

## 1.4 UNITING EUROPE: THE EUROPEAN UNION



### FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- What are the advantages of a united Europe?
- How does it promote the concept of global interdependence?
- How can nations preserve their own identities when they regionally cooperate?

**STANDARD #6** POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE.

**STANDARD #7** PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION.

**STANDARD #9** GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.

### LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson focuses on the advantages of being a nation in a united Europe and being a member of the European Union (EU). The students will use materials from the European Union (EU) to label a classroom map with information about the member countries. They will identify which countries use the euro and discuss why not all of them do so. The students will be able to recognize the 28 member countries as well as understand the basic timeline of the EU's development and Germany's participation. They will complete a map of the European Union (EU) for their own use.

### TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

With its central location (bordered by nine nations), its large population, and strong economy (4th largest in world), Germany has always had special role to play on the continent of Europe. In 1957, Germany was one of the founding nations of the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union (EU). Today, the EU is a unique economic and political partnership among European countries that are committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not a super-organization designed to replace existing states, nor is it just an organization for the promotion of international cooperation. The member states of the EU have established common institutions to which they have delegated some of their sovereignty, so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest may be made democratically at the European level.

The historical roots of the European Union (EU) lie in the Second World War. Europeans were determined to prevent the wanton killing of innocent citizens and material destruction from ever happening again. The initial steps were to foster economic and commercial cooperation. Since then, the EU has developed into a huge single market with the euro as the common currency in many of its member states. Today the organization embraces 28 countries and 500

million people, and it deals with a wide range of issues of importance to daily life, such as education and health. The EU actively promotes human rights and democracy, and in its environmental policy, it has the most



ambitious emission reduction targets for fighting climate change in the world. As a result of the elimination of border controls, it is now possible for people to travel freely within most of the EU. It has also become much easier to live and work in another EU country. Germany supports the idea that in the increasingly interdependent world of the 21st century, it is more necessary than ever for every European citizen to work together with people from other countries in a spirit of curiosity, openness and solidarity.

**Source:** The European Union (EU). Retrieved 8.20.2012, from [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

### TIME:

3 (45-minute Class Periods)



### INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- A large wall map of Europe
- Post-It-Notes (different colors)
- European Union PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 1.4 A on Resource Disc**)
- A List of the Countries of the EU (to be cut into individual pieces) (**Handout 1.4 B on Resource Disc**)
- Copies of the following EU publications available for free download online / not available on the Resource Disc:
  - *United in Diversity* (<http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/united-in-diversity-pbKC3110515/>)
  - *Let's Explore Europe* ([http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/pdf/lets\\_explore\\_europe\\_-\\_teachers\\_guide.pdf](http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/pdf/lets_explore_europe_-_teachers_guide.pdf))
- Copies for each student of a Blank Map of Europe (**Handout 1.4 C on Resource Disc**)



### PROCEDURE:



#### DAY 1:

##### Anticipatory Set:

- The teacher should introduce the idea of the European Union by using either a large political wall map of Europe or projecting a political map on a screen and ask the students to count the number of countries on the continent (46, including Kosovo). The teacher should then ask the students to identify the advantages and disadvantages of so many independent nations in such a small geographic area. (These can be written on the board.) Can Europe be compared in any ways to the United States? The teacher should point out that the United States is one country with 50 states, which is technically different from Europe; however, this may help the students to comprehend some of the issues. What would commerce and travel be like in the United States if each state or group of states had their own languages and monetary system?
- The teacher should call upon students to locate Germany's location and then to identify Germany's immediate neighbors: Denmark, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. The teacher should explain to the students that to better understand Germany's role in Europe and the European Union, they will have the opportunity to research the member states of the EU.
- The teacher should give the students an explanation of the European Union. The teacher may choose to show part of the *PowerPoint on the European Union* (**PowerPoint 1.4 A on Resource Disc**)

#### DAY 2:

- The teacher should distribute to each student a copy of the European Union publication for children, *United in Diversity*, (available for free download online at <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/united-in-diversity-pb-KC3110515/>) and have them look through the introductory section and discuss the symbols that are used there for area, population and the euro.
- Next, the teacher should assign each student a country of the EU (except Germany). [If the class is larger than 27, the teacher may want to have two students work together on some of the larger nations such as



France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, etc.] The teacher should randomly assign the countries by having the students draw a slip of paper with the country name on it (**Handout 1.4 B on Resource Disc**).

- The students should research their assigned countries, beginning with the EU publication and then with information from the Internet. The students should find out the year the nation joined the European Union, its capital, whether it uses the euro (or not), its language (how to say ‘hello!’) and two other interesting facts about the country to share with the class. The teacher should then select a different color Post-It-Note for each year a nation joined the European Union and distribute these to the students who should place the name of the nation and the euro symbol € (if used).

### DAY 3:

- Having completed their research, the students, one at a time, should place their Post-It-Notes on the large map. They should then tell the class the name of the country, when it joined the EU, whether it uses the euro (or not), how to say ‘hello’ and two interesting facts about the country. The teacher should then place a Post-It-Note on the map over Germany with the correct information.
- The teacher should then distribute the blank outline maps of Europe (**Handout 1.4 C on Resource Disc**) to the students and instruct them to label the countries and create their own key, coloring the map to represent the European Union (EU) and the countries using the euro.
- Once all of the countries are covered, the teacher should have the students discuss what they have learned. Some ideas are that there are many languages spoken in the EU, that not all countries use the euro, etc.
- Next, the teacher should show the remainder of the PowerPoint on the European Union (**PowerPoint 1.4 A on Resource Disc**). The teacher should facilitate a discussion on the relatively new monetary system of the euro. Students should discuss the positive and negative effects of this system.
- Finally, the teacher should explain that the European Union (EU) focuses its efforts on many regional and global issues, such as climate control. The teacher might draw the students’ attention to the EU pamphlet, *Let’s Explore Europe* ([http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/pdf/lets\\_explore\\_europe\\_-\\_teachers\\_guide.pdf](http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/pdf/lets_explore_europe_-_teachers_guide.pdf)).



### WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- The teacher should return to the comparison of the United States and Europe and ask the students to reexamine the advantages and disadvantages of so many independent nations in such a small geographic area. How might a country such as Germany benefit from being in the EU? What might some of the drawbacks be? The students should then write three facts that they have learned about the European Union. They might then do a “pair-share” and then report out their ideas to the rest of the class.

### MODIFICATION:

- There are numerous ways that the teacher may assign the EU countries for the students to research rather than picking the names randomly. Teachers should determine the best method based on their specific class composition.

### EXTENSIONS:

- The students should add the completed EU map into their Geo-German atlas.
- Students might research the European Union Song and Europe Day.
- The teacher may ask the students to review the EU and find the:
  - Country with the greatest land area
  - Country with the largest population
  - Country with the most neighboring countries
  - Highest mountain

- Longest River
  - Largest lake
  - Largest island
  - Most active volcano
  - Largest dune
- In addition to the topic of Climate Change, the European Union works on many other regional and global issues, such as Pollution, Hunger and Poverty, International Crime and Terrorism, Famine and Natural Disaster Relief, Education Reform, etc. Students (either individually or in groups), should research these topics and others, and then create PowerPoints to present to the class.
  - A current events project might involve the students bringing in articles from magazines, newspapers and/or the Internet which are related to the EU as an organization or individual member states and sharing these with the class.
  - The names Ann and John are common girls' and boys' names in many countries of the EU. The students can research the equivalent names in each EU country. (For example: Romania (Anca, Ion), the Netherlands (An or Anneke, Jan or Joop)).
  - The teacher might write the following questions on the board for the students to discuss:
    - Why might Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands have been eager to join together in 1957?
    - What was revolutionary about the countries that joined in 2004?
    - A goal of the EU is to promote peace. Name two countries which had been war enemies in the past, yet are now working toward a common goal.
    - What are some of the possible reasons why prospective countries such as Turkey have not joined the EU?