by the Foreign Minister or the Minister for European Affairs of the country that holds the Presidency. Each of the Council’s sector formations is presided over by the relevant minister of the Member State which holds the presidency with the exception of Foreign Affairs, which is presided over by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

**Headquarters:** the Council of the European Union holds meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg.
The institutions which make Europe work (2)

N.B.! The Council of the European Union can easily be confused with the **Council of Europe**. The Council of Europe is not an EU institution. It groups together 47 countries to defend human rights. No country has ever joined the Union without first belonging to the Council of Europe.

- **The European Commission**
  
  **Action**: it drafts “proposals for European laws” and then submits these for approval to the European Parliament and to the Council of the European Union. When a “European law” is adopted, the Commission ensures that it is respected in all the Member States. It also manages the European Union's budget.

  **Composition**: the government of each Member State nominates a Commissioner. Each Commissioner is responsible for a specific area that the Member States would like to work on together. So the former Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht is the European Foreign Trade Commissioner. Each Commissioner represents the European Union as a whole and not only its own country of origin.

  **Headquarters**: the European Commission has its headquarters in Brussels.

The supervisory authorities

The **Court of Justice** ensures that the law is respected by the European institutions and the Member States. A problem can be dealt with by the Court at the request of a country, an institution or even an individual. It must, however, relate to an application of European laws, otherwise it is the national courts which have jurisdiction in this area. Note that European law prevails over national law. National law must therefore adapt itself in order to comply with European law. The Court of Justice has its headquarters in Luxembourg.

The **European Court of Auditors** supervises the execution of the European Union budget. It examines all the Union's revenue and expenses and checks if there has been good financial management. Its headquarters is in Luxembourg.

The most specialised institutions and agencies

The decision-making institutions sometimes need additional information before being able to make a decision. They can then consult different institutions and more specialist agencies.

- **The European Economic and Social Committee** is the consulting body that represents organised civil society, in other words, the employers, the trade unions, the consumers, the farmers, etc.

- **The Committee of the Regions** is the advisory body representing the regional and local authorities. It groups together the presidents of the region, regional parliamentarians, mayors of the large towns, municipal councillors, etc.

- **The European Central Bank** is responsible for monetary policy in the Eurozone. Its headquarters is in Frankfurt.

- **The European Investment Bank** is one of the most important investment institutions in the world. Its main aim is to support balanced development of the Union. Its headquarters is in Luxembourg.

In addition to these institutions, the European Union has **European Agencies**. Here are some examples: the European Medicines Agency, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Aviation Safety Agency... Together with all these institutions and bodies, one man – **the European Mediator** – defends the citizens and European businesses against the risks of a potentially bad administration demonstrated by the European institutions and bodies. There are several complaints relating for example to access being refused to certain documents, administrative delays or the hiring of staff. The European mediator works in Strasbourg.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Since 2003, the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) has been the sole point of contact for all citizens of the European Union who wish to work in the European institutions. It organises competitive exams and tests (http://europa.eu/epso).

The European Parliament is the only supranational institution in the world: the members have been democratically elected by direct universal suffrage every 5 years since 1979.

To find out more:

- **Europe**
  
  http://europa.eu

- **Council of the European Union**
  
  http://consilium.europa.eu

- **Court of Justice**
  
  http://curia.europa.eu

- **European Economic and Social Committee**
  
  http://cese.europa.eu

- **European Central Bank**
  
  http://www.ecb.int

- **European Mediator**
  
  http://ombudsman.europa.eu

- **European Parliament**
  
  http://europarl.europa.eu

- **European Commission**
  
  http://ec.europa.eu

- **European Court of Auditors**
  
  http://eca.europa.eu

- **Committee of the Regions**
  
  http://cdr.europa.eu

- **European Investment Bank**
  
  http://eib.europa.eu
When it was established in the 1950s, the European Community consisted of six Member States, and the objectives it pursued were mainly economic. Today, the EU has 27 Member States and its field of action has expanded considerably. This success meant that it needed to react: a Union made up of 27 - and soon more - countries, and which has far-reaching competences, could no longer operate as though it were a Community of six Member States with limited objectives. The Treaty of Lisbon not only allows the EU to adapt to its own development, but also better to face the challenges posed by a globalised world.

Ratification

On 13 December 2007, the Treaty of Lisbon was officially signed by the European Heads of State or Government. Before it could enter into force, however, the Treaty still had to be ratified by the 27 Member States in line with their respective constitutional procedures. The last country ratified the Treaty in November 2009, so that it entered into force on 1 December 2009.

In Belgium, both the Federal Parliament and the parliaments of the Regions and Communities approved the Treaty. Belgium's ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon was ultimately concluded by the deposition of the ratification instrument in Rome on 15 October 2008.

Major changes arising from the Treaty of Lisbon

The Treaty of Lisbon amends, but does not replace, the existing treaties.

The Treaty of Lisbon comprises two main parts. The first part modifies the earlier Treaty on European Union, whereas the second amends the earlier Treaty establishing the European Community. The latter is renamed the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union by the new Treaty.

The Treaty of Lisbon introduces a range of new elements:

- The Treaty of Lisbon makes the European Union more democratic. It substantially expands the powers of the European Parliament as a co-legislator, budgetary authority and body responsible for political scrutiny. The Treaty of Lisbon also involves national parliaments more closely in the Union's activities, in particular with respect to monitoring subsidiarity.

- The Treaty introduces citizens' initiative provisions, extends the powers of the Court of Justice and recognises the constitutional structure of the Member States, including with respect to regional autonomy.

- The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which was previously just a political declaration, is not part of the Treaty, though a provision in the Treaty does specify that the Union respects the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter. That provision gives the Charter the same legal force as the treaties. The United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic have been given a derogation. This solution was given preference over other possibilities that would have restricted the Charter's binding nature on EU institutions.

- The Treaty of Lisbon also provides for the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

- The Union's actions will be more efficient and coherent. The Treaty of Lisbon gives the Union a single legal status for the first time. It expands the Community method and adapts the institutional framework.

- The taking up of office by the first permanent President of the European Council, the Belgian Herman Van Rompuy, and by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the Briton Catherine Ashton, will also improve the functioning of the European Union and its visibility in the world, by giving it the necessary tools to tackle future challenges and respond to citizens' demands. The Treaty simplifies decision-making within the Council. The scope of application of qualified majority voting will be considerably extended.

- The Treaty lends EU policy fresh impetus, primarily with regard to the Union's external relations and the area of freedom, security and justice. It also introduces a new horizontal social clause, under which the Union must take account of social objectives in all of its policies. The Treaty sets out a specific legal basis for services of general economic interest complemented by a Protocol which was not included in the Constitutional Treaty.

- Other innovative features of the Treaty of Lisbon include its express commitment to the fight against climate change and a section that supplements the Union's legal basis in the field of energy.
- The Treaty of Lisbon clarifies the framework for action by the Union. It puts an end to the artificial division into pillars, though it does underline the specificity of foreign and security policy, and also clarifies the respective powers of the Union and Member States. Finally, the Treaty simplifies the Union’s legislative and executive instruments and establishes a hierarchy of norms.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The name ‘Treaty of Lisbon’ comes from the capital where the Treaty was signed in December 2007.

The Treaty of Lisbon introduces a new form of public participation in European Union policy shaping, the citizens’ initiative, which enables at least one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States to call directly on the European Commission to bring forward an initiative of interest to them in an area of EU competence.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

If you had to give your opinion on the Treaty of Lisbon, would you vote for or against?
On 31 December 2010 Belgium’s term as President of the Council of the European Union came to an end and the torch was passed to Hungary. It was the 12th time that Belgium held the Council Presidency. As the Union was faced with numerous critical challenges, Belgium opted for a pragmatic and targeted approach: the programme of the Presidency aimed to achieve the greatest possible concrete results in various high-priority fields of action, in function of the legislative agenda of the Council and the European Parliament. The smooth collaboration between the European Institutions was also of special concern since only with a properly functioning machinery, the Union can take effective decisions.

**Implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon**

For the Belgian Presidency, it was of great importance to ensure that the innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon which came into effect one year ago, were subject to full implementation and compliance and would be put to maximum use. The Presidency therefore functioned completely within the framework of the Treaty and the changes that it brought to the exercise of the rotating presidency, particularly at the level of the European Council, which has become a fully fledged institution with a permanent president, as well as at the level of the Council for Foreign Affairs which is now chaired by the High Representative.

Another important issue was the approval of the budget for the Union for 2011 according to the new budgetary rules of the Treaty.

The Belgian Presidency also managed to reach an agreement with the Parliament about the elaboration of the European Citizens’ Initiative, an innovation of the Treaty of Lisbon that is highly visible for citizens. From now on, subject to the collection of one million signatures and according to certain rules, citizens will be able to petition the Commission to consider legislative proposals.

**Fighting the economic crisis – working on sustainable economic growth**

In light of the increasing pressure on the euro zone, a reinforcement of the economic governance of the Union was the leading priority. Under the Belgian Presidency the Council took a first, far-reaching step in the direction of a better coordination of economic policies with the introduction of a “European semester”, a reorganisation of the calendar regarding economic policy coordination. This means that, from 2011 onwards, the governments of the member states need to submit their annual budget plans together with their structural reform plans for a joint European review during the first semester.

In the wake of the worldwide banking crisis, increased supervision and regulation of the financial sector was a priority.

Making the Union more resilient towards the future also means carrying out structural reforms in the long-term. The presidency gave priority attention to the implementation of the “Europe 2020” strategy for growth and jobs which was launched by the European Council of June 2010.

The Presidency also worked on a number of concrete issues on behalf of corporations, employment opportunities and consumers.

**Towards a more coherent European external policy - EU enlargement and common trade policy**

A second core task of the Belgian Presidency was to contribute to a more coherent external European policy by demonstrating the full application of the Treaty of Lisbon in the area of foreign policy as well.

In this regard, the transition towards the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was an absolute priority. Early on in the Belgian Presidency it was possible to win the approval for the basic decision on the establishment and functioning of this European diplomatic service. With regard to the remaining instruments (concerning personnel, budget and financial regulation) which were necessary for the functioning of the service, an agreement was reached with the European Parliament in October, so that the service could be formally launched on 1 December.

In December the Council also approved Council conclusions regarding a communication of the Commission aimed at a further improvement of European action in the area of ‘disaster response’ in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness as well as coherency and visibility. This communication will be further transposed into a number of legislative initiatives.

With regard to the enlargement dossiers the Belgian Presidency achieved a number of important results. On 27 July the accession negotiations were officially opened with Iceland. On 17 December the European Council decided to grant Montenegro the status of candidate country.

The Belgian Presidency was inventive in searching for ways to improve the ‘external representation of the Union’. In Cancún, but also within a number of multilateral organisations, we ensured that the various parties not only spoke with one single voice but also formed an integrated negotiation team whereby the European Commission and the Presidency jointly sat behind the EU-flag and consistently negotiated as a single team.

Under the Belgian Presidency, the Foreign Affairs Council (in the Trade formation) reached an agreement on the signature and provisional application of a free-trade agreement between the EU and South Korea. The signature took place during the summit meeting between the EU and South Korea on 6 October in Brussels, in the margin of the ASEM-Summit. This is the most ambitious trade agreement ever concluded by the Union.
An assessment of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2)

**Climate, environment and energy**

Under the impulse of the Presidency, the Union managed to establish a unanimous and coherent European position for the biodiversity conference in Nagoya and the climate conference in Cancún, two important occasions to take worldwide action to combat loss of biodiversity and climate change.

In addition, work was also carried out on the propagation of the climate theme in other sectors including greener transport and energy.

With regard to the environment, the Presidency reached agreement between the Council and the Parliament on the revision of the directive on the restriction of the use of hazardous substances in certain electrical and electronic devices. With regard to the regulation on the ban of the use of biocides, an initial agreement was reached within the Council.

**A more social Europe**

The European year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion was highlighted through numerous debates and conferences; ultimately, a declaration of the Council concerning combating poverty was also approved.

In the area of healthcare, the Belgian Presidency was able to reach an agreement between the Council and the Parliament on the directives on combating counterfeit medicines and regarding transborder health care.

**Justice, home affairs, asylum and migration**

The Presidency strove to achieve the greatest possible progress in a number of legislative proposals which form part of the asylum package, in accordance with the target of realising a Common European Asylum System by 2012. Progress was achieved with regard to the fight against human trafficking and with regard to the external dimension of the fight against terrorism.

In the area of justice, the Belgian Presidency reached an agreement within the Council on the proposed regulation to establish closer collaboration between member states that choose to do so regarding legislation on divorce (“Rome III”).

The Belgian Presidency was also able to achieve tangible progress in a number of other matters, equally groundbreaking in their own area. Thus, agreements were reached in matters such as bringing construction products onto the market, improving the rights of bus passengers and consumers, administrative collaboration between the member states in fiscal matters, transborder traffic safety, the allocation of unused funds for the recovery plan on energy, labelling of textile products, food information for consumers and the fishing quota 2011.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

*How would you go about organizing the presidency of the Council of the European Union? Which role would you want to play?*

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The European Council, where the heads of state and government of the Member states and the President of the European Commission meet, is no longer chaired by the rotating presidency, but by the Belgian Herman Van Rompuy, the first permanent President of the European Council.

With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Council became a fully fledged institution. The European Council provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its further development and defines the general orientation, political directions and priorities. It does not exercise legislative functions.
One of the first things which the European Union brings to mind is a group of states where people, goods and capital travel from one country to another without customs checks. This freedom of movement is a right for each of the EU’s inhabitants. Yet Europe is much more than this freedom of movement of persons and goods! The Union is not a bureaucratic machine which is exclusively concerned with economic matters. In reality, all the countries of the European Union share a number of values and basic principles. The word ‘value’ refers to the cultural traditions of the Member States. Each country has its own history which has formed its identity and its way of thinking.

The ‘fundamental’ values, on the other hand, are common to all Member States, since all EU countries are democracies led by governments which respect human rights, and where citizens are free and equal. In addition, tolerance and solidarity also belong to these shared values.

A genuine European citizenship!

The European Union wishes to base its existence on these values, not only implementing them in Europe, but also promoting them throughout the world.

All EU Member States have also signed the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This latter is deemed to be the most rigorous and most reliable human rights treaty in the world. Thus far, only the Member States are party to the Convention. However the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force on 1 December 2009, provides for the accession of the European Union itself to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Only states which respect the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law can be members of the Union. These conditions are taken very seriously and are constantly monitored. Member States which fail to respect these principles risk losing their membership in the EU.

Respect for these values is not merely an empty promise; it results in concrete action. European citizenship thus ensures that each citizen is protected in the same way by political rights which are equal throughout the EU.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

I am European…
Is a large Europe good for democracy?
The Charter of Fundamental Rights

The European Union misses no opportunity to stress the importance of these fundamental values. In 1999, it drafted a Charter of Fundamental Rights which states that democracy and the rule of law are the foundations of the EU and that all EU citizens are linked by shared values: freedom, tolerance, equality, solidarity and cultural diversity. The Charter of Fundamental Rights has not been included in the Treaty of Lisbon which entered into force on 1 December 2009, but a provision does specify that the Union respects the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter. That provision gives the Charter the same legal force as the treaties.

As you can see, a European Union based on these fundamental values has concrete added value for each European!

Did you know?

Since 1 January 2007, the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia has been replaced by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, which is also based in Vienna.

The European Union gave the go-ahead to the drafting of the Charter of Fundamental Rights on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998.
Belgium

Membership: 1957 (founding member)
Capital: Brussels
Population (in millions): 10
People: Belgians
Surface area: 30,500 km²
Official languages: French, Dutch and German
National holiday: 21 July
National dish: Chips with mayonnaise... in a cardboard cone!
Car country code: B
Telephone code: 32
Internet domain identifier: .be
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Euro

Austria

Membership: 1995
Capital: Vienna
Population (in millions): 8
People: Austrians
Surface area: 84,000 km²
Official language: German
National holiday: 26 October
National dish: Kaiserschmarren, a pancake with raisins, cut into small pieces
Car country code: A
Telephone code: 43
Internet domain identifier: .at
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Cyprus

Membership: 2004
Capital: Nicosia
Population (in millions): 0.8
People: Cypriots
Surface area: 9,000 km²
Official languages: Greek and Turkish
National holiday: 1 October
National dish: Koupepia, stuffed vine leaves
Car country code: CY
Telephone code: 357
Internet domain identifier: .cy
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Bulgaria

Membership: 2007
Capital: Sofia
Population (in millions): 7
People: Bulgarians
Surface area: 111,000 km²
Official language: Bulgarian
National holiday: 3 March
National dish: Banitsa, filo pastry with fresh cheese
Car country code: BG
Telephone code: 359
Internet domain identifier: .bg
Political system: Republic
Currency: Bulgarian lev

The European Union

Composition: 27 Member states and 5 candidate countries
Population (in millions): ± 500
Surface area: ± 4,400,000 km²
Official languages: 23
Europe Day: 9 May (the day of Robert Schuman’s declaration)
Headquarters of European institutions: Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg
Internet domain identifier: .eu
### The great European mosaic (2)

#### Estonia
- **Membership:** 2004
- **Capital:** Tallinn
- **Population (in millions):** 1
- **People:** Estonians
- **Surface area:** 45,000 km²
- **Official language:** Estonian
- **National holiday:** 24 February
- **National dish:** Tallinna Kili, little fish in a spicy sauce, black bread and boiled egg
- **Car country code:** EST
- **Telephone code:** 372
- **Internet domain identifier:** .ee
- **Political system:** Republic
- **Currency:** Estonian Krone

#### Czech Republic
- **Membership:** 2004
- **Capital:** Prague
- **Population (in millions):** 10
- **People:** Czechs
- **Surface area:** 79,000 km²
- **Official language:** Czech
- **National holiday:** 28 October
- **National dish:** Bramborak, a potato pancake with pieces of dry sausage, garlic and herbs
- **Car country code:** CZ
- **Telephone code:** 420
- **Internet domain identifier:** .cz
- **Political system:** Republic
- **Currency:** Czech Koruna

#### Denmark
- **Membership:** 1973
- **Capital:** Copenhagen
- **Population (in millions):** 5
- **People:** Danes
- **Surface area:** 43,000 km²
- **Official language:** Danish
- **National holiday:** no official date but generally 5 June
- **National dish:** Smørrebrød, special bread garnished with dry sausage, cheese or fish
- **Car country code:** DK
- **Telephone code:** 45
- **Internet domain identifier:** .dk
- **Political system:** Constitutional Monarchy
- **Currency:** Danish Krone

#### Finland
- **Membership:** 1995
- **Capital:** Helsinki
- **Population (in millions):** 5
- **People:** Finns
- **Surface area:** 338,000 km²
- **Official languages:** Finnish and Swedish
- **National holiday:** 6 December
- **National dish:** Karjalanpiirakka, small pasty filled with rice or potatoes
- **Car country code:** SF
- **Telephone code:** 358
- **Internet domain identifier:** .fi
- **Political system:** Republic
- **Currency:** Euro

#### France
- **Membership:** 1957 (founding member)
- **Capital:** Paris
- **Population (in millions):** 63
- **People:** French
- **Surface area:** 632,000 km²
- **Official language:** French
- **National holiday:** 14 July
- **National dish:** Quiche lorraine, tasty savoury tart
- **Car country code:** F
- **Telephone code:** 33
- **Internet domain identifier:** .fr
- **Political system:** Republic
- **Currency:** Euro

#### Germany
- **Membership:** 1957 (founding member)
- **Capital:** Berlin
- **Population (in millions):** 82
- **People:** Germans
- **Surface area:** 357,000 km²
- **Official language:** German
- **National holiday:** 3 October
- **National dish:** All kinds of sausages!
- **Car country code:** D
- **Telephone code:** 49
- **Internet domain identifier:** .de
- **Political system:** Republic
- **Currency:** Euro
Hungary

- Membership: 2004
- Capital: Budapest
- Population (in millions): 10
- People: Hungarians
- Surface area: 93,000 km²
- Official language: Hungarian
- National holiday: 20 August
- National dish: Gulyas, a meat and pepper stew with paprika
- Car country code: H
- Telephone code: 36
- Internet domain identifier: .hu
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Forint

Ireland

- Membership: 1973
- Capital: Dublin
- Population (in millions): 4
- People: Irish
- Surface area: 70,000 km²
- Official languages: Gaelic and English
- National holiday: 17 March
- National dish: Irish stew, a hotpot of lamb, cabbage and celery
- Car country code: IRL
- Telephone code: 353
- Internet domain identifier: .ie
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Euro

Greece

- Membership: 1981
- Capital: Athens
- Population (in millions): 11
- People: Greeks
- Surface area: 132,000 km²
- Official language: Greek
- National holiday: 25 August
- National dish: Moussaka, a dish made with aubergines, minced meat, potatoes and tomatoes and baked in the oven
- Car country code: GR
- Telephone code: 30
- Internet domain identifier: .gr
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Euro

Ireland

- Membership: 1973
- Capital: Dublin
- Population (in millions): 4
- People: Irish
- Surface area: 70,000 km²
- Official languages: Gaelic and English
- National holiday: 17 March
- National dish: Irish stew, a hotpot of lamb, cabbage and celery
- Car country code: IRL
- Telephone code: 353
- Internet domain identifier: .ie
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Euro

Italy

- Membership: 1957
- Capital: Rome
- Population (in millions): 60
- People: Italians
- Surface area: 300,000 km²
- Official language: Italian
- National holiday: 2 June
- National dish: The one and only pizza!
- Car country code: I
- Telephone code: 39
- Internet domain identifier: .it
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Euro

Latvia

- Membership: 2004
- Capital: Riga
- Population (in millions): 2
- People: Latvians
- Surface area: 64,000 km²
- Official language: Latvian
- National holiday: 18 November
- National dish: Piragi, tasty bread rolls with bacon
- Car country code: LV
- Telephone code: 371
- Internet domain identifier: .lv
- Political system: Republic
- Currency: Latvian Lats
Luxembourg

Membership: 1957 (founding member)
Capital: Luxembourg
Population (in millions): 0.4
People: Luxembourgers
Surface area: 2,500 km²
Official languages: Luxembourgish, French and German
National holiday: 23 June
National dish: Judd mit Gaardenboonen, pork with green beans, diced bacon and potatoes
Car country code: L
Telephone code: 352
Internet domain identifier: .lu
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Euro

Malta

Membership: 2004
Capital: La Valette
Population (in millions): 0.4
People: Maltese
Surface area: 316 km²
Official languages: Maltese and English
National holiday: 21 September
National dish: Bigilla, spicy beans for the brave!
Car country code: M
Telephone code: 356
Internet domain identifier: .mt
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Poland

Membership: 2004
Capital: Warsaw
Population (in millions): 38
People: Poles
Surface area: 312,000 km²
Official language: Polish
National holidays: 11 November and 3 May
National dish: Bigos, sauerkraut with red wine... preferably doused with icy vodka!
Car country code: PL
Telephone code: 48
Internet domain identifier: .pl
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Euro

Netherlands

Membership: 1957 (founding member)
Capital: Amsterdam
Population (in millions): 16
People: Dutch
Surface area: 41,000 km²
Official language: Dutch
National holiday: 30 April
National dish: Maatjes, young salt herrings
Car country code: NL
Telephone code: 31
Internet domain identifier: .nl
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Euro

Portugal

Membership: 1986
Capital: Lisbon
Population (in millions): 10
People: Portuguese
Surface area: 92,000 km²
Official language: Portuguese
National holiday: 10 June
National dish: Bacalhau, famous dried salted cod
Car country code: P
Telephone code: 351
Internet domain identifier: .pt
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Romania

Membership: 2007
Capital: Bucharest
Population (in millions): 22
People: Romanians
Surface area: 238,000 km²
Official language: Romanian
National holiday: 1 December
National dish: Sarmale, pickled cabbage parcels stuffed with pork
Car country code: RO
Telephone code: 40
Internet domain identifier: .ro
Political system: Republic
Currency: Romanian Leu
Spain

Membership: 1986
Capital: Madrid
Population (in millions): 45
People: Spanish
Surface area: 505,000 km²
Official language: Spanish
National holiday: 12 October
National dish: Paella, famous rice dish
Car country code: E
Telephone code: 34
Internet domain identifier: .es
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Euro

Slovakia

Membership: 2004
Capital: Bratislava
Population (in millions): 5
People: Slovaks
Surface area: 49,000 km²
Official language: Slovak
National holiday: 1 September
National dish: Bryndzove Halusky, gnocchi with melted cheese
Car country code: SK
Telephone code: 421
Internet domain identifier: .sk
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Slovenia

Membership: 2004
Capital: Ljubljana
Population (in millions): 2
People: Slovenians
Surface area: 20,000 km²
Official language: Slovene
National holiday: 25 June
National dish: Potica, walnut and honey cake
Car country code: SLO
Telephone code: 368
Internet domain identifier: .si
Political system: Republic
Currency: Euro

Sweden

Membership: 1995
Capital: Stockholm
Population (in millions): 9
People: Swedes
Surface area: 450,000 km²
Official language: Swedish
National holiday: 6 June
National dish: Gravad lax, raw salmon marinated with dill
Car country code: S
Telephone code: 46
Internet domain identifier: .se
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Swedish Krona

United Kingdom

Membership: 1973
Capital: London
Population (in millions): 60
People: British
Surface area: 244,000 km²
Official language: English
National holiday: no official. Queen's Birthday on a Sunday in June
National dish: Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, Sunday lunch
Car country code: GB
Telephone code: 44
Internet domain identifier: .uk
Political system: Constitutional Monarchy
Currency: Pound sterling
The great European mosaic (6)

5 candidate countries

Montenegro
Capital: Podgorica
Population (in millions): 0.7
People: Montenegrins
Surface area: 13,812 km²
Official language: Montenegrin
National holiday: July 13
National dish: Tullumba (cylindrical fried pastry in Syrup)
Car country code: MNE
Telephone code: 382
Internet domain identifier: .me
Political system: Republic
Currency: Icelandic Krona

Turkey
Capital: Ankara
Population (in millions): 71
People: Turks
Surface area: 780,000 km²
Official language: Turkish
National holiday: 29 October
National dish: Döner Kebab, slices of grilled meat
Car country code: TR
Telephone code: 90
Internet domain identifier: .tr
Political system: Republic
Currency: Turkish lira

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Capital: Skopje
Population (in millions): 2
People: Macedonians
Surface area: 26,000 km²
Official language: Macedonian
National holiday: 2 August
National dish: Tabre, white beans, baked in the oven
Car country code: MK
Telephone code: 389
Internet domain identifier: .mk
Political system: Republic
Currency: Macedonian Denar

Croatia
Capital: Zagreb
Population (in millions): 4
People: Croats
Surface area: 56,000 km²
Official language: Croatian
National holiday: 25 June
National dish: Kulen, salami with a lot of paprika, garlic and salt
Car country code: HR
Telephone code: 385
Internet domain identifier: .hr
Political system: Republic
Currency: Kuna

Iceland
Capital: Reykjavik
Population (in millions): 0.3
People: Icelanders
Surface area: 103,000 km²
Official language: Icelandic
National holiday: 17 June
National dish: Porramatur, very old assortment of traditional Icelandic dishes made up of salted beef, sheep's head, dried fish, rye bread, shark and boiled meats.
Car country code: IS
Telephone code: 354
Internet domain identifier: .is
Political system: Republic
Currency: Icelandic Krona
Established in 1957 by the six founder members, the European Union has expanded to include 27 Member States, and is set to enlarge further. Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro and Turkey are candidate countries. Albania and Serbia have applied to join, and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo also aspire to do so.

How can a country become a member of the European Union?

The Treaty on European Union specifies that: ‘Any European State which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles that are common to the Member States, may apply to become a member of the Union’. The clauses in the Treaty have been supplemented by more specific criteria called the Copenhagen criteria. These criteria, adopted at the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1993, are as follows:

- the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities;
- the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to political, economic and monetary aims.

Furthermore, since the European Council of Madrid in 1995, candidate countries must adjust their administrative structures in order to create the conditions for their gradual and harmonious integration. The European Union, for its part, must be capable of integrating new members.

Before the European Council decides to open negotiations, the political criteria (respect for human rights and democracy) must be met.

Candidate countries must prove that they will be capable of playing a full role as a Member State. In order to do so, they must ensure that they have extensive public support and comply with the European Union’s strict political, legal and technical standards. In practice, negotiations involve adoption of the acquis communautaire by the candidate country. Acquis communautaire means the common body of EU legislation, or in other words the basic treaties and the detailed laws and rules in force in Europe. As a result, a country which wishes to become a member of the European Union must adapt its former laws and rules to comply with European legislation, which stretches to several tens of thousands of pages. This process involves profound changes, which is why accession negotiations last several years.

It should be noted that the Treaty on European Union does not specify the borders of Europe, and that religion is not a criteria for accession.

Why enlarge?

The last wave of EU enlargement helped to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It also gave the EU more influence when rising to global challenges such as climate change or competitiveness. The countries cooperate to resolve common problems and to defend their common interests. Thanks to this cooperation, a repeat of the conflicts which devastated Europe in the first half of the last century has become almost impossible. The 2004-2007 enlargement, in particular that involving the 12 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is also of major symbolic importance: it has given concrete expression to the end of the division of the European continent after the Cold War. The enlarged Union has a greater influence at a global level if it can speak with one voice, all the more so since it is involved in the majority of major international issues, from the Middle East conflict to the fight against avian influenza and environmental protection.

An additional consequence of enlargement is that it promotes economic growth and increases prosperity. An enlarged Union extends the economic zone in which the same rules are applied in terms of competition, product quality and worker protection.

Yet ‘enlargement’ must go hand in hand with ‘deepening’, or in other words an ever closer union between the Member States. A European Union with six members cannot operate in the same way as a Union of 27 countries. The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009 makes a major contribution to this deepening by adapting the EU’s decision-making process to take account of these facts, so that it can continue to operate in an organised and efficient fashion.
Did you know?

Ever since the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) joined on 1 May 2004, the European Union has included a Russian enclave: Kaliningrad.

Norway completed all the stages but decided not to join the European Union following a referendum.

Discuss in class

What do you think of the accession criteria? Where are the limits of Europe’s enlargement?
Europe opts for sustainable development

A polluted river does not stop at a country’s borders and pollution from one country’s factory can cause acid rain and therefore pollute the soil in other countries. Protecting the environment is also a challenge that can only be taken up if all of us work together on a European and global scale. We must therefore seek solutions together!

**Fresh air for Europe!**

In terms of the environment, the European Union’s policy is aimed at the preservation, protection and improvement of the environment, as well as the protection of the health of individuals. It is also committed to the rational use of natural resources by encouraging citizens to save and not waste water, energy, paper etc. Scientific research is encouraged to find alternative, more environmentally-friendly alternatives, in particular with regards to energy. Finally it helps to promote international measures aimed at dealing with regional or planetary environmental problems, such as climate change.

The European Union has two tools for protecting the environment more effectively:

- **European environmental legislation**

Environmental laws are aimed at citizens and companies. They cover the urban environment, forests, air and water. Some examples include:

- The Union encourages the selective collection and recycling of all sorts of waste and supports land development projects with much attention paid to the green areas.
- The Union is actively involved in projects to improve public transport and recommends its use.
- The Union has a strict system for monitoring gas emissions and waste water from factories.
- The Union also oversees forest management and lays down directives for farmers regarding the use of insecticides and pesticides.
- In addition to this, fishermen and oil tankers must comply with EU regulations to prevent overfishing and polluting the seas.

- **The European Environment Agency**

Based in Copenhagen, the European Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring environmental conditions and launching early warnings if there is a threat. It regularly drafts reports and forecasts based on these warnings. The Union has the information they need at all times.

**A greener planet**

The major environmental problems of our times, such as climate change, can only be solved through global agreements. The news shows us more and more terrible images of devastating hurricanes, floods or catastrophic droughts. Moreover, sea levels are rising and glaciers are melting.

For more than 10 years, the European Union has been developing a policy to fight against climate change and it has played an important role in this area on the global stage.

The **Kyoto protocol** (which came into force in 2005) is probably the most well-known agreement. This international protocol has drawn up a schedule for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are responsible for global warming. The Union has played a major role in this agreement being concluded, by undertaking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 8% compared to 1990 levels and to do so between 2008 and 2012. The transport, energy, industry and farming sectors must comply with these new environmental standards. Belgium has committed to its European partners in the fight against climate change by taking several important measures within the framework of the Kyoto protocol. A cooperation agreement was therefore concluded in 2002 between the Federal state and three regions based on a national objective for reducing greenhouse gases by 7.5% compared to 1990 levels.
International negotiations are currently being held in order to reach an agreement on the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which will end in 2012. These negotiations should be completed by the end of 2011.

Fauna and flora are under threat around the world. Europe decided to react by setting a target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. This target has not yet been achieved. Europe has also launched the Natura 2000 programme, which aims to protect wild species, animals and plants, as well as their habitats. Natura 2000 merges zones within Europe according to specific criteria and recognition of the rarity or fragility of their species. On a practical level, the Union pays out funds to protect these sites.

**Did you know?**

The greenhouse effect owes its name to the similarities between the earth’s atmosphere and a greenhouse used for plants. The sun sends us energy, which passes through the atmosphere and warms the surface of the earth. The earth in turn returns part of this energy in the form of infrared radiation. The water vapour, the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, naturally present in the atmosphere, partially absorb this radiation. This is very fortunate, since without this natural cover, the temperature of the earth’s surface would be below the 30° C we currently enjoy.

**European labels to protect our environment**

**The eco-label or European environmental label**

The granting of the eco-label takes into account damage that a product can cause to the environment over its lifetime. All aspects relating to raw materials, production, water and energy consumption, emissions and waste are checked.

**CE Label**

The CE label is found on several different products, such as toys, electrical equipment and clothes. The label is based on two rights that the EU attaches a lot of importance to: the right to information and the right to safety. The label can only be used if the products comply fully with strict European rules.

**The energy label**

The Union believes it is important to save energy because most of the energy used in Europe comes from non-renewable sources. For this reason, there is a special label that shows the energy consumption of domestic equipment, such as washing-machines and refrigerators. This label takes into account the energy required to manufacture the equipment and its use by the consumer.
Citizens expect that the food on their table every day is healthy and of a high quality. For this reason, the European Union (EU) has put in place animal and plant health rules, a traceability system and food hygiene rules. Since quality is subjective, it is also important that everyone is in possession of the facts when choosing their food. To this end, European legislation on organic farming and rules on quality marks, such as the protected designation of origin for example, have been put in place. Furthermore, in order to promote a healthy diet, the EU supports specific measures in schools.

From farm to fork

By way of example, we can examine the various stages passed through by a steak which ends up on our plate. Throughout its production (the feed fed to cattle, rearing, vaccination, transport, slaughter etc.), it must be possible to identify and locate the various participants. Such a system is absolutely necessary, since in the event that a defect of some kind is discovered in the meat, it must be possible to identify the defect and ascertain its origin. This is made more complicated by the fact that a problem can occur at different stages of the food chain. If the problem is confined to a single ill cow, the risk is fortunately limited. Yet what is to be done if problems arise with feed given to cattle? It is then necessary to find out which manufacturer the feed came from, which batches of feed are affected, to which farms the affected feed has been sent and in which shops the meat has been put on sale.

Consequently, it is important to be able to ensure the traceability of a product or an ingredient at all times. To this end, an accurate labelling system for foodstuffs has been put in place, which allows food hygiene services to ascertain the origin of a product easily.

A healthy diet

Hygiene is a critical link in the food chain. Rigorous hygiene standards are applied to food manufacturers, including kitchens where food is prepared, since poor hygiene can spread pathogenic germs which may infect humans coming into contact with contaminated food. Food products imported into the EU must also meet European rules, and so such products are checked at external borders.

The EU body responsible for risk assessment in the food sector is the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). EFSA provides scientific opinions with a view to helping EU authorities and the Member States to take effective and timely decisions in the field of risk management. There are also national food agencies in the Member States. In Belgium, this is the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (AFSCA). AFSCA monitors the food chain by means of a programme of checks based on risk assessment.

Labels that allow quality to be identified

Organic farming label
Organic farming is a mode of production which respects the environment. The EU ‘organic farming’ label can be used by manufacturers to show that their production systems meet the detailed criteria set out in EU regulations.

Here is the new logo which will apply to all EU organic products from July 2010:

Characteristic and specialised products
These are products which have one of the following marks: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) or Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG). Belgian PDO/PGI marks include ‘Fromage de Herve’ [Herve cheese], ‘Pâté gaumais’ [Gaume pâté], ‘Beurre d’Ardenne’ [Ardenne butter], ‘Jambon d’Ardenne’ [Ardenne ham] and ‘Geraardsbergse mattentaart’. In addition, several Belgian beers have been awarded the STG mark; these mainly include Kriek, Lambic and Gueuze.
The **food guide pyramid** is a model which specifies what you should eat every day in order to absorb enough and the right proportions of nutrients. In descending order it includes: 1. water and drinks (1.5 litres per day); 2. cereals and starchy foods; 3. fruit and vegetables; 4. dairy products, meat and fish; 5. fats (in moderation).

The European Union ‘**School milk**’ programme provides funding assistance for preschool establishments and primary and secondary schools to distribute **milk and dairy products** to their pupils. Any dairy products may be distributed: milk, yoghurts, cheese, buttermilk etc.

A European Union programme encouraging the **distribution of fruit and vegetables in schools**, aimed at primary pupils (6-12 years), has also been set up.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

- The same rigorous food standards applied everywhere constitute a guarantee that citizens will remain healthy.

- What can you find out if you enter ‘Europe PDO PGI TSG’ into an Internet search engine?

- Learn to recognise certain labels. A stamp on eggs indicates the way in which the laying hens have been kept, followed by the manufacturer’s code (0=organic, 1=free range, 2= barn, 3=caged). The packaging of the eggs indicates the date of minimum durability, which is the 28th day following that on which the eggs were laid.
One of the European Union’s priorities is to guarantee the existence of a unique area of freedom, security and justice. The powers granted to police services and courts are often limited to national territories, whereas crime and terrorism do not stop at borders. The European Union has therefore taken measure to fight effectively against these evils on its territory. The measures include protection for the fundamental rights of individuals, the promotion of European citizenship initiatives, the development of a common European policy on asylum and judicial cooperation in civil matters, a policy on the management of migratory flows, the strengthening of the fight against terrorism and the promotion of a consistent penal policy.

Citizen of one’s own country and of the European Union

Every person holding the nationality of a Member State is automatically a citizen of the European Union. National citizenship is therefore complemented rather than replaced. European citizens enjoy the rights and freedoms set out in the European Declaration of Human Rights (1950) and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000). In particular, these two conventions guard against any discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, religion, handicap or age. European citizenship also confers the right to stand for election to the European Parliament and to stand in local elections in each Member State.

Borders, what borders?

In practical terms, the free movement of persons means that European citizens can travel throughout the EU without encountering any obstacles. The actual abolition of borders, symbolised by the abolition of passport checks, was made a reality by the Schengen Agreement and the famous ‘Schengen area’.

Which countries belong to the Schengen area?

22 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The United Kingdom and Ireland do not belong to the group of countries that are parties to the Schengen Agreement. Bulgaria and Romania have committed to preparing themselves for membership in 2011.

3 countries which are not members of the EU: Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.

Fortress Europe?

Without checks on internal borders, citizens can move about freely in Europe, but so can criminals and terrorists. Yet freedom of movement must not be gained to the detriment of the safety of European citizens. The EU decided to react to this threat by strengthening cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organised crime in Europe. The attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, followed by those in Madrid and London, prompted the EU to harmonise legislation regarding the definition of terrorist acts and applicable sentences.

The EU wants to protect its citizens by carrying out effective checks along its external borders. This involves not only the border posts between Member States and third countries, but also international airports, sea ports and certain railway stations. These checks make it possible to curb crime and to fight illegal immigration.

The aim is not to turn Europe into a fortress, however, which would make cross-border trade and cooperation very difficult. All Member States are working together to relax relations with countries outside the EU as regards migration by creating joint regulations on visas, asylum and migration.
whereby they apply uniform criteria as far as access to their territory is concerned. European embassies apply the same procedures whenever foreign citizens request a visa for travel in the Schengen area.

**Increased cooperation ...**

Strengthened cooperation between the different national police services and judicial authorities has been put in place in order to guarantee the safety of citizens. A European arrest warrant has thus been created: for example, the Belgian police can issue an arrest warrant to be used in any country of the EU. Persons accused of a serious offence or who have already been sentenced and have escaped abroad can no longer hide behind long-winded extradition procedures; instead, they can be repatriated without delay to the country in which they are wanted.

In addition to the European arrest warrant, two services are fighting crime across national borders: Europol and Eurojust. Europol is a police coordination centre which gathers, analyses and shares information at a European level. Eurojust is made up of a public prosecutor, a magistrate and a police officer from each Member State, who work together in the fight against serious cross-border crime.

Cooperation has also been strengthened in the civil sector in order better to harmonise the different judicial systems in the Member States. European citizens must be able to have recourse to courts and authorities in all Member States as easily as they would in their own country. Sentences and decisions must be respected and enforced throughout the EU. Moreover, agreements exist which provide for sentences handed down by national courts to be recognised and enforced in other Member States, in particular in the case of divorce and child custody.

By using a variety of means, the European Union is thus trying to ensure that all of its citizens are able to travel, live and work in a large area of freedom, security and justice.

**Did you know?**

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is a special EU agency put in place to deal with the many problems relating to drugs. Its main remit is to collect and format data gathered in all the Member States in order to assess the scale of drug use in Europe.

The European Union is developing a number of legislative measures to take action in the fight against cybercrime: IT piracy, the spread of harmful viruses, child pornography, violations of intellectual property rights etc.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

Are there only advantages to be gained from a safe Europe?
Fifty years after the signature of the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community in 1957, the different national economies of the time together form the second largest economy in the world. The European economy has been gradually unified in three stages: the customs union, the single market and the Economic and Monetary Union.

Increased trade

The customs union was established in 1968. In concrete terms:

- Companies no longer had to pay customs duties.
- All Member States applied the same conditions to imports from the rest of the world.
- Since the borders had been abolished, there were no longer any import or export quotas between Member States.

The impact was immediate: in 1970, trade increased sixfold in comparison to 1958. However, the situation still falls short of ideal: customs posts continue to exist and to check shipments of goods at borders, which means that time and money is wasted. Different laws remain in force in each Member State, which complicates trade.

More choice for consumers, travellers and workers

The Single European Act, which was passed in 1986 and which provides for the creation of a large single internal market – the elimination of borders and the introduction of the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons – represented a breakthrough for the Member States.

The single market allows companies to operate throughout the EU. Obstacles to the movement of capital are gradually removed. Financial institutions can set up more easily elsewhere, in order to sell insurance, savings and banking services. The single market is also based on competition rules in order to avoid monopolies, cartels or abuse of dominant positions. Citizens thus have at their disposal a wider range of consumer choices. When a company holds a monopoly, this advantage is not guaranteed.

A first in the monetary history of the world

The Treaty on European Union (or the Treaty of Maastricht), which was concluded in 1992, prepared for a future Economic and Monetary Union based on a single currency. In order to be able to join the Economic and Monetary Union, countries had to meet five criteria relating to inflation, long-term interest rates, exchange rates, budgetary deficit and public debt.

Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, which met the Maastricht criteria in 1999, launched a common monetary policy with the introduction of the euro as a single currency. The 11 countries of the euro area were then joined by Greece in 2001, Slovenia in 2007, Cyprus and Malta in 2008, Slovakia in 2009 and Estonia in 2011. Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom have decided not to join the euro area at present.

In 1999, the single currency existed virtually in the world of business. The man on the street still paid with Belgian francs, lira or florins. On 1 January 2002, eight coins and seven notes appeared in purses and wallets. One side of the coins depicted a symbol of the country where they had been minted; in Belgium this is King Albert II or a commemorative design found only on the two euro coin. The design on the other side – which is common to all countries – was created by the Belgian Luc Luycx and symbolises the cohesion of the European Union.

Citizens can now travel in 17 European countries without changing currency. This is a first in the monetary history of the world!

European banks

In order to introduce and manage the new single currency, a Central European Bank was created in 1998. It is responsible for the monetary policy of the euro area. It monitors
price stability, in line with the principle of an open market economy. It thus has the duty of ensuring the proper operation of payment systems.

Set up in 1958 by the Treaty of Rome, the European Investment Bank funds investments at European level, in particular in the fields of transport and telecommunications. It also invests in environmental protection and in strengthening the international competitiveness of industry and of small and medium-sized enterprises. Outside the EU, the Bank contributes to the implementation of European cooperation policy vis-à-vis third countries.

**Uniting to assert oneself in the face of globalisation**

The European Union accounts for less than one tenth of the world’s population. Its economy must therefore remain strong and dynamic if it wishes to continue playing a significant role in relation to new global economic powers such as China and India. Member States which act individually, even the most powerful, have little influence in the international arena. By uniting, however, they can play a front-line role. The Member States are thus represented by the European Commission within the WTO (World Trade Organization).

**Did you know?**

There are no national symbols on the euro notes, unlike the coins.

**Fair Trade** is another way of doing business which aims to reduce inequalities and ensure that everyone involved in international trade receives their due. Prices charged should enable everyone to attain an acceptable standard of living.

**DISCUSS IN CLASS**

What are the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation?
Each Member State has its own traditions, its own heritage and its own language or languages, or in short its own culture. In spite of their differences, the countries share a common cultural heritage. This has not escaped the notice of devotees of the European integration project. The Treaty of Maastricht, which was signed in 1992, officially recognises a ‘European culture’, while respecting national or regional cultural diversity. ‘An ever closer Union between the peoples of Europe’, as laid down in the Treaty, comes in addition to the EU’s economic, political and trade unification projects which have been underway since the establishment of the European Communities in the 1950s.

Culture with a big C

Why this sudden attention to culture? The reason is that the European cultural sector accounts for an industry in its own right, which includes cinema, radio, television, literature, music, the fine arts etc., and which represents an important source of revenue and jobs. In the field of education, Europe promotes the cross-border mobility of students in order to increase their awareness of other languages and cultures.

Cities and capitals come alive

One of the most widely-known cultural programmes is the ‘European Capital of Culture’. This initiative was launched by Mélina Mercouri, the then Greek Minister of Culture. The aim of the initiative is to highlight shared trends in European cultures and to promote better mutual acquaintance of the citizens of the EU. Each of the chosen cities organises various events of European dimensions, such as exhibitions, concerts and theatre performances, while showcasing its historic and modern monuments.

In 1985, Athens was chosen to be the first European Capital of Culture. Ever since, one or several city(ies) or capital(s) have been chosen each year. The programme has been a notable success and has had long-term effects on culture and tourism in the cities chosen.

A successful tower of Babel

Europe has not chosen a single working language. Linguistic diversity is one of the foundations of the European Union, which currently has 23 different official languages. Regional and minority languages, such as Catalan and Breton, are also protected. The EU also wants to encourage its citizens to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. Moreover, the promotion of multilingualism has been added to the remit of a European Commissioner.

A great many initiatives exist for promoting linguistic diversity. During the European Year of Languages in 2001, cities were declared ‘towers of Babel’. The idea was to open up homes, cafés and schools to multilingual conversations. In Belgium, the town of Mons organised a languages festival which was open to everybody.

Studying elsewhere

Student exchanges between the various Member States are another important factor in European diversity. Such exchanges not only allow students to come into contact with another culture, but also to improve their knowledge of another language. Thousands of young people, students, teachers and trainers have enjoyed unforgettable experiences in other countries thanks to the many education and training programmes on offer. Erasmus is the oldest and undoubtedly the best known of the cross-border education programmes funded by the EU. Every year it awards grants to students and teachers, thus giving them the opportunity to travel to universities in other Member States in order to learn or teach.
These exchange programmes contribute to the objective set by the EU in 2000: building the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. In order to achieve this objective, Europe offers the means of gaining specialist knowledge more easily in another country. Several programmes thus aim to simplify cooperation between colleges and universities in different Member States by means of recognition and equivalence of qualifications.

**The Odyssey of space**

In addition to teaching, Europe also promotes scientific research, since new inventions contribute to the objective of a knowledge-based economy. One of the scientific and technological projects in which the EU is participating is the European Space Agency (ESA). The Ariane rocket launches about half of all the world’s satellites. Another example is the Galileo programme, a future independent satellite radio navigation system. Within a few years, 30 satellites will provide data which will have a direct bearing on everyday life: GPS, air navigation management, road, rail and maritime transport, humanitarian aid etc. In the field of European air navigation, Airbus has become the world’s leading manufacturer of civil aircraft over the past 30 years.

European scientific research also plays a growing role in the fields of mobile telephony and the digital revolution. Such technological progress directly improves living conditions in the field of teleworking, e-commerce and electronic administration, distance teaching and training etc.

The development of nanotechnologies (manipulation of the infinitely small) is already resulting in specific applications: new computer screens, skin creams, artificial heart valves etc. These nanotechnologies will also make it possible to treat certain diseases better, to manufacture clothes that get less dirty and are of higher quality, to improve aeroplane and space vehicle surfaces etc.

Such research and discoveries, which have been promoted by the European Union, thus all contribute to improving everyday life not only in Europe, but also throughout the world!

**Find out more**

- **European culture programmes:** [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm)
- **European research programmes:** [http://ec.europa.eu/research](http://ec.europa.eu/research)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Since 7 April 2006, Europe has also made its mark on the Internet, thanks to the new domain name ‘.eu’, which comes in addition to the ‘.com’ and ‘.be’ with which we have long been familiar. Over one million Internet sites have already chosen the domain name ‘.eu’, and their number can only grow!

**Antwerp** was European Capital of Culture in 1993, **Brussels** in 2000 and **Bruges** in 2002. **Mons** will be European Capital of Culture in 2015.

Due to its enormous success, the **European Capital of Culture** programme has been extended by 15 years.

The **Bologna Accord**, which harmonises studies in the European Union and has led to much reorganisation and standardisation within national colleges and universities, has been put in place to promote the mobility of students within Europe.
Europe has established itself as a major economic power on the international stage. It has forged a broad network of relations with countries around the world. It has found that it is often not heard in terms of international policy. The coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 with the nominations of a stable President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should strengthen the European Union’s position on the international stage. Never before has Europe been as prosperous, confident and free as it is today. After the violence of the two world wars, we are witnessing the longest period of peace and stability in European history. The Union has shown that the democratic countries have been able to join their financial and political resources successfully. This European vision is an important point of departure to develop an international policy.

Better consultation on external questions

The origins of the foreign European policy go back to the ‘External Policy Cooperation’. In the 1970s, the Belgian diplomat, Étienne Davignon, launched the idea of an informal meeting between ministers and diplomats on the subject of foreign policy. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) resulted in the creation of a true Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This allowed the Member States to draw up points of view together, to approve the actions and to express themselves with a single voice, particularly through the High Representative for the CFSP, a position occupied by the Spaniard Javier Solana from 1999 to 2009. His nomination was an important decision in terms of the increased effectiveness and visibility of the Union’s foreign policy. The Lisbon Treaty has allowed for a new qualitative leap in terms of coherence and unity of the foreign policy and external action of the EU as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy henceforth combines both the functions of the Vice-Presidency of the Commission in charge of the responsibilities that fall to the latter in the area of external relations and the coordination of other aspects of the EU’s external action (former portfolio of the Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner). This new function is carried out by British Catherine Ashton, who has a 5 year mandate. The permanent President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, is himself in charge of the CFSP at his level (in particular the summit meetings with the Heads of State or the Government). Apart from CFSP, it is the Commission that represents the EU externally.

A tool to prevent or resolve international conflicts

In 1999, a common CFSP crisis management tool was created: the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), granting the CFSP an operational element capable of conducting a common defence policy. The Treaty of Nice (2000) officially gives the Union the capacity to undertake actions to maintain or impose peace outside its territory. Today, after 10 years of the ESDP (which after Lisbon became the Common Security
Europe makes its voice heard on the international stage (2)

and Defence Policy (CSDP)), the positive assessment that we can make is based on the increasing number of operations carried out by the EU, the diversification of the missions and skills, the increase in the strength of its operations and their geographical range. After the launch of the first ESDP mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003, 19 civil, police or military operations were launched, covering four regions around the world: the west Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo), the Middle East (Palestinian Territories, Iraq), Asia (Afghanistan, Indonesia) and Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Atalante, Somalia).

Furthermore, in the age of globalisation, distant threats are just as worrying. Nuclear activities in North Korea and in Iran, as well as the proliferation of weapons in Asia and in the Middle-East are equally worrying for Europe. The terrorists and the criminals are now capable of operating anywhere in the world.

This European Security and Defence Policy must lead to the adoption of real European defence, involving the creation of an operational army – made up of various national powers, the establishment of joint police forces, as well as the conclusion of agreements for equipment used in the various armies of the Member States. In fact, if the French military radio equipment had not been compatible with that of the Germans, cooperation between the Union’s military forces would have been difficult.

There have been significant advances in the area of military cooperation. European Combat Groups and the European Defence Agency have been created. Belgium has also played a pioneering role in this area. Our Belgian sailors have been operating for several years on Dutch submarines...even before the creation of a European defence force.

Widen the field of humanitarian action

Faced with the increase in crisis areas related to conflicts or natural disasters around the world, the European Union aims to help those in distress as quickly as possible. It is present in all conflict regions such as Iraq, Afghanistan, several parts of Africa etc. and in regions where conflicts have led to instability. ECHO, the European Union’s humanitarian aid service, provides first aid equipment and specific help for the victims. ECHO’s primary aim is to save and preserve human lives by supplying tents, blankets, provisions, medication, medical equipment, water purification systems and financing for medical teams, mine-clearing experts, etc. ECHO cooperates with the non-government organisations (NGO), specialist United Nations and International Red Cross agencies.

Cooperate on the development of the poorest countries

The European Union and its Member States supply more than half of the international development aid. The main principal of the European development policy is the eradication of poverty through the implementation of bilateral and regional agreements and through specific programmes. The eight Millenium Development Goals (MDG) are essential for the European development policy. Adopted in 2000, they aim to reduce extreme poverty, combat HIV/AIDS and guarantee primary education for all by 2015.

The start of the European policy on development dates back to the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. It was primarily applied to overseas countries and territories of the Member States at the time. With the successive expansion of the Union, the cooperation progressively extended to the ACP countries, mainly poor countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific that became a model so that the rich countries could open themselves up to the poor countries through special business relations. The aim: to offer these countries all the opportunities to increase their exports. In order to involve them more in the world economy, Europe sought to conclude commercial agreements with them and to promote such agreements between them. Along with the economic and social objectives of this cooperation there is also a political objective: to contribute to strengthening democracy and the rule of law as well as the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This type of economic partnership has also been extended to the countries of Latin America and Asia.

Even if spectacular advances have been made in terms of the European Union’s foreign policy, the road is still long. However, any long journey begins with the first step... and the Union has already taken several steps.