Europe and Me - Social Studies

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Foreword

In this booklet you will find information concerning the history, relevance, power, structure, pros, cons and the current challenges of the European Union. By writing this booklet, I hope to achieve my goal which is to inform and educate a younger audience about the EU. The booklet is divided into six chapters.

The European Union is a political and economic union that contains 27 member states, primarily located in Europe. It has a population of 512.4 million people (2018).

During my lessons I have gained much knowledge about the EU. I have also received knowledge from videos, websites and my book.

Before doing research on Europe. I did not have much knowledge. Therefore my prior knowledge is not very big. I know that Europe is a continent and that the European Union has 27 member states. That I live in a European country and that Brussels is the home to the headquarters of the European Union. To me the European Union means that there are countries who are united together and will help each other when needed.

POWER AND STRUCTURE: DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS

The EU is made up of a number of different parts. These are explained in this section.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISION

The European Commission is like the government, or executive power of any member states. It introduces proposals for legislation in Europe (Schmulow, Derek, 2010) Once these have been accepted they are known as directives, this is after being passed through the European legislative process. The European Commission is also responsible for **implementing** decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU. The Commission is composed of one commissioner per member state, so one from each of the 27 EU countries. The Government appoints these Commissioners. It is usually a person who has a reputation as a prominent and capable politician in their own country, the appointed person goes to Brussels to take up his or her post. Together, the 27 Members of the College are the Commission's political leadership during a 5-year term. They are assigned responsibility for specific policy areas by the Commission President. The Commission president's function comes close to that of the prime minister or president of Europe. The Commission president is an influential politician from one of the member states.

The European Union has 27 member states. The European Union has the following structure:

- ❏ The Legislators: European Commission and European Parliament (27 members).
- ❏ The Executive powers: Council of ministers (27 members).
- ❏ Judiciary powers: The European court of justice (27 members).

Legislators:

Legislators are the European commision and European parliament. Their role is to write new laws and vote for new laws. A legislature is usually elected or appointed. There are 27 legislators in the EU structure. European commission contains one minister from each country and parliament, each country is appointed certain seats and elections fill those seats with parties.

Executive Powers:

The Executive power is responsible for carrying out the laws passed by the council, parliament and commission. There are 27 ministers part of the executive branch. The Council of ministers are also a part of the Executive Branch. Every country is appointed one.

Judiciary Powers:

The Judiciary power is responsible for judging and making sure the laws are properly used. There are 27 ministers part of the Judiciary Powers. The European Court of Justice is a part of the Judiciary powers. Every country is given a person to take on this responsibility.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The council of ministers decide on any specific issue that comes before the council. This also means that the council of ministers changes with each proposal that it must decide on. The council of ministers forms the **bicameral legislature**, together with the European Parliament and is made up of members of each of the member state's executive branches of government. Bicameral legislature means a legislature with two houses, or chambers. For example the Netherlands has the first and second chamber (eerste en tweede kamer). If a proposal that was put forward by the commission comes before the council on a Financial issue, it is the ministers of Finance from each one of the member states that go to Brussels to discuss the problem and take part in the decision making process for the proposal. Mark Rutte is our Dutch representative.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT & ELECTION

The European Parliament passes laws and debates in public. They also approve the president that the European Commission council **nominates**. There are 751 members in the European Parliament. Every country that takes part in the EU gets 6 seats. The members of the European Parliament are elected by the citizens. The seats that are left over, are divided by the percentage of the population compared to the entire population of Europe (Fabbrini, Sergio, 2016). So if a country has 10% of the population of Europe they will receive 10% of the remaining seats.

EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

The European court of justice is the **supreme court** of Europe. It is said to be 'the most powerful and influential international court that is realistically possible'. The European Court of Justice has to uphold the EU laws. This means that they are the ones that make sure that everyone follows these laws. Just like the European Commission, every single country that is part of the EU can have one member on the European Court of Justice. This means that there are 27 members.

THE HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The EU has a long history with its roots in the organizations that were founded in the years following the second world war.

HISTORY OF THE EU

It all started in 1948 with the **Marshall Plan**. This was an American program providing aid to West Europe after WW2. In 1950, the **Schuman Declaration** was stated by the French foreign minister Robert Schuman. The Schuman Declaration proposed to place French and West-German production of Coal and Steel under one higher authority. In 1951, the **Paris Treaty** was signed between France, Italy, West Germany and the three Benelux countries. The Paris treaty established the European Coal and Steel Community (**ECSC**). On the 25th of March 1956, two treaties were signed which established the European Economic Community (**EEC**) and **Euratom** (European Atomic Energy Community), this was also known as the Rome treaty. In 1962, the UK applied for EU membership, which was denied. In 1965 the **Merger treaty** was signed (Brussels treaty). The treaty **unified** the ECSC, EEC and Euratom. There were also signs of **Economic growth** in Europe. In 1967, the UK **renewed** its request to join the EEC, but was yet again denied. From 1970-1973, the UK, Ireland and Denmark joined the EEC. Then later from 1974 to 1976 Spain and Portugal **joined** the EEC as well. In 1979 the **Parliament** in the community was created. The citizens of member countries had a vote in who represented them in the parliament. This made it truly **democratic**. Greece **joined** the EEC in 1981. In 1992 the **Treaty of Maastricht** was signed. This treaty created the

European Union (**EU**) which contains the three branches: **Legislative branch, executive branch** and **judicial branch**. In 1995 the EU **added** Austria, Sweden and Finland. In 2002 a common currency (the Euro) was adopted by 12 of the member countries. **The Euro** caused the countries to have even better trade. In 2004 ten countries **joined** the EU: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. In 2007- Bulgaria and Romania **joined** the EU.

In 2009 the **Treaty of Lisbon** was signed. It gave the EU the legal authority to **negotiate** and sign international treaties. In 2020 **Britain left** the European Union, this is known as the BREXIT (Geo History, 28/2/2020).

PROS AND CONS FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Being a part of the EU can have its pros and cons. But what are those pros and cons?

PROS

The first advantage of having an EU membership is **Trade**. Being in the European Union gives the country access to free trade with other EU countries. Also accessible trade around the world is made easier with EU membership because the EU is a big trading bloc that can **negotiate** trade deals with other countries.

The second advantage of being an EU member is **Security**. The European Union is a very big alliance, working together they are very powerful. This way it can give higher security against terrorism and cross-border crimes than when a country has to handle these on its own. This way big threats are easily tackled and things can quickly go back to normal

The third advantage of being an EU member is **Consumer Goods**. The European Union can offer goods for lower prices. This way members can save a lot of money on goods.

The fourth advantage of being an EU member is **Travel**. EU citizens can travel freely throughout Europe. Citizens of countries outside the EU have more difficulties entering the EU, since they are not members of the European Union.

Another advantage of having EU membership is **Business**. Smaller businesses have the chance to also sell to other countries and expand their business due to free trade. Therefore businesses have a larger range and can then expand.

The last advantage of having EU membership is **Jobs**. Free trade in the European Union creates a lot of jobs. This gives people more job opportunities.

CONS
The first con of being an EU member is that you have to give up a certain amount of **Sovereignty**. As a country, you cannot have national laws that are contrary to EU laws. This means that countries give up some control over their own laws and economic policies when they join the EU. Loss of sovereignty contributed to the decision of the UK to leave the EU.

Another disadvantage of having an EU membership is **Cost**. EU countries have to contribute to the EU budget. According to documentation published by the European Commission, the EU budget in 2019 was €165.8 billion. However poorer countries will usually receive more from the EU budget than they contribute. Richer countries contribute more but in return they get a bigger market for their goods.

The third disadvantage of having an EU membership is **Trade with the rest of the World**. EU countries are in a customs union and cannot negotiate their own trade deals with countries that are outside the EU. Also, when the EU makes trade deals with countries with a major economy (think of the US or Japan) it can have a negative effect on producers of certain products within the EU due to lower tariffs on imports.

There is also a **Security** disadvantage to EU membership. Since the EU is so big, they have less control of what comes into every individual country. When a country works alone, it can control what comes into the country and the borders are more protected. Since we have free trade and easy travel in the EU, this can be difficult to control.

The last disadvantage of EU membership is that **small businesses** have trouble because of the bigger competition.

WHY BE A PART OF THE EU
The EU is a very strong alliance that has many advantages. It has easy travel, free trade, excellent education and Job opportunities, the Europeans also have good protection through **NATO**. With 500 million people the European Union is one of the strongest economic areas in the world. The image down below shows the countries that belong to the EU (Britain is no longer a part).

Current challenges for the EU
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The European Union deals with a lot of problems. But what are the current challenges for the EU?

GLOBAL WARMING
Global Warming is a global problem. Since the European Union is so big because it consists of so many countries it has to work on being more Earth friendly by trying to become greener. Becoming greener will mean that we have to **emit** less carbon into the air. This means driving the car less often or maybe using electric cars, but also bigger things like coal mines and oil winnings and work on recycling. The European Union already had the idea for a green deal. The main idea is to emit the least amount of carbon possible by 2050. For a few Eastern European countries it is a bit harder to achieve this goal because they rely on coal for energy supply.
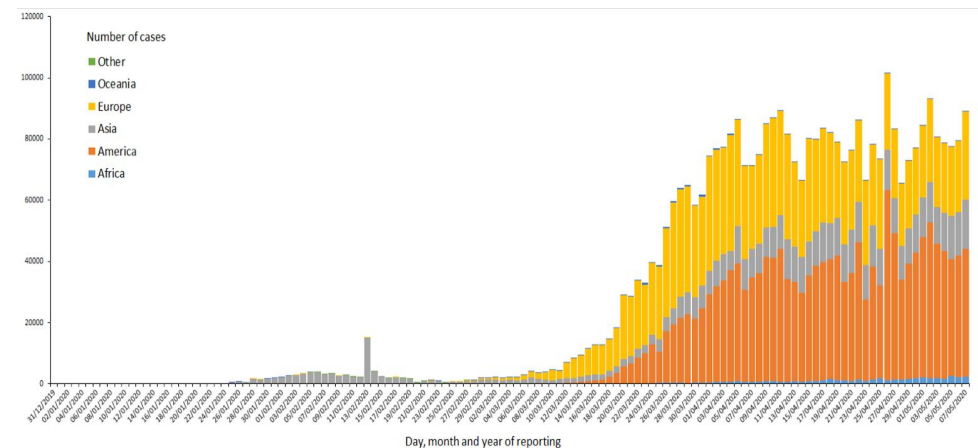
REFUGEE CRISIS
The EU has been dealing with refugees for a long time, but since the war in Syria started, they have had to deal with even more refugees. The EU has to carefully discuss what they want to do with these refugees. Their decision must be realistic, **ethically correct** and carefully thought through. Some EU countries are reluctant to take refugees while others are forced to carry a greater burden.

BREXIT
This year Britain will leave the EU. This is known as Brexit (Britain-Exit). Since the EU is a democracy. The British got a chance to vote to either leave or stay in the EU. Most votes were for leaving the EU, however the opinions in Britain were divided. That made the decision quite difficult and it took a long time before arrangements were made.

CORONAVIRUS
We are living in an insecure time because of the COVID19 Pandemic. We don't know what the future holds for us. Many countries are in lockdown and this has a negative effect on the economy. All of the restaurants, hairdressers etc are closed and many businesses will not survive. There are also very few planes flying. Everybody has to stay home to prevent the virus from spreading. Since the lockdown is taking so long they have to discuss the long term and short term consequences (Wijffelaars, Maartje, 9 Apr. 2020). The figure down below shows the number of coronavirus cases in the world. You can see that Europe has a lot of coronavirus cases.

Fun Facts about EUROPE
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Here are some fun facts about EUROPE!!

#1: In the European Union there are 24 official languages, but the most commonly used ones are English, French and German.

#2: Europe is named after the Phoenician Princess: Europa. This is according to Greek Mythology.

#3: There's a train station in Wales called: llanfair-pwllgwyngyll-gogery-chwyrn-drobwll-llanty-silio-gog o-goch

#4: Europeans eat 50% of the world's chocolate…yikes..

#5: The plague (called the Black Death) killed about 60 % of Europeans.

#6: The European Union has its very own motto, it sounds: United in Diversity. It shows how all the Europeans worked together to form the European Union.

#7: The Euro is currently being used in 19 countries within the European Union.

#8: Barcelona's Basilica de la Sagrada Familia is Taking Longer to Build Than the Pyramids..

(Admin, 21 Fun Facts About Europe, 21/3/15)

How relevant is the EU for you?
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How relevant is all of this information to you? You are too young to vote and to have a say in who rules in the Political world.

It may seem a bit early to think about. But by the time you are 18 years old, you can have a say in who rules in your country by voting.

You can also vote for the Dutch Parliament. You can vote for the representatives of the Netherlands. This means that you get to have a say, together with all the other Dutch inhabitants, in who will represent you in the European Union.

You can also vote in elections for the European Parliament. Dutch political parties are members of an EU group (fraction).

Quiz

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#1: What are the current challenges the European Union is facing?
   a. Global Warming, Covid-19, Refugees & cocoa bean scarcity.
   b. Global Warming, Coronavirus, Brexit & refugee crisis
   c. Covid-19, Global Warming, Brexit & bats

#2: After what major event was the European Union established?
   a. The Marshall Plan
   b. WW1
   c. The Merger Treaty

#3: What's the European Union's motto?
   a. United in diversity
   b. The Union of division
   c. Europe is united

#4: Who is responsible for judging and making sure the laws are properly used?
   a. The legislators
   b. The executive powers
   c. The judiciary powers

#5: In what year was the treaty of Lisbon signed?
   a. 2008
   b. 2009
   c. 2006

#6: What country is leaving the EU?
   a. Belgium
   b. Russia
   c. Britain

#7: How many members are there in the European parliament?
   a. 751
   b. 864
   c. 672

#8: What does ECSC stand for?
   a. European Community Sea Cells
   b. European Coal and Steel Community
   c. European Coffee and Skimmed Milk

#9: How many countries are there in the EU?
   a. 32
   b. 19
   c. 27

#10: What European countries rely on coal for energy supply?
   a. Eastern countries
   b. Southern countries
   c. Northern countries

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Answers:

1-B	6-C
2-A	7-A
3-A	8-B
4-C	9-C
5-B	10-A

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Wordbank

Negotiate = To negotiate is to try to work out an agreement between parties that each want something out of the deal
NATO = The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an alliance between 30 North American and European countries
Diversity = Differences in a group
Democratic =When the people get to vote for decisions
Alliance = Countries that decide to work together.
Excrete = To get rid of material such as waste from the air.
Bicameral legislature = means a legislature with two houses, or chambers. For example in the Netherlands we have the first and second chamber (eerste en tweede kamer
Sovereignty = Is when a government has complete control over an area. Supreme Power.
Implementing = To carry out or accomplish
Nominating = To appoint or propose
Supreme court = The highest judicial court in a country or state.
Emit = Produce and discharge
Ethically correct = Honest and follows good moral standards

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