



# Europe at a Glance

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## What is the Purpose of this Brochure?

Europeans can be hard on Europe. They find it “complicated” and “incomprehensible”; they deem its texts “unreadable” and the way it functions “opaque.”

However, Europe is not complicated: it is simply under construction. Europeans are well aware of this, since they place ever-greater demands on Europe in terms of the environment, climate, security and defence. Nevertheless, the house of Europe is clearly unfinished. Even if Europeans agree on Europe’s main priorities, they still sometimes hesitate over its future, and sometimes simply change their minds or have to adapt to new circumstances; hence, they may decide to change the purpose of a room or move around the furniture. Obviously, if we try to recount every detail and every episode in a project that after 50 years is still evolving, both the difficulty in understanding and explaining Europe will remain a tall order.

However, if we agree to limit ourselves to a few key questions—those asked by persons with good common sense and a smattering of curiosity—the task is far from daunting.

This is indeed the essence of this brochure, which is intended for non-Europeans. Its purpose is to provide answers to two key questions: how does the European Union, which is currently a model for political and

## PART 3: EUROPE IN 12

### FIGURES

## A Brief Introduction to Europe

In Greek mythology, Zeus, father of all the gods, seduced the princess named Europe. Transforming himself into a bull, Zeus abducted Europe and after a wild chase, whisked her off to Crete, or as some historians contend, to the other side of the Bosphorus. Around 500 B.C., the word Europe came into use to refer to the north of Greece then, gradually, the region located to the north of the Mediterranean Sea. It was only after the 16<sup>th</sup> century that Europeans started using the term Europe to refer to their common territory.

### European Symbols

- ✓ **A flag:** 12 stars on a blue background forming a circle as a sign of union
- ✓ **An anthem:** "The Ode to Joy" by Ludwig van Beethoven
- ✓ **A holiday:** "Europe Day" on 9 May, in memory of the 1950 Schuman Declaration
- ✓ **A motto,** adopted by the European Parliament in 2000: "United in diversity"

## What is the Difference between Europe and the European Union?

Europe is a geographical and cultural notion.

The European Union is a political and economic union among 27 States on the European continent: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Romania, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

Three more States have applied for accession into the European Union: Croatia and Turkey, for which negotiations have begun, as well as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), which has been granted the official status of an applicant country.

Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are not part of the European Union.

## When did the European Union Start?

After the two world wars, the European Union started in 1951, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris by six European countries (Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), which decided to pool their strategic resources— .e. coal and steel— o form the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

Six years later in Rome, the same countries signed two treaties, one on the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), and the other establishing the European Economic Community, which was the first forerunner of the European Union and marked the beginning of the European venture.

The five enlargements of the European Community, thereafter called the European Union, expanded it from six founding members (France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy) to nine (in 1973 with the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark), ten (Greece in 1981), 12 (Spain and Portugal in 1986), 15 (Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995) and most recently to 27 Member States (in two stages with the accession of ten new States. On 1 May 2004, ten new members joined the EU i.e. Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia, and on 1 January 2007, Romania and Bulgaria filled out the roster of nations).

*And from the union of liberties in fraternity of the peoples will arise the sympathy of souls, the seed of this immense future wherein the universal life will begin for mankind that we shall call the peace of Europe."*

Victor Hugo

Excerpt from "Choses vues"

## Who had the Idea of a Unified Europe?

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some French writers began to dream of a "United States of Europe" as a means to put an end to the wars between European nations. Just after WWI, an Austrian suggested the creation of a pan-European union intended to seal Franco-German reconciliation. A Frenchman, Aristide Briand, and a German, Gustav Stresemann presented the first official project of the European Union in September 1929 to the League of Nations. Ten years later, during WWII, Winston Churchill wrote a memo on the United States of Europe as a means of safeguarding peace.

After the war, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, demonstrated the need for a union for prosperity, peace and democracy.

For his part, Jean Monnet, in charge of reviving the French economy, presented a plan to pool coal and steel. With the agreement of the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman made a declaration inviting all interested countries to take "the first concrete step towards a European federation," on 9 May 1950.

## What are the Goals of the European Union?

The European Union encompasses 27 European democracies and has set a goal for itself to ensure peace, prosperity and freedom for its 495 million citizens in a fairer, safer world.

### **Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union**

Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union states that the objectives of the European Union are: "peace, the well-being of its people, an area of freedom, security, justice, full employment, social progress, economic, social and territorial cohesion, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, an economic and monetary union, a highly competitive social economy market and the fight against social exclusion."

## Useful Websites

<http://www.touteleurope.fr/>

<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>

[http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

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

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/default_en.htm)

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.ASP?lang=en>

**The official site of the French Presidency of the EU Council:**

[www.ue2008.fr](http://www.ue2008.fr)

## 1.1 Europe Today

The European Union is an international organization unlike any other. It is built upon three major institutions that enter into dialogue and always makes decisions based on procedures explicitly defined by European treaties.

### **The European Parliament**

Headquartered in Strasbourg, the European Parliament has 785 deputies elected by universal suffrage who represent the 500 million inhabitants of the 27 Member States of the European Union. Each Member State has a number of seats proportional to its population (from 5 for Malta to 99 for Germany). The duration of the mandate of European deputies is 5 years. European deputies are grouped within the Parliament not on a national basis, but rather by their political affinity depending upon the orientations of the parties to which they belong.

The Parliament contributes to the drafting of European legislation: it can give an advisory opinion or its assent (i.e. legally binding) on texts that are submitted to it by other European institutions; it can decide to amend these texts or reject them based on specific procedures (called codecision or cooperation).

The Parliament exercises control over the other institutions: it approves appointments, raises questions, organizes debates, creates inquiry commissions and in some cases can even compel the European Commission to resign. Lastly, the European Parliament votes on the EU budget and, if necessary, amends it.

The European Parliament can receive a petition from a European citizen and is assisted by a Mediator responsible for examining citizens' grievances or criticism of the European Union.

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

The European Council meets in Brussels at least twice per year (in actuality, four times per year). This is a summit for heads of State and Governments of Member States of the European Union in which the President of the Commission participates. Each country gets a turn at the Presidency of the European

Council on a six-month, rotating basis. The European Council takes major political decisions and decides strategic policy but never votes— all decisions are taken by consensus.

The Council of the European Union (commonly called the Council of Ministers) has nine specialized groups, which meet on a thematic basis (General Affairs and External Relations, which convenes Foreign Affairs Ministers, Economic and Financial Affairs with Finance Ministers, among other groups) with a varying degree of regularity, from once per month to twice per half-year. The Council shares legislative and budgetary power with the European Parliament and sets foreign policy for the Union in accordance with the strategic policies laid down by the European Council.

#### **The Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER)**

According to Art. 207 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, “a committee consisting of the Permanent Representatives of the Member States shall be responsible for preparing the work of the Council and for carrying out the tasks assigned to it by the Council.”

The COREPER meets either at the ambassadorial level, who hold the title of Permanent Representatives (COREPER II, which deals with political, trade, economic or institutional matters), or at the deputy permanent representative level (COREPER I, which deals with internal policies of the Union).

The responsibilities of the COREPER are applicable to all sectors of activity of the Council save agricultural issues, for which a Special Committee prepares the reports for the Agriculture Council and the Economic and Financial Council.

### **The European Commission:**

The Commission promotes European public interest. It is the guardian of treaties and has a monopoly on legislative initiative.

The Commission is headed by a President and has 27 members, or commissioners, appointed for a five-year term. Each commissioner is in charge of a matter corresponding to the political principles of the Union: competitiveness, transport, justice, external relations, the environment, taxation, and trade, among others. Nevertheless, the Commission functions according to the principle of collegiality: the 27 commissioners take all decisions collectively.

The European Commission prepares legislative texts either on its own or jointly with Member States. In the domains referred to as “community-based,” i.e. the States that transferred some or all of their powers to the Community, the Commission has the exclusive initiative to submit proposals to the European Parliament and the European Council, which convenes the ministers from Member States for the sectors concerned.

The Commission is also responsible for the implementation of a certain number of European programmes and ensures the enforcement of Community law, including imposing sanctions on countries or any other economic operators who do not abide by Community laws in matters such as competition.

Lastly, the Commission negotiates international agreements in the areas of its exclusive competence— e.g. international trade agreements.

### **Other European Institutions**

There are other institutions (Court of Justice, Court of Auditors) and Community institutions (European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions) that are assigned specific missions.

#### **Voting by qualified majority**

When the States vote on decisions taken in the European Union, they must take into account contradictory concerns:

- The principle of one State, one vote, which is generally customary in international organizations, cannot be applied. The decisions taken directly affect European citizens and it is, hence, natural that the votes of a country with a larger population have greater influence than those of a country with a smaller one.

- At the same time, a system in which countries would have the proportional vote would not be acceptable either, since, after they agree on something, the most populated States could end up taking every decision.

Therefore, it was necessary to come to an intermediary means of calculation. In the current system, decisions are taken in the Council of Ministers by “qualified majority”; in other words, each Member State has a certain number of votes, from three for Malta to 29 for the four most populated countries (Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom). There are 345 in total and a qualified majority can be reached with 255 votes.

### **The world's most expensive fine**

In 2004, the European Commission imposed a 497-million euro fine on Microsoft for abuse of dominant position, and two years later, another fine for an additional 280 million euros. Bill Gates' firm contested the decision before the European courts, which after an in-depth examination of the case, finally upheld the record 777-million euro fine in September 2007.

*“Today there is a European nationality, like there was a Greek nationality in the time of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.”*

*Victor Hugo*

*Les Burgraves*

## **1.2. Europe in Action**

### **The Competences of the European Union**

In a certain number of domains, European States decided to transfer their powers to the Union. This is the case for trade and agricultural issues. However, examples of States only transferring part of their power to the Union (or none at all) remain common.

Since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, Europeans classify EU-related topics in three categories or “pillars:”

- The first pillar, called the “community” one encompasses the domains in which countries transferred their powers to the Community. The initiative for proposals reverts to the Commission, and the EU Council and European Parliament take decisions. Presently, this pillar includes 17 domains: foreign trade, competition, the internal European market (i.e. the “single market”), fishing, free movement of persons, the visa regime (Schengen Area), etc.
- The second pillar concerns European cooperation as regards the Common Foreign and Security Policy (or CFSP).
- The third pillar pertains to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters between European States.

The second and third pillars are based on the idea of cooperation among Member States. Initiatives come from both the Commission and the governments of European countries. The distinction among

these three pillars tends to fade and the community method is becoming widely applicable.

## **Regulatory Legislation**

A major portion of the activity of the European Union concerns developing European legal rules, the body of which forms Community law.

These rules, called regulations or directives and which stem from European treaties, are applicable to European institutions, States or citizens.

## **One Europe, Many Europes**

### **What is the Schengen Area?**

The Schengen Area encompasses 24 European countries that have agreed to abolish their border controls and have instituted a regime allowing the free flow of all citizens from signatory States, other States in the Community or third-party countries. A foreign national who receives a visa from one of the countries within the Schengen Area may circulate throughout all countries in this area without border checks. However, this foreign national must enter and exit the territory via the country that issued their visa to them.

Since 1999, the 'Schengen Acquis' has been integrated into the EU's institutional and legal framework under a protocol annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The Schengen Agreements are today applied:

- In full by Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Malta and Slovakia.
- In part by the United Kingdom and Ireland
- In full by two non-EU countries: Iceland and Norway. Switzerland and Liechtenstein plan to join them at the end of 2008.

### **Do all European Countries Use the single European currency?**

Fifteen European countries decided to replace their national currencies with a single European currency - the euro - and are therefore required to meet a number of economic conditions - the 'convergence criteria' - which were set by the Maastricht Treaty, and include keeping inflation in check, balancing the budget and limiting the public deficit.

### **Are There any Non-EU Organizations in Europe?**

Yes, most notably:

The Council of Europe, which was founded in 1949 with the aim of defending democracy and human rights as they are set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. The Council's Member States and activities do not correspond exactly with the EU's, but there is coordination between the two.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA), whose members are Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, encourages economic exchange between countries. The role of the European Economic Area (EEA) is to develop economic exchange between the EU and members of the EFTA excluding Switzerland.

These organizations work in close collaboration with the EU.

## Who can Join?

Any European state that complies with the European Union's fundamental democratic principles can apply for membership. Since 1993, three criteria must be met to do this: stability of institutions (political criterion), an open and competitive market economy (economic criterion), and adoption of all legislation in EU treaties (or the 'Acquis Communautaire') and their objectives (institutional criterion). In December 2006, the 'absorption capacity' criterion was added, i.e. the ability to take on new members while at the same time maintaining the momentum of European integration.

Once a country has been recognized as a candidate, it can begin to take part in community programmes which help it to familiarize itself with the European Union. This is the pre-accession phase.

After a certain amount of time, the candidate country opens talks with the European Union. Discussions are initiated upon adoption of the Acquis Communautaire. They are divided into chapters (varying in number according to the country) and are aimed at verifying that the system of rights and obligations specific to the European Union has been correctly incorporated into the national legislation of the candidate country.

The talks can lead to accession, but this does not happen automatically. A draft accession treaty must first be drawn up, submitted for endorsement to the Council and to the European Parliament for agreement, before being ratified by all Member States.

*The foremost European revolution of our time, the revolution aiming to replace national rivalries with a union of peoples in freedom and diversity, the revolution which strives to foster the development of our civilization, and offer it a new lease of life - this revolution began with the European Coal and Steel Community."*

*Jean Monnet*

## 1.3. The Europe of Tomorrow? The Content of the Treaty of Lisbon

The European Union can only act within and under the terms set out in the Treaties that bind the countries of Europe. Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, new treaties have periodically been adopted to update European law: the Single European Act in 1986, the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (which created the European Union), the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and the Treaty of Nice in 2000.

The most recent treaty was signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 by the 27 EU Heads of State and Government, but has not yet entered into force.

All 27 countries of the European Union must ratify the Treaty of Lisbon before it can enter into force.

Nineteen of the 27 member states have already ratified it in parliamentary processes. However, on 12 June last, the Treaty was rejected in a referendum in Ireland where the 'no' vote won 53.4% of the ballot, amid a turnout of 53%.

European institutions must, however, continue to evolve in order to meet the demands of an enlarged Europe.

The European Council of 20 June 2008 decided to take some time to assess the situation and accepted Ireland's proposal to hold further talks on the issue in October 2008.

## **Why Draft a New Treaty?**

The EU adventure started out in the 1950s with six member countries. Today, the European Union has twenty-seven members.

This growth meant that European institutions needed new legislation, as they clearly could not function with twenty-seven members in the same way as they did with six. In addition, a number of simplifications were necessary to ease decision-making and efficiency, as well as to strengthen Europe's democratic character.

## **Clarifying Competences**

The Treaty of Lisbon distinguishes between three general categories of competence:

Exclusive competence in areas where the EU alone is able to legislate (common trade policy, common monetary policy for countries using the euro, etc.)

Shared competence between the EU and member states (agriculture, energy, transport, environment, etc.)

Supporting, coordinating or complementary competences in areas in which the Member States are entirely competent (e.g. industry, culture, tourism, education, etc.) but in which the EU can lend a helping hand.

## **Institutional Reform**

- The Treaty of Lisbon makes provision for a President of the European Council, elected by the 27 EU Heads of State and Government, for a once-renewable 2½-year term.

- An EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will be appointed. This position will merge the current roles of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Mr. Javier Solana) and the European Commissioner for External Relations (currently Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner).

- The number of European Commissioners will be reduced as of 2014. There will no longer be one commissioner per Member State as is currently the case. This cutback will facilitate the work of the EU and consolidate the principle of European unity, with commissioners working in the interests of Europe as a whole, without focusing on individual nationalities.

- The number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will not exceed 750, based on the principle of 'degressive proportionality' (i.e. the larger the population of a Member State, the more citizens that are represented per MEP). The lower threshold is set at 6 seats and the upper at 96.

The Council of Ministers' decision-making process will be facilitated by the implementation of a new voting rule as of 2014 known as 'double majority'. In practice, the Council will be able to make decisions in a variety of areas if it receives the assent of 55% of member states which must account for 65% of the population of Europe. In certain cases, relating to foreign policy, for example, the necessary majority will be set at 72% of Member States, representing 65% of the EU population.

### **Strengthening Democratic Control**

The Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the European Parliament's powers:

In a legislative context: in over 50 new areas, the European Parliament will have the same legislative powers as the Council of Ministers

In a budgetary context: the European Parliament will be conferred with a right to decide equal to that of the Council of Ministers.

In the context of political control: the Parliament elects the President of the European Commission upon the nomination of the European Council.

The powers of the national parliaments in European countries have also been strengthened. They would, for example, be able to refer cases before the Court of Justice in certain circumstances.

Democracy is also strengthened by the establishment of a citizen's right of initiative. The Treaty of Lisbon provides that if European citizens from different countries gather 1 million signatures, they can request that the Commission propose a draft law on the issue.

### **Greater Coherence, Unity and International Profile for the European Union**

A President of the European Council elected for a 2½-year term and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will boost the EU's international profile and lend more coherence and unity to its foreign policy. A European diplomatic service is scheduled to be in place by 2009.

The Treaty of Lisbon also gives Europe a legal personality. It could thus participate in international conventions and gain membership of international organizations.

*"Europe is a State made up of several provinces."  
Montesquieu*

## **2.1. Advances in European Foreign Policy**

For nearly 50 years, the European Union only partly considered itself a world power. Its overriding aim was to unite the countries of Europe rather than to form a group capable of influencing the rest of the world. Foreign policy in particular was therefore very much up to each individual Member State, while military matters remained strictly domestic issues. The EU had been formed to avert war, and the failure of a new common defence project in 1954 left a lasting impression on people's minds.

Today, the European Union is the world's foremost trading block, possesses the world's second most powerful currency and is far and away the world's largest contributor of international aid, donating over 3 billion euros each month to aid projects around the world. The highlights of its foreign activities, which are also the areas in which it traditionally intervenes, are trade policy, development assistance, humanitarian activities and the promotion of human rights and democracy. It has, in particular, made considerable progress in terms of helping the poorest countries through international agreements linking trade and development, such as the Lomé Agreements (which subsequently became the Cotonou Agreements) or initiatives such as "Everything But Arms", which was launched in 2001 and gave the 49 LDCs free access to the EU marketplace for all products except arms.

But given the instability in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the war in Kosovo, the EU began to reflect on how it could play a diplomatic and military role. It thus created a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and then in the same vein, a Common Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

As set out in the Maastricht Treaty, the CFSP's goals are:

- Development and strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, as well as respecting human rights and basic freedoms
- Protecting common values, fundamental interests and the independence of the European Union
- Strengthening all forms of security within the EU and all its member states
- Peacekeeping and the strengthening of international security, in compliance with the principles set out in the UN Charter, as well as those in the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Charter of Paris
- The promotion of international cooperation

The European policy does not replace national diplomacy but supplements it and helps make it more coherent. European countries do not, however, just hold discussions – they make decisions and can even vote using simplified procedures in order to reach consensus more quickly. All decisions must be made unanimously, especially when they have military consequences, such as establishing a European army.

## 2.2. Why Create a European Neighbourhood Policy?

The European Union created a European Neighbourhood Policy in order to prevent divisions forming between the enlarged EU and its neighbours, as well as to improve prosperity, stability and security for all. Through its Neighbourhood Policy, the European Union intends to strengthen links with all neighbouring countries that share the same objectives of peace, stability and prosperity. This policy is simply the implementation of the European Union's main objectives in neighbouring countries with which it wishes to have a special relationship.

The approach, however, aims to be progressive and differentiated as it is important to respect each country's national identity and sovereignty:

Firstly, association agreements were concluded with neighbouring countries, with each agreement followed by an Association Council, which meets at a ministerial level.

Then, the Commission and the Member States went further, with an action plan suited to the needs and desires of each of its neighbours. This action plan describes the planned cooperative measures, prepares, if necessary, a programme of political or economic reforms with short- and medium-term priorities, and finally, sets the financial resources allocated to each project. It is jointly managed by the country in question and the European Union through an association committee made up of various sub-committees.

The Neighbourhood Policy aims to be a forum for close and constructive dialogue as well as a means of encouraging economic integration between partners.

### **We're neighbours!**

The European Union has two categories of countries in its immediate environment:

- EU **candidate countries**: these countries follow a specific procedure with a view to possible full membership at a future date.
- EU **neighbouring countries**: The European Neighbourhood policy, created in 2004, deals with the EU's direct neighbours who are not involved in the accession process (Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian territories, Syria, Turkey and the Ukraine).

## **2.3. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument**

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument is a European financial resource set up to fund Neighbourhood Policy initiatives. It replaced the MEDA programmes. Its main objectives are:

- Political reform: good governance, rule of law, respect for human rights, participation in civil society, dialogue with different cultures, and fighting fraud, corruption, organized crime and terrorism
- Economic reform: economic development, market economy, increased trade and contact with the EU in areas of common interest with a view to establishing a free trade area
- Social reform: the fight against unemployment, poverty and discrimination
- Cooperation in areas such as the environment, energy, transport, telecommunications, health, education and training

*“Europe’s detractors caricature it as an abstract and geometric outline drawn on a blank piece of paper. A true Europe needs its nations like a body needs flesh and blood.”*  
*François Mitterrand*

## EUROPE IN FIGURES

Distribution of GDP (2006)	
agriculture	2.2%
industry	27.3%
services	70.5%

World's number one exporter, with exports totalling 1,072 billion euros in 2005.

World's number two importer, with imports totalling 1,184 billion euros in 2005.

Main clients		Main suppliers	
United States	23.3%	United States	13.8%
Switzerland	7.6%	China	13.4%
Russia	5.2%	Russia	8.2%
China	4.8%	Japan	6.2%

A budget forecast of **866.4 billion euros** for the period 2007-2013, financed by 1.24% of member states' gross national income, corresponding to their contribution to the budget of European institutions.

Four largest contributors to the EU budget in 2006	
Germany	20.56%
France	16.43%
Italy	13.70%
United Kingdom	12.36%

Population distribution by age	
0-14	16 %
15-64	67 %
65 and over	17 %

4 most populated urban areas	
Paris (France)	10.136 million

London (United Kingdom)	8.5 million
Ruhr-Essen-Dortmund-Duisburg (Germany)	5.2 million
Milan (Italy)	5 million

Life expectancy of **78.3** years – **17%** of the population living below the poverty threshold – **7.9%** of the working population is unemployed – **5.1%** population growth, of which **80%** is due to immigration – birth rate of **1.47** children per woman – a Human Development Index (HDI) score between **0.900 and 0.950** – an area of **4.215** million km<sup>2</sup> - **785** Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) – **23** official languages – World's **number one** tourist destination in 2006, with 54% of international tourists.