

The European Union in 2013



On 1st July 2013, the number of countries in the European Union increased by one – Croatia has joined the EU and there are now 28 members.

Are you old enough to remember queues at passport control at the Italian border, or the forms you needed complete in order to travel to Spain or Portugal? Being able to travel freely across

borders, work where you like and live where you choose within Europe is one of benefits of EU citizenship or as the EU constitution proclaims: *every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.*

The Schengen Area (named after a small town in Luxembourg) is a group of 26 countries within Europe who have abolished all passport and immigration controls. Four of these countries, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, are not EU members, the other 22 are in the Union. As a result you hardly realize when you leave one European country and enter another. Unless, of course, that country is Ireland or the UK, who both opted out of the Schengen Agreement and still maintain rigid border controls! Perhaps you have stood in the queues at Dublin or Heathrow airports, wishing that the Schengen Area incorporated the two countries of the British Isles. Similarly if you travel to and from Cyprus, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria, you'll have to show your passport.

The EU has grown slowly but steadily in its almost 60-year history. The founding of the European Union (or as it was then called, The European Economic Community) in 1957 brought together just six countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. These six countries were joined 16 years later by Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. In 1981, Greece became the 10th member of the EEC and Spain and Portugal followed five years later. Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in 1995 making a total of fifteen countries. The 'big bang' enlargement in May 2004, saw the number of countries increase to 25 with the membership of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007, making a total of 27 countries in the European Union.

Switzerland and Norway have twice applied to join the EU, but the applications were withdrawn by the countries themselves after opposition from voters. In 1987 Morocco also applied to join, but its application was refused on the grounds that it was not considered a European country.

Did you know?

Network Now

Of the fifteen countries who were members in 2002, twelve introduced the euro. Now there are 19 euro countries, the latest to join being Lithuania, which dropped the *litas* in favour of the euro in January 2015. And this certainly makes life easier for travelling across Europe – unless, of course, you are visiting the UK when you need your British pounds.

If you would like to know more about the European Union, click [here](#).

If you would like to use the European Union as a topic in your classroom from A2.1 upwards, we have provided you with an activity.

You'll find it in the following Teacher's Notes and on the Worksheet (see next pages).

Teacher's notes

The European Union in 2013 (level A2.1 upwards) (20+ mins)

- Make one copy of the **The European Union in 2013** for each group of three or four students. Make sure you keep a complete copy for yourself.
- Cut up as indicated so you have a long list of countries (you don't need to cut up the list of countries) and 28 country descriptions. In order to keep each set of countries and descriptions separate, put each set in an envelope, or print each set on different coloured paper.
- On the board write the words **European Union**. Ask students how many countries are in the European Union (there are 28 as Croatia joined on 1 July 2013). Ask them which countries they know. Encourage accuracy with the country names.
- Tell students that they are going to do a matching exercise. On the board write the word **Austria**. Ask students what they know about it. (*It's next to Germany. Its capital city is Vienna. People go on holiday there. It's popular for skiing and hiking. It has no coast.*) Write some of the sentences on the board.
- Distribute the cut up copies and ask students to match each country name with the right description. Help with any unknown vocabulary.
- Check answers together in class.

Follow up activity (1):

- Read out the country descriptions and see if students can remember the country.

Follow up activity (2):

- Ask students which of the countries use the euro.
(**Key:** Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain)

Follow up activity (3):

- In groups, ask students to talk about the countries they have visited.

If you would like a shorter activity, ...:

- ... cut up the table on the Worksheet into four groups of seven countries and give only seven countries to each group.

Worksheet - The European Union in 2013



Austria	This country is very popular for skiing. It has no coast and has a border with Germany and Italy.
Belgium	This small country has a coast on the English Channel. People here speak French, Flemish and German.
Bulgaria	This country is on the Black Sea. Its capital is Sofia and it has a border with Turkey.
Croatia	The latest (28 th) country to join the European Union, this country used to be part of Yugoslavia.
Cyprus	This is an island country in the Mediterranean. It is half Greek and half Turkish.
Czech Republic	This country is east of Germany. Its capital city is Prague, famous for its many bridges.
Denmark	This country is north of Germany. The people do not use the euro. The capital city is Copenhagen.
Estonia	This country is north of Lithuania and very near Finland. It is the latest country (17 th) to use the euro.
Finland	This is a Scandinavian country and you can use the euro here. It has a border with Russia, Norway and Sweden.
France	This is one of the biggest countries in Europe. It is next to Spain on the west and Germany on the east.
Germany	This country has a border with nine other countries, including France, Denmark and Poland.
Greece	Today this country has a lot of financial problems. It is a hot country with lots of islands and lots of tourists.
Hungary	This country has no coast, but there is a big lake called Balaton in the middle of the country.
Ireland	This is an island west of the United Kingdom. This country is very green, because there is plenty of rain.



Italy	Many Germans take their holidays in this country. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
Latvia	This country is north of Lithuania and south of Estonia and joined the EU in 2004.
Lithuania	This is a small country on the Baltic sea, north of Poland. The capital city is Vilnius.
Luxembourg	This country is very famous for its banking. It has no coast and it has a border with France, Germany and Belgium.
Malta	An island in the Mediterranean between North Africa and Italy, where many people speak English.
Netherlands	This is a flat country on the North Sea. Its neighbours are Germany and Belgium.
Poland	Warsaw is the capital city of this country east of Germany. It has a coast on the Baltic Sea.
Portugal	This country in the west in Europe has only one neighbour, Spain.
Romania	Bucharest is the capital of this country that joined the EU in 2007. It has a coast on the Black Sea.
Slovakia	This country joined the EU in 2004. Its capital city is Bratislava.
Slovenia	It has 43 km of coast on the Adriatic Sea. It used to be part of Yugoslavia.
Spain	Situated in the west of Europe, this big country has a coast on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.
Sweden	This big country in Scandinavia has more than 221,000 islands and is famous for an international furniture store.
United Kingdom	This country has a queen and everyone speaks English. Its capital city is London.