



The Abduction of Europa
(on a wall fresco in Pompeii)

Technical Note:

Who and what is *Europa*?

authored by:
Peer Ederer

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Europa – either derived from Semitic 'ereb' = evening and Phoenician 'erob' = dark, i.e. the lands where from the view of the early Fertile Crescent civilizations the sun was setting, or derived from the Greek 'eurys' = broad and 'op' = face, i.e. the broad open lands available for settling

Europa – the official name of Europe as decided by the European institutions, following the Latin and old Greek spelling

The European Union

The European Union and its citizens

Legally, the European Union is the result of a treaty signed in the Dutch city of Maastricht in 1992 between the governments of the then Member States of the European Communities (for definitions see below).

Technically, the European Union possesses almost all factual and symbolic trappings of an independent country: it has an anthem (of Beethoven's Symphony No 9 the final movement incorporating the text known as Ode to Joy and written by Friedrich Schiller to express his idealistic vision of the human race becoming brothers), a national day (May 9th commemorating Robert Schuman's proposal in 1950 to create an organised Europe), a flag and emblem (dark blue with 12 golden stars, the number 12 standing for perfection, unity and completeness – designed by the Council of Europe in 1955 and adopted by the EC in 1985), a common currency (the Euro, formerly the ECU, in use since 1999 and in circulation since 2002), a common passport, a common driver's licence system, a common road numbering system and a number of other symbolic and substantive common features.

The European Union also has a de facto capital (Brussels), a long-term secured budget for use at its own discretion, quasi-embassies and representations around the world, its own military command structure (60,000 troops deployable within 60 days), its own police force (Europol), its own democratically elected Parliament with a well practiced legislative process, its own High Court system with the power to overrule national courts of justice (the European Court of Justice), a ministerial bureaucracy with a staff of 25,000 (the DGs and agencies) and an executive government (Council and Commission). Finally, as agreed by ratified law, every citizen of the Member States is also a citizen of the European Union.

If nonetheless, the European Union does not feel like an independent country in its own right, it is probably because there is not a clear majority of the citizenry who identify themselves as European first, and then with nationality in the homeland Member State second. One indication of this is the fact that there are essentially no Europe-based (vs national-based) media, neither in television broadcasting nor the printed press. Whether this missing, yet important qualifying feature for countryhood will come to exist in future is one of the most interesting political questions of the 21st century. Will the Europeans eventually develop a sense of European citizenry by spending the same money, travelling and working without borders, electing a common parliament, graduating from universities with European degrees (in effect from 2010), and having their speeding tickets enforced across Europe from 2006 (only to name a few of the commonalities)? Or will the undeniable and deep diversity

of cultural, historical and linguistic features among the European nations prevent them from growing together for generations to come? The official guiding principle of Europe is: "United in Diversity". How the European citizens are putting this principle into practice carries significance far beyond the borders of Europe.

The European Union and its Member States

The pre-2004 members of the EU are often referred to as the EU 15. That group comprises six west-central countries: France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and Austria; four southern countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece; two Atlantic coastal countries: Ireland and The United Kingdom, and three Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Sweden and Finland. In 2004, ten new members joined the European Union. These are five east-central countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia; three Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and two southern islands: Malta and Cyprus. The total is often referred to as the EU 25.

Two further east-central countries, Romania and Bulgaria, are expected to join in 2007, since the entry negotiations have already been formally concluded; and they are therefore called 'accession' countries. Croatia is expected to join in 2009, but entry negotiations were delayed until the end of 2005 due to Croatia's initial non-compliance in war criminal extradition. Entry negotiations with Turkey have started in October 2005, but are widely expected not to lead to membership within the next ten years.

In Western Europe there are eight countries that are not members of the European Union, and which are not likely to become so in the foreseeable future. These are Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, and the five tiny countries which are the Vatican City, Monaco, San Marino, Liechtenstein and Andorra. The political leadership of Switzerland and Norway have repeatedly attempted to join the EC/EU, but the citizens of these two countries have repeatedly voted against it.

Four additional Balkan countries are generally expected to join at some future date, and these are Serbia/Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania – both politically and economically, however, all four countries are still far from being able to start negotiations. Of the Eastern European countries, the Ukrainian and Georgian governments have openly stated that eventual membership in the EU is a target, while Byelorussia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Armenia are not expressing interest. Russia and Israel, for different reasons, are virtually never spoken of as membership candidates. Occasionally, the King of Morocco claims a long-term interest in membership.

The European Communities

Over the course of its history since 1949, the European Project (see below) created numerous treaties. Three of these treaties constitute the so-called 'European Communities', which are the European Economic Community (EEC of 1957), the European Steel and Coal Community (ECSC of 1951) and Euratom (also 1957). The two most noticeable additional treaties to these (but by far not the only ones) are the Economic Monetary Union (EMU of 1992, which emerged from the EMS of 1979) and the Schengen Acquis (in force since 1995). However, participation in the latter two treaties for instance has not needed to be identical with participation in the three Communities.

When the Maastricht Treaty established the European Union in 1992, the European Three Pillars were introduced, which together make up the European Union. The First Pillar consists of the previously established three Communities enlarged by additional responsibilities (noticeably health and food safety, for instance). The Second Pillar is a 'Common Foreign and Security Policy' (which subsumes the treaties of the European Political Cooperation EPC of 1970, the Single European Act SEA of 1986 and the Western European Union WEU of 1948). The Third Pillar is 'Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs'.

In legal and administrative practice the European Union mostly uses the established institutions and legal frameworks of the European Economic Community (EEC), which is why most of these were renamed in 1993 to their current names (see below for instance the triangle institutions). Thus, the EEC was changed into 'The European Community' or EC (dropping the reference to 'economic').

However, the legal situation of the European Union remains highly complex. For instance, even though EMU (European Monetary Union) continues to function *de facto* outside of the Three Pillars, the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) is installed in Article 8 as part of the EC (First Pillar). So today, there exists the 'European Community' as one of the three 'European Communities' which in turn is only one of 'Three Pillars' of the 'European Union', of whom most Member States use the common currency EURO in the EMU framework supervised by the wholly independent European Central Bank ECB, but where yet a different member group are signatories to the Schengen Acquis abolishing internal border controls (which has been incorporated into the EC nonetheless), and where yet another group of members are part of the defense-oriented WEU, while through the EEA/EFTA even another group of non-members participates in the economic Single Market, and so on and so forth. This institutional melange has led to the term 'Europa à la carte', whereby Member and even Non-Member States *de facto* choose from a menu of European offerings that suit their needs best.

Furthermore, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 which established the EU, has been re-negotiated, superseded or partially replaced by the Amsterdam Treaty in force since 1999, and the Nice Treaty in force since 2003. Together with the 1986 SEA, these four treaties are called IGTs, the four major Inter-Governmental Treaties.

As this legal state of affairs surrounding the multiple overlaying treaties is both cumbersome to operate and almost impossible to communicate to any stakeholder, it was decided in 2001 in the Belgian town of Laeken that a single encompassing treaty would be developed which would subsume all previous ones within a single framework. This single treaty was to become the European Constitution and the fifth IGT.

European Constitution

The European Constitution was developed in a process called the European Convention between 2002 and 2004. The outcome of the Convention was a "Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe". This treaty, as all treaties before, would have needed to be signed by the governments of each Member State of the EU to come into force. However, in contrast to previous practices, most European governments decided to hold a national referendum in order to achieve a popular mandate for ratification. When the French and Dutch

referendums failed at the end of May 2005, it became clear that the Constitution would not be ratified. Nearing the end of 2005, there are no efforts under way to resurrect the drafting or implementation of either this or another European Constitution.

The European constitutional effort attempted to achieve many highly ambitious targets at once. For one, it tried to accomplish its original legal task, which was to streamline the legal framework of the European Union, which was thought to be essential for when the membership expanded to 25 and more members. That is the principle reason why the Constitution developed into a 500+ page document and offered so many inherent contradictions that it became a feast for a critical press. The contradictions, however, were not so much the result of the Constitution draft in itself, but were those already present in the current set of treaties which could not be resolved during the course of the Convention.

The need to achieve this streamlining becomes apparent when considering that by now the legislative powers of the European Union are already more encompassing than those of the Federal Government of the United States, both in quantity and in the areas of responsibility – more than 70% of all legislation in the Member States is caused or triggered by initiatives of the European Union, and essentially all national legislation must be harmonised with EU law in one way or the other.

Second, the Constitution was intended to adjust the balance of power between the Member States, which is widely acknowledged to be unduly out of balance in the currently valid Treaty of Nice. Third, the drafters of the Constitution tried to further enlarge the powers of the European institutions at the expense of the national governments. Fourth, the Constitution was the attempt to create a fundamental political framework for the sovereign basis of a European Union – i.e. to achieve the function that a constitution normally has in any legal context of an independent country. Fifth – a fact that in the general debate has been widely overlooked – the Constitution was to be for Europe and not for the European Union, thus implying a far reaching validity for everybody and every country that considers itself European, something that a 500 page document cannot possibly achieve on that level of detail even under the best of circumstances.

In retrospect it is all too easy to claim that the failure of the European Constitution was due to an attempt to achieve too much in one step with too few resources and too little support, or even that it was a doomed and wrongful project from the beginning. On the other hand, never before in the European history, or anywhere else for that matter, has a common political effort been undertaken with such broad and intensive stakeholder involvement. If it had succeeded, it would have been a stunning advance for defining the future of Europe. It should also be kept in mind that the political momentum in the Member States for starting the constitutional effort began before September 11, 2001. Therefore the drafting and ratification of the constitutional effort coincided with the years 2002–2005, in a period of economic stagnation and geopolitical insecurity, both of which are not conducive to the success of such a far reaching project.

Insiders to the political processes in Europe believe that the next step in the European Project will probably not be to launch the second draft of a constitution, but instead to tackle the last remaining important political power that the European Union does not possess, which is direct taxation power under the control of the European Parliament.

EU Institutions

The institutions of the EU are, in a narrow definition, the three triangle institutions plus seven other institutions such as the European Central Bank (ECB) and a few other executive agencies such as the new European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In a broader definition, EU Institutions sometimes refers to the countless official and semi-official governance systems of the EU. However, the more frequently used term for this broader definition is the 'European Architecture'.

The three triangle institutions are the Council of the European Union, European Parliament, and the European Commission. They are called the triangle institutions, because in a mixture of formal and informal procedures, these three institutions working together manage the entirety of decision making processes and power flow inside the European Union.

The power balance between these three triangle institutions is in constant flux, and heavily influenced by personal leadership constellations. It is said that when the Commission was headed by Jacques Delors in the 1990s, power shifted to a large degree from the Council towards the Commission and the Parliament. During the Prodi Commission, some of that power supposedly swung back to the Council. The Barroso Commission got off to a rocky start, but it is too early to tell how it will fare.

Technically, since the Council has the purse strings in its hand and since the Member State governments it is composed of generally enjoy a higher degree of legitimacy with the citizens than the Eurocrats in Brussels, the Council could be the strongest of the three institutions. However, the Council is severely handicapped by the fact that its governance structure rotates every six months to a new Member State government, with often widely diverging views on how to advance the European agenda.

The Council is addressing this weakness by strengthening the system of Permanent Representations and Corepers of the Member States in Brussels, the latter a position that is rising in status towards one of the most important posts that a national government has to staff. There have also been so far unsuccessful attempts to establish a 5-year term for the Council presidency to match the Commission president's term. For the Council this presents an irresolvable dilemma: providing itself with more permanent Brussels-based structures will automatically weaken the direct national influence on the European agenda which is now exerted through the rotation principle. If the council does not go ahead with that, however, the established Brussels-based institutions are likely to maintain their momentum and keep the initiative in their hands.

It seems therefore that, institutionally speaking, one way or the other, the long-term trend of Europeanization of the political governance mechanisms away from national governments and towards the center, is likely to continue.

European Commission

The European Commission consists of 25 Commissioners, one of whom is the President. A candidate is proposed by the EU Council to fill the office of Commission President (now and until the year 2009 José Manuel Durão Barroso), and this candidate selects the other 24 Commissioners. The Commission as a whole group must be approved by the

Parliament and the Commission must regularly report to Parliament. Commissioners are supposed to represent and guide a functional portfolio, and their role is not to represent the respective Member States of which they are citizens, one each. The European Commission's unique power position is that this body is solely empowered to initiate legislative processes.

European Parliament

The European Parliament has 732 members, who were directly elected in 2004 by citizens in all 25 Member States. The European Parliament functions similarly to any other national parliament, with two exceptions. First, it cannot enact legislation alone – most EU legislation has to be agreed upon in a complicated co-decision process with the EU Council. Second, the EU Parliament does not have sovereign budget control – that is still vested in the Council.

Council of the European Union

'Council' (in short) is the institution through which the Member State governments are represented in the legislative process of the EU. By participation in the co-decision process with the EU Parliament, the European Union achieves its ultimate legitimacy, as each member government is granted these executive powers by their national political systems.

European Council

The European Council is the quarterly meeting of all the heads of governments of the Member States of the European Union. The Council meetings used to take place in the country of the current Council Presidency which changes every 6 months, but since 2004 all Councils are held in Brussels.

Agriculture (Farm) Council

All the agricultural ministers of the Member States hold official meetings on a regular schedule (as do nine other subject-oriented minister level Councils with other names).

DGs

DGs are the 'Directorates General' of the European institutions. The nearest description would be to equate the DGs with the functional ministries of a European government. However, even though the DGs typically work very closely with the Commission, they are de jure not under its direct or sole control. Likewise, the EU Commissioner in charge of the same functional portfolio as a corresponding DG, is not exactly only a minister, but also has some chancellery powers invested in this post. Also, with 25 Commissioners there are more of them than there are DGs. The head of a DG is not the Commissioner but a Director General. DGs used to be designated with Roman numerals, but have since acquired informal short names. The DG in charge of agriculture and rural development is called 'DG Ag', or the DG in charge of food safety is called 'DG Sanco' (Health and Consumer Protection).

European Court of Justice

The Court of Justice of the European Communities (often referred to simply as 'the Court') was set up under the ECSC Treaty in 1952. Based in Luxembourg, its role is to make sure that EU legislation is interpreted and applied in the same way in all EU countries, so that the law is equal for everyone. It ensures, for example, that national courts do not give different rulings on the same issue. The Court also makes sure that EU member states and

institutions do as the law requires, and it has the power to settle legal disputes between EU member states, EU institutions, businesses and individuals.

The Court is composed of one judge per member state, so that all 25 of the EU's national legal systems are represented. For the sake of efficiency, however, the Court rarely sits as the full court. It usually sits as a 'Grand Chamber' of just 13 judges or in chambers of five or three judges.

Some other European definitions in common use

Euro-zone or Euro countries or Euroland

The above terms cover those countries that have adopted the Euro as their currency. These are the EU 15 countries excluding the UK, Denmark and Sweden, but including Monaco, Andorra, San Marino and the Vatican City. Contractually speaking, all EU countries have the obligation to adopt the Euro as soon as their macroeconomic condition allows them to do so. That applies to the 10 new Member States as well as any further new members. The UK and Denmark enjoy contractual opt-outs, while Sweden remains more or less in technical violation of the Treaties.

European Economic Area (EEA)

EEA refers to an agreement of the EU with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, so that they can fully participate in the economic Single Market of the EU, while not assuming the full responsibilities of political membership in the EU. The EEA was supposed to emerge from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1994, but the fourth EFTA member Switzerland decided by referendum not to participate in the EEA. Therefore, both organisations exist now, and they are typically referred to as EEA/EFTA.

Lisbon Agenda

A 10-year plan agreed upon by the Council in the year 2000, called the 'Lisbon Agenda', aimed to make Europe the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010". One of the most valuable outcomes of the Lisbon Agenda to date has been the institutionalization of widespread benchmarking procedures ('Open Method of Coordination') across all sectors of economic and political life in Europe. These benchmarking procedures provide the tangible and frequently used opportunity for Member States to compare and learn from each other.

Eurojargon

The European institutions have developed a eurospeak nomenclature in which targets or coordination processes are called by the name of the city in which these matters were originally decided upon. For instance, the Lisbon Agenda was decided upon during the Council meeting in 2000 that happened to have been held in Lisbon. The Maastricht Criteria evaluate the fiscal performance of Member States because the corresponding treaty was signed in that city. The Copenhagen criteria are those that applicant countries have to fulfill before they can join the EU, as decided in 1993 in Copenhagen. The Bologna process is one by which in the year 2010 all European university degrees and professorships must be compatible with each other, and credits earned must count towards a degree anywhere in Europe. This decision was taken in 1999 in Bologna.

Even though the naming of several hundreds of such processes, targets and criteria with city names is confusing to the outsider, it is very practical. Using city names removes the difficulty of having to translate the matter into every one of the 21 official languages of the EU (Irish Gaelic has just become the latest one), thereby eliminating a source of even more confusion. It also prevents ideological wrangling over the titles of these acts.

There are many other EU specific terms such as 'communitisation', 'comitology', 'eurocrat', 'Open Method of Coordination', 'Qualified Majority Voting', 'Four Freedoms' and 'harmonization', 'federalisation' – all of which are highly charged political terms that need to be employed with utmost care when communicating inside European political circles. The correct usage and knowledge of such terms differentiates Brussels insiders from outsiders.

Brussels

Most of the European institutions have their seats in the Belgian capital of Brussels, with only few exceptions. For instance the Parliament officially resides in French Strasbourg, but de facto works in Brussels. The ECJ Court resides in Luxembourg, a three hour drive away, the ECB bank resides in German Frankfurt, EFSA resides in Italian Parma, or the Office for the Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM) in Spanish Alicante. In the press and casual jargon, like "Brussels decided / is responsible for", Brussels is an unofficial abbreviation describing the whole decision making machinery of the European Union.

Schengenland or Schengen countries or Aquis

Technically, the Schengen Aquis is an 'umbrella' understanding under which a number of different agreements and protocols are in operation concerning internal and external border controls. The practical ultimate effect is that for most members of the European Union there are no internal border controls. All EU 15 members are members of the Schengen Aquis, though the UK and Ireland are not participants on the immigration part of it. Additionally, since Norway and Iceland operate in a passport union system with Sweden, Denmark and Finland, those two Non-Member States are technically also Schengen countries. In 2005 Switzerland also signed the Schengen Aquis, now triggering Liechtenstein to follow suit. The new Member States are also expected to become members of the Schengen Aquis soon. Schengen is a city in the country of Luxembourg.

European Patent Office

The patent office is the second largest European organisation after the European Union. It has 31 member countries, a staff of 6000, a budget in excess of EUR 1 billion, and it is headquartered in Munich, Germany. The member countries are all EU 25 except Malta, plus Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Switzerland, Iceland, Monaco and Liechtenstein.

Council of Europe (COE)

This sounds similar, but is very different from the European Council. It refers to a political institution that was started in 1949 and today has 46 members (every European country except Byelorussia, Kazakhstan and the Holy See). Any European country can become a member of the COE, if it accepts the principles of the rule of law (which precludes the Holy See) and guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms (so far ruling out the other two). The COE is a completely separate organisation from the European Union.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was drawn up within the Council of Europe. It was opened for signature in Rome on 4 November 1950 and entered into force in September 1953. Taking as their starting point the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the framers of the Convention sought to pursue the aims of the Council of Europe through the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention was to represent the first steps for the collective enforcement of certain of the rights set out in the Universal Declaration. In addition to laying down a catalogue of civil and political rights and freedoms, the Convention set up a mechanism for the enforcement of the obligations entered into by Contracting States.

Three institutions were entrusted with this responsibility: the European Commission of Human Rights (set up in 1954), the European Court of Human Rights (set up in 1959) and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the latter organ being composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member States or their representatives. The ECHR resides in Strasbourg.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was established in 1991 when communism was crumbling in Central and Eastern Europe and ex-soviet countries needed support to nurture a new private sector in a democratic environment. Today the EBRD uses the tools of investment to help build market economies and democracies in 27 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia. The EBRD is the largest single investor in the region and mobilises significant foreign direct investment beyond its own financing. It is owned by 60 countries and two intergovernmental institutions. Despite its public sector shareholders, it invests mainly in private enterprises, usually together with commercial partners.

European Broadcasting Union (EBU)

The EBU was started in 1950 in order to exchange newscasts among European TV and radio stations. In 2005, the EBU has members from 54 countries. Members from outside the European continent include Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Armenia and Georgia.

Eurovision Song Contest

In this annual tele-voting event, Europeans select their favorite pop song among national candidates previously determined in each country. Any nation that is a member of the EBU can take part and in 2005, 39 nations participated, of which Israel has been a long-standing and successful participant.

UEFA

The governing body of European football (soccer) is known by its abbreviation, UEFA. Besides members from the European continent it also includes Cyprus, Israel, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan. It also has as members the nations of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Faeroe Islands, thus bringing the total membership to 48.

General Definitions for Europe

Geographical Europe

The geographic extent of the European continent is not uniformly defined. Commonly, the continent is held to include Iceland and the Atlantic Ocean islands of the Azores in the west, excluding the Danish territory of Greenland (North America) and the Spanish Canary Islands (Africa). To the south it includes all islands of the Mediterranean Sea, except for Cyprus which belongs to Asia. The geographical border to the east (running north to south) passes along the Arctic Kara Sea, the Ural Mountains, the Ural River into the Caspian Sea, then in western direction into the Kuma-Manych Depression to the Sea of Azov, leaving the Crimean peninsula inside Europe, following the Black Sea into the Sea of Marmara south of Istanbul and into the European Mediterranean Sea.

This geographic demarcation at the eastern reaches includes small percentages of the countries of Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey (though the European landmass of Russia represents a quarter of the whole European landmass), whereas with Moscow and Istanbul, Russia and Turkey have major cities placed on the European peninsula. The definition includes fully the countries of Byelorussia and Ukraine, but excludes fully the Caucasian countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Caucasian mountain ridge serves as another common definition of the eastern demarcation of the European continent. This would then partially include the countries of Georgia and Azerbaijan as well, but still not Armenia. Regardless of geographic definition, the European continent is the second smallest continent after Australia, but the one with the longest inhabited coastline of 37,000 km.

Political Europe

The nations which are either already part of or have defined aspirations to join the European Project are considered to fall under the term 'Political Europe'. Besides essentially every nation of Western and Central Europe, this definition includes in the East also the Ukraine, Georgia and Turkey. It typically excludes the European nations of Byelorussia, Moldova and Russia. Politically, this definition also includes some islands around the world that are still part of the sovereign territory of various European countries, such as for instance: Greenland (Denmark), Canaries (Spain), Falklands (UK), Aruba (The Netherlands) and various other Caribbean Islands, Guyana in South America (France) and a number of islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, or also the two Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla in African Morocco.

European Project or Agenda

The words 'project' and 'agenda' are typically used to describe the encompassing effort of European nations to achieve European commonality and to achieve a better future for the European citizens through supranational institutions to which some sovereign powers are ceded. The European Union is the major such supranational organisation, but not the only one.

European Identity

The concept of European Identity refers to all the nations that share or strive towards some form of common identity based on the cultural history of this geographic location in the world. This definition typically includes Georgia and Armenia in the Caucasus, and Israel, Turkey and Cyprus in Asia Minor. In a wider definition, the Central Asian countries of

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia share some European identity due to the 20th century Russian-Soviet domination. Similarly, parts of West Africa are still culturally and legally oriented to France, and parts of African and South Asian Commonwealth countries are culturally and legally oriented to England. In an even wider definition, North and South American nations, as well as Australia and New Zealand share many cultural roots of European identity.

Europeans and European countries

By the most common usage, 49 countries are considered to be European. There are roughly 700–800 million people who call themselves Europeans, or about 11–13% of the world's population (456 million of which are citizens of EU Member States). Those 49 countries include Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, mostly for geographic reasons, and they include Georgia, Armenia and Cyprus for cultural reasons, even though the latter two are geographically located in Asia. Although this also includes Turkey, the list of 49 excludes Israel.

Besides the difficulty of defining an eastern border of Europe, there is also the contention of what constitutes a country. The above list of 49 includes the tiny countries of the Vatican (Holy See), Monaco, San Marino, Liechtenstein and Andorra, in addition to the not so tiny, but still very small countries of Luxembourg and Malta. But it does not recognize the Faeroe Islands or Greenland as separate countries, even though these two for all practical intents and purposes are independent countries with their own independent political and economical systems. Legally these two still fall under Danish territory, but by their own popular vote they decided to stay outside the European Union.

There are also various other regions with varying degrees of autonomous government. For instance the Finnish Aland Islands, the Greek Mount Athos, the British Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Gibraltar. For EU purposes, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man are not part of the United Kingdom, while Gibraltar is. While Alanders voted to become part of the European Union, they remain outside its VAT tax system. So do two cities, German Büsingen and Italian Campione, which are enclosed by Swiss territory and are economically and fiscally part of Switzerland, but politically part of the EU. In Scotland a 'national' Youth Hostel pass will mean a Scottish one (Scotland being one of the two kingdoms that were united in 1706 to become the United Kingdom). The 16 German Länder (each of them with their own parliament and constitution) include three which call themselves a Free State instead of Land (for instance Bavaria). The two parts of Belgium, Wallonie and Vlaanderen, thoroughly dislike each other, making Belgium hard to govern, ... and so on and so forth.

Apart from the above samples of European idiosyncrasies of country-, state- and nationhood, there are two likely contenders for United Nations recognized independent countryhood over the next couple of years: Kosovo which is currently under United Nations administration, and Montenegro which is currently in a State Union with Serbia. Other secessionist movements in Europe are either subsiding or not given much of a long-term chance, like the Basque movement in Spain, the Corsica troubles of France, the left river bank or Trans-dniestria slice of Moldava and seceded regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia.

Historical Europe

In Greek mythology, Europa is a Phoenician princess who became the mistress of Zeus, who appeared to her as a gentle white heifer. Zeus persuaded Europa to take a ride on his back, and then abducted her away across the sea to the island of Crete where she gave birth to Minos, a semi-legendary Cretan king.

As was typical for Greek mythology, this account of European abduction provides an allegorical explanation (or justification) for the rise of the Greek civilization. The Phoenicians, settled on the coast of what today is Lebanon, were the first maritime super power of the Mediterranean Sea, with trading posts as far west as the Atlantic Ocean. Their culture flourished from 1200–900 BC. Their role as a maritime trading power was succeeded by the Greeks who expanded from around 700 BC, who in turn were succeeded by the Romans in that role. Before 500 BC, Europa was the customary name for the Greek mainland peninsula, while after that date the definition gradually extended to the lands further north. In later Greek times, Europa became the name for one of the three parts of the world, with Asia (to the east) and Libya (to the south) being the other two.

During Roman and medieval times, the term Europa was barely used. For instance, the speech by Pope Urban II in 1095, calling for the crusades against "that accursed race from Persia utterly alienated from God" in order to free Jerusalem, is generally seen by historians as one of the key founding moments of a European sense of cultural and political identity (alas not the flattering parts of it). However, Pope Urban II does not refer to Europe in his speech. Nonetheless, historians and thinkers in the 10th and 11th century occasionally use the term *Europae* to describe its geographic extent as far as the Caspian Sea, to demarcate themselves against the peoples and lands on the unknown landmasses east and south of the European peninsula, thereby following the ancient Greek naming tradition.

Only during and after the Renaissance does the term *Europae* enter into more general usage. The leading Austrian humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464, Pius II from 1458) is the first historian and intellectual who refers to Europe frequently in the sense of having a cultural and ideological identity. He uses the name to describe those nations who derive and rediscover much of their cultural identity from the ancient Greek polis and civilization. Progressive Renaissance thinkers and leaders also hoped that this connection would promote the assimilation of the liberal, scientific and democratic mindset of ancient Greece into a European continent torn and worn by hegemonic and ideological battles between an outmoded aristocracy and an even more outmoded Roman Catholic church that were both not in tune with the economical and political needs of their time.

While Europe has been many things to many people in many ages – the most consistent theme since the Renaissance has been to associate the European Idea with humanist ideals and progress. The draft European Constitution for instance refers itself in its very first paragraph to "...the values underlying humanism: the equality of persons, freedom, respect for reason".

The well known contemporary Italian intellectual Claudio Magris recently defined Europe as

"the Dignity of the Individual above all that is Totalitarian".

Exhibit 1

EU Member States and Trade Partners in Comparison

2004		PPP indexed	Employment % of pop.	Population million	Fertility reprod. rate	GDP growth real %	Public Debt % of GDP
	EU 25	100	63	456.9	1.48	2.4	63
	EU 15	109	65	382.7	1.52	2.3	64
	US	155	71	291.7	2.07	4.4	63
	Japan	116	69	127.3	1.38	2.9	164
Benelux	Netherlands	125	73	16.3	1.75	1.7	53
	Belgium	118	60	10.4	1.61	2.9	96
	Luxembourg	222	62	0.5	1.63	4.5	7
Alpine	Germany	109	65	82.5	1.34	1.6	66
	France	110	63	59.9	1.89	2.3	65
	Italy	105	58	57.9	1.29	1.2	107
	Austria	122	68	8.1	1.39	2.4	64
	Slovenia	79	65	2.0	1.22	4.2	30
Mediterranean	Spain	98	61	42.3	1.29	3.1	47
	Greece	82	59	11.0	1.27	4.7	109
	Portugal	76	68	10.5	1.44	1.2	59
	Cyprus	81	69	0.7	1.46	3.7	72
	Malta	71	54	0.4	1.41	0.4	76
Atlantic	UK	119	72	59.7	1.71	3.2	42
	Ireland	141	66	4.0	1.98	4.5	30
Scandinavia	Sweden	116	72	9.0	1.71	3.6	51
	Denmark	123	76	5.4	1.76	2.0	43
	Finland	114	68	5.2	1.76	3.6	45
Baltic	Lithuania	48	61	3.4	1.25	7.0	20
	Latvia	43	62	2.3	1.29	8.3	15
	Estonia	51	63	1.4	1.35	7.8	6
Central	Poland	47	52	38.2	1.24	5.3	44
	Czech	70	64	10.2	1.18	4.4	37
	Hungary	61	57	10.1	1.30	4.2	57
	Slovakia	52	57	5.4	1.17	5.5	43
Accession	Romania	32	58	21.7	1.27	8.3	19
	Bulgaria	30	54	7.8	1.23	5.6	39
	Croatia	46	55	4.5	1.39	3.7	44
	Turkey	29	46	69.9	1.94	7.7	80
EFTA	Switzerland	149	63	7.5	1.42	1.8	57
	Norway	153	75	4.6	1.80	2.9	47
	Iceland	116	82	0.3	1.99	5.2	37

 two lowest EU 25 values
 two highest EU 25 values

Source: Eurostat

Exhibit 2

Geopolitical map of Europe



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