



COMMISSIONE EUROPEA  
Rappresentanze in Italia



Ufficio Scolastico Regionale  
per l'Emilia-Romagna

## **Peace, rights and democracy through dialogue and debate**

Dear boys and girls,

last 9 May 2005, during Europe Day which was organized by the Regional Parliament of Emilia-Romagna, the Representatives of the European Commission in Italy, the Regional school office and the Council of Rimini, students and teachers coming from 21 countries met together in Rimini and took part to a European youth forum.

For four days, from 6 to 9 May, approximately 700 guys had animated an extraordinary multicoloured event dedicated to the values of integration and European citizenship.

The aim of this initiative was to put together different realities and sensibilities and discuss with the youth and among the youth the future of Europe, its prospects and its involvement the day after the EU enlargement.

Their observations, developed in various workgroups, were synthesized in a [final document](#), which the representatives of each delegation discussed and approved, and presented to the 9-May plenary assembly in the presence of many authorities and the representatives of the Embassies in Italy of those countries taking part to this initiative. Comments and proposals contained in this document are an important starting point for 2006 Europe Day which will take place in Riccione and will see the participation of the delegations of 30 different countries.

As a matter of fact, this year too 9 May Europe Day will be an occasion to talk about Europe and to involve citizens in a wide-ranging debate upon European Union, its aims, future and tasks.

In particular, this 9 May Europe Day, organized in Riccione by the Representatives of the European Commission in Italy, the Legislative Assembly of the Emilia-Romagna region, the Regional school office, the Council of Riccione, the local authorities, the Europe Direct network and the Europa points (i.e. information bureaus on the European Union in the Emilia-Romagna region), will give you, young European citizens, also the chance to actively join the decision-making process of the European Union. We conceived for you, thus, a study programme which will allow you to be heard and to present your proposals about Europe to the EU institutions in Riccione on 8 May 2006.



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This programme, we have detailed below, needs your active participation, imagination and open-mindedness. First of all you are asked to work at a distance with other European students twinned with you and, once together in Italy, to work in close contact with each others: remember that respecting the others' opinion must be your leading principle along this programme.

Good luck and do a good job!

***Study programme for the twinned classes which take part to the Europe Day from  
6 to 9 May 2006 in Riccione***

This study programme comes from an idea of the Europe Direct centres of the Emilia-Romagna region (Modena, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia) and was developed and approved by all the entities involved.



**I. In your country, before the Europe Day**

Your class is twinned with a class of another European country and you are supposed to work together on a common project consisting of:

**1st stage:** choosing together with your "twins" a study matter among:

1. [European citizenship](#)
2. [fundamental rights](#)
3. [employment](#)
4. [economy growth](#)
5. [humanitarian aid and development aid](#)
6. [foreign policy](#)
7. [environment](#)

**2nd stage:** studying in class the selected matter, analyzing which activities the European Union carries out within that matter and pointing out consequences and effects of that EU policy on the national and regional reality and, thus, on citizens' life.

**3rd stage:** at the end of the study, starting a discussion with your twin class: did you come to the same conclusions? Are there more differences or more similarities? Do you feel like



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challenging the other class in a quiz on the selected matter? If you are competitive, you could decide together some rules to work out the score and play to improve your knowledge!

**4th stage:** thinking together on real proposals you think the European Union should take on in the matter you studied, in order to make Europe a better place to live in.

**5th stage:** deciding how to present your proposal among:

- a letter
- a poem
- a song
- a slogan
- a promotional commercial
- a video presentation
- a website

**6th stage:** in addition to the proposal, choosing together with your twins an ideal ambassador of Europe selected among music, literature, sport or movie celebrities. Bear in mind that your choice must be motivated by "European" reasons and compulsorily oriented towards a EU citizen.

## II. In Riccione 7, 8 and 9 May 2006

Once together in Riccione, the representatives of your class and of your twin class you already met in your town and the other guys of your Region and of all the countries of the European Union, will finally have the chance to present the work carried out during the weeks before this event.

On Sunday 7 May, in the morning, a student for each delegation will take part to a meeting in the Town council to prepare, on the basis of the work carried out and the problems emerged, a final document which will be presented during the closing day, 9 May. At the same time, in the hotels which accommodate the groups, meetings between the twin classes will be organized in order to define the proposals to be presented during the afternoon of 8 May.

Monday 8 May, instead, will be the day dedicated to the listening of your proposals.



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The representatives of your class and of your twin class will have 3 minutes (only 3 minutes!) to present both the proposal and the ambassador candidate to an assembly made up of representatives of EU and national institutions and the other guys.

Once all the twinned classes have presented their idea, you will be called:

- to vote for by far the best proposal, the best communication form and, finally, the most innovative proposal.
- to vote for the person who, among those presented, you think could become a worthy ambassador of Europe.

### III. Tools for Partnership

The framework for schools to collaborate on the Internet with partner schools in other European countries is:

#### 1. eTwinning

eTwinning is the main action of the European Union's eLearning programme.

It promotes the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at schools in Europe. Teachers and students use the Internet to work together across borders. They cooperate, exchange information and share learning materials.

*Who can get involved?*

- Teachers in any subject, headmasters, librarians and other school staff,
- Schools from the European Union, Norway and Iceland,
- Schools in primary and secondary education (indicative age bracket: 3 to 19 year-olds).

*What can you do in eTwinning?*

There are no requirements to the aims, duration or scope of activities, except the pedagogical relevance of the project for the school and its pupils and the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

Projects can take many forms, for instance:

- A short project lasting one week where focusing on a specific part of the curriculum,
- A three months' project teaching pupils how to set up a common web site and present information in a foreign language,



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- A whole school year project on European history, mathematics or art, which is integrated into the curriculum and eventually part of final examinations,
- A project that sets up a cooperation framework with one or more partners.

### [Guidelines to eTwinning tools](#)

## **2. Spring Day in Europe 2006**

[Spring Day in Europe](#) is an annual citizen-driven event project on democracy and citizenship where young people learn and make their voice heard on topical European issues. Spring Day in Europe 2006 is held on 21 March 2006 and on 9 May 2006. Schools have access to all the tools, activities and services of the project to organise events on either or both dates.

It provides schools with the necessary political, pedagogical and technological support to implement events on European issues and achievements.

Spring Day in Europe 2006 give schools from all EU, accessing and candidate countries the opportunity to voice their views and concerns but also raise the awareness on how young European citizens can ally forces with the European institutions for a better dialogue and understanding of European democratic developments.



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## 1<sup>st</sup> Rimini European Youth Convention

(Rimini, May 6-9, 2005)

This document is the result of a cooperative work, shared amongst many delegations. This work has involved us greatly. It was an extraordinary experience, which allowed many young people, coming from all over Europe, to exchange ideas, proposals and even emotions on the future of Europe. Europe is a major project, which was started in the aftermath of WWII, and has now reached a crucial point.

At the heart of our reflections we debated the issues concerning the European Constitution, Enlargement, European Citizenship, the European Foreign and Security Policy and the Role of the EU in the World and the European Economy. These very important issues are still open to discussions.

They involve us intimately, and have to do with our future, our perspectives of study and work, in one word our lives. The establishment of a united Europe, is a major issue, especially after experiencing the biggest enlargement in our history. Peoples, nations, divided until yesterday, share now a common destiny, based on the same values of liberty and democracy.

If we take a look at the long process made by Europe regarding its unification we may acknowledge how many steps have been made, how many challenges that once seemed impossible have already been won. Even the simple fact that we are here today, in Rimini, in this theatre, with hundreds of young people from 25 member countries, is already an historical accomplishment.

We represent today the new European Union, born on May 1st, 2004, the Europe that is regaining possession of its history, its culture and its identity.

But the road is still long, uncertain, and full of obstacles. Much has yet to be done, many problems are still in front of us, and are waiting for solutions. Europe has not yet won the confidence of all its citizens. It still must find ways to face the many challenges laying in front of us, giving concrete answers, through actions and policies which are clear and effective at the same time.

Europe needs the passion, enthusiasm and the ideas of the young in order to create the best conditions for its youth so that it can be directly involved. The very ideas that have been collected today in this document.

What if Europe had a face? It would have big ears to hear the problems of all its citizens, their fears and concerns, their deepest worries of losing their national sovereignties and diverse cultures. It would have big eyes to see the diversity of its peoples, inherent in their languages, traditions, cultures and ways of life. And above all it would have a mouth, one mouth for all, to address and tackle all of these concerns using a united voice, so as to bring forward a united Europe capable of defending the needs of all its citizens. Thus 25 member states and 450 million citizens would have a powerful voice in this world, a voice that could make a difference.

### **European Constitution**

For the first time in the history of European Integration we face the perspective of having a single Constitution for Europe. We would like to express our support to this Constitution. If it shall be ratified by all the member states, Europe will become a stronger and better defined political subject. The text is a manifesto for peace and a guarantee for the values on which the European integration is based, the same values that are at the heart of the Schuman Declaration, that we are celebrating here today. We recognise that the European citizens have different feelings regarding this Constitution, and we even share some of their doubts and complaints. We want to reply to those critiques by stressing the fact that this Constitution is merely a first step, and it is open to future improvements. We do also admit that there has been and there is a certain lack of information on the contents of the text. Nevertheless, this is not only the responsibility of the national and European institutions, but it is also the duty of the citizens to make use of the many informative sources that are available. Today we face the risk that these negative feelings could prevail and that on the 29th of May the European Constitution could be rejected by the French citizens. We want to make an appeal to our French friends: "Don't let fear prevail on hope and keep on being at the heart of the European integration, following the Schuman's example". In the future, we would like to see an even more integrated Europe, based on the model of the Federal State, the only one that can maintain Europe "United in diversity" at the same time, but we don't want to replicate the US model: the cultures and histories of the European States are too different and must be preserved.



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### **Enlargement**

The recent enlargement was a unique opportunity for the new member countries and for Europe as a whole. For many of us this meant an unprecedented extension of peace, stability and prosperity. Many of our countries received funds for improving our infrastructures, creating new jobs, and improving the quality of our lives. Our daily lives were also affected. Our Estonian friends reported an interesting experience in this sense. During a trip to Hungary on April 30th, 2004, they spent a lot of pointless time waiting to pass border controls. On their way back home, on May 2nd, after becoming members of the European family, the border was opened, and they did not have to wait any more. Many of our countries, which were marginalised, gradually gained a new role in the world scene.

At the same time, due to the enlargement, we are also facing some new challenges. The borders of Europe shifted, sometimes towards critical areas of the world. This increased the need for a common policy on immigration and border control. In terms of the economy, the enlargement provoked deep changes in many of our systems. Some of these were positive, and some negative. Many adjustments must be made in order to reduce the huge differences in the quality of our lives. Also the possibility to circulate freely all over Europe came with its drawbacks. One of them being the process known as "brain-draining"; the best students leave our countries because abroad they have better chances to improve their lives. Nevertheless, we disapprove of those who blame Europe for every problem. Many of the problems must be solved at a national or local level. Regarding further enlargements, we believe that before making new steps in this direction, Europe should first devote some time to consolidate its economy and its institutions.

### **European Citizenship**

The European citizenship represents a new model of open citizenship, not based on national identity but on common values. A model that should be proposed to the rest of the world. The highest expression of our common citizenship is our right to vote for the European Parliament, sharing an act of democracy amongst us all. In the past few days, discussing with young people from all over Europe, we could see that for the young, Europe is already united. Despite this, there still is a different perception of the way in which we belong to Europe amongst the new and old member states. We need new instruments to try and fill this gap. We demand a stronger effort for harmonisation of the educational models and for the mutual recognition of diplomas. We propose to make English a second mother-tongue for the coming generations of Europeans. We recognise the benefits of the Erasmus program and of the many projects already available for the European students. Nevertheless, we still feel the need for new projects, capable of involving every single European citizen, regardless of their cultural level or social condition.

### **Foreign and Security Policy and Role of the EU in the World**

Europe must be a model for the rest of the world. This means that we must find new ways to export our values beyond of our borders. The real challenge is to do this by peaceful means, and not by war, like some seem to think nowadays. The Iraqi crisis underlined the limits of our Common Foreign and Security Policy. Due to its division, Europe was unable to play any effective role, and to counterbalance the American strategy. For the future, we must avoid at all costs that this happens again. Europe must speak to the world with a single voice. Considering that it is impossible for all countries to agree on one single foreign policy a majority of them should decide what position the EU should take. This could be a qualified majority (e.g. 75%) of the States and the citizens. The presence of conflicts at the new borders of the EU, should push us to assume a more active role in areas like the Middle East.

Europe is a project of peace. Therefore we would like to see in the European Constitution the translation of article 11 of the Italian Constitution, which states the refusal of war as a mean to solve controversies. In order to speak with a single voice to the rest of the world, we would like to see a single representative of the EU in the UN Security Council. This role should be played by the new European Foreign Ministry foreseen by the Constitution. On the military side, we think that Europe is not ready to have a single EU army. Most of all, we want to preserve the neutrality of some member countries. Nevertheless, we would like to build a joint peace-keeping force, put together by the best national experiences in this field. It should be accompanied by a joint civil protection force, that could be deployed in case of natural disasters, like the sea-quake that recently caused so many casualties in South-Eastern Asia.

### **European Economy**

In the economical field, we want a Europe which is able to preserve its unique social model, extending minimum standards of social protection throughout its borders. The right to a job, included for the first time in the Constitution, should be actively promoted by the European Commission. We believe in the importance of sustainable development as stated by the Constitution. To fulfil this task, Europe should implement ecological taxes, and become a world leader in developing alternative energies in order to reduce our



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dependency on oil. We must help the poorest countries of the world by lowering the customs duties on their goods, and by cancelling their debt.

During these days in Rimini we have been enriched profoundly, and it has been an extraordinary opportunity for both our studies and our lives. We would like to thank our hosts and all those who cooperated in the realisation of such an important meeting of the European youth on Europe Day.

We would like to let the organisers know that we are so happy, that we wish to reserve a place for the coming year.

Ciao ciao Emilia Romagna  
Bye bye Rimini  
See you in 2006





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## **Subject 1: CITIZENSHIP OF THE UNION**

Citizenship of the Union is dependent on holding the nationality of one of the Member States. In other words, anyone who is a national of a Member State is considered to be a citizen of the Union. In addition to the rights and duties laid down in the Treaty establishing the European Community, Union citizenship confers four special rights:

1. freedom to move and take up residence anywhere in the Union;

An EU citizen, has the right to **enter** any EU country without having to comply with special formalities. All you need is a valid passport or identity card.

Your identification can be checked for validity, but you cannot be asked questions about the purposes and duration of your trip. Your right to travel may be restricted only on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. Members of your family, whatever their nationality, may go with you. Non-EU citizens may need an entry visa, depending on their nationality.

Within the 'Schengen area', there are generally no identification checks at internal borders. This area comprises the following countries (as of 1 May 2005): Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

When travelling within the EU, if you suddenly fall ill or have an accident in another EU country, you (and your family) are entitled to immediate healthcare there. For this, you need the European health insurance card (or the relevant 'E111' form), which you should obtain from your home country before departure. This applies only to short periods abroad.

You can buy goods and services for your personal use under the same tax rules as apply to nationals of the country concerned, and take them home with you. However, this does not apply to the purchase of new cars. For tobacco products and alcohol, evidence may be required that the goods are for personal use in certain circumstances.

As an EU citizen you have the right to **study** in another European country.

The university or college in the EU country where you wish to study must accept you on the same conditions as nationals, and cannot require you to pay higher course fees.

Information on education and training available throughout [PLOTEUS](#) website.

Hundreds of thousands of students and researchers have already discovered the benefits of spending a long period abroad for studying purposes, thanks to some of the EU's most popular programmes.

- [Leonardo da Vinci](#): vocational training placements and exchanges.
- [Socrates](#): aims to develop the European dimension in education throughout life through the following individual programmes:
  - Erasmus: for university students and teachers;
  - Comenius: for school pupils and teachers;
  - Lingua: for language teachers;
  - Grundtvig: adult education and other education pathways.
  - Minerva
- [Youth](#): youth exchanges enable young people to experience other social and cultural situations. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) gives young people the opportunity to reside in another country for up to one year and take part in local projects as volunteers

As an EU citizen you are entitled to **stay** and **settle** in any EU country. This fundamental right extends to members of your family. If they are not EU nationals, the country concerned may require an entry visa.

For periods shorter than three months: all you need is a valid identity card or passport.

For periods longer than three months: you have the right to settle in another EU country if:

- you are a worker or self-employed in the host EU country, or



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- you are enrolled at a private or public establishment for the principal purpose of following a course of study, including vocational training, or
- you have sufficient resources for you and your family members and you have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in the host EU country.

You have the right to **work** and retire in whichever EU country you want.

You should receive the same treatment as any national of this country and cannot be asked to meet additional requirements.

You can apply for any job advertised anywhere in the EU (apart from certain public service posts).

Please note: during a transitional period of maximum seven years, workers from some of the States which recently joined the EU may face restrictions on access to the labour markets of the previous Member States (EU-15), whilst workers from the EU-15 may face reciprocal restrictions in some of the new Member States.

There are also limitations on the access by citizens of new EU countries to unemployment benefits in an EU country other than their own.

2. the right to vote and stand in local government and European Parliament elections in the country of residence;

You can vote and stand as a candidate in the new country under the same conditions as nationals of that country in:

- municipal (local) elections: note that you do not automatically lose your vote in your home country if you vote in the new country;
- European elections: note that you must register on the electoral role. You will automatically lose your vote in your home country if you vote in the new country.

3. diplomatic and consular protection from the authorities of any Member State where the country of which a person is a national is not represented in a non-Union country;

Every citizen of the European Union located in the territory of a third country is entitled to the consular protection of any Member State's diplomatic or consular representation.

The conditions for entitlement to this protection are as follows:

- the absence, in the territory in which the citizen requesting protection is located, of accessible permanent representation;
- production by the citizen requesting protection of proof of his nationality (passport, identity card or other document) for the diplomatic or consular representation approached.

The diplomatic or consular representation giving protection must treat the person seeking help as if he were a national of the Member State which it represents. The protection must cover:

- assistance in cases of death;
- assistance in cases of serious accident or serious illness;
- assistance in cases of arrest or detention;
- assistance to victims of violent crime;
- the relief and repatriation of distressed citizens of the Union.

Any other type of assistance may be given to any citizen who requests it.

4. the right of petition and appeal to the European Ombudsman.

You have the right to petition the European Parliament on a matter which is related to the Community's fields of activity and which affects you directly. Petitions can be a valuable means of putting pressure on those concerned. There is no specific form to be filled in. Petitions can be written in one of the 11 official languages of the European Union and must contain the following details: name, nationality, address and occupation, a clear description of the facts, with reference to the relevant field of activity of the European Union, the grounds for the petition, if possible, relevant documentation and signature.

Your petition should be sent directly to:



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The President of the European Parliament  
L- 2929 Luxembourg

You can also complain to the European Ombudsman. The European Ombudsman is empowered to inquire into the Community administration and its relations with citizens and businesses. He can deal with complaints concerning maladministration on the part of the Commission and the other EU institutions

When the Ombudsman finds maladministration by an EU institution, he tries, if possible, to find a mutually acceptable solution. If he considers it necessary, he can make recommendations to the institution concerned on how to solve the case. Unless the institution implements his recommendations within three months, or finds another satisfactory solution to put an end to the maladministration, the Ombudsman makes a special report to the European Parliament.

You can write to the Ombudsman in any of the 21 official languages of the Union, setting out clearly who you are, which institution or body of the EU you are complaining against and the grounds of the complaint.

You can also use a standard form to help you in drafting your complaint. This is available from the Ombudsman's office and from the national ombudsmen's offices in the Member States where they exist. You may contact the European Ombudsman:

by mail :

The European Ombudsman,  
1, avenue du Président Robert Schuman,  
BP 403, F- 67001 Strasbourg Cedex

by telephone: (33 3) 88.17.23.13, by fax: (33 3) 88. 17. 90. 62

**Useful link:**

[Your Europe](#)



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## **Subject 2: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

[From the web pages activities of the European Union](#)

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are core values of the European Union. Embedded in its founding treaty, they have been reinforced by the adoption of a [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#). Respect for human rights is a prerequisite for countries seeking to join the Union and a precondition for countries who have concluded trade and other agreements with it.

The European Union sees human rights as universal and indivisible. It is therefore actively promoting and defending them both within its borders and in its relations with outside countries. At the same time, the EU does not seek to usurp the wide powers in this area held by the national governments of its member states.

The focus of the Union's human rights policy is on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It also seeks to promote the rights of women and of children as well as of minorities and displaced persons. The war on terrorism is another priority.

### **Beginning at home**

Although the EU has, on the whole, a good human rights record, it is not complacent. It is particularly concerned about human rights in the area of asylum and migration and it is fighting racism, xenophobia and other types of discrimination against minorities. The Union has a long tradition of welcoming people from other countries – those who come to work and those fleeing their homes because of war or persecution. The EU has already defined the rights of the five million non-EU migrant workers legally established in the European Union, including the right of family members to join them. In the past these rights had not always been applied in the same manner by all member states.

### **A helping hand to those in need.**

A number of steps have been taken towards establishing a Common European Asylum System with agreed procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status and setting reception conditions for asylum seekers. In addition, a European Refugee Fund has been set up to provide support for the reception, integration and voluntary repatriation of refugees.

The EU has also adopted measures to provide temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons as occurred during the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s. These provisions, which took effect after the 1999 war in Kosovo, protect displaced persons for up to three years, providing them with residence and work permits, accommodation, access to social and medical services, and schooling for their children. They may also formally apply for asylum.

### **Fighting discrimination**

Under its Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination, the EU funds a wide range of activities to combat racism and xenophobia within its borders including exchanges between national authorities and the creation of a network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialised in human rights. The programme, which runs from 2001 to 2006 with a total budget of €100 million, also funds the monitoring of human rights within the EU and evaluates the action being taken by member states.

Efforts to stop trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, have become a political priority for the Union. The old and new EU member states and candidate countries are working together to help victims and organise prevention campaigns.

The Union has run a series of cross-border programmes to fight against human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children. It currently funds these projects within its 'Agis' framework programme for



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cooperation between the judiciary, police and legal professionals in the different EU countries. Agis runs from 2003 to 2007.

### **A global force for human rights**

The EU has gradually pushed the human rights issue to the forefront of its relations with other countries and regions. Since 1992, all agreements on trade or cooperation with third countries contain a clause stipulating that human rights are an essential element in the relations between the parties. There are now more than 120 such agreements.

The pivotal role of human rights is particularly evident in the Cotonou Agreement - the trade and aid pact which links the Union with 78 developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (the ACP group). If any of these countries fail to respect human rights, trade concessions can be suspended and aid programmes reduced or curtailed. The Union believes that poverty reduction, the main objective of its overseas development policy, will only be achieved in a democratic structure.

Similar provisions exist in the EU's other aid programmes, including those involving:

- the candidate countries in eastern Europe and the Balkans,
- Russia and the republics of the Caucasus and central Asia
- its neighbours in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

The EU's programme of emergency humanitarian assistance around the world is not normally subject to restrictions because of human rights breaches. Its aid deliveries in cash, kind or technical assistance are decided with the sole aim of relieving human suffering whether it is caused by natural disasters or by misrule by oppressive regimes.

In recent years, the EU has maintained a human rights dialogue with countries like Russia, China and Iran. It has imposed sanctions for human rights breaches on Serbia, Burma (Myanmar) and Zimbabwe.

### **Taking the initiative**

To give weight to its support for human rights around the world, the EU funds the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. Set up in 1994, it has an annual budget of €130 million. The initiative puts respect for human rights and the strengthening of democracy into a long-term context and focuses on four areas:

- strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law (cooperating with civil society to promote political pluralism, a free media and sound justice system);
- abolishing the death penalty in countries which still retain it;
- combating torture through preventive measures (like police training and education) and repressive measures (like creating international tribunals and criminal courts);
- fighting racism and discrimination by ensuring respect for political and civil rights.

The initiative also funds projects for gender equality and the protection of children. In addition, it supports joint action between the EU and other organisations involved in the defence of human rights – such as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

### **Useful reading:**

[\*Freedom, security and justice for all\*](#) - Series: "Europe on the move"

### **Useful links:**

[DG Justice, freedom and security](#) – European Commission

[Equal Opportunities for Women and Men](#)

[Human-Rights](#) - European Parliament

[UNICEF](#)

[Pace e diritti](#) - Legislative Assembly of Region Emilia-Romagna



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## **Subject 3: EMPLOYMENT**

### **From the pages activities of the European Union**

More and better jobs, and equal opportunities are the watchwords of European employment and social policy. The Union wants everyone to be adequately equipped to keep up with change in a knowledge-based economy that confronts the challenges of globalisation.

A key framework is a Social Agenda designed to ensure that the benefits of the EU's growth reach everyone in society. The 2005-2010 Agenda is the umbrella for policies designed to provide jobs and equal opportunities for all, against the background of the EU's overall aim of promoting a prosperous, innovative, knowledge-rich, competitive, but also eco-efficient and environmentally sustainable economy. A dynamic economy is the means to provide high living standards, full and high-quality employment, and high levels of social protection, including sustainable pension systems for ageing populations.

These policies are all-inclusive. The attempt to remedy fundamental inequalities is at the core of the European social model. This model does not prevent those who prosper through their own effort from benefiting from their success, but provides support for people in difficulty. That difficulty may be a disabling illness or accident, the result of natural disaster or of the restructuring of a whole sector of the economy, or living conditions which are a barrier to a proper education and to equal access to the labour market.

### **The European Employment Strategy**

Common priorities and individual objectives for member states' employment policies, are set out in multi-annual Employment Guidelines agreed jointly by all member states. The current guidelines cover the period 2005-2008. They address strategies for job creation, job quality, productivity and for making work pay, i.e. making it economically attractive to work while nevertheless providing adequate social safety nets. They also promote a better balance between the demands of work and personal life, active ageing and means of ensuring that race, gender or disabilities do not limit opportunities for employment. Progress is measured in annual national reform programmes.

### **The European Social Fund**

Creating worthwhile jobs in a knowledge-based society, guaranteeing equal opportunities and equipping the labour force for constant change require a large investment in human resources. The European Social Fund plays a major role in funding this with €60 billion available between 2000 and 2006 to develop both the work skills and the social skills which make it easier for people to find work or set up businesses of their own. Special attention is paid to funding for areas of the EU with particularly high levels of unemployment or low average incomes. €3 billion is reserved for the EQUAL programme. This tests new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality.

### **Minimum standards for all**

The EU has a long tradition of ensuring a decent working environment throughout the EU and of protecting workers' rights through common minimum rules on working conditions and health and safety at work. The EU also promotes modern labour relations and dialogue between worker representatives and employers. Sound labour relations not only further worker protection, but contribute to competitiveness. The European Commission encourages corporate social responsibility by promoting the concept that social and environmental concerns should be an integral part of business strategies. Common EU rules establish the baseline standards to protect people from health risks at work, such as noise or exposure to chemicals, and to protect pregnant women and workers under 18. Other legislation spells out basic rights on working hours, parental leave, the basic information all employers must supply to new employees about the job and the terms on which they have been hired, the terms of any collective



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redundancy and the same treatment for part-time or temporary workers as for permanent full-time employees. Equal pay for equal work is also a fundamental tenet of the EU as is protection against sexual harassment.

The EU has outlawed discrimination on the basis of gender, racial or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, and religion or belief. This is bolstered by legislation banning gender-based discrimination in access to goods and services (with some exceptions for insurance), policy strategies on combating discrimination and xenophobia, and on ensuring that gender issues are taken into account in all EU policies.

### **Pan-European mobility for all**

The right to work anywhere in the EU is a fundamental right of all EU citizens, subject to some transitional arrangements for countries which joined the EU in 2004. The Public Employment Services of the EU, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are linked through a single service, Eures. Job-seekers can post their CVs and look for jobs on the site. The EU encourages worker mobility for the benefits it brings to the individual in terms of personal and vocational or career development and as a means to match skills to demand. 2006 is the European Year of Workers' Mobility.

The ability to work in another EU countries carries with it the right to most social benefits for the whole family – rights which generally extend as well to retirees living in a different EU country from the one in which they spent their working life.

The right to health care anywhere in the EU also applies to emergency care for travellers. The European Health Insurance Card introduced on 1 June 2004 and being phased in across the EU by 2006, makes it more straightforward to obtain treatment.

### **Useful reading:**

*European employment and social policy: a policy for people* "Series: Europe on the move"

### **Useful links:**

[DG Employment and social affairs](#) - European Commission

[Employment and social affairs](#) - European Parliament

[Subject 4: growth economy](#)

[European social fund](#)

[EURES](#) European employment services



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## **Subject 4: ECONOMY GROWTH**

### **The challenges**

At present, Europe finds itself at a crucial crossroads facing both internal and external challenges. On the one hand, Europe must address the challenge of ageing populations which in the long-run will result in a considerable shrinking of the working-age population while increasing the share of retired persons. Unless the decline in the size of the workforce is compensated by increases in labour productivity, potential growth will drop dramatically to around 1% by 2040, which is only half of the current level. Such a decline in economic performance together with a rise in age-related expenditures would put the European social model under considerable stress. On the other hand, the increased pace of globalisation has exposed the EU economy to mounting competition from abroad. The range of economic activities exposed to external competition has widened, now including the production of both high-tech and labour intensive goods and services. R&D investment in the EU has become close to stagnation. If current trends continue, R&D investment will be at 2,2 % of GDP in 2010, considerably lower than the agreed objective of 3%. Against this background important decisions need to be taken which will determine Europe's economic and social future.

### **Growth and jobs: working together for Europe's future**

On 2 February 2005, the Commission proposed a new start for a new strategy focusing the European Union's efforts on two principal tasks – delivering stronger, lasting growth and more and better jobs. The institutions of the European Union have begun to turn the new momentum for a re-launch into concrete action since. This strategy is also to be seen in the wider context of the sustainable development requirement that present needs have to be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

We have the resources to sustain our high living standards, but we need to take action to unlock them. Europe will need to invest more in its young people, education, research and innovation, so that we can provide our society with the assets and outlook to generate wealth and provide security for every citizen. We will further open markets, cut red tape and invest in modern infrastructure so that our enterprises can grow, innovate and create new jobs. And we will take the necessary steps to develop a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce so that all Europeans can enjoy the benefits of a society with high employment, a high level of social protection and a healthy environment. All these steps will be taken against a background of sound macroeconomic policies.

The goal itself is compelling, but the steps to get there need explaining. The challenges facing our society today provoke a sense of uncertainty and pessimism in some of our citizens.

Social and economic progress often entails significant changes in the life of individuals, with risks as well as benefits. Citizen's legitimate worries need to be taken seriously; the benefits of our new strategy to citizens' daily lives need to be properly explained.

Boosting growth and creating jobs are the keys for unlocking the resources needed to meet our economic and social ambitions and are important to reach our environmental objectives. Recent public debate has shown them to be of immense importance to our citizens. The relaunch of this ambitious project aims to ensure both. Some policy actions will take time to show visible effects. Others will deliver early benefits. In all cases, they must be approached with a strong sense of urgency and collective responsibility. There is no time to lose.

### **Time to move up a gear**

Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: "(...) Our ambition is clear. We are aiming for top-class universities, highly trained and educated workforces, strong social security and pensions systems, the most competitive industries and the cleanest environment. To those who say that it cannot be done I say, a decade or so ago who would have thought that Ireland would have become one the most prosperous countries of the European Union, or that productivity in Poland would be higher than in South Korea? We can and must go the extra mile for growth and jobs."





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The four Priority Action Areas where European Leaders are being asked to commit to additional measures (national and European) at the March EU Summit

#### 1. Investing in education and research

- Investment in higher education should by 2010 be stepped up to 2% of GDP from the current 1.28%, including by removing barriers to universities seeking complementary private funding.
- Already this March, every Member State should set a clear target for overall R&D expenditure for 2010.
- A greater share of state aids (25%) and structural funding should be spent on R&D.
- There should be a European Institute for Technology by the end of 2007.
- To raise the marketable skills base of all citizens, the teaching of mathematics and foreign languages should be given greater priority in schools.

#### 2. Freeing up SME's and unlocking business potential

- By 2007, Member States should each set up a "one-stop shop" to assist future entrepreneurs and so that businesses can fulfil all administrative requirements in one place.
- The average time for setting up a business should be cut by half by the end of 2007 and then to one week or less.
- Entrepreneurship education should be provided as part of the school curriculum for all pupils.
- Every Member State should set up a system to properly measure administrative burdens. The Commission will launch a major exercise of its own to identify and propose how to reduce costs arising from EU rules or their implementation at national level.
- The Commission will remove the obligation to notify certain categories of small state aids, which should help SMEs.

#### 3. Getting people into work

- To help increase employment rates and to finance pensions and health care for an ageing population, Member States should adopt a lifecycle approach to employment, with people of all ages offered the support they need.
- Every young person who has left school or university should be offered a job, apprenticeship or additional training within six months of becoming unemployed by the end of 2007, and within 100 days by 2010.
- There should be stronger efforts to meet national targets for the provision of affordable high-quality childcare and measures to achieve greater gender equality at work and to promote a work-life balance.
- "Active ageing" should be implemented, with more training for those over 45, financial incentives for prolonging working lives and use of part-time work.
- The Commission will organise an extraordinary social summit and present a report by the end of 2007 on the balance between flexibility and employment security ("flexicurity").

#### 4. Efficient, secure and sustainable energy

The Commission pledges in the Report to galvanise Europe to meet the challenges of rising oil and gas prices and of cutting pollution. It delivers a blunt message to EU leaders: energy is a global issue that needs a European response. That means:

- Better coordination between Europe's electricity grids and gas pipeline systems, better regulation of energy markets and more competition.
- More tax and other incentives to promote sustainable energy use and boost research into energy efficiency, clean energy and renewables.
- Europe "speaking with one voice" in negotiations with the external suppliers who will supply more and more of our energy.
- The Commission will publish a Green Paper with detailed proposals in early spring 2006.

Useful link:

[Growth and jobs: working together for Europe's future](#)



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## **Subject 5: HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **HUMANITARIAN AID**

#### From the pages Activities of the European Union

Images of conflict and disaster fill our television screens and newspaper front-pages every week. The European Union is at the heart of a network whose role is to alleviate the ensuing human suffering. The aim is to get aid to those who need it as quickly as possible, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions, or whether the crisis results from a man-made conflict or a natural disaster.

The EU is present in all trouble spots including Iraq, Afghanistan, the Palestinian Territories, and several parts of Africa. Its relief activities are global, sometimes taking place away from the cameras of the world media in so-called forgotten crisis zones and areas of post-conflict instability. These include the northern Caucasus (especially Chechnya), Tajikistan in central Asia, the Western Sahara and Sri Lanka.

The EU also draws on its acquired experience to promote disaster preparedness in high-risk countries and regions prone to earthquakes, hurricanes, floods or drought. It was one of the biggest contributors to the international relief effort following the Asian tsunami disaster of December 2004. Specialists and equipment from EU countries were sent to help in relief efforts on the American gulf coast following the devastation caused when hurricane Katrina struck in late August 2005.

#### **Enter ECHO**

The European Union's relief operations are handled by ECHO, its humanitarian aid office. ECHO's activities since its creation in 1992 reflect the proliferation of serious crises around the world and the EU's willingness to take the lead in getting essential equipment and specialist help to the victims. Its budget runs to more than €500 million a year.

ECHO considers its first duty to be towards the victims of disaster: to help save and preserve life, reduce suffering and protect the integrity and dignity of those affected.

Emergency supplies can include tents, blankets and other essential items, such as food, medicines, medical equipment, water purification systems and fuel. ECHO also funds medical teams, mine-clearance experts, and transport and logistical support. It has operated in 82 countries around the world since 1992.

#### **The network**

The EU and ECHO cannot themselves mobilise the resources on the scale required to deliver emergency relief supplies, provide rescue teams, set up emergency field hospitals and install temporary communications systems. ECHO therefore funds and coordinates these operations, while relying on humanitarian partners - non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the UN specialised agencies and the international Red Cross - to deliver the food and equipment and carry out the emergency programmes. In recent years, about two thirds of the EU's relief effort has been channelled to NGOs with about 20% going to UN agencies and 10% to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Each partner plays its own special part. NGOs often have a key role in regions hit by civil war, where UN agencies or the Red Cross have been denied access, and only they are present. In complex crises involving big areas and large-scale population movements, only major UN agencies like the World Food Programme or the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have the ability to deliver large amounts of aid to all the victims. The ICRC, with agents around the world, is often the organisation which can move aid fastest to regions hit by unexpected natural disasters.



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## The helping hand

### The EU is skilled at speeding food aid to its destination.

The Union's humanitarian assistance has three main tools: emergency aid, food aid, and aid for refugees who have fled conflict areas and for people displaced within a country or region at war.

- Emergency aid is provided in the form of cash to buy and deliver basic essentials like medicine, food and shelter, or to finance reconstruction work after a disaster. Emergency aid has to be fast and flexible.
- Food aid comes in two types. First, the Union provides regular amounts of food to regions hit by famine or drought to help provide security of supply until normal production can be re-established. Second, it supplies emergency food aid where sudden food shortages result from man-made or unforeseen natural disasters.
- The EU and its member states give aid to refugees driven from their country and to persons displaced within their own country or region. EU aid tides them over during the emergency period until they are able to return home or settle in a new country. This has been a particularly important activity in the Balkans.

## Exit strategy and the grey area

Disaster relief and emergency assistance are almost by definition short-term. Operations funded by the EU generally last for less than six months. But the Union wants to ensure that, when humanitarian aid is withdrawn, the people it has helped can once again cope with the situation, or that another form of longer-term development assistance is available to take over. The transition from disaster relief to the follow-on phase of recovery is a difficult grey area, with the risk that nothing is in place after humanitarian relief is phased out.

To reduce this risk, the EU is asking its partners in the field to build in an exit strategy when they define a project, whereby they either hand back control to a local authority on completion or, if this is not possible, they ensure other aid structures can replace them after they leave.

The EU has already completed its exit strategy in the Balkans. The switch away from the Balkans freed up funds for emergency operations in the Middle East, Asia and especially Africa. Post-conflict operations are under way in Liberia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Darfur in western Sudan, while measures are being taken to tackle the severe food shortages affecting several southern African countries.

## In harm's way

Relief workers are increasingly subject to threats to their security. Some have been kidnapped, robbed and beaten; others have been killed. As regional conflicts become more vicious and as international rules protecting civilians are increasingly flouted, the EU is taking action to improve the safety and protection of workers in the field.

- ECHO has introduced clauses in contracts with partner organisations (which now number nearly 200) to ensure they provide as much security as possible for their personnel in the field;
- ECHO will fund specific security items within contracts;
- ECHO will support specific security projects with appropriate partners in regions where major security problems exist;
- ECHO will update security provisions for its own field staff and provide them with appropriate training.



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### **Useful reading:**

[European solidarity with the victims of humanitarian crises](#) "Series: Europe on the move"

### **Useful links:**

[ECHO](#) - European commission

[Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) – European Parliament

[General Affairs and External Relations](#) – Council of the European Union

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### From the pages Activities of the European Union

Nearly half the money spent to help poor countries comes from the European Union and its member states, making it the world's biggest aid donor. But development policy is about more than providing clean water and surfaced roads, important though these are. The Union also uses trade to drive development by opening its markets to exports from poor countries and by encouraging them to trade more with each other.

Trade and aid are the twin pillars of EU development policy. They come together as the Union assumes its share of responsibility to help developing countries fight poverty and integrate into the globalised world economy.

### **Trade and aid**

The EU has long recognised that trade can boost the economic growth and productive capacities of poor nations. Beginning in 1971, the Union has reduced or removed tariffs and eliminated quotas on most of its imports from developing countries. For the 49 least-developed countries (LDCs), the Union is removing tariffs on all their exports - with the sole exception of arms – under a programme launched in 2001.

The special trading relationship between the Union and its 78 partners in the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) group has been considered a model for how rich countries can open their markets to poor ones. However, despite the special relationship, the ACP countries' share of EU markets has continued to fall, and they have become increasingly marginalised in world trade.

This is why the EU's development strategy also focuses on financial and technical assistance to improve the basic physical and social infrastructures and productive potential of poor nations and to strengthen their administrative and institutional capacities. This support can also help them benefit from international trade opportunities and secure more inward investment to broaden their economic base. These are essential preconditions for integrating into the global economy and achieving sustainable growth.

### **Striking a new balance**

The Union is combining its trade and aid mix in a new way in the next generation of partnership agreements it is negotiating with the ACP countries. These are due to be in place by 2008. The idea is to help them integrate with their regional neighbours as a step towards global integration, and to help them build institutional capacities and apply principles of good governance. At the same time, the EU will continue to work to open its markets and remove barriers to exports from the ACP group.

At global level, the Union strongly supports the decision taken at the world trade negotiations, known as the Doha Development Agenda, to strengthen the administrative and managerial capacity of poor countries and thus help them take advantage of trading opportunities created by the negotiations.

### **Deeper pockets**

The European Union and its member states pay out more than €30 billion a year in public aid to developing countries. Of this amount, about €6 billion is channelled through the EU. The Union has committed itself to raising the annual total from €30 to €39 billion by 2006. This is the equivalent of 0.39% of the joint GNP of the 25 member states. Although EU members, like other industrialised countries, have accepted a target of spending 0.7% of their GNP on aid each year, only Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden



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have reached this target. The average for the EU as a whole is 0.34%, which is higher than the United States or Japan.

In May 2005, ministers from the 25 member states agreed to a new collective target of 0.56% for 2010, which would result in an additional €20 billion of aid by that time. They also set 2015 as the date for reaching 0.7%.

Most of the EU's aid is in the form of non-repayable grants. A limited amount of soft loans and investment capital is made available by the European Investment Bank (EIB) the EU's long-term funding body. The EIB made loans to developing countries outside Europe worth €3.6 billion in 2003.

Over the years, the EU has funded thousands of development projects across the third world. Often relatively small amounts of cash go a long way. Recent success stories include a project to equip and train silk weavers in Cambodia, funding to help small businesses in Peru to export more, support for Namibian farmers to set up a lobby to defend their interests, a grant to a business venture in Senegal to improve the quality of local manufactured products, technical assistance to Egypt to eradicate a pest which threatened its vital potato exports to the EU, and many more.

### **Controlling their own destiny**

The ultimate objective of Union policy is to give disadvantaged people in the third world control over their own development. This means attacking the sources of their vulnerability, including poor access to food and clean water, or to education, health, employment, land, social services, infrastructure and a sound environment. It also means disease eradication and access to cheap medicines to combat scourges like HIV/Aids, as well as action to reduce the debt burden that diverts scarce resources away from vital public investments back to rich lenders in the industrialised countries.

As part of this process, the European Commission has proposed to set aside one billion euro to improve access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for populations in the ACP countries. This is part of an international campaign to halve by 2015 the number of people without access to these facilities.

The EU also promotes self-help and poverty eradication strategies which enable developing countries to consolidate the democratic process, expand social programmes, strengthen their institutional framework, expand the capacities of the private and public sectors, and reinforce respect for human rights, including equality between men and women. All EU trade or cooperation agreements with outside countries now include a human rights clause as a matter of routine. Failure to comply entails automatic penalties in terms of lost market access or frozen or cancelled aid projects.

### **Useful reading:**

*[A world player - The European Union's external relations](#)* "Series: Europe on the move"

### **Useful links:**

[DG Development](#) - European Commission

[DG Development](#) - European Parliament

[General Affairs and External Relations](#) – Council of the European Union



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## **Subject 6: FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY**

### From the pages Activities of the European Union

The idea that the European Union should speak with one voice in world affairs is as old as the European integration process itself. But the Union has made less progress in forging a common foreign and security policy over the years than in creating a single market and a single currency. The geopolitical changes following the collapse of communism, and the outbreak of regional crises in the Balkans and beyond, have led EU members to redouble their efforts to speak and act as one.

Historically, the first step was an ambitious attempt in 1954 to create a European Defence Community, which failed at the last minute. This was followed in 1970 by a process called European Political Cooperation, whereby EU member countries tried to coordinate their positions on foreign policy issues of the day. Under this process, EU countries produced joint statements (but no action) condemning acts of aggression and terror around the world, or supporting United Nations or other peace initiatives. But on particularly sensitive issues, or where individual EU countries had special interests, no single voice could be found because decisions had to be unanimous.

### **A new push**

In the last 15 years the Union has renewed its efforts to perform a political and security role more in line with its commercial and economic power. The regional conflicts that erupted after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and, more recently, the need to fight international terrorism have convinced EU leaders that they should create formal instruments of both diplomacy and intervention.

One of the problems was to agree how much authority for vital issues of foreign policy and security should be vested in the EU and its institutions and how much should be retained by member states. In the end, essential authority remains with the member states, although the European Commission and, to a lesser extent, the European Parliament, are associated with the process. However, the formula agreed still requires that key decisions be taken by unanimous vote – hard to achieve when there were 15 EU members, even more difficult with 25.

### **The lesson of Yugoslavia**

The principle of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) was formalised in the Maastricht treaty of 1992. But by that time war had broken out in former Yugoslavia. The Union tried unsuccessfully to broker a diplomatic deal to end the fighting. Without a European intervention capacity, EU countries could only intervene as part of the UN peacekeeping force and subsequently, under US leadership, as part of a Nato force – as they did in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The lessons of the Balkan conflicts have not been lost. The Union has acted since then on both the diplomatic and security fronts.

### **More decisive diplomacy**

To give it diplomatic clout and visibility, the Union has created the post of High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and provided him with a far-reaching support structure, including a policy unit to provide assessments and early warnings on crisis situations, a political and security committee and a military committee. One major innovation, agreed by the 25 member states but not yet implemented, is to raise the EU's diplomatic profile further by creating the post of European foreign minister.

The EU maintains a strong presence on the ground and has dispatched special representatives to several of the world's hotspots, including the Great Lakes (Africa), the Middle East, the Balkans and Afghanistan.



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## Credible intervention capacity

As part of the CFSP, the Union also created a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) with the potential, if agreed later on, for creating a common defence structure. In December 2003, EU leaders adopted a European Security Strategy and have since agreed on its basic mission and priority areas for action: the fight against terror; a Middle East strategy; a comprehensive policy on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

To give it a credible intervention capability, the EU identified a number of tasks a military force could undertake, including humanitarian and rescue missions, peacekeeping, crisis management and even peacemaking. To implement these tasks, the Union created a rapid reaction force, whose military strength will be built up gradually over several years.

It also agreed to provide up to 5 000 police officers for civilian aspects of crisis management of whom 1 000 could be deployed within 30 days.

## First ESDP missions

It is perhaps fitting that the first three ESDP missions have been in the former Yugoslavia, the scene of earlier frustrations.

The first began on 1 January 2003, when the European Union Police Mission of 500 officers took over in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the UN's International Police Task Force. The mission, which will remain for a period of three years, is training local police officers and establishing sustainable policing arrangements in line with European standards and practice.

The second operation followed later in 2003, when a small Nato force in Macedonia was replaced first by an EU military force, and subsequently by a 200-strong EU police mission, which is still in place.

The biggest of the three started in December 2004, when an EU military force (EUFOR) took over from the previous Nato-led Security Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. SFOR had been in place since the end of hostilities in 1995. EUFOR has a total of 8 000 troops.

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## Where to go from here

With the CFSP and ESDP, the Union is creating a political dimension to add to its international role as a major commercial and economic power. But there is still a long way to go before the scale of this political dimension becomes clear. Despite their commitment to making a success of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, member governments sometimes find it hard to change their own national policy regarding a particular country or region in the name of EU solidarity.

Just how difficult this can be is illustrated by the deep divisions among EU member states in spring 2003 over whether the UN Security Council should authorise the American-led war on Iraq.

Although the Union has introduced flexibility into voting procedures on CFSP decisions by allowing individual governments to abstain, or by using majority voting, or by allowing a majority of countries to act on their own, unanimity is still required on decisions with military or defence implications.

## Useful reading:

[A world player - The European Union's external relations](#) *Series: Europe on the move.*

## Useful links:

[External Relations](#) - European Commission

[Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) – European Parliament

[PESC](#) – Council of the European Union



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## **Subject 7: ENVIRONMENT**

Damage to the environment has been growing steadily worse in recent decades. Every year, some 2 billion tonnes of waste are produced in the Member States and this figure is rising by 10% annually, while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our homes and vehicles are increasing, as is our consumption of polluting energy. Natural disasters (floods, droughts and forest fires) are increasing and causing considerable damage to the natural environment and human infrastructure. The consumption of natural resources is also increasing year on year. The quality of life for people living in Europe, especially in urban areas, has declined considerably because of pollution and noise. Human health is also affected, for example by an increase in the number of illnesses linked to air pollution.

Protection of the environment is therefore one of the major challenges facing Europe. The European Community has been strongly criticised for putting trade and economic development before environmental considerations. It is now recognised that the European model of development cannot be based on the depletion of natural resources and the deterioration of our environment.

### **Instruments and application**

The range of environmental and technical instruments available to the European Union (EU) to implement Community environmental policy has expanded as this policy has developed. The principal financial instrument is the LIFE Programme under which co-funding is available for environmental action in the EU and in certain third countries. In addition to this Community funding, assistance is available through national measures put in place by Member States, involving either State Aid or environmental taxes.

The EU also wishes to involve economic players and civil society in protecting the environment, by virtue of measures such as eco-labelling.

### **Waste management**

Every year, the EU "produces" more than 1.8 billion tonnes of waste, 40 million tonnes of which are hazardous waste. Experts predict that this will increase by over 40% by 2020. The main sources of waste are agriculture, construction, industry, mining and urban areas. Stockpiling waste is not a viable solution and destroying it is unsatisfactory due to the resulting emissions and highly concentrated, polluting residues.

Community policy on waste management involves three complementary principles:

- eliminating waste at source and breaking the link between waste creation and growth, amongst other things by improving product design ;
- encouraging waste recycling and re-use, for specific waste flows in particular;
- improving the method of final disposal, for example by reducing pollution caused by waste incineration and using landfill only as a last resort.

### **Noise pollution**

According to the European Environment Agency, noise above a certain volume threshold affects not only the wellbeing, but also the health of citizens.





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The main thrust of Community strategy has long been to adopt maximum permissible levels for noise from certain types of machine (lawnmowers, motorcycles, or, more recently, aircraft and equipment used outside buildings ).

For a long time, the Commission proposed extending this strategy by reducing noise emissions at source, stimulating exchanges of information and improving the consistency of Community programmes to combat noise.

### **Water pollution**

Water is regarded as one of the most abundant resources on the planet: seas and oceans cover more than 70% of the earth's surface and produce almost three quarters of the oxygen that we breathe. However, only 1% of this water is directly usable by man, and many human activities put considerable pressure on this resource. Water contaminated with pollutants, from whatever source, returns to the environment in one way or another, and can therefore be a threat to human health and the environment.

A number of Directives have been adopted by the Member States to introduce water quality standards for particular water uses: drinking water, bathing water and water for fish farm.

Community measures in the 80s and early 90s were based more on the limitation of pollutant emissions. The treatment of urban waste water and measures to combat pollution from nitrates are examples of this.

From 1995, the Community began to adopt a more global approach to water management. This led to a Directive which seeks to promote sustainable use of water resources and to ensure the coherence of policy in this area. This framework Directive is at the heart of current legislation on water protection and management.

European legislation also protects the marine environment, in particular from pollution due to maritime transport . This field is also covered by a thematic strategy under the Sixth Action Programme.

### **Air pollution and climate change**

Improving air pollution is a world priority. To achieve a significant reduction in air pollution, which is the main cause of global warming and climate change, national and international measures must be combined to reduce emissions of the gases responsible.

To this end the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Kyoto Protocol (1997) were adopted. The signatories have undertaken to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 5% compared with their 1990 levels during the period 2008-2012. The European Union has undertaken to reduce emissions by 8%. The EU has reiterated its firm commitment to the Kyoto Protocol on a number of occasions. At the Marrakech Conference (COP7, 29 October to 9 November 2001), the Parties reached an agreement translating the procedures for implementing the Kyoto Protocol into a legally binding text. In the spring of 2002, the European Community approved and then ratified the Kyoto protocol. In spite of the refusal of certain industrial countries to follow suit, the protocol entered into force in February 2005 following its ratification by Russia.

### **Nature conservation**

It is estimated that the continent of Europe is home to more than 200 000 species of animals and plants. Although this figure is relatively low compared to other areas in the world, the proportion of threatened species is far higher than elsewhere. The spread of urbanisation and infrastructures, the over-exploitation of resources, the many forms of pollution and the introduction of exotic species into ecosystems do enormous damage to biodiversity. On the continent of Europe as a whole, therefore, 42% of mammals, 15% of birds and 52% of freshwater fish are under threat. Moreover, some 1 000 plant species are severely threatened or



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on the brink of extinction. For this reason, the protection of biodiversity is one of the main objectives of the Sixth Action Programme for the Environment, adopted in 2002.

In order to protect biodiversity and avoid the extinction of animal and plant species, the European Union has created a vast network of protected sites: the "Natura 2000" network, based on the Birds Directive (1979) and the Habitats Directive (1992).

**Useful reading:**

[Choices for a greener future](#) - Series: "Europe on the move"

**Useful links:**

[DG Environment](#) - European Commission

[Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#) - European Parliament

[Green week](#) – Biodiversity is life 30 may – 2 June