

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT EU COUNTRIES

Austria

The World Competitiveness Yearbook ranked Austria No. 2 in quality of life, surpassing the U.S. and Japan.

Between 1994 and 2004, productivity in Austria grew by 52 percent, far faster than in the U.S. (38 percent) and Japan (30 percent).

The company that makes Red Bull, the world's No. 1 energy drink, is headquartered in Fuschl, Austria.

Austrian firms lead the world market for encapsulated photovoltaic cell technology.

Belgium

Belgium has the highest density of roads and the highest density of railroads in the world.

Belgium is the world's largest diamond center and second largest petrochemical center.

Belgium has the 2nd highest concentration of diplomatic missions (159 Embassies) after Washington, D.C.

One third of all dredging work in the world is done by Belgian companies.

According to the UN Human Development Index 2005, Belgium was the 9th most 'liveable' country in the world. (one place ahead of the U.S.)

Cyprus

Cypriot culture is among the oldest in the Mediterranean. By 3700 BC, the island was well inhabited, a crossroads between East and West.

Since 1974, Cyprus has been divided. While the entire territory of the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, full application of EU laws and policies is suspended in the areas not controlled by the government of Cyprus.

In the past 20 years, the economy has shifted from agriculture to light manufacturing and services. The service sector, including tourism, contributes roughly 76 percent to the GDP and employs 72 percent of the labor force.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is No. 2 in investment incentives and No. 3 in investment in telecommunications among 60 leading economies.

The Czech Republic boasts an extraordinarily high number of cultural monuments. Over 2,000 preserved castles and chateaux are open to the public (more per square mile than any other country in the world) and represent an important part of national cultural heritage, in terms of their number and their historical and artistic value. The Czech Republic is the birthplace of many well-known people, notably Antonin Dvorak and Madeleine Albright.

The Czech Republic has the largest number of incoming tourists per capita, with Prague being the most visited city. Many popular spas exist in the Czech Republic, which have been frequented by numerous renowned personalities, including such European cultural giants as Goethe, Schiller, Chopin, Beethoven, and Wagner.

The Czech Republic is the number one beer-brewing nation in the world and can lay claim to many “beer firsts”: first in per capita beer consumption, first beer museum in the world, first beer brewing textbook, first Pilsener, first Budweiser, and first president to have written an absurdist play based on his experiences working in a Czech beer brewery in 1974 (Vaclav Havel – Audience).

Denmark

Denmark is an advanced society with a high level of education, state of the art infrastructure, and high tech industry.

Denmark has one of the strongest economies in Europe with a public expenditure surplus, trade surplus, and the lowest unemployment rate in Europe. More than 50 per cent of its GDP derives from foreign trade.

Denmark is a world leader in energy efficiency and conservation. Today, Denmark is favored by a flexible and diverse energy supply structure marked by a high percentage of renewables. Wind energy alone accounts for 20 per cent of the total power generation in Denmark.

Denmark leads the world in public and private investment in educational institutions as a share of GDP, according to the World Competitiveness Yearbook.

Estonia

Estonia was the first country to adopt a flat tax. It has no hidden taxes and corporate investment is exempt from corporate income tax.

Estonia has had an average growth rate of about 6 percent over the past five years. It is so wired that it is nicknamed E-stonia. Bars and cafes are universally equipped with wireless connections.

Skype, designed by Estonian developers, offers free calls over the Internet to millions of people.

Finland

Finland is ranked as the most competitive economy in the world, ahead of the United States, according to the World Economic Forum. Finland is ranked as the world leader in business-academia cooperation by the World Competitiveness Yearbook.

Finland has been ranked the least corrupt country for several consecutive years.

Finland ranks No. 1 in press freedom, according to the Freedom House annual survey.

According to the OECD, 15-year-old Finns have the best literary skills in the world. Finnish students are the world champions in math, reading, and science.

France

France is the most visited country in the world.

French-based Arianespace is the world's commercial space launch leader, with more than 50 percent of the global market for launching satellites into geostationary orbit. Clients include NASA, AT&T and the Hughes Aircraft Corporation.

In 2004, the French built the Queen Mary 2, the world's largest, most advanced passenger cruise ship ever conceived.

The French constructed the world's tallest bridge in 2005; the Millau Viaduct's roadway is almost four times the height of the roadway on the Golden Gate Bridge; its tallest tower is just 125 feet shorter than the Empire State Building.

Germany

Germany has the world's third largest and Europe's largest economy.

Germany leads the world in exports; 10.1 percent of world exports come from Germany.

Germany was ranked by the World Competitiveness Yearbook as No. 1 in patent and copyright protection.

Germany plays the largest role next to that of the United States in the campaign to bring stability and development to Afghanistan and other countries.

Greece

Greece has the largest merchant fleet in the world.

Greek-owned ships lead in the world's merchant tonnage.

The Greek fleet accounts for 16 percent of the global shipping force.

Hungary

Hungary tops the world's leading trading nations in imports and exports as a share of GDP.

Forty-five of the top fifty multinational companies are present in Hungary.

Stock prices at the Budapest Stock market rose by 40 percent from mid 2003 to mid 2004.

Ireland

Ireland leads the world in high technology exports as a share of total exports. Over half of Ireland's manufacturing exports are high technology products.

Ireland is the world's biggest recipient of foreign direct investment dollars as a share of GDP.

Ireland was proclaimed the third most liberalized economy in the world—almost displacing number two ranked Singapore—in the most recent Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal Index of Economic Freedom.

Italy

Italy is ranked as the world's 6th largest industrial economy. According to the OECD, Italy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP at PPP values) is the sixth largest in the world.

Italy is home to the greatest number of sites on UNESCO's world heritage list; many exhibits in America and throughout the world originated in Italy.

Italy has been and is a major player, along with the United States and other European allies, in peacekeeping, stabilization, and reconstruction in the Balkans and the Broader Middle East, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

The city of Torino hosted the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, which were a great success in terms of organizational efficiency and security as well as an intense celebration of sport and friendship.

Latvia

Latvia has the highest GDP growth in the EU: 10.2 percent in 2005.

The Latvian Lats to U.S. dollar exchange rate is approximately 1:2--\$2=1 Lats.

A high number of women are represented in Latvia's political leadership, including the Latvian President, Speaker of Parliament, and Minister of Defense.

Cell phone coverage is available over 99 percent of Latvia's territory.

Lithuania

In March 1990, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare its independence from Moscow.

The inflation rate in Lithuania is the lowest in Europe.

The productivity growth of Lithuanian companies exceeds the rapidly rising average productivity growth of Central European companies.

Lithuania is the largest EU contributor to the NBA: 6 players this year.

Luxembourg

Residents of Luxembourg rank No. 2 in the world in their standard of living and per capita income.

Luxembourg leads the world in mobile telephone access. In 2003, Luxembourg had more cell phones than total inhabitants.

Luxembourg ranks as the world's top city for personal safety and security.

Luxembourg has the highest GDP per capita (\$58,900) in the world.

Malta

Malta is home to seven Megalithic structures that are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with the oldest structures dating from the 6th Millennium BCE, making it 1,000 years older than the Pyramids of Egypt. Very little is known about the mysterious yet highly complex civilization that built them over a span of thousands of years. Valletta, a walled, 16th century gem of baroque architecture and the capital city is yet another World Heritage site.

Malta welcomes 1.2 million tourists a year (triple its population of 400,000), who flock to the island not only to experience its natural beauty, climate, and clean seas, but also its ancient heritage—the island's 7,000 year old history and pre-history. Tourism accounts for 24.3 percent of Gross National Product and over 25 percent of exports of goods and services. Malta has also become a center for Conferences and Learning of English as a Foreign Language.

In 1967, Arvid Pardo, the Maltese Ambassador to the UN, proposed that the UN declare the seabed and ocean floor "underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction" to be "the common heritage of mankind." The UN General Assembly convened the 1973 Third UN Conference of the Law of the Sea to write a new treaty. The convention came into force on November 14, 1994.

There are two main political parties in Malta and elections generate a widespread voter turnout exceeding 96 percent. The margin between the two parties is so narrow that a 52 percent share of the votes can still be considered a "landslide" for the winning party.

The Netherlands

Although often called ‘Holland’, our official name is ‘The Netherlands’ – which means lowlands. One-third of the Netherlands is below sea level. The Netherlands' highest point is about 1000 feet high and they call it a ‘mountain.’

While the Netherlands comprises only 0.008% of the world's area, it is the world's third largest agricultural exporter. Rotterdam’s seaport is the world’s largest port in size and tonnage.

The Dutch are strong inventors and developed the compact disc, the microscope, and the artificial heart.

800 Dutch companies in the U.S. employ over 350,000 Americans. Skippy Peanut Butter, Ponds, Ben & Jerry’s, Hellman’s, Slim Fast, and Close-up are Dutch products.

Poland

Poland gave birth to one of the largest citizens’ movements in modern history, led by Nobel laureate, Lech Walesa, which led to the fall of Communism in Europe.

Polish glass makers built and operated the first factory in the New World, in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1608.

Poland’s labor force is among the strongest in the world and is ranked 3rd for labor utilization, above the U.S. and Japan.

Poland holds the world's fifth-largest proven reserves of hard and brown coal in addition to deposits of copper, sulfur, zinc, lead, and silver, as well as magnesium and rock salt

Portugal

Portugal could become the world's 10th largest tourism market by 2020, attracting almost quadruple the current number of tourists, according to the World Tourism Organization. Wine tourism is growing at a strong 7 to 12 per cent a year in Europe, and Portugal is one of the main destinations. Portugal’s annual income from the golf industry represents 1.25 per cent of national income and 14 per cent of all income from tourism.

In relative terms, Portugal invests more than the EU average in education; the average ratio of one teacher to every nine students is one of the highest in the world.

Portugal ranks as number one among the advanced industrialized nations in the number of Internet subscribers per capita.

Portugal had the second highest GDP growth rates in Europe over the last 40 years.

Slovakia

Eugen Andrew Cernan, Apollo 17 captain, and the second American who walked on the Moon, was of the Slovak origin.

Among Slovakia's reknowned native sons are: Jozef Murgaš, inventor of radiotelegraphy; Štefan Banič, constructed the first parachute based on the principle of the umbrella; Maximilián Hell (1720 – 1792), a mathematician and astronomer, was the first to measure the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

The hill known as Krahule near the town Kremnica, Slovakia, is the geographical center of Europe.

In 2007, the Slovakian automotive industry will produce 950,000-1,000,000 cars per year, giving the country the highest per capita car production in the world.

Slovenia

Slovenia is one of the best economic performers in Central and Eastern Europe--with GDP per capita at \$17,008 in 2005--and receives the highest credit rating of all transtion economies.

Slovenia's Port of Koper on the Adriatic Sea provides a 7-10 day shorter route for shipments arriving from Asia than do Europe's northern ports.

Slovenians in their first state, Carinthia, practiced the unique custom of the Installation of the Dukes of Carinthia (7th –14th century). According to some scholars, the ritual of installing Carinthian dukes carried out in the Slovenian language and the democratic arrangement between people and ruler is said to have influenced Thomas Jefferson's drafting of the Declaration of Independence.

Several exceptional sportmen of this nation of two million have made it into the halls of fame of extreme sports achievements. Among them are ultramarathon swimmer Martin Strel, the first to swim the Mississippi River, and Jure Robic, the two time winner of RAAM - the endurance bicycle race from the west to the east coast of the United States.

Spain

Thirteen of the 15 major North American oil and gas companies have Spanish management, control, and information systems installed.

The Tampa Bay Water Authority has selected a Spanish firm to repair, redesign, and operate the Apollo Beachplant, the largest desalination facility in the U.S.

Six Spanish companies were among the top 10 private infrastructure-management companies of 2004, according to Public Works Financing, the leading industry magazine.

A Spanish company, Abengoa Bioenergy, is the second largest biofuels producer in the world.

Sweden

Sweden has the second highest proportion of women in its national parliament, 45.3 per cent, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Sweden's Ericsson is a world-leading provider of telecommunications equipment and related services to mobile and fixed network operators globally. Over 1,000 networks in 140 countries utilize network equipment from Ericsson and 40 percent of all mobile calls are made through Ericsson's systems.

Sweden is the third largest music exporter in the world, after the U.S. and Britain.

Sweden is the number one nation in environmental protection and sustainability policies and aims to be the first country in the world to become oil independent by the year 2020.

United Kingdom

London has the world's largest foreign exchange market.

The United Kingdom is the largest exporter to the United States and the largest recipient of U.S. investment in Europe.

With less than 1 percent of the world's population, the UK is responsible for 5.5 percent of global R&D. Tim Berners-Lee of the UK invented the World Wide Web.

The UK is ranked first in the world for wind energy, according to the Ernst & Young Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria occupies a strategic location between Europe and Asia, and is a center of political and economic stability in South-Eastern Europe. Historically, Bulgaria has been a nation of proven ethnic and religious tolerance.

Bulgaria is second in the world in international IQ tests and SAT scores and fourth in the world in per capita university education after the U.S., Japan, and the United Kingdom.

Bulgaria boasts a highly skilled labour force that is cost-competitive, with 5,000 computer science graduates annually and more than 20,000 professionals employed in the IT sector (from a population of 7.9 million). Intensive foreign language training is part of the curriculum - e.g. 429,000 secondary school students follow the English only language program every year.

Bulgaria has established itself as a preferred tourist destination, with almost 5 million tourists in 2005 (more than half of the country's population and an increase of 16 percent over 2004), visiting its spa, mountain and sea resorts as well as its archaeological sites and cultural monuments.

Romania

Romania has been one of the five fastest growing economies in Europe during the last five years. Romania is number four in the top of 10 countries with highest growth rate in tourism development, with an estimated potential of 8 percent from 2007 – 2016 (The World Travel and Tourism Council).

Constanta Port, located on the Romanian Black Sea Coast, is the 2nd largest port in Europe.

Romania is one of the largest wine producers in Europe with a vineyard surface of 243,000 hectares and an annual production of 5 to 6 million hectoliters. Archaeological finds and historical documents place the beginnings of wine culture on the present territory of Romania some 4000 years ago.

Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci was the the first Olympic gymnast ever to score a perfect 10, at the Montreal Olympics in 1976.