



World Affairs Councils of America

## TALKING POINTS FOR OFFICIALS VISITING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### EU Educational Outreach Program 2012



EUROPEAN UNION  
DELEGATION TO THE USA

#### **If Visiting in May**

##### **May 9<sup>th</sup> Europe Day – Why we celebrate?**

---

- May 9<sup>th</sup>, "Europe Day," is the anniversary celebration of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's proposal envisioning a partnership of Western European countries – an idea that would continue to grow into today's European Union.
- Europe Day is a time that we as Europeans celebrate the values we share and the benefits and prosperity we enjoy from working together.
- On Europe Day, we also remember the pivotal role the United States has played in supporting European integration and how valuable the transatlantic partnership continues to be.
- In celebration of Europe Day, many European officials representing the 27 EU Member States and the EU here in the United States are visiting local high schools to talk to students about the EU, the US-European relationship, and the mutual benefits of our continued partnership.

#### **If Visiting in the Spring of 2012, March thru April**

##### **European Spring of 1848—Why we commemorate?**

---

- The European Spring of 1848 was in some European countries known as the Springtime of the Peoples, very similar to what we have seen with the Arab Spring of 2011
- It is considered by many historians as laying the foundation for modern Europe. In many European countries the uprisings sought to cast of traditional authority and demanded more participatory and democratic governments.

#### **If Visiting Fall of 2012**

##### **Collapse of the Berlin Wall –November 9<sup>th</sup> --Why we commemorate?**

---

- November 9 is the anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It reunited East and West Berlin and paved the way for the reunification of Germany in October 1990.
- Throughout Europe this anniversary symbolizes a significant milestone in the reunification of East and West Europe, and the appeal of EU membership has been instrumental in the peaceful democratic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe.

#### **A History of the European Union – 1950 to today**

---

- After World War II and the destruction and divisiveness that Europe and the world endured, many European and American political figures believed the best way to

secure a peaceful and prosperous future was to ensure mutual interdependence, making war so costly it would be virtually impossible.

- Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman were two pioneers. Schuman made a famous speech in 1950 in which he detailed his visions for a community of coal and steel—the key industrial sectors of the European war machines—that would in the future form the foundation for reconciliation and peace between countries.
- In 1952, six European nations—France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—formed the European Coal and Steel Community, the precursor to the European Economic Community (EEC) and today's evolution of that vision, the European Union.
- The 1957 Treaty of Rome enshrined the determination to lay the foundation for an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe and the EEC. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty completed the formation of the European Union and officially created one of the most successful facets of the European project to date—the single market and a single currency, the euro, adopted by 11 countries in 1999 as their official currency.
- The European Union today comprises 27 Member States with 17 states now members of the Euro-zone. With one acceding country (Croatia), five candidate countries (FYROM, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) and three potential candidates (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo under UNSCR 1244) working towards accession, the EU continues to grow and evolve, most recently in 2009 with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.
- Since Schuman's proposal over 60 years ago, the European Union has fostered democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law throughout the European continent and in the world. In that period, Europe has enjoyed the longest period of peace and prosperity in its history, speaking to the power and success of the European project.

### **Key Governing Institutions**

---

- The EU is more than a trade organization or a common market; it is a global player committed to promoting peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, and human rights around the world.
- From a beginning focused on breaking down economic barriers, the EU today has coordinated policies including international trade, environmental protection, crisis response, and even academic recognition.
- The EU makes joint decisions in many policy areas today.
- The European Council, made up of the presidents or prime ministers of Member States, along with the presidents of the European Commission and European Council, is the highest political authority in the EU. European Council summits, which take place several times a year, set overall EU policy.

- EU policies are developed, implemented, and enforced through 4 key institutions:
  - The **European Parliament**, directly 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, comprising 754 MEPs representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest electorate in the world.
  - The **European Commission** is the EU's executive body, independent of national governments. The Commission manages and implements EU policies and budgets, representing the EU as a whole. It proposes legislation for European laws, which is very different from the U.S., where Congress proposes laws and then the Executive Branch approves and implements laws.
  - The **Council of the European Union** represents the governments of each Member State, with one minister from each state present at each meeting. The Council is the key decision-maker, adopting EU laws proposed by the European Commission—with each minister empowered to commit his/her government to a proposal.
  - The **European Court of Justice** ensures that EU legislation is interpreted and applied in the same way in all EU countries, so that the law is equal for everyone. The Court has the power to settle legal disputes between EU member states, EU institutions, businesses and individuals. It is composed of one judge per member state, so that all 27 of the EU's national legal systems are represented.
  
- In the US, the EU is represented by the Delegation of the EU to the USA which represents the EU and its Member States in all collective areas. This is in contrast to each Member State's embassy which represents that nation's interests in areas outside of EU jurisdiction bilaterally with the US.

### **A Transatlantic Partnership – the U.S. and the EU**

---

- Just as the transatlantic partnership played a formative role in the emergence of a European project over 60 years ago, the EU-US relationship continues to build upon this long, mutually-beneficial history based on strong, shared core beliefs.
- EU and US leaders meet and consult regularly to coordinate responses to crises, identify new areas of cooperation, and consolidate the relationship. For example, at the December 2011 summit in Washington, DC, leaders initiated establishment of a new joint High-Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth, and reaffirmed the EU-US relationship as irreplaceable to both sides of the partnership.
- Cooperation comes in many forms including development assistance, mutually beneficial trade relations, energy and climate policy, and increasingly international economic, political, and defense security.

### ***Transatlantic Trade and Investment***

- 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 economic times.

- The US-European trade relationship represents about 40 percent of total world trade. The transatlantic economy continues to generate close to \$4.28 trillion in total commercial sales a year and employs up to 14 million workers in jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. EU firms are the largest foreign employers of U.S. workers, and Europe remains the most profitable region in the world for U.S. firms to do business.
- Thousands of European companies have offices and factories in the United States, just as many U.S. companies have offices and factories throughout Europe.

### ***Democracy, Peace, and Freedom***

- 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. Currently, in the Middle East, the EU and U.S. are on the front lines of aiding the people of the region in securing freedom and democratic rights for themselves.
- 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 earthquake in Haiti. The EU is also providing significant humanitarian relief to people displaced by revolutions and fighting in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. 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 official development assistance (approximately 60% EU, 20% US).

### ***Responding to the Middle East Crises***

- The EU and the U.S. are working together to support democratization, basic freedoms, and the rights of people in the Middle East to have the freedom of choice in their government.
- The EU has sent humanitarian aid to Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt in the wake of their popular revolutions, and we are working diligently to avert a humanitarian disaster by continuing our support of humanitarian aid to the region. The EU condemns the use of force, violence, and deplores aggressive actions against peaceful demonstrators.
- EU High Representative Catherine Ashton has worked very closely with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the US government to coordinate our responses and aid in supporting a peaceful transition to democracy in the Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and elsewhere.

### ***The Ongoing Economic Crisis***

- The ongoing economic crisis has only reaffirmed the EU's and its Member States' commitment to the euro and economic and monetary union. We are addressing head-on the symptoms and the root causes of the economic and sovereign debt crises.
- We are revamping the economic framework that underpins the euro-zone and solidifying mechanisms to protect the European Union, making it stronger for the future and promoting mechanisms of growth, development, and competitiveness simultaneously.
- The EU and its Member States will do whatever is necessary to defend the euro and promote growth. Not only are we making reforms aimed at strengthening the euro at the EU level, EU Member States are also implementing major structural reforms at the national level to promote growth and drive the EU into the future.

### ***Energy Policy and Climate Change***

- 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, and European businesses are at the forefront in the efforts including renewable energy production.
- We play a key role in international action against climate change, and we strive currently to reduce domestic emissions by 80-95 percent by 2050, transitioning the EU to a low-carbon society, meeting the 20-20-20 criteria by 2020 to cut emissions, increase consumption from renewable sources, and cut overall energy consumption.

### **Come see Europe for Yourself!**

- Every year, more than 100,000 Americans contribute to increased understanding between the EU and U.S. by studying abroad in Europe. Many more Americans and Europeans travel across the Atlantic every year, continuing to grow our partnership culturally, economically, and politically with every trip!
- The EU provides financing for exchanges at all levels. We sponsor ten EU Centers of Excellence at universities throughout the U.S. We also provide funding and grants to think-tanks and policy research centers, all to encourage the study of the European Union and dialogue on the EU-US relationship.
- The EU Delegation to the United States runs an educational competition called the 'Euro Challenge', which focuses on EU economics. This program is an exciting opportunity for high school students in global studies, economics, world history, and geography to develop communication, critical thinking and cooperative skills while increasing their understanding of the EU and the euro.
- Studying abroad and travelling benefits you—you can learn new languages, experience other cultures, open your minds to new ideas, and discover exciting career opportunities!

- In taking advantage of these opportunities, *you become a vital part of the transatlantic alliance!*