

The Emerging European Identity

Unity and Diversity, Peace and Prosperity

“The European Union has helped to promote democracy, freedom, and human rights throughout Europe. I know what I’m talking about. I was born in a country without democracy and without freedom. I remember that our European aspirations were crucial to building a democratic society in Portugal.”

José Manuel Barroso
President of the European
Commission



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History is often marked by watershed events—wars, significant social movements, the dramatic beginnings or endings of regimes. The end of the Cold War is one such marker for many Europeans in 2007. Hailing from twenty-seven countries and speaking even more languages, today’s European citizens enjoy a measure of prosperity, peace, stability, and solidarity unimaginable just 50 years ago.

Sharing democracy, respect for human rights, and economic freedom, Europeans celebrate their diversity—language, culture, ethnicity—while increasingly reaching beyond the borders of their particular country to the broader Europe.

Is a new European Identity coming into being? What does it look like and how has the EU helped bring about its creation? Certainly there exists a broad recognition—and an expectation—of rights, privileges, and freedoms that the EU helped create or solidify.

Throughout Europe, EU values reflect national values. In Central and Eastern Europe, where many nations are relative newcomers to democratic governance and free market economies, the lure of EU membership was a beacon as these societies transformed themselves following the end of the Cold War.

The generation coming of age in the East today barely remembers the separation and closed societies that existed previously, and already feels firmly rooted in the larger EU and the values it represents: democracy, pluralism, and freedom of speech, religion, association, and thought. The notion of “solidarity” among EU Member States keeps the EU working to reduce disparities in economic and social development, to the ultimate betterment of all Europeans.

Among other tangible accomplishments of the integration process is the free movement of goods, services, persons, and capital throughout the Union.



Citizens can travel, study, work, shop, and live anywhere in the EU—and have grown accustomed to doing so. In thirteen EU countries, with more to follow, the euro is the currency, simplifying travel, eliminating exchange rate costs, and aiding price comparisons across national borders.

Thanks to increased competition brought about by the EU, quality is greater and many goods and services are more affordable. For example, airfares have plummeted and new airlines, including “no-frills” carriers, are making making travel easier and more affordable. Educational exchange has exploded in popularity, energized by programs such as the EU’s Erasmus program. For both practical and philosophical reasons, the EU embraces its natural multilingualism, the continued growth of which further erases borders within the EU.

The changing face of Europe today is not about geography as much as a new way of living for all Europeans. What once were obstacles have been transformed into opportunities on a continental scale. As many forces converge, a new European sense of identity is indeed taking shape—even if it cannot be precisely defined or if it looks a bit different at various points across the breadth of the European Union.

Building A European Consciousness: The EU Role

“Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship.

...
Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.”

Treaty Establishing the European Community, Articles 17(1) & 18(1)

What is it that is making many Europeans *feel* more European today? In large part, and not always acknowledged, it is the role of the EU in bringing the citizens of Europe closer together by breaking down barriers, ensuring fundamental rights, and helping foster an enduring peace that indeed makes war between European nations unthinkable for most EU citizens today.

Free Movement of Persons, Goods, Services, Capital

Chief among the fundamental rights guaranteed to EU citizens are the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital throughout the EU.

Free Movement of People & the Schengen Area. Just one generation ago, during the last years of a Cold War that bisected a continent, who could have imagined a Europe without borders in which citizens can move freely and work and live wherever they choose? Today, these rights are considered the norm, particularly by the “new Europeans,” the post-Cold War generation just coming of age now. Thanks to the EU, citizens of Member States can travel, shop, live, and work anywhere in the Union—in fact, removing national restrictions has enabled more than 15 million Europeans to go to another EU country to work or retire.

EU citizens can enter any EU country with just a passport or identity card, without having to comply with special formalities. Within the “Schengen area” (EU Member States Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden, along with non-EU nations Iceland and Norway), there are generally no identification checks at internal borders.



Schengen rules remove all internal border controls, establishing effective controls at the external borders of the EU and introducing a common visa policy. Switzerland and the newer EU Member States are prepared to join Schengen once conditions have been met for abolishing internal border controls. The United Kingdom and Ireland have chosen to maintain border controls with the other EU Member States.

Living & Working. Beyond merely traveling, EU citizens have the right to stay in another Member State without conditions for up to three months. For longer periods, an EU citizen may settle in another EU country to work, study, train, or retire, or if the citizen and family members have sufficient resources to avoid becoming a burden on the state.

Importantly, the freedom of citizens to work in another EU country has been guaranteed from the start—included in the founding Treaty, now half a century old. Free movement of workers is one of the most important EU rights for individuals and an essential element of European citizenship.



European Passport

Issued by individual Member States to their own citizens, European passports have a common format, with the words “European Union” on the burgundy cover, along with the name of the individual member country.

Like the common currency, the euro, the European passport is a powerful symbol of the Union—one that recognizes both the EU and the Member State—and a reminder to citizens of their status as modern Europeans.



Workers have the right to job hunt, work, reside, and remain in another Member State. Part of the EU's contribution is to help make this happen.

It is this very freedom that has at times caused a measure of anxiety in some Member States as less-wealthy countries joined the Union, leading to fears of flooded employment markets in more developed countries. Such qualms have proven largely unfounded—internal migration has tended to follow the jobs, often reinforcing economic and job growth in larger, wealthier Member States.



“Working in another European country gives individuals the chance to learn a new language, discover a new culture, and develop new skills. Job mobility is also crucial to Europe’s objective of boosting jobs and growth.”

Vladimir Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities

Working Around Europe: How the EU Facilitates Citizen Mobility

Portable Benefits. EU nations have a range of social protection plans, but most countries organize and at least partially fund benefits for unemployment, health care, disability, maternity, and retirement. The EU's special role is to coordinate the national programs, particularly with regard to mobility and portable benefits throughout the EU, an essential prerequisite for the free movement of people.

Job-Hunting. A massive job-search database, EURES, not only helps citizens find work in 31 European countries (All 27 EU Member States plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland), but also provides advice and information about living and working conditions throughout Europe.

Europass. An EU tool designed to foster mobility and lifelong learning by helping citizens better communicate and present their qualifications and skills throughout Europe, Europass offers five documents (e.g., a Europass CV), available in all EU languages.

Recognition of Qualifications. The rights of EU citizens to establish themselves or to provide services anywhere in the EU are fundamental freedoms in the Single Market. EU rules guaranteeing the mutual recognition of qualifications between Member States are designed to overcome potential obstacles presented by national regulations that would only recognize professional qualifications from a particular jurisdiction.

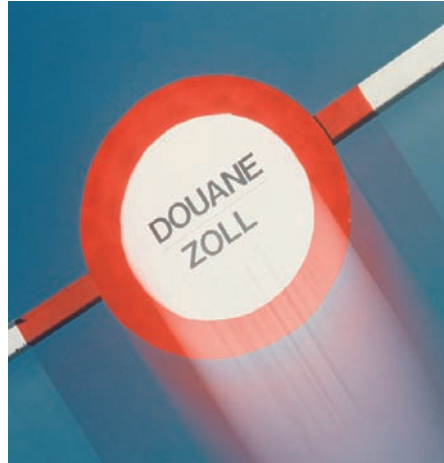
For those in regulated professions, the EU has introduced a system to streamline recognition of qualifications by different EU countries. For a select number of professions—including architect, midwife, pharmacist, doctor, nurse, dentist, and veterinary surgeon—a system is in place for automatic recognition. A more general arrangement applies to others who are qualified to practice a profession in one Member State and wish to have their qualifications recognized in another Member State in order to practice there.



A European Consciousness: The Economy & Society

“[The] European model combines economic success and social responsibility. Only together can we continue to preserve our ideal of European society in future for the good of all European Union citizens.”

Berlin Declaration, March 25, 2007, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the EU



Even though the European Economic Model or the European Social Model are, in fact, a number of models across EU Member States, it is fair to say that Europeans by and large understand and appreciate a society that values both economic success and social protections. Universal health care, fixed pension plans, and other social benefits are commonplace—and highly valued—in EU countries.

Fundamentals: The “Single Market.” With the EU’s origins as a common market and trading bloc, the largely technical process of eliminating barriers to intra-EU trade has been a long, laborious process, often unnoticed by European citizens. The “Single Market,” however, is a singular achievement—the elimination of physical, technical, and tax-related barriers to commerce between Member States—and one which is at the very core of the

Union. Today, with old barriers gone, most goods, services, and money move around Europe as freely as within a single country.

The effects are widely felt. The opening of national markets in the EU has brought down the price of national telephone calls to a fraction of what they cost one decade ago. With competitive pressure, the prices of budget airfares in Europe have dropped significantly. The EU has completed its plan to create an integrated market for financial services, cutting the cost of borrowing for business and consumers, offering a wider range of investment products, and reducing bank charges for cross-border payments.

In short, a plethora of goods and services are available across the EU as readily as if they came from next door. The European Commission estimates that the Single Market has created 2.5

The Euro: A Common Currency for Europe

In many ways, the euro is perhaps the most powerful symbol of the European Union for EU citizens and non-EU citizens alike.

A national currency is a very personal thing for most people, something wrapped up in the nation and culture and not easily given up. It is no small matter, then, that 13 European nations share the euro, the EU’s common currency, and nearly all Member States plan, and are required by treaty, to adopt it in the future. Easing the psychological transition, the “national side” of euro coins is a physical reminder that a growing and increasingly borderless Europe does not eliminate national identities.

To outsiders, besides simplifying travel and doing business in the EU, the common currency denotes a coalescing continent, a union that is indeed much more than a mere grouping of nations.



Lesser-Known Roles: The EU Keeping Europe Healthy & Safe

In a number of areas, the European Union is actively making Europe a better place to live but, ironically, the EU role is not very well-known by its own citizens. Among these important, but lesser-known roles:

Public Health. While health care delivery falls within the domain of the individual Member States, as cross-border health threats evolve in a growing and increasingly mobile Union, the EU plays a critical role in promoting and coordinating health care solutions for all EU citizens, focusing on disease prevention, overall preparedness, and rapid response to potential dangers to human health.

The European Center for Disease Control (ECDC) pools knowledge and expertise, reinforcing the continent-wide disease control system, strengthening rapid alert systems for disease outbreaks, supporting the preparedness of EU institutions and Member States against epidemics, and providing scientific advice.

The EU has also begun to address longer-term issues of promoting healthier living for its citizens, including strategies to deal with the impact of poor diet and nutrition, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, and alcohol abuse.

Consumer Protection. The EU works to ensure that all products sold in the EU are safe and that consumers are not defrauded, and also that consumers have the information needed to make informed, rational choices.

Importantly, the EU role protects consumers both at their local supermarket or when shopping elsewhere in the EU, including on the internet. Strong, clear, EU-wide consumer protection rules reassure citizens while strengthening the EU's internal market by providing a simpler landscape for business as compared to 27 different regulatory regimes.

“The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and an economic and monetary union and by implementing common policies or activities...to promote throughout the Community a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities, a high level of employment and of social protection, equality between men and women, sustainable and non-inflationary growth, a high degree of competitiveness and convergence of economic performance, a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment...”

| Treaty Establishing the European Community, Article 2

million new jobs since 1993 and generated more than 800 billion in additional wealth.

Trade & Commerce. An EU citizen is free to shop throughout the EU with virtually no limits on purchases (aside from quantitative limits applying to tobacco and alcohol) as long as it is for personal use and not for resale. Taxes (VAT and excise duties) are included in the price paid and no further payment of tax is due in any other EU country, with the exception of new car purchases, which are taxed when registered in the country of residence. Shopping in another country has become convenient and common-

place, and citizens can bargain-hunt for lower prices and more favorable VAT rates as they please. Should an English family wish to purchase wine in France for a family member's wedding, they simply drive to France—in these days of the Chunnel—buy it (paying tax in France), and return home. Quite simple.

European consumers today enjoy a wider range of choices for products and services at competitive and more easily comparable prices. EU consumer protection law gives citizens confidence that they are purchasing safe products and services in whatever Member State they shop.

“Soft Power”—The EU on the World Stage

In the wake of differences between some EU countries and the United States about the invasion of Iraq, a good deal has been made of the soft power/hard power distinction between the EU and the U.S. While such discussions are often oversimplified—a number of EU nations sent troops to Iraq and earlier to Afghanistan, and the Union itself has certain military capabilities, some of which rely on partnership with NATO—it is fair to say that Europeans by and large feel inclined to rely heavily on the inherent “soft power” of persuasion and incentive available to the EU by virtue of its size and economic importance in the world, turning to military action only as a last resort and then with a specific multilateral mandate.



Educating the New Europeans: “Mobility” and Enhancing the European Identity

“Erasmus has developed beyond just being an educational program. It gives many European university students the chance of living for the first time in a foreign country, and it has reached the status of a social and cultural phenomenon.”

José Manuel Barroso
President of the European
Commission



Erasmus: 20 Years of Bringing Europeans Together

Twenty years ago, no major European-level student exchange program was available within the EU. Today, thanks to two decades of the Erasmus program, more than 1.5 million European students have studied abroad in another European country, typically acquiring another language and becoming acquainted with another culture.

Erasmus is designed to support “European” activities of higher education institutions and to promote the “mobility” (exchange) of their teaching staff and students. A remarkable 90 percent of EU universities take part in Erasmus, providing full academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the EU. Erasmus is truly a phenomenon, vastly more successful than its early proponents imagined. For many participants, Erasmus represents a turning point in their lives, introducing new experiences, broadening horizons, and making them more well-rounded European citizens.

Named after the cosmopolitan Dutch scholar who lived in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the program has greatly contributed to an enhanced sense of European citizenship and identity among participants and the larger university populations.

Results

- Studies confirm that participation in Erasmus can be a key asset when it comes to finding a

job—employers view a study abroad period as a distinguishing attribute.

- Students achieved greater linguistic competence, with 65 percent able to work in a second language and others also improving their skills in a third or fourth language.
- Erasmus has been and continues to be a driver for change in European higher education, for example by inspiring the *Bologna Process*, a major initiative to simplify Europe’s higher education system.

In Their Own Words: The Erasmus Experience

A Romanian Student in Portugal. “I saw that despite being so different from one another, speaking different languages, one can find open minds and the same purpose. We students abroad are the agents for change in the world. Through Erasmus I have become a better citizen of the world.”

An Estonian Student in Finland. “As the students were from different countries and with different backgrounds, seminars turned out to be very interesting and full of different approaches.”

A Portuguese Student in Sweden. “When I finished my Erasmus year I felt not only Portuguese, but a bit Swedish...a little bit Italian as well, and Spanish, German, French, and so on...! This experience made me want to work abroad, which I am doing now. In fact, Erasmus really changes your life.”



Erasmus Goes to the Movies

The film *L'auberge espagnole* drew attention to the Erasmus program in the United States with its entertaining depiction of a French Erasmus student in Barcelona studying and living with housemates from seven different European countries.

“I am French, Spanish, English, Danish. I am not one but several. I am like Europe, I am all of that!”
—*L'auberge espagnole*

Exchange Programs

Promoting Intercultural Understanding Beyond Europe

Erasmus Mundus. Launched in 2004, Erasmus Mundus is a European Masters program that provides scholarships to students and visiting scholars from around the world for post-graduate study at participating European universities. This program also provides for partnerships with institutions outside the EU that allow European students and scholars to study in non-EU countries. As with the original Erasmus program, the idea is to promote intercultural understanding, in this case through cooperation with non-EU countries, while at the same time enhancing the quality of higher education in Europe.

Tempus. Higher education is a priority for EU development cooperation activities with neighboring countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. The Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies (TEMPUS) funds projects between the higher education sector in the EU and its 26 partner countries to facilitate university modernization, mutual learning between regions and peoples, and understanding between cultures.



“As an integral part of our identity, language is the structuring element of any culture and its most direct expression. To respect and promote linguistic and cultural diversity is one of the European Union’s strategic priorities and a basic key to European integration. The promotion of intercultural dialogue is inseparable from multilingualism.”

Leonard Orban
European Commissioner for
Multilingualism

Multilingualism: A Hallmark Strength of the EU

One of the hallmarks of the European Union is respect for diversity, including all 23 official languages of the 27 Member States as well as additional regional languages. Linguistic diversity is a daily reality in Europe, and the EU is committed to preserving and promoting this enriching feature of European society. All EU legislation must be published and made available simultaneously in all official languages.



Yet because language barriers can present practical obstacles to those wishing to take advantage of student exchange programs or employment opportunities in other Member States, the EU has focused on improving language skills, calling for concrete action such as teaching at least two foreign languages beginning at a very early age and more broadly seeking to help business increase language skills to boost competitiveness and create jobs.

A recent Eurobarometer survey found that 56 percent of EU citizens are able to hold a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue, up by 9 percent since 2001. Twenty-eight percent can converse in two foreign languages. This multilingual group could well represent a key facet of an emerging European identity.



Gauging European Identity Within the “European Project”



The European Project at age 50 continues to be a work in progress, unfolding at its own pace, driven by the sometimes difficult process of decision-making by consensus of 27 sovereign states. Similarly, the notion of a European identity is emerging gradually, in a manner very personal to individuals but reflective of the fact that the European Union is increasingly a part of everyday life for modern Europeans.

European citizens have experienced intense change during the past 15 years—completion of the “single market,” the opening up of national borders, launching a common currency, more than doubling the size of the EU between 1995 and 2007. These and other significant EU achievements are shaping what it means to be European today by defining some of what citizens themselves want and expect of Europe.

A 2007 Eurobarometer survey of EU citizens found that an average 57 percent of citizens think that EU membership for their country is a good thing, the highest level of support in over a decade. Looking 50 years into the future, the majority of EU citizens see the EU playing a strong role diplomatically, with its own army and a directly-elected President.

Such positive trends seem at odds with the “enlargement fatigue” reported in some quarters, or the “No” votes by Dutch and French citizens in their respective referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005. But are they really? It is one thing to vote “no” on an unfamiliar treaty, or to call for a more open

debate and process, or even to feel the need for an “enlargement pause” to catch one’s breath after a period of momentous change. It is another thing entirely to reject the European Union or revert to a Europe without the EU.

The challenge before the EU today is to continue building a Europe that is more transparent and responsive to citizens’ needs. Leaders are working to bring the EU closer to the average citizen and boost accountability while continuing to remind Europeans of the benefits delivered by the EU, many of which are simply taken for granted these days.

The European integration process is the most ambitious undertaking of its kind in the world, indeed in history. In half a century, the EU has changed the European landscape, dramatically improving the lives of its citizens, bringing peace, stability, and prosperity, and helping shape the emerging European identity.



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Anthony Smallwood
*Spokesman and Head of Press
& Public Diplomacy
Editor-in-Chief*

Ben Harrison
Editor

Melinda Stevenson
Writer/Assistant Editor

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Delegation of the European
Commission to the United States
2300 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202.862.9500

www.eurunion.org
email: delegation-usa-info@ec.europa.eu

For further information: <http://www.eurunion.org/eufocus>