



Europe Day 2010 – Talking Points

WHAT IS EUROPE DAY?

- May 9, Europe Day, is the 60th anniversary of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's proposal of a partnership of western European countries that would later grow into the European Union.
- Europe Day is a time for Europeans to celebrate the values they share and the benefits we enjoy from working together. It is a day to reflect on past achievements and plans for the future.
- On Europe Day we also remember the key role that the United States has played in supporting European integration, and the valuable transatlantic partnership that Europeans share with the United States.
- To mark this event, many officials who represent the 27 Member States of the European Union here in the United States are visiting high schools to talk to students about the EU, how Europe and the United States work together, and how we will all benefit from the transatlantic relationship.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EU

- After World War II, a number of European political figures—from countries that had fought each other for centuries—were convinced that the best way to secure a peaceful and prosperous future was for their countries to form a coalition to ensure that mutual independence would make future European wars almost impossible.
- When Robert Schuman made his famous speech in 1950, he envisaged a community where coal and steel—the key industrial sectors of the time—would become the basis for reconciliation and peace instead of tools for war and destruction.
- Six European nations—France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg—formed the European Coal and Steel Community, the precursor to today's EU.
- Since then, the number of Member States has expanded dramatically from six to 27, with another three candidate countries and six potential candidate countries waiting in the wings. The EU is still an exciting and ambitious 'work in progress'.

- Democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law has been a requirement for EU membership from the start, and for many nations, the prospect of EU membership helped smooth the transition to democratic rule.
- Since Schuman's proposal 60 years ago, Europe has not only enjoyed the longest period of peace in its history, but the European continent previously divided by the Cold War, has also been united.

THE EUROPEAN UNION TODAY

- From a beginning that focused on breaking down economic barriers, the EU today has coordinated policies in areas ranging from international trade to climate action to academic recognition.
- Products and services, investment and people move freely across borders. There are common standards for environmental protection and product safety, and all EU Member States commit themselves to democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe and beyond. The EU opposes the death penalty in all cases and in all countries.
- Sixteen of the 27 EU Member States also share a common currency—the euro. A common currency makes it easier for people and companies to do business within the EU, and nearly all EU countries are expected to adopt the euro as time goes on.
- There are now more euros in circulation than U.S. dollars, and the euro—which was worth nearly \$1 when it was launched 10 years ago—is now worth much more.

HOW THE EU WORKS

- Policies in areas where the 27 Member States make joint decisions are developed and implemented through four key EU institutions:
 - **The European Parliament**, elected by the people of each Member State, serves as the voice of the citizens. It is the world's only directly elected multinational assembly.
 - **The European Commission** is the EU's executive body and represents the European perspective. The Commission manages and implements EU policies and budgets. It also proposes legislation, very different from the U.S., where your Executive Branch approves and implements laws, but Congress proposes them.
 - **The Council of the European Union** represents the governments of each Member State. The Council is the key decision-maker, adopting EU laws proposed by the European Commission—usually doing so jointly with the European Parliament.

- **The European Court of Justice** ensures that EU law is interpreted and applied uniformly throughout the EU.
- In the United States, the EU is represented by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States, as well as by the separate embassies of the 27 individual Member States
- The Delegation represents the EU in all matters where the Member States have agreed that their interests are to be represented collectively.
- By contrast, the embassy of each EU Member State represents the bilateral interests of that nation in its dealings with the U.S. government, and on issues that are not under specific EU jurisdiction.

THE EU & THE U.S.: AN IMPORTANT LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

- The EU and the U.S. share many common interests and there is a constant political and economic dialogue between the two. In addition, EU and U.S. leaders meet annually, alternating between Europe and America, to identify new areas of cooperation and to consolidate and enhance the transatlantic relationship.

International Affairs: Democracy, Freedom, Peace

- The EU and U.S. work together to promote democracy, freedom, and peace around the world. In areas of conflict, such as Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia, we work side-by-side to help rebuild these countries and improve people's lives.
- Together with the U.S., the UN and Russia (the 'Quartet'), we support efforts to establish peace in the Middle East. In Iraq, the EU is providing training to the police and criminal justice communities, and was a major contributor to the management and funding of elections.
- We provide emergency relief to victims of natural disasters like the recent earthquake in Haiti. The EU even provided emergency supplies and personnel to the U.S. Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.
- We help fight AIDS and other serious diseases in Africa and the Caribbean, and the EU is the world's largest donor of development and humanitarian assistance. Together with the United States, the EU and its Member States provide 80 percent of the world's grant development assistance (60% EU, 20% US).

Trade and International Economics

- The EU and the U.S. work closely together to promote an open and stable global economy—a partnership that has been particularly important in the current financial crisis, when EU and U.S. leaders met to launch the G20 process to coordinate global economic recovery.
- At \$4 trillion annually, the EU-U.S. transatlantic economy represents the largest economic relationship in the world, supporting over 14 million jobs in Europe and the United States combined (split roughly 50:50).
- Thousands of European companies have offices and factories in the United States, just as many U.S. companies have offices and factories throughout Europe.
- Sometimes the EU and the U.S. do have ‘trade problems’ but we try to work together to sort out issues before they become too serious.

Fighting Terrorism and International Crime

- Combating terrorism is another priority shared by the EU and the U.S. Both Europe and the United States have been victims of deadly terrorist attacks in recent years.
- We work together to counter terrorism and to make international travel and trade between our countries safer and more secure.
- The EU and U.S. also cooperate on fighting international crime, illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, counterfeiting and piracy.

Confronting Energy and Environmental Challenges

- One area where we need to work more closely together is on climate change and other environmental challenges.
- The European Union is a leader in global efforts to protect the environment. We play a key role in international action against climate change—the EU has set the benchmark in the fight against global warming by undertaking to cut at least 20 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, in part through our existing cap-and-trade system.

STUDY ABROAD: COME TO EUROPE!

- Every year, more than 100,000 Americans contribute to the ongoing and enthusiastic dialogue between the EU and the U.S. by studying abroad in Europe.
- Studying abroad has many benefits: you can learn new languages, experience other cultures, open your mind to new ideas, and discover exciting career opportunities.
- I hope many of you will spend at least a semester studying in Europe during your college career. If a semester abroad is too long, there are hundreds of summer and short-term opportunities as well.
- You will join a community of people on both sides of the Atlantic working to understand each other, and you will become a vital part of the most important international relationship in the world, the transatlantic alliance.

Delegation of the European Union
Washington, DC