Stability & Trade: The Pax Romana and Modern European Union

This activity can be completed in 3-5 class periods, depending on teacher preferences and time available.

Purpose: This lesson has been designed for a middle grades course that focuses on ancient civilizations, specifically Rome, and the stabilizing effect of centralized leadership during the Pax Romana period. Students will analyze trade information from the Pax Romana to learn how political stability increased trade in Ancient Rome. Students will then learn about the European Union and the evolution/impact of the European Single Market.

Desired Outcomes: At the completion of this instructional mini-unit, students will be able to describe political and economic patterns that are consistent in both the ancient and modern world. Students will be able to evaluate how stability benefits political and economic outcomes.

NCSS Themes

Time, Continuity, and Change
Global Connections

Essential Questions	**Students will understand...**
- How does political stability impact trade in different civilizations? - How can comparing and contrasting different historical periods help us understand continuity and change?	- political stability improves trade conditions for civilizations - periods of prolonged political stability can occur after (and as response to) periods of immense internal and external conflict
Students will know...	**Students will be able to...**
- political systems change over time - economic systems change over time - economic success is connected to political stability	- evaluate the impact that political stability has on trade at differing points in history - compare and contrast different historical periods to interpret historical patterns

Resources:

For Students
Pax Romana Adapted Text with Guiding Questions
European Union Adapted Text with Guiding Questions
Venn Diagram
Resource Slides for Student Discovery
Graphic Organizer: EU Student Discovery

Learning Plan

Prior to Lesson

- Students should have learned about the Punic Wars while learning about the Roman Republic and its outcome.
- Students should have learned about the assassination of Julius Caesar and the conflicts that followed.
- Students should have received background in the political events that led to the establishment of the Roman Empire under Augustus.

During the Lesson

Day One: Pax Romana Background
 Guiding Question: How did political stability during the Pax Romana influence trade?
 Students will receive direct instruction about the Pax Romana using the slide deck. Then students will complete the [guided reading activity](#) about the Pax Romana independently or with a partner.

Day Two: European Union Background
 Guiding Question: How does political stability in the European Union influence trade?
 Students will receive direct instruction about the European Union using the slide deck. Then students will complete the [guided reading activity](#) about the European Union independently or with a partner.

Day Three: Venn Diagram Activity
 Guiding Question: How can comparing and contrasting different historical periods help us understand continuity and change?
 Students will work with a partner to complete the [Venn Diagram](#) using the passages about the Pax Romana and the European Union and work. If time permits, pairs can share their comparisons with the whole class.

Day Four & Five: Student Discovery
 Guiding Question: How do political and economic stability within the EU benefit the European Community?
 Students will use these [links to resources](#) about current issues facing the European Union. They will use this information to identify the political and economic benefits of addressing these issues on a multi-national level. Students will use a [graphic organizer](#) to guide research. Teachers can opt to have students present their research (mini-presentation, infographic, paragraph, etc) based on time available.

The European Union and Trade

The European Union (EU) is an international organization of 27 countries that have established political and economic alliances to benefit its members. It is a federal system founded on democratic principles, meaning that the EU does not control all political decisions in Europe. As a federal system, some political and economic decisions are the responsibility of the EU, but others are the right of members. EU countries work together to address common political, social, and economic concerns for the benefit of EU citizens.

Background

World War II completely devastated the European continent by the time it ended in 1945. Millions of soldiers and civilians died through battle, bombings of cities, and genocide. European countries sought ways to prevent future conflicts from causing so much loss of life and destruction of property. One major source of conflict prior to WWII had been economic competition between countries over the resources needed to wage war, specifically coal and steel. Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, proposed an economic alliance between countries to manage production of coal and steel. Six countries- Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands- established the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. This alliance laid the foundation for the modern European Union.

Evolution of the European Union

The success of the European Coal and Steel Community encouraged its six members to establish deeper political and economic alliances. By 1958, the Treaties of Rome expanded the alliance with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC). Additional countries joined the EEC beginning in 1973. Over the next two decades, political and economic ties between the member countries strengthened. In 1993, the Maastricht Treaty renamed the alliance the European Union and established its governing institutions.

People who live in EU countries receive many political and economic benefits. Citizens of the EU can travel freely across borders, elect members to the European Parliament to represent their country, receive consumer and human rights protections, and can work in any EU member country.

The Single Market and Euro

The EU has benefited from the economic stability of its Single Market. This allows people, goods, services, and money to flow freely between member countries. Free trade means that citizens have access to goods from all EU countries at reduced costs. Functioning as a single market also allows the EU to establish better trade agreements with countries outside of the region because it represents a larger market.

The EU adopted its own currency- the euro- in 1999. Member countries are not required to use the euro, but 20 countries have adopted it. The European Central Bank supervises monetary policy, manages the euro, and encourages investment. The bank advises EU institutions, and the European Union enacts laws to regulate the bank.

Sources: European Union, History of the EU,
EU & ME | What is the European Union?

Guiding Questions

1) What type of political system (government) is the European Union?

2) What event led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which later became the European Union?

3) What are three political benefits of EU citizenship?

4) How has the Single Market benefited European trade?

5) How have the euro and the European Central Bank benefited the EU?

6) How has peace within the European Union increased economic prosperity in the region?

Graphic Organizer: European Union Discovery Activity

Select an current issue that the European Union is facing and research it using the provided resources. Use the graphic organizer below to plan your artifact. (mini-presentation, infographic, paragraph, etc).

Chosen Issue	
Why is this issue a concern for the EU?	
How is the EU addressing (working on) this issue?	
How has the **political** stability of the EU made it easier for countries to address this issue?	
How has the **economic** stability of the EU made it easier for countries to address this issue?	

Trade During the Pax Romana

Pax Romana, meaning Roman Peace, is a term used to describe a peaceful and politically stable time during the Roman Empire that lasted for more than 200 years. It started with the reign of Augustus in 27 BCE and ended with the death of Marcus Arelius in 180 CE. Political peace and stability during the Pax Romana allowed the empire to flourish economically.

Background

After the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Rome was thrown into civil war. The Senate's plot to murder Caesar caused political unrest. His closest ally, Marc Antony, and great nephew, Octavian, sought revenge. After they succeeded in defeating Caesar's enemies, Marc Antony and Octavian fought one another for his legacy. Ultimately, Octavian won and the Senate declared him emperor for life. He took the name Augustus, meaning *magnificent*, and also took the title Princeps Civitatis, meaning *first citizen*. Historians mark the reign of Augustus as the beginning of the Pax Romana.

The Leadership of Augustus

During his reign from 27 BCE through 14 CE, Augustus enacted many political reforms with the support of the Senate and the Roman people. He expanded the borders of the Empire through conquest, updated the tax code, and improved infrastructure. Augustus traveled to provinces throughout the empire with the 23 legions he commanded. This show of strength encouraged provincial governors to support the new emperor's authority. He increased the building of roads and aqueducts and other architectural improvements, including remodeling the Circus Maximus.

Augustus encouraged Roman prosperity through economic reforms under a central treasury. He took over the minting of gold and silver coins, which regulated the value of currency throughout the empire. To keep track of population numbers, Augustus enacted a regular census. The census made taxation more fair throughout the empire. When Augustus died in 14 CE, he left a legacy of improvements that guaranteed the Pax Romana flourished for the next 200 years.

Expansion of Trade

Rome had regulated trade and the price of goods throughout the Mediterranean region since the end of the Punic Wars in 146 BCE. More than a century later, the Pax Romana increased Roman authority over trade. Improvements to roads and other infrastructure made trade routes safer and faster. Augustus had strengthened the Roman army and navy, making trade safer by both land and sea. The amount of goods traded within Rome and with other civilizations increased. Trade also benefited from having an imperial treasury regulate currency because Roman coins were used to exchange goods.

Peace within the Empire played a key role in Rome's economic prosperity during the Pax Romana. Provincial governors were less likely to engage in conflict with one another due to the authority of the emperor in Rome. This ensured that trade routes were not restricted by internal conflicts and that goods traveled freely throughout the entire Roman Empire.

Sources: World History Encyclopedia, Pax Romana,
World History Encyclopedia, Reforms of Augustus,
History.com, How Ancient Rome Thrived Under the Pax Romana

Guiding Questions

1) What historical event in 44 BCE caused a civil war in Rome?

2) What type of political system (government) did Augustus establish in Rome?

3) What were three political changes Augutus made during his reign?

4) What were three economic changes Augustus made during his reign?

5) How did the Pax Romana benefit Roman trade?

6) How did peace within the empire influence Roman prosperity during the Pax Romana?

Political Stability and Trade

Comparing the Ancient and Modern

Essential Questions:

- *How does political stability impact trade in civilizations?*
- *How can comparing and contrasting different historical periods help us understand continuity and change?*
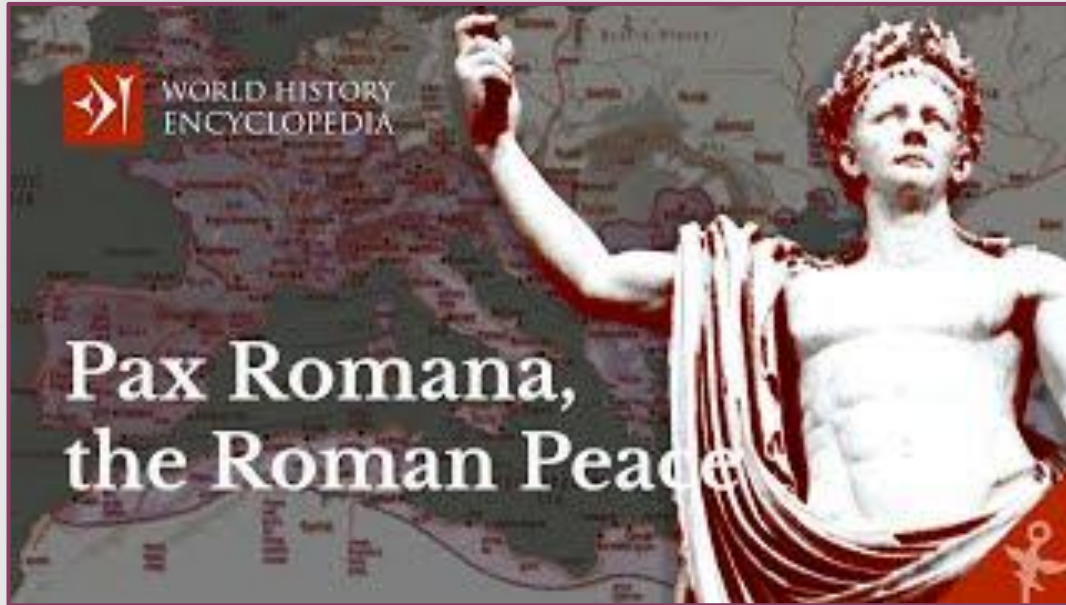
Day 1: Guiding Question

How did political stability during the Pax Romana influence trade?

Day 1: Learning Targets

- I can describe the series of events that led to the Pax Romana.
- I can evaluate the effects of political stability on trade during the Pax Romana.

4

What is the Pax Romana?

Digging Deeper: Pax Romana

Read the article to discover more about the Pax Romana and then answer the questions following the text.

Day 2: Guiding Question

How does political stability in the European Union influence trade?
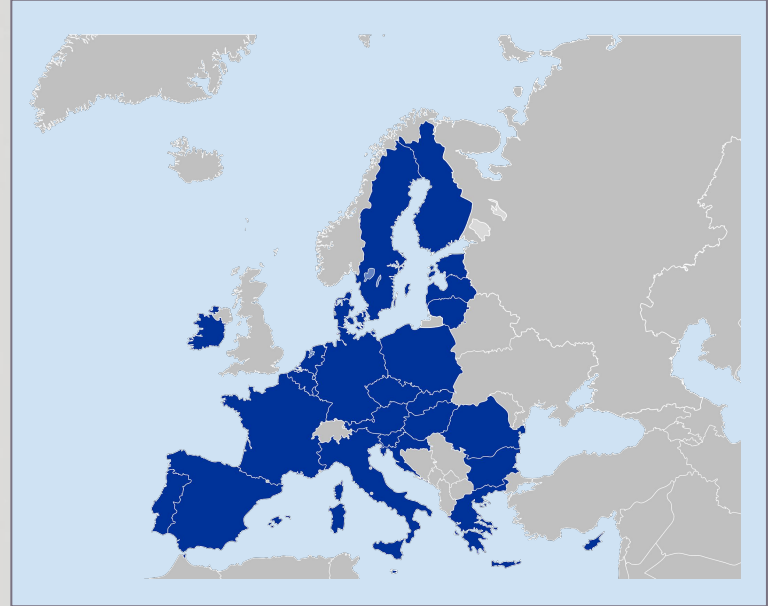
Day 2: Learning Targets

◈ I can describe the series of events that led to the establishment of the European Union

◈ I can evaluate the effects of political stability on trade in the European Union.

What is the European Union?

THE SINGLE MARKET WAS CREATED 25 YEARS AGO TO MAKE THE LIVES OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES EASIER

Digging Deeper: European Union

Read the article to discover more about the European Union and then answer the questions following the text.
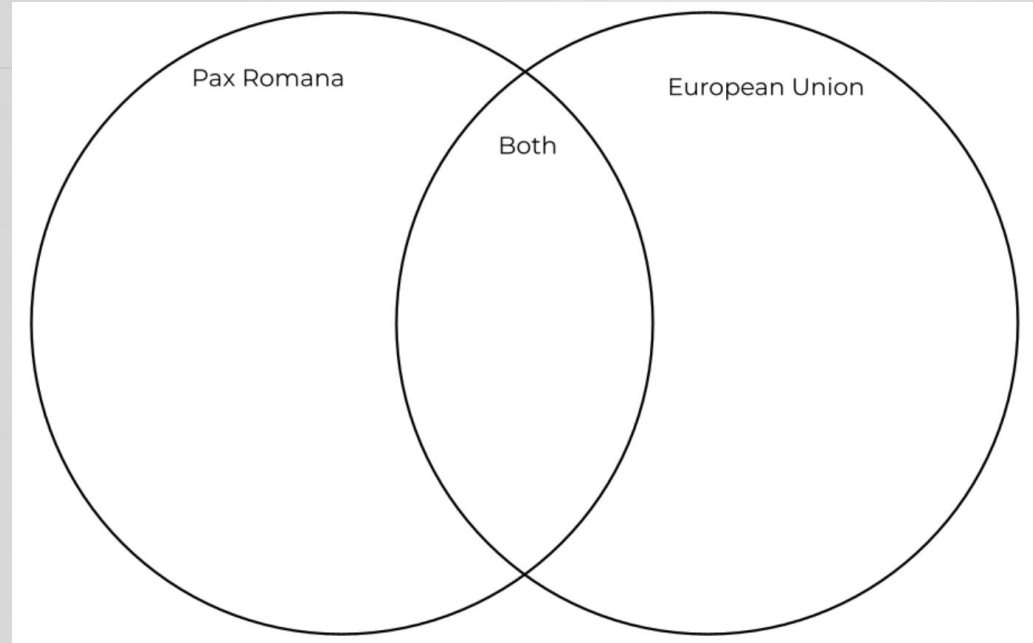
Day 3: Guiding Question

How can comparing and contrasting different historical periods help us understand continuity and change?

Day 3: Learning Target

◈ I can compare/contrast different historical periods to understand continuity and change in civilizations.

Venn Diagram

Pax Romana

European Union

Both

Day 4 & 5: Guiding Question

How do political and economic stability within the EU benefit the European Community?

Directions

We have learned about the EU and will now take a deep dive to learn more!

1) Use the resources on the next slide to research current issues facing the EU

2) Select one issue that interests you

3) Complete the graphic organizer by answering questions about your issue

4) Create an artifact (mini-presentation, infographic, paragraph) on your issue to share with the class

Day 4-5: Learning Target

◈ I can evaluate how political and economic stability enable a civilization to solve issues.

Resources

- <u>The European Union: What it is and what it does</u>

  - Written and video resources on forty issues facing the European Union

- <u>European Commission Priorities</u>

  - Written and video resources on six major priorities of the European Commission

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Student Discovery Resources

Directions

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Resources

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European Commission

The **European Union**

What it is and what it does

This document should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

Member States of the European Union in 2022

0 — 500 km

Azores (PT)

Madeira (PT)

(FR) Guadeloupe (FR)

Canary Islands (ES)

Martinique (FR)

Mayotte (FR)

French Guiana (FR)

Réunion (FR)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Iceland
Reykjavík

Norway
Oslo

Finland
Helsinki

Sweden
Stockholm

Estonia
Tallinn

Latvia
Riga

Lithuania
Vilnius

Denmark
Copenhagen

United Kingdom

Ireland
Dublin

London

Netherlands
Amsterdam

Brussels
Belgium

Germany
Berlin

Poland
Warsaw

Luxembourg
Luxembourg

Paris

Prague
Czechia

Slovakia
Bratislava

Vienna
Austria

Budapest
Hungary

Bern
Switzerland
Liechtenstein

France

Slovenia
Ljubljana

Zagreb
Croatia

Romania
Bucharest

Portugal
Lisbon

Madrid

Spain

Italy
Rome

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Sarajevo

Belgrade
Serbia

Montenegro
Podgorica

Pristina
Kosovo

Sofia
Bulgaria

Skopje
North Macedonia

Tirana
Albania

Ankara

Turkey

Greece
Athens

Malta
Valletta

Cyprus
Nicosia

Member States of the European Union (March 2022)

Candidate countries and potential candidates

COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to human tragedy, lockdowns and economic slowdown. The EU rapidly took action to protect lives and livelihoods and developed a common European response to the public health and economic challenges.

#SafeVaccines   #HealthUnion

© European Union 2021

What the EU does

Solidarity is at the heart of the common EU response to COVID-19. The EU is mobilising all resources available to help Member States coordinate their national responses. This includes providing objective information about the spread of the virus, effective efforts to contain it and action to repair the economic and social damage resulting from the pandemic.

The rescEU medical reserve, the first common EU stockpile of emergency medical equipment, has helped Member States facing shortages of equipment. The EU vaccine strategy aims to speed up the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The EU financed some of the upfront costs faced by vaccine producers to speed up the development and production of promising vaccines as part of its vaccine purchasing strategy. To date, five safe and effective vaccines have been authorised for use in the EU following positive scientific recommendations by the European Medicines Agency.

The Commission had secured up to 2.6 billion vaccine doses by April 2021 and negotiations continue for additional doses. In January 2021, the Commission called on Member States to speed up the roll-out of vaccination across the EU. Vaccine deliveries to EU Member States are increasing steadily and vaccination is gathering pace. The Commission is also working with the industry to increase vaccine manufacturing capacity.

Work has started to rapidly produce effective vaccines for new variants. In February 2021, the Commission launched the HERA Incubator to prepare for COVID-19 variants of concern and ensure the swift development and production of effective vaccines to counter them.

The EU budget for 2021–2027 and NextGenerationEU, the recovery plan, will provide €1.8 trillion to support people, companies and regions, particularly those most affected by the crisis. In addition, the SURE initiative (Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency) helps preserve jobs and support families in 19 Member States.

In March 2021, the Commission presented a proposal to create an EU Digital COVID Certificate to facilitate the safe free movement of citizens within the EU during the pandemic.

The EU is committed to ensuring that safe vaccines reach all corners of the world. The Commission and EU Member States have pledged over €2.2 billion to COVAX, the global initiative aimed at ensuring fair access to COVID-19 vaccines, and are supporting vaccination campaigns in partner countries.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response_en

@EU_Health #SafeVaccines

Health

Health is a major priority for the European Union. The EU's health policy complements Members States' policies to ensure that everyone living in the EU is protected from serious cross-border health threats and has access to quality healthcare.

While the organisation of healthcare is the responsibility of individual Member States, the EU complements national policies to reach shared objectives. The EU's health policy focuses on tackling serious EU-wide health threats, preventing diseases and ensuring an equal chance of good health and quality healthcare for all. Working together also means pooling resources, which generates economies of scale.

What the EU does

The EU's ambition is to ensure accessible, effective and resilient health systems in the EU. The EU's work includes action on vaccination (including against COVID-19), fighting antimicrobial resistance, and preventing and limiting pandemics and other infectious diseases.

The EU's role in preparing for and responding to serious cross-border health threats is essential to protecting people in Europe. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced a stronger European Health Union to tackle health crises, cancer and medicine shortages together.

Cancer is a major cause of death in the EU and a high cost to health systems. The EU is supporting prevention, detection, early diagnosis and treatment as well as quality of life for cancer patients and survivors through Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. The EU is active in combating smoking through tobacco legislation and promoting healthy lifestyles.

The pharmaceutical strategy aims to improve access to affordable medicines for patients, including those suffering from rare diseases. It will also support innovation and diverse supply chains, with a view to enhancing our crisis preparation.

The main instrument for financing EU health policies is the €5.1 billion EU4Health programme. It will fund interventions to boost disease prevention and the preparedness and resilience of healthcare systems in the EU. In addition, the Horizon Europe programme will invest €5.4 billion in health-related research and innovation.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control assesses emerging threats so the EU and national health authorities can respond rapidly. And to ensure patients get the best treatment, all medicines in the EU must be approved at the national or the EU level (through the European Medicines Agency) before going on the market.

The European Health Insurance Card helps travellers obtain treatment if they fall ill while visiting another EU Member State, while EU law on cross-border healthcare sets out citizens' rights when crossing borders for planned care. Through European reference networks, patients with rare or complex diseases benefit from the best expertise from across Europe without even leaving their home country.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/health/

@EU_Health

European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is the EU's action plan to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent. It is a growth strategy that aims to create, by 2050, a modern, resource-efficient and competitive European economy with no net emissions of greenhouse gases that leaves no one behind.

Climate change and environmental degradation are threatening Europe and the world. The atmosphere is warming and the climate is changing.

Environmental protection and economic growth can go hand in hand. Between 1990 and 2019, the EU cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 24 % while its economy grew by around 60 %.

What the EU does

The European Green Deal sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Reaching this target means creating a clean, circular economy, restoring biodiversity and cutting pollution. It requires action in all sectors of the economy, including:

- investing in environmentally friendly technologies;
- supporting innovation in industry;
- cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport;
- decarbonising the energy sector;
- ensuring buildings are more efficient;
- working with international partners to improve global environmental standards.

The EU is committed to becoming climate neutral by 2050 and has set the target of cutting net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % below 1990 levels by 2030. The first-ever European climate law will set these goals in stone and ensure that all EU policies contribute to meeting them.

Significant investment from both the EU and the national public sector, together with the private sector, will be required. The European Green Deal investment plan will mobilise at least €1 trillion in sustainable investments, while the Just Transition Mechanism will ensure that no region is left behind, providing targeted support to help mobilise at least €55 billion in the most affected regions. Climate action is a part of all the main EU spending programmes, with at least 30 % of the budget for 2021–2027 dedicated to climate-related initiatives.

The Green Deal is underpinned by an ambitious goal to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by transforming our food systems and our forest, land, water and sea use, as well as energy, cities and industry. The new EU industrial strategy will help Europe's industry lead the twin transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership. Digital technologies will play an important part in achieving the EU's 2050 climate goal, for example, by optimising energy use in many sectors including agriculture, transport and manufacturing.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are global threats and the EU will continue to lead international efforts to promote the implementation of ambitious environment, climate and energy policies across the world.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

EUClimateAction   @EUClimateAction

Climate action

The EU is working hard to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The European Green Deal is the plan to make this happen by cutting greenhouse gas emissions, investing in green technologies and protecting our natural environment, while also addressing the unavoidable consequences of climate change.

The EU is taking action in response to changes in the earth's climate, in particular the rise in global temperatures due to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity. Higher average temperatures have many consequences, including more frequent extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and storms. As well as posing a direct threat to people, these can also jeopardise food production and create water shortages, which can in turn trigger famine, conflicts and migration.
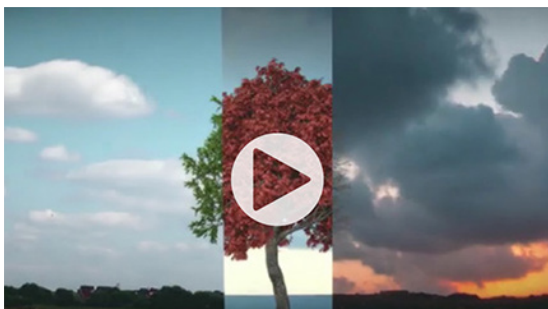
What the EU does

The EU is leading global efforts to fight climate change. It is actively working with other countries and regions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep global warming to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, and it is making efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C.

The EU is committed to becoming climate neutral by 2050 and has set the target of cutting net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % below 1990 levels by 2030. The first European climate law will set these goals in stone, while the ambitious package of measures that make up the European Green Deal will enable European citizens and businesses to benefit from a sustainable green transition that leaves no one behind.

This transition requires action by all parts of the economy and society. Individuals and communities can play their part through the European Climate Pact, which invites everyone to participate in building a greener Europe.

The EU's strategy to adapt to climate change promotes measures such as building flood defences, developing drought-tolerant crops and changing building regulations, and supports international action for climate resilience.

Failure to address climate change would be very costly for the EU and the rest of the world. At the same time, the growing demand for clean technologies presents opportunities for innovation, industrial modernisation and green jobs and growth. The European Green Deal represents the growth strategy through which these opportunities will be harnessed. Climate action is a part of all the main EU spending programmes, with at least 30 % of the budget for 2021-2027 dedicated to climate-related initiatives.

The EU has a comprehensive set of measures in place to reduce emissions from all sectors of the economy. The EU emissions trading system cuts emissions from industry, power plants and aviation within Europe in a cost-effective way. EU Member States have also agreed national targets for reducing emissions in other sectors, such as transport, construction and agriculture.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/

EUClimateAction   @EUClimateAction

Environment

The EU has some of the world's highest environmental standards, which protect nature and people's quality of life, green the economy and ensure careful use of natural resources.

However, we are currently facing major global challenges, which include climate change, biodiversity loss and resource scarcity. Meeting these challenges is urgent and will need a deep and fast transformation of our society, the way we live and the way we produce and consume. The EU's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic must be green, it must make Europe more resilient and it must be fair and inclusive for all.

EU environment policy plays a crucial role in supporting the European Green Deal in accelerating the transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and regenerative economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes.

What the EU does

The EU is striving to reduce the environmental impacts of the production and consumption of goods and services. Becoming a circular economy, in which the value of products and materials lasts for as long as possible and waste and resource use is minimised, is essential to achieving the EU's target of reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and halting biodiversity loss.

The new Circular Economy Action Plan, one of the main blocks of the Green Deal, aims to make sustainable products the norm in the EU. It focuses on areas with the most potential such as electronics, batteries and vehicles, textiles, construction and food. Under the plan, the plastics strategy aims to make all plastic packaging in the EU reusable or recyclable by 2030, while new rules target single-use plastics.

The EU must safeguard natural resources and halt the decline of endangered species and habitats. The EU's biodiversity strategy will expand protected areas on land and at sea, plant billions of trees and encourage sustainable farming practices, among other initiatives. It will build on its existing Natura 2000 network of protected natural areas across the EU where sustainable human activities can coexist with rare and vulnerable species and habitats.

To protect people from environment-related pressures and risks to health, the EU aims to guarantee safe drinking water and clean bathing water, improve air quality, reduce noise and reduce or eliminate the effects of harmful chemicals.

The EU also plays a leading role in international efforts to promote sustainable development. Environmental challenges do not stop at borders. More action is needed globally to ensure clean air, oceans and other water resources and to ensure that land and ecosystems are used sustainably and that climate change is kept to manageable levels. Environmental standards are upheld through the EU's trade deals with other countries.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/environment_en

f EU Environment   @EU_ENV   @ourplanet_eu

Energy

The EU's energy policy aims to ensure a secure, competitive and affordable supply of energy, while meeting our climate targets.

Europe faces a number of major energy challenges. In addition to ensuring secure energy supplies at reasonable prices for everyone, the EU must shift from a fossil-based economy towards a cleaner, carbon-neutral system.

To make this transition, the EU needs to become more energy efficient, scale up renewable energy, embrace innovation and new technologies, improve cross-border energy connections and reduce dependence on energy imports.

What the EU does

Each Member State defines its own energy mix, but the co-ordination of rules at the EU level allows them to meet common political objectives.

Climate and energy are inextricably linked. Energy accounts for 75 % of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. To achieve its goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050, the EU is seeking to completely redefine its energy system.

The Energy Union will deliver this transformation by coordinating with other policy areas such as transport, research and innovation, digitalisation, the circular economy and sustainable financing.

The clean energy for all Europeans legislative package will help to speed up the clean energy transition and deliver on the EU's Paris Agreement commitments.

The decarbonisation of the power sector through renewable energy is one of the key elements of the European Green Deal. Offshore renewable energy is among the technologies with the greatest potential. In addition, the EU is taking steps to improve energy efficiency, including by renovating millions of Europe's buildings and through ecodesign and energy labels.

The proposed EU strategies for energy system integration and hydrogen pave the way towards a fully decarbonised, more efficient, flexible and interconnected energy sector. In addition, the Commission is looking at new challenges such as decarbonising the gas sector, for example, by reducing methane emissions.

Tackling these challenges at the EU level also provides new opportunities for growth, jobs, research, and a more competitive and sustainable energy market. Consumers should also benefit significantly in terms of their rights to change energy suppliers, and, ultimately, lower household bills and less air pollution. Some additional policies and measures that help ensure that the EU meets its goals include:

- new cross-border networks for gas and electricity, including projects to better integrate renewables into the grid;
- measures to step up efforts on batteries, including the creation of the European Battery Alliance to build up battery technology and production capacity in the EU;
- the initiative for coal regions in transition towards clean energy sources, leaving no one behind;
- contributing to the ITER international fusion project, one of the world's most ambitious energy projects.

Find out more: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/index_en

@Energy4Europe

Transport and travel

The EU's transport policy helps keep the economy moving by developing modern infrastructure that makes journeys quicker and safer, all while promoting sustainable and digital solutions.

Europe needs efficient transport connections to drive business, growth and employment, for tourism and leisure, and to keep people connected. Transport is a major contributor to the economy, directly employing around 10 million people. The EU's transport policy focuses on creating a crisis-proof single European area with cleaner and greener transport and fair competition.

The Re-open EU platform provides practical information on COVID-19 and national coronavirus safety and travel measures, such as quarantine and testing requirements in the Member States.

What the EU does

Thanks to the EU, the last 20 years have seen considerable progress in Europe's transport sector, with safer skies, seas and roads, better working conditions for transport workers, more and cheaper mobility options and fast progress towards cleaner and digital solutions.

Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and the European Green Deal aims to reduce them by 90 % by 2050. Achieving more sustainable and smart mobility means providing more affordable, more accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives. A key objective is to boost the uptake of clean vehicles and alternative fuels and strengthen the role of sustainable transport modes, such as rail. In 2021, the European Year of Rail shone a light on the benefits of rail as a sustainable, smart and safe means of transport.

Improving efficiency is crucial. Digital technologies enabling automated mobility and smart traffic management systems, for example, will help with efficiency while also making transport cleaner.

Funded through the Connecting Europe Facility, with a budget of over €25.8 billion, the EU's transport infrastructure policy aims to connect the whole continent. This includes bridging gaps between national transport networks and supporting investments in cross-border connections. It also prioritises environmentally friendly modes such as rail and the development of infrastructure for vehicles using alternative fuels.

Transport is the backbone of the single market, keeping the EU's economy moving. By building a single European market in aviation and advancing on the Single European Sky initiative, flying continues to become easier and cheaper. Licensed rail companies can now offer their services anywhere in the EU and shipping companies can operate in more countries.

Safety and security are paramount. While there is progress in the right direction, around 18 800 people still lost their lives in road accidents in 2020. This is why the EU actively works to improve road safety. EU transport policy also helps travellers in other ways: air, rail, ship and bus passengers travelling in the EU have rights when they experience delays or cancellations.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/index_en

@Transport_EU

Food and farming

The common agricultural policy ensures a stable food supply produced in a sustainable way and at affordable prices for the EU's 447 million consumers. It also helps tackle climate change, manage our natural resources and support jobs and growth in rural areas.

The common agricultural policy (CAP) is applied in all EU countries and is funded from the EU budget. It supports the EU's vital food and farming sector, which provides nearly 40 million jobs.

Crises such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are a reminder that our food system is under threat and must become more resilient. A healthier and more sustainable EU food system is a cornerstone of the European Green Deal.

What the EU does

The CAP provides support through the following.

- Direct payments that support farm incomes. These offset the risks and uncertainties associated with farming and are allocated on the condition that strict food safety, environmental and animal health and welfare rules are followed.
- Market measures to deal with difficult situations, such as a sudden drop in demand due to a health scare or a fall in prices due to temporary oversupply.
- Rural development programmes (co-financed by EU countries) that foster innovation and competitiveness to make rural areas attractive places in which to live and work.

In 2019, the EU supported farmers to the tune of €57.98 billion, with income support comprising nearly three quarters of the total amount.

Proposals for the future CAP seek to shift the emphasis from rules and compliance to performance and results. They aim to foster a sustainable and competitive agriculture sector that can contribute to the goals of the European Green Deal. Farmers, agri-food businesses, foresters and rural communities have an essential role to play on many issues. One such issue is the Farm to Fork strategy that aims to protect the environment through sustainable food production and consumption. The strategy aims to promote healthy food for everyone and prevent food loss and waste, while ensuring farmers' livelihoods. The future CAP is closely linked to the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and is due to be implemented from 1 January 2023, pending final agreement between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

The EU's General Food Law aims to protect people's health and consumer interests, while ensuring the single market works efficiently. The European Food Safety Authority advises on food-related issues to protect people, animals, plants and the environment. The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed helps ensure that food that does not comply with European rules is removed from the shelves. Whenever significant outbreaks of animal disease or food poisoning occur, EU authorities can follow the movement of food products via the TRACES system.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries_en

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Oceans and fisheries

Our oceans produce most of the oxygen we breathe, regulate our weather and climate and are home to the majority of the planet's species. They are also important drivers of the European economy, providing us with food, jobs, transport and recreation. The EU works to protect our seas and oceans and to ensure that they remain environmentally and economically sustainable for future generations.

What the EU does

With a turnover of €650 billion in 2018, and employing close to 4.5 million people, the EU's 'blue' economy sector is in good health. The EU's Sustainable Blue Economy strategy seeks to harness the potential for sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole.

Thanks to research and innovation, the seas and oceans are a source of renewable energy, minerals and pharmaceuticals. The EU is in a unique position to develop offshore renewable energy thanks to the number and variety of its sea basins and the steadily falling costs of new installations. Proposals to maximise this potential will help the EU to meet its goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050.

While nurturing these new opportunities, the EU also plays an important role in promoting the responsible and sustainable exploitation of seas, both in Europe and globally.

The EU's common fisheries policy aims to ensure that fishing and aquaculture (farming fish under controlled conditions) are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. Its goals are to foster a dynamic and sustainable fishing industry, conserve resources and protect the marine environment, while ensuring a fair standard of living for fishing communities. It contains a set of rules for managing European fishing fleets and for conserving fish stocks. To prevent overfishing, quotas for EU Member States set limits on how much of each species can be caught, while a landing obligation avoids the wasteful practice of dumping unwanted fish.

The EU has introduced protected areas to safeguard marine ecosystems and their biodiversity, along with the services they provide, and aims to protect at least 30 % of the EU's seas by 2030. In addition, EU rules to tackle marine litter reduce the negative impacts of the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, along with lost and abandoned fishing gear.

The EU's common fisheries policy and maritime policy will be financed through the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Pending its final approval, this fund will provide over €6.1 billion (2021–2027) for sustainable development in the sector, with a particular focus on supporting small-scale coastal fisheries.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/index_en

f EUmaritimefish

@EU_MARE

Economy, finance and the euro

The Economic and Monetary Union provides a common foundation for stability, jobs and growth across the EU.

The Economic and Monetary Union binds the EU's economies together through coordinated economic and fiscal policies, harmonised rules for financial institutions, a common monetary policy and a common currency, the euro. It is a powerful tool to deliver jobs, growth, social fairness and financial stability. However, while there have been important institutional reforms to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union in recent years, it remains a work in progress.

What the EU does

The EU's economic and financial policies aim to:

- create jobs and boost investment;
- promote economic stability;
- improve the efficient functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union;
- regulate financial institutions and complex financial products;
- preserve financial stability and protect taxpayers in financial crises;
- strengthen the international role of the euro.

While all 27 Member States are a part of the Economic and Monetary Union, many have taken their integration further and adopted the euro as their currency. Together, these countries make up the euro area. Today, the euro is used by more than 340 million people in 19 Member States. Euro notes and coins are a tangible symbol of the freedom, convenience and opportunities that the EU makes possible.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the EU took action to address some of the institutional weaknesses the crisis exposed in the Economic and Monetary Union and create a safer financial sector. The EU has strengthened economic governance, designed a system to safeguard financial stability in the euro area, improved Member States' public finances and promoted reforms to encourage investment. Moreover, the EU put in place harmonised rules to increase the resilience of EU financial institutions and strengthen supervision of banks in the euro area.

The strong foundations provided by the Economic and Monetary Union have helped Member States weather the unprecedented economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the necessity of responding to crises quickly, decisively and in a coordinated manner. The EU responded by allowing Member States to depart from their normal budgetary requirements, creating the €100 billion SURE initiative to help protect jobs and workers and launching the unprecedented €723.8 billion (current prices) Recovery and Resilience Facility, the centrepiece of NextGenerationEU. The facility is financing the investments and reforms contained in the recovery and resilience plans prepared by Member States. These measures will support the green and digital transitions while helping EU countries to emerge stronger from the pandemic.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro_en
https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/banking-and-finance_en

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Employment and social affairs

The EU contributes to the creation of more and better jobs across Europe and aims for fair social standards for all, including through the €99.3 billion European Social Fund Plus for the 2021–2027 period.

Responsibility for employment policies and social affairs is shared between the EU and its Member States. The Commission has made jobs, growth and investment a top priority, backed up by NextGenerationEU, the EU's recovery plan to tackle the social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What the EU does

The EU's employment and social affairs policies are designed to:

- create quality jobs throughout the EU;
- help workers to find employment in their own or another Member State;
- promote skills and entrepreneurship;
- coordinate and modernise social security schemes;
- create better working conditions through common minimum standards;
- support social inclusion and combat poverty and homelessness;
- protect the rights of people with disabilities.

The EU provides and coordinates funding to help Member States to invest in areas like childcare, healthcare, training, accessible infrastructure and help with finding a job. The European Social Fund Plus will help millions of people to acquire new skills, in particular those required for the green and digital transitions, and find better jobs. The Youth Guarantee helps ensure that all people under 30 receive a good quality and concrete offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Meanwhile, the new aim, learn, master, achieve (ALMA) initiative aims to help disadvantaged young people who are vulnerable as regards their chances of accessing work or training for individual or structural reasons.

The European Skills Agenda is designed to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills, and sets ambitious objectives to be achieved by 2025.

The European Pillar of Social Rights enshrines principles and rights in the areas of equal opportunities on the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection. An action plan to turn the principles into reality sets key targets for employment, training, and social protection and inclusion to be reached by 2030.

EU rules on social security coordination do not replace national systems but protect the social security rights of people when they move within the EU (and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). The European Labour Authority ensures that EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way. EURES, the European job mobility portal, helps connect jobseekers and companies offering a job, while the Europass service helps people build their CVs.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/employment-and-social-affairs_en

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Jobs, growth and investment

The EU is committed to creating a more attractive investment environment that will drive economic growth and create jobs. It aims to do this by removing barriers to investment and ensuring that EU citizens are equipped with the skills needed for the jobs of the future.

The EU is addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, while working to help EU citizens successfully navigate the green and digital transitions. It aims to ensure that the transformation of the EU's economy is fair and inclusive so that every citizen can reap the benefits offered by the twin transitions and to make sure no one is left behind.

What the EU does

The InvestEU programme is an important element of the EU's recovery plan to tackle the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the EU's long-term priorities. It builds on the success of the investment plan for Europe, which mobilised more than €500 billion between 2015 and 2020 to help close the gap in investment caused by the 2007–2008 financial crisis. To help investment recover even further, InvestEU provides an EU budget guarantee to help businesses in the EU access and attract the funding they need. It aims to trigger at least €372 billion in additional investment between 2021 and 2027.

The programme focuses on four key policy areas:

- sustainable infrastructure,
- research, innovation and digitisation,
- small and medium-sized businesses, and
- social investment and skills.

To complement the programme, the InvestEU advisory hub will act as a one-stop shop for the identification, preparation and development of investment projects across the EU.

The rapid shift towards a climate neutral and digital Europe is changing the way we work. The European Skills Agenda is already helping to address this challenge and sets objectives to be achieved by 2025. It puts into practice key principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which aims to create a fair and inclusive European labour market. To ensure concrete benefits for citizens, key targets for employment, training, and social protection and inclusion have been set for 2030.

The Just Transition Mechanism, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and, in the future, the proposed Social Climate Fund will provide support to reduce regional and social disparities. The Commission is also working to identify concrete measures and solutions for Europe's demographic challenges, so as to support people, regions and communities that are most affected.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro_en

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Regions

Regional policy targets all regions and cities in the EU in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth and sustainable development, and to improve citizens' quality of life.

Modernising the airports of Riga and Wrocław; improving urban mobility in Athens, Sofia and Cluj-Napoca; preserving Mont Saint-Michel and safeguarding Pompeii; developing broadband infrastructure across Lithuania; supporting businesses in Utrecht and Paredes; renewing wastewater treatment in Trenčín and Slavonski Brod; and promoting the use of information technologies in universities in Nicosia and Ljubljana – these are just some examples of the thousands of projects co-funded by the EU's regional policy.

What the EU does

Regional policy underpins European solidarity, boosting economic growth and improving quality of life through strategic investment. It dedicates the bulk of its funding to help the EU's less-developed countries and regions to catch up and to therefore reduce the economic, social and territorial disparities that still exist in the EU.

Regional policy is jointly managed by the Commission and the EU Member States and their regions, which choose the projects that will be co-financed by the EU under programmes agreed on in advance with the Commission. EU funds are always topped up with national (private and/or public) funds.

Through the European territorial cooperation (Interreg) programmes, regional policy pays particular attention to the needs and potential of border regions.

Almost a third (€392 billion) of the EU's 2021–2027 budget has been set aside for regional policy. These resources are used to finance strategic transport and communication infrastructures; to favour a transition to a more environmentally friendly economy; to help small and medium-sized enterprises to become more innovative and more competitive; to create new and lasting job opportunities; to reinforce and modernise education systems; and to build a more inclusive society.

In addition, under NextGenerationEU, the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) will provide more than €50 billion of fresh resources to existing programmes in the Member States until 2023 to support the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve the EU's goal of becoming the first climate-neutral continent, the Just Transition Mechanism will help mobilise around €55 billion between 2021 and 2027 to support regions most affected by the shift to a climate-neutral economy. The proposed Social Climate Fund also aims to help Member States support the transition to climate neutrality for people most reliant on fossil fuels.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/regional-policy_en

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Research and innovation

The €95.5 billion research and innovation programme Horizon Europe is helping to boost jobs and growth and tackle some of our biggest challenges.

Research and innovation are essential to our economy and society. They are at the heart of European efforts to create jobs and boost growth and investment, and help make people's lives better through improvements in areas such as healthcare, transport and energy. They also provide us with the knowledge and solutions to tackle both urgent problems such the COVID-19 pandemic and longer-term challenges such as climate change and the fight against cancer.

What the EU does

The EU is the world's biggest knowledge factory, accounting for almost a third of global science and technology production. However, in the face of increasing competition, the EU must keep turning excellent research and innovative ideas into successful technologies and products. All EU Member States have their own research policies and funding programmes, but many important issues can be best tackled by helping researchers and innovators in different countries to work together. This is why research and innovation is supported at the EU level, in particular through the Horizon Europe programme.

Horizon Europe is one of the largest and most ambitious research programmes in the world, investing €95.5 billion of funding (2021–2027), in addition to the other public and private investment that this money attracts. Building on the achievements of the Horizon 2020 programme, it continues to drive Europe's scientific excellence through the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships and exchanges. It also draws on the scientific advice, technical support and dedicated research of the Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Centre.

Horizon Europe has established a series of EU missions – a new way of working together to tackle big challenges in health, climate and the environment. Each of the five missions work as a set of actions to achieve concrete results by 2030.

Horizon Europe also supports European partnerships, which bring the EU, national authorities and the private sector together to address some of Europe's most pressing challenges through concerted research and innovation initiatives. They will help strengthen the new European research area, which aims to create a single EU market for research, innovation and technology and enables countries to be more effective by aligning their research policies and programmes.

Mandatory open access to publications and open science principles are applied throughout the Horizon Europe programme.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/research-and-innovation_en

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Single market

The single market is one of the EU's greatest achievements. For 30 years it has helped to make everyday life easier for citizens and businesses, allowing goods, services, people and money to move freely around the EU.

Thanks to the single market (sometimes also called the internal market) EU citizens can study, live, shop, work and retire in any EU Member State and enjoy products from all over Europe. Companies are able to expand their operations, while competition helps to bring prices down and give consumers more choice. At the same time, the EU works to ensure that these greater freedoms do not undermine fairness, consumer protection, workers' rights or environmental sustainability.

BETTER EQUIPPED
SINGLE MARKET

What the EU does

Underpinned by the EU's industrial strategy, the single market plays an essential role in supporting businesses on the path to the green and digital transitions. It also helps shield companies from supply shocks and crises while strengthening their global competitiveness.

The EU is working to:

- build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for example, by addressing supply chain disruptions;
- ensure the single market creates more opportunities for companies and entrepreneurs to expand their businesses;
- tackle obstacles that prevent people from easily buying or selling goods and services from or in another Member State and workers from moving freely;
- make sure the same rules on fairness, opportunities and obligations also apply to the digital economy;
- improve reskilling and upskilling across industrial sectors;
- ensure access to finance, standards and patents to build, scale and protect European leadership in innovative technologies.

New industrial alliances in key areas where the EU is dependent on non-EU countries play a key role in achieving its goals. As part of these efforts, the EU has presented new measures to improve the shift to a circular economy and to secure a more sustainable supply of critical raw materials.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up 99 % of all companies in the EU, provide two thirds of total private-sector employment. EU policies encourage the creation of new businesses and support innovative enterprises in their efforts to scale up.

With a budget of €4.2 billion for 2021 to 2027, the Single Market Programme consolidates a wide range of activities in areas such as food safety, consumer protection, standardisation and competitiveness, reducing overlaps and improving coordination.

The Your Europe portal contains information on living, working, travelling, studying and doing business in another Member State. It also offers access to services such as Your Europe Advice and the SOLVIT problem-solving network.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu_en

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Consumer protection

EU consumer policy safeguards consumers' rights, ensures products are safe, helps people make informed choices when they buy goods and services and offers tools to solve problems if something goes wrong.

The EU single market offers consumers access to greater choice, flexibility, quality and value for money. EU consumer policy ensures that people's rights will be upheld if they encounter any problems when buying goods or services from other Member States, building trust and encouraging trade, including online.

What the EU does

The New Consumer Agenda sets out the EU's strategy up until 2025. It outlines the measures that the EU will take to respond to new challenges such as COVID-19 and the green and digital transitions. These include addressing environmental and sustainability concerns, enforcing consumer rights and protecting vulnerable consumers.

The EU offers consumers a set of practical rights when something goes wrong.

- Online shoppers have 14 days to reconsider their purchase and withdraw. They may return a product within 2 weeks and get their money back.
- If an item bought in the EU (online or in a shop) is not as advertised or does not work properly, the consumer has the right to at least a free repair or replacement.
- EU rules on mortgage credits ensure clear information in advertisements and timely information to consumers before signing a contract.
- There are minimum standards for passenger rights across all modes of transport, including information, assistance and compensation in the event of cancellations or long delays.

The EU also provides help to resolve disputes with traders quickly and efficiently. The online dispute resolution platform allows consumers and traders to resolve disputes over online purchases. The European Consumer Centres Network provides free help and advice to consumers on their cross-border purchases. New EU rules will, by mid 2023 at the latest, make it easier for organisations to defend the collective interests of consumers and bring actions to court.

Stringent safety, health and environmental standards apply to toys, electrical appliances, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Strict rules ensure that unsafe products are recalled from the market, with hundreds of products notified via the EU's rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products every year. In 2021, the Commission proposed to revise rules on product safety, including new rules for online marketplaces, along with a revision of EU rules on consumer credit.

The EU's Circular Economy Action Plan aligns consumer and environmental rights, focusing on higher quality, longer lasting, sustainable products.

Find out more:
https://commission.europa.eu/live-work-travel-eu/consumer-rights-and-complaints_en

f facebook.com/EUJustice   @EU_Consumer

Fair competition

EU competition rules aim to ensure that all companies compete fairly and equally in the single market to the benefit of consumers, businesses and the European economy as a whole.

Together with national competition authorities and national courts, the Commission enforces EU competition rules to make sure that companies compete fairly with each other. This helps to reduce prices and improve quality, encourages innovation and efficiency and creates a wider choice for consumers.
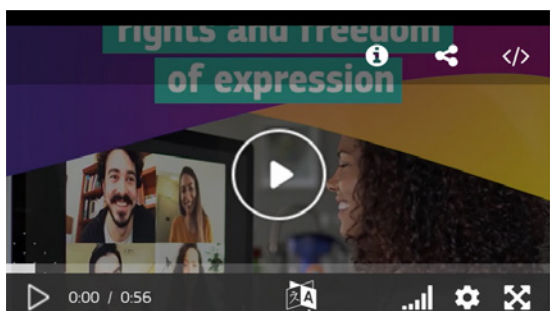
What the EU does

The Commission takes action in regard to:

- cartels or other illegal arrangements between companies to avoid competing with each other or that set artificially high prices;
- cases where major players abuse their dominant position in markets to try to squeeze out competitors or charge excessive prices;
- company mergers and takeovers that could restrict competition in the single market;
- financial support (State aid) from EU governments to companies, which may distort competition in the single market by favouring some companies over others; and
- promoting competition culture internationally so that EU companies enjoy fair competition in markets elsewhere in the world.

The enforcement of competition policy benefits EU citizens. For example, in 2020, conservative estimates by the Commission put customer savings from cartel prohibitions and merger interventions at between €14 billion and €23.3 billion.

EU investigations into anti-competitive practices cover goods, professions and services. The Commission monitors the assistance EU governments give to businesses to ensure that it does not give certain companies an unfair advantage over their competitors. State aid may be allowed if it helps or promotes disadvantaged regions, small and medium-sized businesses, research and development, environmental protection, training, employment or culture.

New rules on State aid introduced in January 2022 align with the EU's important objectives under the European Green Deal. They aim to help EU Member States meet their ambitious EU energy and climate targets, supporting projects for environmental protection, including climate protection and green energy generation.

The EU is also working to ensure its legislation keeps pace with the digital transformation. The Digital Markets Act, for example, will prevent online platforms that act as gatekeepers from imposing unfair conditions on businesses and consumers through a clear list of dos and don'ts. Meanwhile the Digital Services Act will impose binding EU-wide obligations on intermediaries providing digital services that connect consumers to goods, services or content, making it easier for smaller platforms to scale up across the EU single market.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/competition-policy/index_en

@EU_Competition   @dg-competition

Tax and customs

While national governments independently set and collect taxes, the EU is responsible for a customs union that ensures the free movement and safety of goods in the single market.

EU Member State governments are broadly free to design their tax laws according to their national priorities. However, in doing so, they must respect certain fundamental principles and ensure that national tax rules do not hinder the EU's single market.

The EU customs union makes it easier for companies to trade, harmonises customs duties on goods from outside the EU and helps protect EU citizens and the environment.

What the EU does

The EU does not have a direct role in raising or setting tax rates, rather it oversees national tax rules to ensure they promote jobs and growth and to ensure that one country's taxes do not discriminate against consumers, workers or businesses from other Member States.

The governments of all Member States must agree when it comes to making EU decisions so that everyone's interests are taken into account. For some taxes – such as value added tax or excise duties on petrol, tobacco and alcohol – Member States have agreed common rules to simplify online and offline cross-border commerce and ensure a level playing field between EU and non-EU companies and platforms.

In 2021, the Commission set out its vision for a new, fairer and more transparent EU business tax system for the 21st century. It includes actions to cut red tape, support small businesses and fight tax abuse. With its proposal for a minimum corporation tax rate of at least 15 % for all multinational companies, the Commission aims to make the EU among the first to implement the 2021 historic global tax reform agreement. This should ultimately ensure that all companies are taxed fairly, wherever they do business.

To ensure a level playing field across the single market, the EU must function as a single customs union, with the same tariffs, standards and procedures to handle goods imported from abroad. No customs duties are applied to goods that are transported from one Member State to another.

In practice, the EU's customs union is managed by the national customs services. They protect consumers, animals and the environment from goods that could be harmful, and they contribute to the fight against organised crime, terrorism and smuggling. Once goods have cleared customs, they can circulate freely or be sold anywhere within Europe.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/index_en

@EU_Taxud

Space

The EU's space policy actively contributes to fighting climate change, stimulates technological advances and innovation, and improves the lives of EU citizens.

Space technology, data and services are essential to the daily lives of Europeans (e.g. for using mobile phones, car navigation systems and automated teller machines (ATMs)). Satellites also provide valuable data and services for a wide array of applications, from transport, agriculture and the environment to crisis response.

What the EU does

The EU has a competitive and growing space industry – estimated to be worth up to €62 billion – that employs more than 230 000 people and is responsible for one third of all satellites currently in orbit.

The following flagship components deliver European space-based services on a daily basis.

- Copernicus is the EU's Earth-observation system. The data generated by its satellites is used in many areas, from monitoring climate change and its effects to directing emergency and humanitarian services. Copernicus data has been used to locate vessels in distress and to respond to forest fires, earthquakes and floods, helping save lives and property.
- Galileo, the EU's global satellite navigation system, provides accurate and reliable positioning and timing information for all modes of transport, vehicles, railways, aviation and other sectors. Thanks to Galileo, 3.2 billion smartphones are equipped with a safe and independent positioning system.
- The European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) monitors and corrects satellite navigation signals for aviation, maritime and land-based users over most of Europe. 426 airports in the EU are already using EGNOS to make landings in adverse weather conditions safer, avoiding delays and rerouting.

The 2021–2027 EU space programme, with a budget of €14.9 billion, builds on their success with a focus on more coordination with other EU policy areas. It aims to encourage scientific and technical progress and support the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the European space industry, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups and innovative businesses. The Commission has also proposed two new flagship initiatives to boost satellite-based secure connectivity and space traffic management.

Through individual EU Member States and the European Space Agency, the EU has developed world-class technology in space exploration. Achievements include the development of new rockets and satellites and robot explorers on the Moon and Mars. While space exploration is strategically and politically important, the EU is also helping scientists to unlock the secrets of the universe; in 2019 EU-funded researchers unveiled the first-ever photograph of a black hole.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/defence-industry-space/eu-space-policy_en

Copernicus EU   @defis_eu

International affairs and security

The common foreign and security policy enables the EU to speak and act as one in world affairs, allowing Member States to tackle challenges they cannot solve alone and ensuring the security and prosperity of EU citizens.

The policy is implemented by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and supported by the European External Action Service, the EU's diplomatic service. The EU's external actions are guided by the principles that inspired its own creation and development, and which it seeks to promote in the wider world, including peace, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

What the EU does

At a time of increasing and complex security threats, the EU Strategic Compass on security and defence will strengthen the EU's ability to react to crises and threats over the coming decade. The Strategic Compass focuses on:

- acting more quickly and decisively when a crisis happens;
- securing citizens against fast-changing threats;
- investing in the capabilities and technologies the EU needs;
- partnering with others to achieve common goals.

The EU supports countries facing conflicts and crises. With the European Peace Facility, the EU is taking on more responsibility as a global security provider. The facility funds the common costs of military missions and operations under the common security and defence policy and peace support operations in cooperation with partners such as the African Union. It also strengthens the defence capacities of partner countries and regional and international organisations and has been instrumental in supporting Ukraine in its response to Russia's military aggression.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU has also taken steps to ensure that global food security is restored through international cooperation.

The EU and its Member States have remained the largest donors in the international response to the Syria crisis, supporting people in Syria and the region through investment totalling more than €27 billion since 2011.

The Global Gateway is the EU's new investment strategy to boost smart, clean and secure energy, transport and digital infrastructure, and strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. The EU, its Member States and its financial institutions, acting together as Team Europe, aim to mobilise up to €300 billion in public and private investment between 2021 and 2027. The Global Gateway is the EU's contribution to the G7's Global Partnership for Infrastructure and Investment.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world_en

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International partnerships

Partnerships and development cooperation lie at the heart of the EU's foreign policy. The EU and its Member States are the world's largest provider of development aid.

Development assistance is one of the pillars of the EU's action around the world, alongside foreign, security and trade policies. The EU promotes poverty eradication, human development, sustainable growth and good governance. It does this by creating partnerships to address global challenges such as climate change, natural resources depletion and irregular migration. The EU upholds effective multilateralism and works with all stakeholders, since current challenges call for more multilateral governance and rules-based international cooperation.
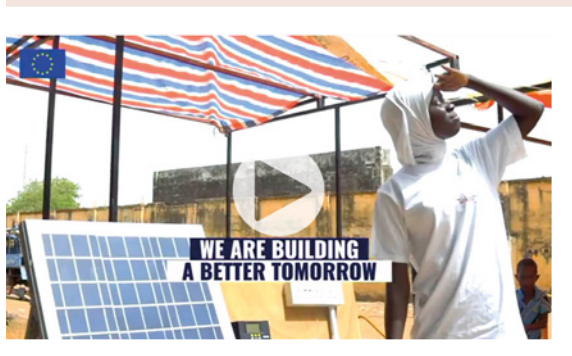
What the EU does

The EU sees international partnerships as an investment in a viable, sustainable and shared future. The EU is a leading advocate of the UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The European consensus on development sets out how the EU focuses on people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership in working towards the sustainable development goals. The EU structures its external action around:

- green deal alliances;
- alliances for science, technology, innovation and the digital transition;
- alliances for sustainable growth and jobs, including through investment in education and skills;
- migration partnerships;
- governance, peace and security, and human development, with a particular focus on women and youth.

The Africa–EU partnership remains a key priority for the EU.

In 2020, the EU responded quickly to the COVID-19 crisis. The Team Europe approach, which combines resources, expertise and tools from the EU, its Member States and financial institutions, has helped the EU's partners mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The EU is also leading the charge to make safe and effective vaccines accessible to all. The Team Europe approach is now being applied in the EU's budget for external action: the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe.

The EU dedicates around 10 % of its budget to external action. The EU's delegations work hand in hand with governments, international organisations, EU Member States and the private sector to increase the impact of Europe's support. Collectively, the EU and its Member States provided €66.8 billion of aid in 2020.

The values of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law guide the EU's action around the world. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy focuses on protecting and empowering individuals, building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies and promoting human rights worldwide. Thanks to the Gender Action Plan, gender equality and women's empowerment are at the forefront of the EU's work.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_en
https://www.youtube.com/user/EUintheWorld

EUPartnerships/   @EU_Partnerships   @eu_partnerships/

EU neighbourhood and enlargement

The EU encourages stable democracies and economies in neighbouring countries by building tailor-made partnerships based on shared interests and cooperation at bilateral or regional level.

What the EU does

European Neighbourhood policy governs the EU's relations with 16 of its closest neighbours. To the south: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, Syria and Tunisia. To the east: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

This cooperation aims mainly to:

- stabilise neighbouring countries by addressing economic development, employment and opportunities for young people, transport and energy connectivity, security and migration;
- promote the values of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights;
- facilitate cooperation at regional level, for example through the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean.

In addition, in the Southern Neighbourhood the EU works alongside its partners to resolve crises such as in Syria or Libya, and to regulate migration flows.

EU Enlargement policy covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo**, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye. The prospect of EU membership is a powerful stimulus for democratic and economic reforms in European countries that want to join the EU. It helps to foster reconciliation and stability. A European country can only become an EU Member State if it meets democratic standards (including the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities), has a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU, and can take on the responsibilities of EU membership.

Türkiye is the EU's partner in many essential areas, however, in recent years it has been moving further away from the EU's core values and principles. Therefore, Türkiye's accession negotiations are effectively frozen. The EU has a strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Türkiye.

In 2020, the EU provided aid worth €7.47 billion to neighbourhood and enlargement regions to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU has provided emergency response, supported research, health and water systems and addressed the economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/eu-enlargement_en

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Trade

The EU champions free trade. 35 million EU jobs are, directly or indirectly, supported by trade with countries outside the EU. The EU fights for open, rules-based markets, a level playing field and the highest international standards across the world.

The EU is the world's largest trading power and one of the most open economies. A third of the EU's gross domestic product depends on trade. 85 % of future global growth is forecast to come from outside Europe. The EU negotiates and agrees international trade agreements on behalf of its Member States.

What the EU does

The EU's trade policy covers trade in goods and services, but also in matters such as the commercial aspects of intellectual property and foreign direct investment.

In February 2021, the Commission presented a new EU trade strategy, which sets out three main objectives:

- supporting the recovery and transformation of the EU economy in a way that supports our green and digital ambitions;
- shaping global rules to ensure that they are fair and sustainable;
- increasing the EU's ability to pursue its interests and enforce its rights.

At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to reforming the World Trade Organization so that it is better able to respond to the challenges of modern trade.

Trade policy can play an important role in combating climate change and environmental degradation. Therefore the EU will improve the implementation and enforcement of sustainable development chapters in its trade agreements. Specifically, the EU will propose to make respect for the Paris Agreement on climate change an essential element in future trade and investment agreements.

The EU stands for open and fair trade and fights against protectionism. It strikes a balance between being open and ensuring that people and companies are defended against unfair trade practices. With the newly appointed Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, the EU is putting a specific focus on maximising the benefits of trade agreements for companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and farmers, and on ensuring that its trade partners honour their commitments, including on sustainable development.

The EU has 46 trade agreements in force with 78 partners around the world. In 2020, the EU reached a new agreement on trade with Mexico, and its trade deal with Vietnam entered into force. In its first year, the agreement with Japan had already boosted EU exports, with almost 7 % growth in the first 10 months of the agreement.

Following the United Kingdom's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020, the EU and the United Kingdom signed the EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 30 December 2020.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/trade_en

@Trade_EU

Humanitarian aid and civil protection

The EU, together with its Member States, is among the world's leading donors of humanitarian aid. It provides critical relief to millions across the globe, and coordinates emergency assistance in Europe and worldwide.

The EU responds to crisis situations and ensures rapid and effective delivery of relief assistance through two main channels: humanitarian aid and civil protection. The EU aims to:

- save and preserve life, prevent and alleviate suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of populations affected by natural disasters and human-made crises;
- provide rapid response to emergencies both inside and outside the EU;
- reduce disaster risks, for example, through action to mitigate the consequences of climate change;
- improve disaster preparedness, for instance, with early warning systems;
- ensure a smooth transition when an emergency operation comes to an end, by linking up with development aid strategies;
- strengthen the overall resilience of populations, for example, by investing in measures to help them prepare for future disasters; and
- protect and ensure the future of children caught up in disasters.

What the EU does

Working with a diverse range of partners, the EU has been supporting humanitarian operations in 110 countries for over 30 years. The EU provided more than €2.4 billion in humanitarian aid in 2021. It is a leading humanitarian donor in many crises, for example, by providing:

- emergency assistance to support people fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine;
- humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced people in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen;
- emergency relief to displaced people inside Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries;
- life-saving humanitarian projects and assistance in the worst affected communities in the Central African Republic and South Sudan;
- emergency assistance through the humanitarian air bridge in fragile and conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan.

The EU also sends emergency response teams and channels aid to affected regions within the EU and across the globe through its Civil Protection Mechanism, for example, by:

- responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe and worldwide, including delivering COVID-19-related supplies via rescEU and repatriating EU citizens stranded abroad;
- sending experts and equipment to countries affected by earthquakes (Haiti), volcanic eruptions (Tonga), forest fires (the western Balkans and the Mediterranean) and to contain the outbreak of Ebola in Guinea in 2021;
- channelling millions of emergency items (such as first aid kits, tents and beds) to Ukraine and neighbouring countries in the largest operation since the mechanism was created.
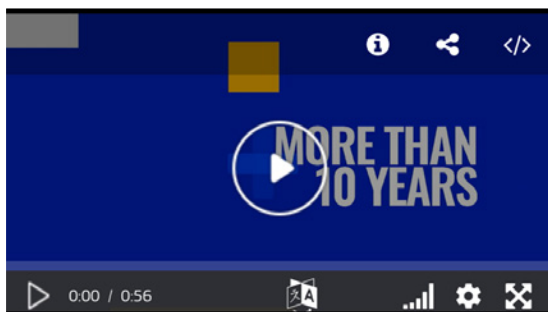
Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/

Fundamental rights

The EU guarantees a range of fundamental rights. Respect for fundamental rights is a common value for the EU and its Member States, and guides the EU's action both inside and outside its borders.

The EU is not simply a single market for goods and services. Europeans share values and rights set down in the EU treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

What the EU does

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together all the personal, civil, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people in the EU. These rights are guaranteed in EU countries and wherever EU law is applied and include human dignity, freedom of expression and association, right to non-discrimination, right to asylum and the right to a fair trial.

In addition, the charter enshrines specific rights linked to EU citizenship under the EU treaties, by granting EU citizens:

- the freedom to move, live, work and study in any EU country;
- the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in local and EU elections;
- the right to lodge a petition to the European Parliament;
- the right to submit a complaint to the European Ombudsman;
- the right to consular protection outside the EU.

The protection of fundamental rights is also ensured through specific EU laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation, legislation that aims to prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation, and laws protecting whistle-blowers and victims of crime.

The EU also ensures the protection of fundamental rights through dedicated policy measures and close cooperation with EU countries and civil society, for instance, on hate crime and hate speech, gender equality and non-discrimination, civil and criminal justice, the digitalisation of justice, data protection, upholding the rule of law, rights of the child and consumer rights.

The EU's legislative and policy work in the area of fundamental rights is supported by the Citizens Equality Rights and Values programme.

The EU is working to achieve a Union of equality through a set of strategies, which aim to challenge stereotypes and create conditions that ensure that everyone can participate fully and freely in European society.

The EU also promotes and defends universal values worldwide. In 2021, the EU launched the Global Human Rights and Democracy programme, worth €1.5 billion, from 2021 to 2027. The EU has also put in place a global human rights sanctions regime, which allows it to better target those responsible for serious violations globally.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/justice-and-fundamental-rights_en

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Justice and the rule of law

The EU works to ensure the uniform application of EU law, to solve cross-border legal problems for its citizens, and to promote and uphold the rule of law.

The EU strives to create an area of justice where citizens and businesses can resolve legal issues in other EU Member States in the same way as they can at home. A borderless and seamless common justice area will ensure that citizens can rely on a set of rights and can access justice throughout the EU.
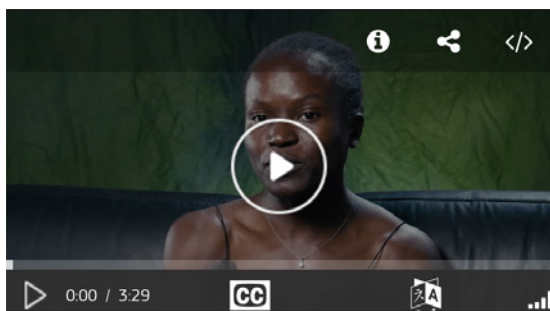
What the EU does

EU citizens can live, study, work and do business anywhere in the EU. This could mean having to deal with the judicial authorities of another Member State.

The EU seeks to strengthen mutual trust between the courts and administrations of the Member States so they recognise each other's judicial decisions. This is especially important in civil cases such as divorce, child custody or maintenance claims.

The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) facilitates cooperation between national justice authorities to help fight serious crimes such as corruption, terrorism, and drug trafficking and distribution. The European Arrest Warrant, for example, has replaced lengthy extradition procedures to return suspected or convicted criminals back to the country where they will be or have been tried. Meanwhile, the EU strategy on victims' rights aims to ensure that all victims of crime in the EU have the support and protection they need.

The Court of Justice of the European Union ensures that EU law is applied in the same way in all Member States. The EU is working towards the modernisation of EU justice systems to keep pace with the digital transformation and ensure easier and faster access to justice. Progress can be tracked through the EU justice scoreboard, which provides data on the efficiency, quality and independence of the justice systems in all Member States, while the e-Justice portal offers a one-stop shop for all justice matters.

The rule of law – one of the fundamental values of the EU – means independent and efficient justice systems must offer adequate judicial protection to everyone in the EU. It is necessary to protect all other values and is essential to the functioning of the EU. It guarantees the application of EU law, the efficiency of the internal market and fosters mutual trust, enabling a business-friendly environment.

The EU works with Member States to uphold and strengthen the rule of law through the Rule of Law Mechanism and by providing technical support and funding for justice reforms.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights_en
https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law_en

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Gender equality

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the EU, dating back to the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The EU continues to work to tackle gender-based discrimination and to make gender equality a reality.

Although women in Europe should enjoy equality, empowerment and safety, they are still over-represented in the lower-paid sectors, under-represented in decision-making positions in politics and business and earn on average 13 % less than men across the EU. Gender-based violence and harassment also remain widespread.

#StopViolenceAgainstWomen

What the EU does

The EU's work on gender equality is driven by the 2020–2025 gender equality strategy. Its goal is to end gender-based violence, challenge gender stereotypes, close gender gaps in the labour market and promote gender balance in decision-making and in politics. The strategy builds on decades of EU initiatives on gender equality.

To enforce the principle of equal pay for equal work enshrined in the Treaty of Rome, the Commission has proposed pay transparency measures, including gender pay gap reporting obligations for big companies. Employees will also have the right to compensation for discrimination in pay.

Violence against women is one of the most persistent forms of gender-based discrimination in Europe. The Commission has proposed new EU-wide rules to combat violence against women and domestic violence, which aim at punishing offenders and ensuring better protection of women, including online. All Member States and the EU have signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

The EU is also working to help women break the glass ceiling in business and politics and to boost women's participation in the digital sector. In particular, the Commission is seeking to improve gender balance in company boards in the EU's largest listed companies.

But life is not just about work and money. The work–life balance directive, which entered into force in July 2019 and had to be transposed by Member States by August 2022, introduces new rights to help balance the sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. This covers paternity, parental and carers' leave, along with flexible working arrangements for parents and carers.

The EU aims to improve the lives of girls and women worldwide through its Gender Action Plan III. This promotes gender equality issues in its external action, including in areas such as development cooperation and trade negotiations. The EU also led the way in negotiating the inclusion of gender equality targets in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality_en

Racism and equality

The EU aims to ensure that everyone can enjoy their fundamental rights, freedoms and equal participation in society, irrespective of their origin.

Although discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin is prohibited in the EU, racism and racial discrimination persist. The EU is working to combat racism and intolerance on all fronts.
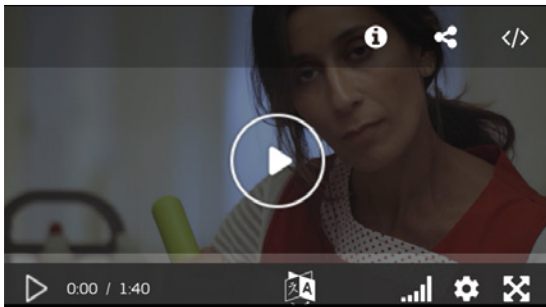
What the EU does

The EU is stepping up its efforts to tackle racism and discrimination through the 2020–2025 EU anti-racism action plan, and the appointment of the first ever coordinator for anti-racism.

The EU rejects and condemns all forms of racism and intolerance. The anti-racism action plan sets out a series of measures to:

- tackle racism and racial discrimination through and beyond legislation and ensure that EU legislation prohibiting hate speech and hate crime, including online, is applied on the ground;
- step up action against structural racism;
- help amplify the voices of people with a minority racial or ethnic background and bring together actors at all levels in a common endeavour to build a life free from racism and discrimination for all;
- provide funding for building inclusive societies and promoting tolerance and pluralism;
- promote diversity among Commission staff and ensure a discrimination-free and inclusive workplace for all, irrespective of people's racial or ethnic origin or skin colour.

Unequal treatment on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, including relating to employment, is prohibited under the Racial Equality Directive, the Employment Equality Directive and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Policies are in place to combat specific forms of racism. For example, the EU strategy on combating antisemitism aims to prevent all forms of antisemitism, foster Jewish life and promote remembrance and education about the Holocaust. Another strategic framework is in place to advance Roma equality.

The Victims' Rights Directive protects victims of hate crime. The EU strategy on victims' rights (2020–2025) aims to ensure that all victims of crime receive support and protection no matter where in the EU the crime takes place.

The EU is also devoted to preventing and countering the spread of online hatred while always protecting freedom of expression. The 2016 code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online has enabled users to flag online hate speech and allows platforms to swiftly review and remove illegal or harmful content.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia_en

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LGBTIQ equality

The EU guarantees a range of fundamental rights for its citizens and protects them from discrimination. This includes members of the LGBTIQ community.

Around 76 % of Europeans polled in 2019 agreed that gay, lesbian or bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people. However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer people (LGBTIQ) can face discrimination in many areas of life, along with hate speech and violence.

What the EU does

In 2020, the Commission adopted its first LGBTIQ equality strategy, addressing discrimination, safety, inclusivity and equality.

The strategy builds on over 20 years of action at the EU level. Since 1999, the EU has had the power to act in cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation. EU actions include the following.

- The Employment Equality Framework Directive, which obliges all EU countries to provide legal protection against discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation in respect of job applications, promotion, training, working conditions and pay and dismissal.
- The Gender Recast Directive that protects trans people against discrimination in their professional life arising from gender reassignment and the Directive on Sex Equality in Social Security to protect people against discrimination in social security.
- The Victims' Rights Directive, which created a set of binding rights for victims of hate speech or violence and obliges EU countries to ensure they are put into practice.

Across the world, same-gender relationships are still criminalised in several countries, with little protection for LGBTIQ people. The EU encourages other countries to ensure that sexual orientation, gender identity or sexual characteristics cannot be grounds for violence or criminal penalties.

The EU is also a major donor worldwide to projects aimed at combating discrimination, mainly through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Since 2016, the EU has supported projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and eastern Europe. In 2018, the EU launched a fund to support activists and organisations in areas where LGBTIQ people are at greater risk of discrimination.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality_en

Disability

The EU promotes the active inclusion and full participation in society and the economy of people with disabilities on an equal basis with others, and protects them from discrimination and violence.

Around 87 million people in the EU have some form of disability. They have the same rights and fundamental freedoms as everyone else, including the right to equality and non-discrimination and to be free from exploitation, violence and abuse. The EU is working to create a barrier-free Europe that empowers and enables people with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights.
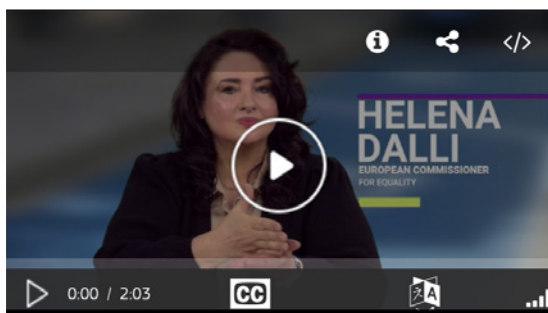
What the EU does

The EU and its Member States are parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU treaties further commit the EU to promote policies that address the rights and needs of people with disabilities.

The 2021–2030 strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities, anchored in the UN convention and building on its predecessor and the European Pillar of Social Rights, sets out concrete initiatives to ensure that people with disabilities can:

- enjoy the same right to free movement as everyone else – the EU parking card and the EU disability card, already piloted in eight Member States, facilitate the mutual recognition of disability status and entitlements between EU countries;
- better participate in the labour market through specific measures to improve their employment opportunities;
- live independently, wherever and with whomever they choose – the AccessibleEU resource centre will contribute to improving access to transport, buildings, information, audiovisual media, communications and technologies;
- participate in society and the economy and be protected from discrimination and violence – the strategy also aims to ensure equal opportunities in and access to justice, education, culture, sport and tourism.

In recent years, a number of EU initiatives and legislation have contributed to improving the lives of people with disabilities in Europe. The European Accessibility Act sets out binding requirements for the accessibility of certain key products and services. Specific rules are also in place to ensure protection against discrimination and equal treatment in employment and occupation.

The EU is also committed to raising awareness of the challenges people with disabilities encounter every day and the tools they need to improve their lives. The European Day of Persons with Disabilities, celebrated at the beginning of December each year, helps bring disability issues to the attention of the broader public. Each year, the Access City Award rewards a city that has made outstanding efforts to become more accessible.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137&langId=en

Over 50s

The EU is working to help people live healthy, active and independent lives for as long as possible. It complements Member States' actions in areas such as employment, health and education, and coordinates joint action on epidemics.

Demographic trends show that in the coming decades, the share of older people in the EU will increase significantly. The Commission's green paper on ageing has launched a debate on the challenges and opportunities of Europe's ageing society. EU countries are addressing the impacts of ageing by improving education and skills systems, encouraging longer and fuller working lives and advancing reforms of social protection, including pensions and long-term care.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE ON REGIONAL LEVEL

In 2019, 31 million Europeans lived in regions with low-income and rapidly shrinking population

0:00 / 1:22

What the EU does

The EU has made it illegal for employers to discriminate on the grounds of age. The European Network of Equality Bodies helps ensure that EU rules on equality and non-discrimination are applied in a uniform way across the EU.

EU initiatives such as the European Skills Agenda, the Pact for Skills and the Digital Education Action Plan help prepare people for the changing world of work. Projects funded by the European Social Fund Plus help millions of Europeans learn new skills and find better jobs each year.

Whether it's for career advancement or for personal development, it's never too late to learn. A wide range of opportunities for the over 50s – from work-based learning courses and training to EU-funded projects – are available through Erasmus+.

EURES, the European job mobility network, helps those looking for a job in another Member State, while EU rules facilitate the coordination of national social security systems, protecting the rights of people moving or retiring within Europe.

A new voluntary pension scheme, the pan-European personal pension product (PEPP), now offers people more choice and enables them to keep saving in the same product, even if they move to another EU country. Every 3 years, the Commission publishes a report on the current and future adequacy of old-age incomes in Member States. Through the 2021–2030 strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities, the EU will contribute to tackling gaps in social protection, including pension schemes, for people with disabilities.

The EU is active in many different areas, such as promoting healthy lifestyles, supporting more effective and sustainable healthcare services, disease prevention and stepping up the fight against cancer.

The EU financially supports non-governmental organisations promoting the right to fair treatment and working to address age discrimination, such as AGE Platform Europe.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu /social/home.jsp

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Digital economy and society

The EU is determined to make the 2020s Europe's digital decade. It is working to ensure that digital technologies work for everyone, while helping to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, and securing Europe's place as a leader in the digital economy.

Digital technologies have never been more important in our lives. During the COVID-19 crisis, they have kept people connected and businesses working, and have proved essential for education and training. They are also crucial in fighting climate change, including through smart energy and transport systems.
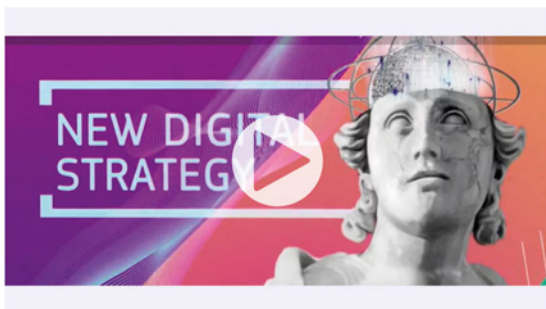
What the EU does

The groundwork for the digital transformation has already been laid. EU action has brought benefits such as:

- an end to additional roaming charges when people use their mobile devices when travelling in the EU;
- access to online content when traveling in the EU;
- strict EU rules on personal data protection;
- free public Wi-Fi hotspots across the EU;
- new rules to ensure better access to public websites for people with disabilities;
- action to fight fake news and online disinformation.

The EU's proposed digital strategy will continue to work on digital solutions that benefit people, businesses and the planet. It focuses on three main objectives: technology that works for people, a fair and competitive economy and an open, democratic and sustainable society.

The Commission has proposed a comprehensive set of rules for online platforms operating in the EU to protect the fundamental rights of citizens online, to address online harm and to foster innovation. Beyond that, the strategy also covers everything from cybersecurity and data to digital education and democracy. The proposed Digital Compass translates the EU's goals for 2030 into concrete targets. Safeguarding EU values and people's fundamental rights and security is a key element.

The Digital Europe programme, with over €7.5 billion in funding between 2021 and 2027, will boost investments in areas such as supercomputing, artificial intelligence and digital skills. It will also ensure wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society, including through digital innovation hubs.

Other programmes will also support the digital transition, including Horizon Europe, which focuses on research and technological development, and the digital aspects of the Connecting Europe Facility. In addition, under the NextGenerationEU recovery fund, Member States should allocate 20 % of their financial support from the Recovery and Resilience Facility to the digital transformation.

Find out more: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en

Digital EU   @DigitalEU

A safer internet

The EU has the strictest data protection and privacy rules in the world. These help ensure that the online environment is safe and fair for citizens and businesses alike and protect people, in particular children, from illegal and harmful content.

The rapid growth of online services in recent years has brought many benefits for Europeans, but also potential new risks. This is why the EU is continually working to ensure that its legislation keeps pace with the digital transformation and that what is illegal offline is also illegal online.

What the EU does

The protection of personal data and privacy are funda-mental rights in the EU. The EU has been applying high standards for data protection and privacy for decades. The law gives people rights as regards data protection and confidentiality of communications, which must be respected by organisations that process their data. In response to the realities of the internet age, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) gives individuals enforceable rights, including the right to be forgotten.

In parallel, the EU is leading efforts to make the digital world a secure place. The cybersecurity strategy aims to strengthen the EU's collective resilience against cyber threats and help ensure that all citizens and businesses can benefit from trustworthy and reliable services and digital tools.

The Commission is tackling the spread of online disinformation and misinformation to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems. Initiatives include the Action Plan and Code of Practice on Disinformation to fight fake news and disinformation; the European Democracy Action Plan and the European Digital Media Observatory.

The EU's Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online aims to ensure that requests to remove racist and xenophobic content are dealt with speedily. Companies, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, have committed to reviewing the majority of these requests in less than 24 hours and to removing the content if necessary.

The safety of children online is paramount. The European strategy for a better internet for children has influenced national policies in most Member States and set a global benchmark for the protection and empowerment of children online. The EU-funded network of Safer Internet Centres helps raise awareness of online safety and foster child participation. New rules on audiovisual media services require online video-sharing platforms to take steps to restrict children's access to harmful content, while the proposed Digital Services Act anticipates specific obligations to address significant risks to the well-being of children. The Commission has also presented an EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse.
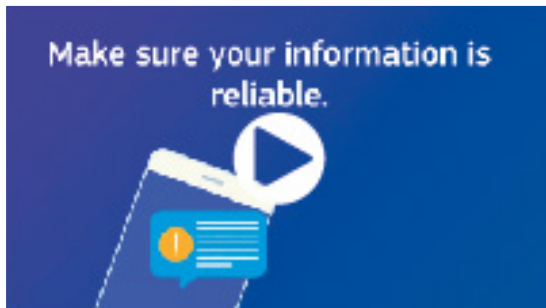
Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/shaping-europe-digital-future_en

@BetterNet4EU @safeinternetday

Citizens and democracy

The EU encourages transparency and democratic participation in a just and fair European political system, and actively promotes citizen engagement in the EU decision-making process.

The EU is governed by the principle of representative democracy, with citizens directly represented at the EU level in the European Parliament and Member States represented in the European Council and the Council of the European Union. The EU works to safeguard European democracy, promote free and fair elections and uphold the electoral rights of EU citizens.

"Europe will not be made all at once or according to a single plan."

What the EU does

The 2019 European parliamentary elections saw the highest voter turnout in 20 years (over 50 %), indicating a healthy level of democratic participation of EU citizens and a desire to be heard.

The Conference on the Future of Europe was launched as part of the EU's commitment to listen to citizens and to give them a greater say on what the EU does and how it works for them. The year-long initiative provided a unique opportunity for Europeans to share their ideas and expectations through a series of citizen-led debates and discussions.

EU citizens can contribute to the European decision-making process in a number of ways. The 'Have your say' website gives citizens and businesses the chance to share their views on new EU policies and existing laws. Meanwhile, the European Citizens' Initiative allows citizens to call on the Commission to propose legislation on areas under EU responsibility, once an initiative has gathered 1 million signatures across at least seven Member States. Citizens' dialogues give people the chance to ask EU politicians questions, make comments and say how EU policies affect them.

The European Democracy Action Plan aims to empower citizens and strengthen democracy in the EU, with measures to promote free and fair elections, fight disinformation, and strengthen media freedom. As part of its work in this area, the Commission has set out concrete action to improve the safety of journalists and media professionals and to protect them from abusive lawsuits.

The Commission has proposed new rules to ensure greater transparency on paid political advertising, which has grown in importance in campaigning in the EU in recent years. It has also proposed to update the current EU rules concerning the funding of EU political parties and the electoral rights of mobile citizens. The Commission reports every 3 years on progress towards effective EU citizenship and new priorities for the years ahead in the area of EU citizenship rights.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy_en

@EUHaveYourSay

The EU budget

The EU budget provides the resources that the EU needs to deliver on its policy agenda. By pooling resources at the EU level, Member States achieve more than by acting alone and can successfully address challenges that know no borders, like climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EU budget consists of long-term plans that cover 7 years. The European Parliament and EU countries in the Council decide on the budget for each year on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. In 2022, the annual budget was about €170 billion, a large sum in absolute terms but only about 1 % of the wealth generated by EU economies every year. Less than 7 % is spent on EU administration.

The EU budget is financed mainly through revenue from customs duties, contributions based on value added tax (VAT), contributions based on non-recycled plastic packaging waste and a direct contribution by EU countries, known as the gross national income-based contribution. To fight any misuse of EU money, the European Anti-Fraud Office independently investigates corruption, fraud and other illegal activities involving EU funds and develops anti-fraud policy for the Commission.
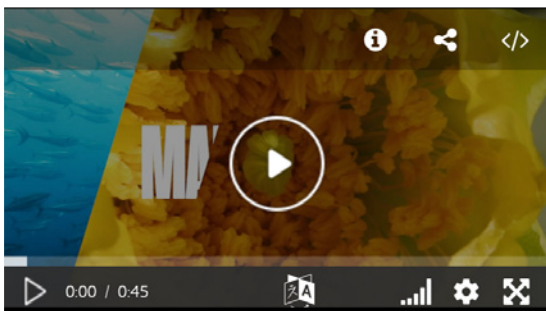
What the EU does

The EU budget has been at the heart of Europe's response to the COVID-19 crisis, through a €2 trillion investment package. It consists of the EU's long-term budget for 2021 to 2027 of €1 211 billion, topped up by €807 billion through NextGenerationEU, a temporary instrument to power the recovery. Funds from this package are being used to support Europe's economic recovery and steer the transition towards a modern, sustainable and resilient EU. To finance NextGenerationEU, the EU is borrowing on the capital markets. The borrowed amounts will be repaid over a long-term period, until 2058. To help with the repayments, the EU is looking into introducing new sources of revenue for the EU budget.

To give some examples, funds from the EU budget enabled the EU to sign advance purchase agreements with pharmaceutical companies for COVID-19 vaccines. On this basis, the EU secured up to 4.2 billion vaccine doses.

In 2022, in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU budget was mobilised to provide emergency assistance, support at the border and in EU countries, and to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the war.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget_en

@EU_Budget

Migration and asylum

The EU's migration and asylum policy helps Europe deal with migration challenges in an effective manner.

The EU works to combat irregular migration and people smuggling, save lives and secure the EU's external borders while still attracting new talent and skills.

Thanks to measures taken by the EU to control its external borders and manage migration, irregular arrivals have fallen by almost 90 % since 2015.
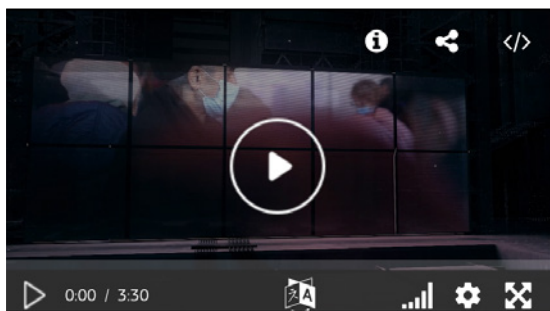
What the EU does

Building on progress made since 2016, the Commission's 2020 proposal for a new pact on migration and asylum will put in place an effective system to manage migration and deal with irregular arrivals, including in times of crisis. The new framework will ensure the fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity between Member States while providing certainty for individual applicants.

The pact ensures that those in genuine need will have the right to stay in the EU, while the first EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration aims to help people with no right to stay in the EU to return voluntarily to and seize opportunities in their home country.

A new policy on legal migration aims to attract people with new skills and talent that will benefit the EU economy, strengthen cooperation with non-EU countries and improve overall migration management in the long term.

Integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe, local communities, the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. While integration policy is primarily the responsibility of Member States, the EU is stepping up action in this area. The 2021–2027 action plan on integration and inclusion aims for inclusion for all through better access to jobs, healthcare, housing and education.

Stepping up the response to migrant smuggling is a common challenge for the EU, its Member States and partner countries alike. Since 2015, over 650 000 lives have been saved at sea by EU and Member State operations. The renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling sets out measures to counter and prevent smuggling in cooperation with partner countries.

The EU is an area of protection for people fleeing persecution or serious harm in their country of origin. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU acted swiftly to offer immediate support to people fleeing the war, including temporary protection in the EU. The temporary protection scheme gives people rights such as residence permits, access to the labour market and housing, healthcare and access to education for children.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum_en

WHAT THE **EUROPEAN UNION** DOES: MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

@EUHomeAffairs

The Schengen area

The EU provides a border-free travel area to more than 425 million people in 26 countries, as well as to non-EU citizens living in the EU or visiting as tourists, exchange students or for business purposes.

Thanks to the Schengen Agreement, checks at many EU internal borders have been progressively abolished. Today, almost 1.7 million people live in one Schengen country and work in another, while 3.5 million travel between Schengen countries every day. The Schengen area also contributes to the functioning of the single market, enabling goods and services to circulate freely.

The Schengen area is the largest free travel area in the world, covering 26 countries

What the EU does

Since 1985, the Schengen area has grown to encompass most EU countries (except Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania), plus four non-EU countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

However, the abolition of internal borders cannot come at the expense of security. Since no checks are carried out at their internal borders, Schengen countries have joined forces to improve security through tightened controls at their external borders based on a set of common rules.

Operational cooperation between Member States' law enforcement authorities is essential to ensuring security inside the EU. One of the main tools is the Schengen information system, used to exchange data on wanted and missing persons and objects in real time.

In 2017, the EU introduced new rules to reinforce checks against relevant databases on all people crossing its external borders, including EU citizens, to make sure that they do not represent a threat to internal security or public order. By the end of 2023, a new system will be in place to pre-screen travellers from outside the EU who don't require a visa to visit the Schengen area. The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) will also apply to Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania. It will help close existing security information gaps while avoiding delays at the border for travellers.

Building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, proposed new rules aim to ensure that controls at internal borders are only introduced as a last resort. They also introduce common tools to manage the external borders more efficiently in the event of a public health crisis.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) plays an important role in protecting the EU's external borders and managing migration. The first deployment of the agency's new standing corps started on 1 January 2021. It will reach its full capacity of 10 000 officers by 2027.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa_en

@EUHomeAffairs

Home affairs and citizens' security

The European Union works to ensure the safety and security of everyone in the EU, in the physical and digital world and across all parts of society.

Europeans should feel confident that wherever they move within the EU, their freedom and security are fully protected. EU Member States, agencies and other partners work together to ensure citizens' safety, tackle threats and fight crime, while the EU puts policies and tools in place to facilitate and enhance cooperation between them.
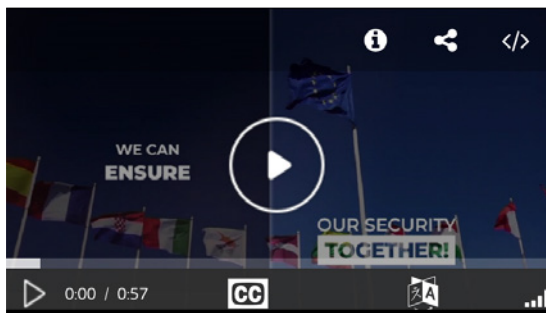
What the EU does

The new EU security union strategy for 2020 to 2025 focuses on three priority areas:

- fighting organised crime and human trafficking;
- countering terrorism and radicalisation; and
- fighting cybercrime.

Organised crime comes at a huge cost for victims and for the economy, with between €218 billion and €282 billion estimated to be lost every year. Action to strengthen EU efforts in this area include: a new EU strategy to tackle organised crime, the EU drugs strategy for 2021 to 2025, an EU action plan on firearms trafficking and EU strategies on combating human trafficking and fighting child sexual abuse.

With its new counter-terrorism agenda the Commission aims to step up the fight against terrorism by better anticipating, preventing, protecting and responding to terrorist threats. A package of legislative proposals aims to strengthen the EU's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing rules. The EU also works to prevent radicalisation. From 7 June 2022, internet companies must remove terrorist content from the web within 1 hour of a removal order from national authorities.

The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) tackles all areas of crime and terrorism, and works with non-EU partner countries and international organisations. The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) facilitates cooperation between national justice authorities to help fight serious organised crimes, while the European Arrest Warrant has replaced lengthy extradition procedures to return suspected or convicted criminals back to the country where they will be or have been tried.

The EU is fighting all aspects of cybercrime. The new EU cybersecurity strategy aims to ensure that all citizens and businesses can fully benefit from trustworthy and reliable services and digital tools, while the EU Cybersecurity Act strengthens the EU's defences against large-scale, cross-border cybercrime.

Work to strengthen the EU's external borders involves the engagement of all relevant parties, including the reinforced European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the customs union. The ability of EU information systems to exchange data and share information will help make checks at external borders more efficient.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/internal-security_en
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/law-enforcement-cooperation_en

@EUHomeAffairs

Education and training

The EU helps improve the quality of education by encouraging and supporting cooperation between Member States and by complementing national measures. Erasmus+ provides opportunities for people of all ages to study, train, gain work experience and participate in exchanges.

Investing in education and training is the key to people's future. The EU and its Member States are working to improve education outcomes, reduce the number of early leavers from education and training, tackle skills gaps and ensure all Europeans can reap the benefits of the green and digital transitions.

What the EU does

EU countries are responsible for their own education and training systems, but the EU helps them achieve quality education through the exchange of good practice, setting targets and standards, and providing funding and expertise.

The EU is working to create a European education area that will remove barriers to learning and improve access to quality education for all. Covering all levels of education, the initiative focuses on:

- improving quality and equity in education and training;
- supporting teachers, trainers and school leaders;
- promoting the development of digital skills for all citizens;
- encouraging green education initiatives;
- strengthening cooperation with countries around the world.

Building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) aims to boost digital literacy and help Member States work together to adapt their education and training systems to the digital age. Meanwhile, the European Skills Agenda aims to help people develop the skills they need for the changing world of work and sets ambitious objectives for upskilling and reskilling by 2025.

Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, supports mobility and learning for all. With a total budget of more than €28 billion, double the funding of the previous programme, Erasmus+ will enable over 10 million people to study, train, gain work experience or volunteer in another country between 2021 and 2027. The DiscoverEU initiative, which is now part of the Erasmus+ programme, gives 18-year-olds the opportunity to explore the EU with a free travel pass. The experience has already given over 130 000 young people the chance to learn more about European culture and history, make new friends and improve their language skills.

The EURES targeted mobility scheme helps over 18s looking for work, training or apprenticeships in another Member State, while the Europass initiative helps workers apply for jobs abroad by presenting their skills and qualifications in a standard Europe-wide format.

Find out more: https://education.ec.europa.eu/

facebook.com/EUErasmusPlusProgramme @EUErasmusPlus

Youth

Through its youth policies and programmes, the EU aims to give young people more equal opportunities in education and the job market and make sure they can participate fully in all areas of society.

The EU supports and complements the action of Member States through its policies targeting young people, for example, in the areas of education and employment, and promotes cooperation between EU countries.
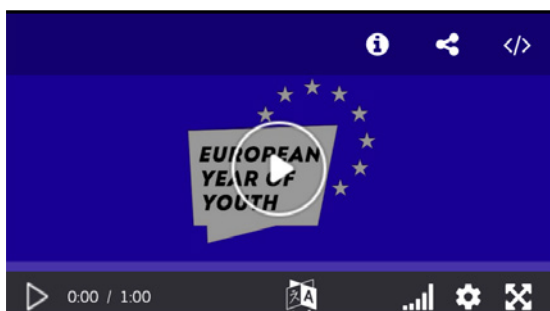
What the EU does

The EU youth strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation up to 2027. It aims to:

- support the personal development and growth of young people and equip them with life skills;
- encourage young people to become active citizens and agents of positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity;
- improve policy decisions that affect young people across all sectors, notably employment, education, health and social inclusion; and
- contribute to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination and promote the social inclusion of young people.

Young people are at the heart of the EU's policies, from NextGenerationEU and the European Green Deal to the digital decade. 2022 was designated the European Year of Youth, with the aim of celebrating, supporting and engaging with young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

The EU runs several programmes and initiatives to help young people play a more active role in society and benefit from experiencing life in another country.

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. With a total budget of more than €28 billion, it is set to enable over 10 million people to acquire knowledge and skills through experiences abroad such as study, traineeships, apprenticeships, exchanges, teaching, training, youth work and sport between 2021 and 2027.

The youth guarantee scheme supports youth employment by ensuring that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good-quality job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education offer within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. The new aim, learn, master, achieve (ALMA) initiative will support disadvantaged young people by offering them work experience in another Member State.

With a total budget of over €1 billion for the 2021–2027 period, the new European Solidarity Corps programme offers opportunities to some 270 000 young people to help address societal and humanitarian challenges through volunteering at home or abroad.

The European Youth Portal provides information on opportunities such as the DiscoverEU initiative and the EU youth dialogue, which gives policymakers first-hand input on the issues that matter to young people.

European Youth Week takes place every 2 years, alternating with the European Youth Event.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/youth_en#policies

facebook.com/EuropeanYouthEU/   @EuropeanYouthEU

Culture, media and sport

The EU works to preserve Europe's shared cultural heritage and make it accessible to all. It supports the arts and helps cultural and creative industries in the EU to thrive through the Creative Europe programme, and promotes sport through the Erasmus+ programme.

Culture and creativity are at the core of the European project and at the heart of EU cultural policy. Europe's rich cultural heritage and dynamic cultural and creative sectors bring immense enrichment, pleasure and a sense of identity to millions of people.

Sport and exercise are an integral part of life for millions of Europeans. Besides promoting better health and well-being, sport can help tackle issues such as racism, social exclusion and gender equality.

What the EU does

The EU seeks to protect Europe's cultural heritage and diversity across countries and harness the contributions made by cultural and creative industries to the economy and society. EU policy also looks to meet common challenges and encourage innovation in the cultural sector. The New European Agenda for Culture contains concrete measures to harness the full potential of culture.

The Creative Europe programme, with a budget of €2.4 billion for 2021 to 2027, aims to strengthen Europe's cultural and creative sectors, and support their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It also promotes initiatives such as EU prizes for cultural heritage, architecture, literature and music, the European Heritage label and the European Capitals of Culture. Its media strand supports the development, distribution and promotion of audiovisual works including films, series, video games and immersive content. The EU's audiovisual and media policy aims to strengthen the European audiovisual sector and encourage the availability of content to citizens across the EU.

Digital technologies provide new opportunities to preserve and reuse cultural content, making it accessible to all audiences. The Europeana digital platform enables people to explore a wealth of cultural heritage from more than 4 000 museums, galleries, libraries and archives across Europe.

The EU focuses on sport as a means to keep people healthy, create communities, nurture social inclusion and promote equal opportunities.

Erasmus+ co-funds initiatives to help develop, share and implement innovative ideas and practices to promote grassroots sport. In 2020, the EU supported 315 projects on health, social inclusion and integrity in sport. The #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards recognise organisations using sport to increase social inclusion for disadvantaged groups, while the European Week of Sport encourages Europeans to be active in their everyday lives.

Find out more: https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/culture-and-media_en
https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/sport_en

@Europe_creative, @EUsport

Historians compare and contrast different periods of time and government systems to understand historical patterns. Think about what you have learned about the Pax Romana and the European Union in the past few days. Compare and contrast them below in terms of their origins, political systems, economics, and social impact. Use the resources we have developed in class as your guide.

Pax Romana

European Union

Both