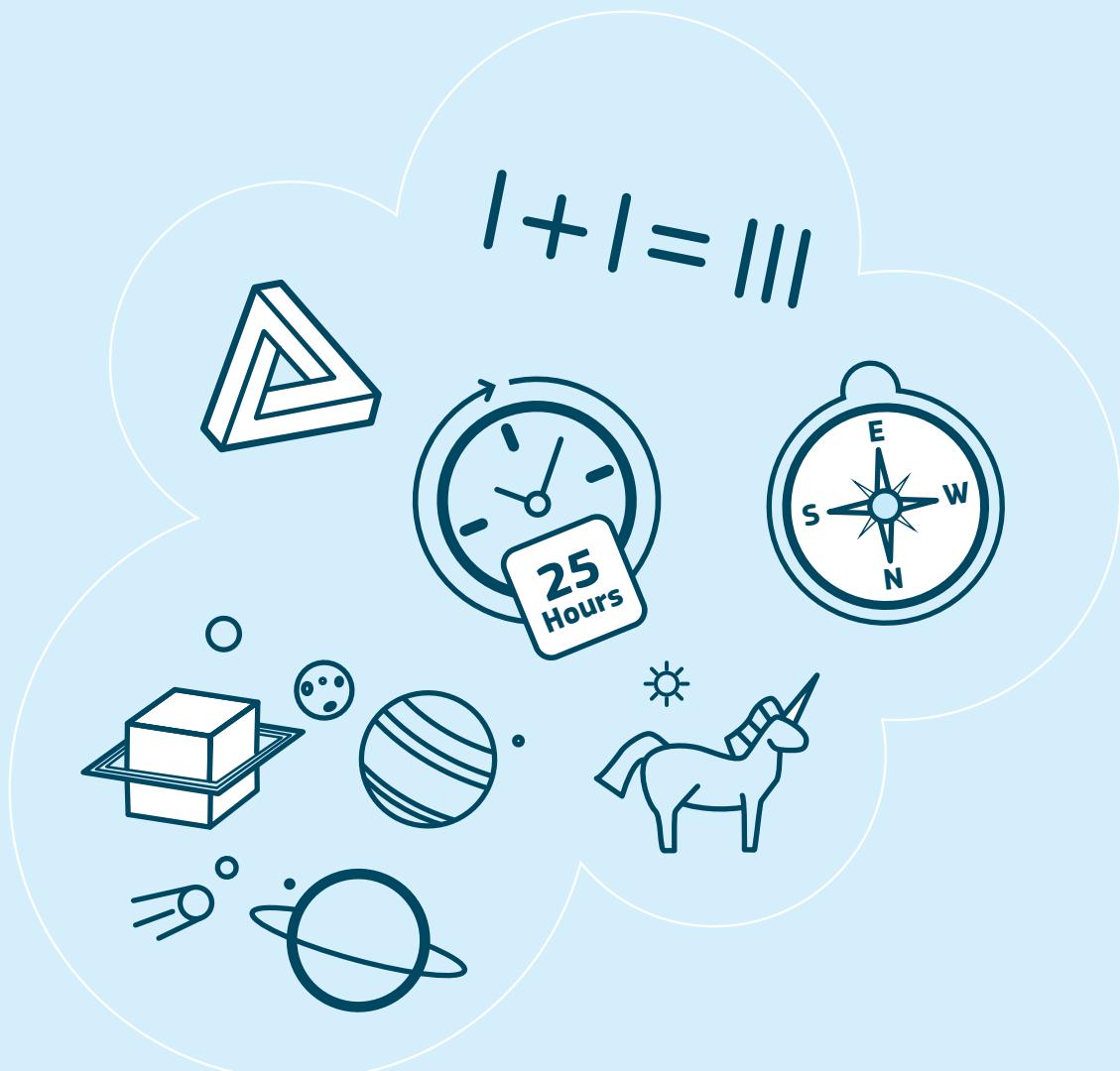




MYTHBUSTING

The response to disinformation

February 2018



Contents

Factsheets

1/ Schengen area	p. 5
2/ CETA	p. 10
3/ Free Movement of Workers in the EU.....	p. 15
4/ Migration and Management of External Borders	p. 20
5/ Democracy and the EU institutions	p. 25
6/ EU competition policy	p. 30
7/ EU refugee policy	p. 36
8/ EU army	p. 42
9/ Globalisation	p. 48

Additional Material

10/ The Eastern Partnership	p. 54
11/ Response to “Stop Brussels”	p. 58

Mythbusting - the response to disinformation

The spread of unbalanced, inaccurate or misleading information in the public sphere is nothing new. In fact the publication of myths about the European Union has long been a frequent occurrence in certain sections of the media. What is new, however, is the volume of disinformation that the public is now being exposed to, as well as the lightning speed at which it can spread thanks to observable advances in technology.

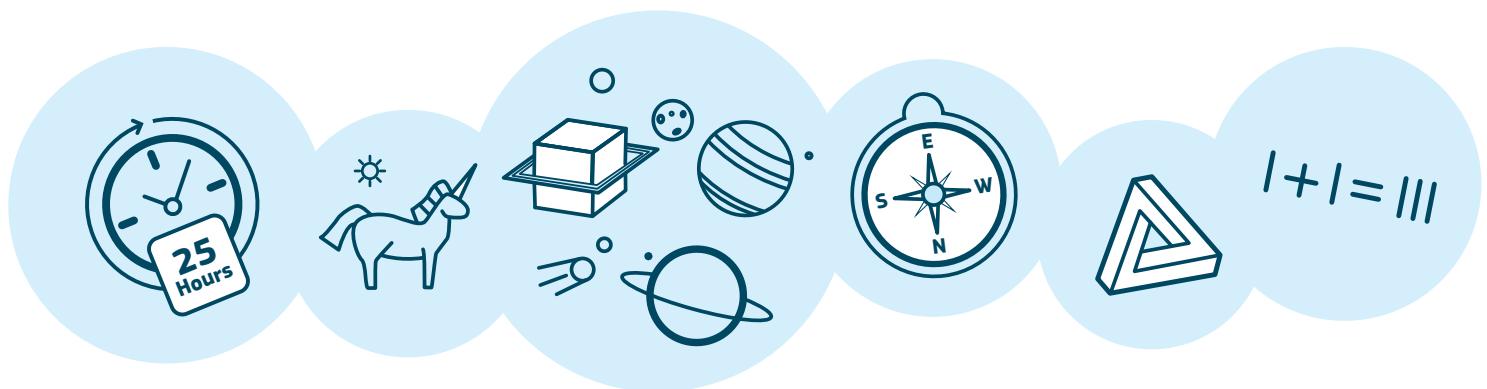
It is clear that many citizens are ill equipped to distinguish disinformation from credible reporting and we can no longer afford to allow false claims to pass unchallenged.

What is the Commission doing?

To tackle this head on, DG COMM has been working with the most implicated DGs and the SPP to develop a series of mythbusting factsheets. This resource is primarily designed to support Commission Representations in countering disinformation in the Member States, rebutting the most widely distributed myths about EU policies and actions across a broad variety of sectors. The material will also be useful to the central social media team and as background briefing material for those Commission officials who speak at public events.

The initiative, however, aims to go beyond simply rebutting inaccuracies – it seeks to foster a **culture of fact-checking** and promote pro-active **positive messaging** about the EU. By equipping ourselves and the Representations with these resources, we also provide those who want to show their support of the EU with the strong argumentation to use in their own communications. Such third-party endorsement from individuals, organisations or the media greatly reinforces our message and strengthens the credibility of the myth-busting operation.

In the brochure that follows you will find our catalogue of mythbusting factsheets as it stands today. These have been produced for use by the Representations and DGs and are available on the Social Media Wiki page at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/SMGG/Mythbusting>. They are intended as a background resource only, and **should not be published as they are**.



Myth 1: Schengen area

“

THE MYTH

**SCHENGEN
FACILITATES
THE FREE CIRCULATION
OF CRIMINALS AND
TERRORISTS**

- Schengen area: no more queues at borders
- Free movement within Schengen: one of the key elements of our common European identity
- Freedom to circulate within Schengen doesn't come at the expense of our security
- Control of external borders and cross-border police cooperation keep us safe

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A free passage for criminals
- A threat to national security

WHAT IT IS

- Freedom of movement for citizens, businesspeople and tourists, without customs checks and passport controls
- A fundamental right of each citizen and one of the greatest achievements of the European Union

2 Debunking the myth



In order to make the Schengen area a safe place for citizens, the European Union combats cross-border criminality and terrorism in various ways:

Tightening of external border controls

While there are in principle no controls on Schengen internal borders, there are stringent external border checks. A single set of rules – the [Schengen Borders Code](#) – defines how border checks should be carried out and what types of visas entrants need. The refugee crisis in 2015 showed that the EU had some deficiencies in its external border controls, deficiencies that are now being addressed step by step, notably with the creation of the new European Border and Coast Guard.

Information sharing

There are several information sharing mechanisms that are at the heart of European cooperation on border management:

[The Schengen Information System \(SIS\)](#) enables border guards and national authorities to exchange data about criminality and terrorist threats.

[The European Criminal Records Information System \(ECRIS\)](#) enables swift detection of criminals in the Schengen area.

[The Visa Information System \(VIS\)](#) allows Schengen countries to exchange visa data. Thanks to the use of biometric data such as fingerprints and digital photographs, criminals trying to cross a border with a false identity can be detected.

Law enforcement cooperation

While law enforcement authorities in Schengen countries no longer carry out traditional checks at border crossings, they do maintain a presence at borders and routinely perform targeted checks. They also work together to combat cross-border crimes, including through Joint Police Teams. They can put suspected criminals under surveillance, track them and arrest them across borders. Beyond this, a constant exchange of data is made possible through integrated IT systems.

[Europol](#) is the European Union's law enforcement agency that helps 28 EU Member States fight serious international crime and terrorism. Europol sent 60 officers as a support team for investigations related to recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium.

Recently, the European Union also created the [European Counter Terrorism Centre](#) in order to strengthen support to Member States fighting terrorism and radicalisation.

Judicial cooperation

One of the best known and most effective examples of judicial cooperation between national authorities is the [European Arrest Warrant](#), which simplifies and speeds up the extradition of criminals from one country to another. Judicial cooperation also allows for more efficient enforcement of criminal judgments across the EU.

3 Did you know?



- A few numbers: in 2015, the Schengen Information System was searched nearly 3 billion times by national authorities, while 100,000 messages are exchanged each month between national authorities via the European Criminal Records Information System.
- A few results: since its creation, the Schengen Information System has made it possible to arrest 25,000 people, to refuse entry at the border to 79,000, and to find 12,000 missing people. On a daily basis, it facilitates the detection of terrorist threats.
- Every day 3,5 million people cross internal Schengen borders.
- Schengen brings prosperity: intra-European trade reached more than €5 trillion in 2014!

4 Case Study



Thousands of people and large amounts of goods cross the five mile long Øresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden every day without border checks thanks to Schengen. It is estimated that without this free movement, businesses which rely on reliable and speedy logistics will lose up to €300 million a year due to delays.

When border checks were recently put in place on the bridge in light of the migrant crisis, Denmark's rail company, DSB, estimated that the checks come at a cost of around €100,000 a day. Pernille Knudsen, Vice Chief Executive of the Confederation of Danish Employers, said: "the lack of workers is a problem and if the Swedes do not want to work here due to a longer commute, the problem will be even bigger." Ms Knudsen went on to say that the "border control is a potential killer of growth for the Danish economy." Schengen rules being fully implemented on the Øresund Bridge means that trade is facilitated, workers have more choice of where to find a job and skills gaps can be filled.

5 Questions in the pub



Schengen: what does it really mean?

Marina, a young Slovak traveller who wants to visit Iceland, can enjoy the free circulation of people because, even if Iceland is not part of the EU, it is part of Schengen.

Laetitia, a Portuguese national who wants to spend her summer travelling in Eastern Europe, from Poland to the Czech Republic to Slovakia to Hungary, can do so with only a valid passport or ID, without applying for four visas.

Sandrine lives in Metz, France, but commutes to Luxembourg every day to work in a large Architecture firm. When Sandrine was offered a job in Luxembourg, she didn't have to move her family to a new city, and can easily travel across the France-Luxembourg border every day without any border checks.

Why is it called Schengen?

The Schengen area's name comes from the city of Schengen, Luxembourg, where the Schengen Agreement was signed on 14th June 1985.

How big is the Schengen area? Does it extend over all of the EU and are all EU Member States automatically Schengen members?

The Schengen area is made up of most EU Member States (all except for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania, Ireland and the United Kingdom) and 4 additional countries: Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.

What is freedom of movement? How is it related to Schengen?

At first, the free movement of people introduced by the Treaty of Rome of 1957 concerned only the free movement of workers. The aim was to give the right to any European citizen to take up a job and to settle in another country. Later, with the signing of the Schengen Agreement and the introduction of European citizenship (1992), the free movement of people was intended to cover all citizens whose country was a member of Schengen. To this end, internal borders were abolished to allow people to freely travel, work, study or retire in the Member State of their choice. Schengen is so important to the European project because the free movement of people really is a core European value. As such, you could say that Schengen plays the role of guarantor of this free movement of people. Schengen has three key objectives: 1) encourage people to travel without restrictions, 2) improve competitiveness by facilitating trade (no transport delays at borders) and 3) reinforce cooperation between Member States when it comes to external border security.

Can new members join the Schengen area? How can we be sure that they will reliably maintain the security of their borders?

Many European countries want to be part of the Schengen Area, but not all can do this immediately. They must fulfill certain conditions, notably related to their capacity to control external borders, issue Schengen visas, apply Schengen rules and collaborate with the national authorities of other Member States. Before joining, candidate countries go through an evaluation and even long afterwards they are still subjected to annual checks (5 to 7 Member States are evaluated each year). For the period 2015-2019, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein and the Netherlands will be evaluated.

At the moment, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Croatia are taking the necessary steps to be able to join the Schengen area.

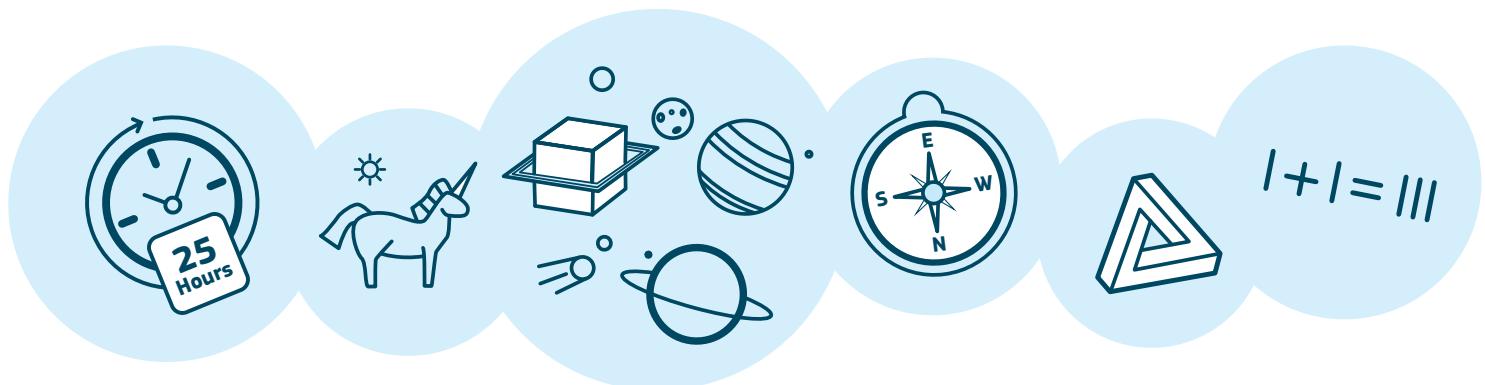
How much does all this cross-border cooperation within the Schengen area cost?

When addressing the issue of cost, it is useful to consider what the cost of introducing border controls would be. Such a move would trigger significant economic, political and social consequences for the EU and its members. In terms of the immediate and direct impact of Schengen no longer being in place, the European Commission has estimated that the cost would be €5-18 billion per year, and while concentrated on certain actors and regions, it would eventually have a significant negative effect on the overall EU economy. The transport sector would be the first one damaged, with the direct cost of up to €7,5 billion per year. Countries like Poland, the Netherlands and Germany would face more 500 million euros in additional costs. In the long term, the rise in transport costs incurred by delays due to the border controls could hinder the economic competitiveness of the EU. Tourism would be also be impacted, with a complete re-introduction of border controls costing €36-98 million in the first two years, according to estimates. Queuing at borders would be longer, especially during rush hours, resulting in an inevitable decline in travel, particularly for short stays and day visits. This effect would be particularly pronounced in tourist areas that are located close to borders.

As a result of the migration crisis, some countries have re-introduced border controls. How is this possible if they're in the Schengen area?

The Schengen Borders Code allows Member States to temporarily re-introduce internal border controls in the event of a serious threat presenting itself to that country's public policy or internal security. It must however be proportional to the risk, limited in time and remain the exception rather than the rule. It should only ever be used as a measure of last resort.

In practice, this has been used for political summits or football games, for example, to prevent foreign hooligans from entering the country. Faced with the refugee crisis since 2015, six of the 26 Member States have re-introduced border controls. For example, Germany is operating controls on the border with Austria. France re-introduced border controls in 2015 following the terrorist attacks in Paris and later on in Nice.



Myth 2: CETA

“

**THE MYTH
FREE TRADE
AGREEMENTS SUCH
AS CETA ARE BAD
FOR EUROPE**

- The agreement with Canada will boost trade, creating jobs, growth and new opportunities for European businesses
- CETA goes beyond just removing customs duties: it safeguards people's rights at work and protects the environment
- CETA will set a new global standard for future trade agreements

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A bad deal for Europeans
- A win for big business

WHAT IT IS

- Europe setting the standards for global trade
- A trade deal that prioritises people's rights at work and the environment

2 Debunking the myth



«The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement», or CETA, is a trade agreement between the EU and Canada. Free trade agreements between the EU and third parties, with CETA being the most recent example, foster European growth and jobs. CETA does this in a number of ways:

For European companies and brands

It **removes customs duties** for exporters and importers worth over €500 million a year to the benefit of businesses big and small, equalling 99% of tariffs. This is good news for all Europeans, from Polish apple growers to French wine producers and Belgian Chocolatiers.

Thanks to CETA, Canadian and EU businesses will now compete on a truly **level playing-field**. In fact, with CETA, Canada has agreed to give EU companies better conditions for doing business than it gives to companies from other countries.

With CETA, EU firms now have a better chance of **competing for Canadian government contracts**. Every year, Canada's federal government, provinces and municipalities buy goods and services worth over €30 billion from private companies. Now Europeans can be part of that huge market.

The agreement is good news for European service providers as services make up three-quarters of the European economy. They will soon have **new opportunities** and **better conditions** for doing business in areas like: telecoms, finance, professional services, such as accountancy and engineering, and environmental services.

The deal will help Europe's **small rural communities to market distinctive food and drinks**. That's because Canada has agreed to protect over 140 European products from imitations, from Gouda cheeses in France and the Netherlands to Prosciutto di Parma ham in Italy. That will help local producers emphasise the distinctive nature and quality of these goods.

For European consumers

The agreement will lower prices and widen the **choice of goods and services for Europe's consumers**. That's because it will scrap or cut almost all the customs duties which EU importers have to pay on goods coming from Canada. And it will do so as soon as it comes into effect.

For investment in Europe

The deal will encourage Canadian companies to invest more in Europe. They already invest a lot in the EU – €14 billion in 2014 alone. That helps create jobs and growth.

For standards on health, food safety, labour and the environment

The deal **cuts costs for EU businesses – without cutting corners on standards**. A toy produced in Europe, for example, can be tested just once, in Europe, to check if it meets the relevant health, safety, consumer protection or environmental standards. The safety certificate it will obtain will also be valid for Canada. That will save time and money.

All imports from Canada **have to satisfy the EU rules and regulations on food safety** and GMOs. This means that CETA will not give access to the European market for products such as chlorinated chicken or beef containing growth hormones.

Under CETA, all existing environmental agreements between the two parties must be implemented, as well as dedicated provisions on the **conservation and sustainable management of natural resources** such as forestry and fisheries. In CETA, both the EU and Canada have reaffirmed commitments that they've already made to respect international rules on protecting **people's rights at work and the environment** and made guarantees that they won't go back on them. When it comes to implementing the EU's and Canada's commitments in these areas, CETA gives a strong oversight role to EU and Canadian civil society – business associations, trade unions, consumer bodies, environmental groups and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

3 Did you know?



- More than **30 million jobs in the EU depend on exports** to the rest of the world
- CETA will **eliminate 99% of tariffs** for European exporters and importers
- Every **€1 billion in exports supports 14,000 jobs** across the EU
- Over **140 European products**, from Gouda cheese to Parma ham **will be protected** from imitations on the Canadian market

4 Case Study



Fromagerie Delin is a French cheese producer based close to Nuits-Saint-Georges in Burgundy. The company is a perfect example of the opportunities created for small businesses and consumers as a result of EU trade deals.

Fromagerie Delin's success as an international exporter has had important economic and social consequences in the region. In addition to investments in new production units and support for local contractors in the supply chain, Fromagerie Delin purchases its milk from local producers at prices well above the market rate.

The company's turnover has increased five-fold in 15 years thanks to exports, which now make up 43% of its profits, 12% of which come solely from the Canadian market. In addition, the producer employs 5 times the number of employees it had in 2001.

Canadian consumers are very fond of French cheeses, but these products are currently subject to strict quotas introduced in 1974. These quotas no longer reflect current Canadian demand and their presence has left the cheese sector at a standstill. An increase in cheese quotas, as set out under the EU-Canada deal, is estimated to result in an immediate increase of at least 25% in cheese sales to Canada – from which Fromagerie Delin, and its employees and local milk producers with it, can benefit.

5 Questions in the pub



CETA: what does it really mean?

Graffeo Cravatte, established in 1992, is a small Sicilian firm that designs and creates handmade ties, using silk from one of the last silk mills in Como in northern Italy. Graffeo Cravatte started to sell to Canada in 2012, and Canadian sales now account for as much as 7% of the total. The company has hired a fluent English speaker to deal with customers in Vancouver, but it faces high customs duties of 16% and burdensome paperwork. CETA will help to reduce both.

Reclay Group is a German company that helps companies and governments dispose of packaging and waste in a way that is safe and environmentally responsible. CETA will open up Canada's public procurement markets to companies from the EU, and Reclay hopes to win contracts to advise on recycling. This would lead to cuts in both CO2 emissions and recycling costs in Canada, and would create jobs in Germany.

Le Roy René, created in 1920, is the number one producer of Calissons d'Aix, sweets typical of Provence in southern France. The company has already begun distributing Calissons d'Aix in Canada through agreements with delicatessens. The reduction of trade tariffs will enable the confectioner to offer its calissons at more competitive prices.

Pranarôm is an essential oils company based in Belgium, and a world-renowned creator of aromatherapy products. Exports make up the majority of their revenue. The company recently introduced a range of products in Canada, following an extensive certification and registration procedure required by the Canadian health and customs authorities. CETA will make the certification and registration process quicker and easier.

Liam, from Ireland, loves pancakes. He will benefit from price reductions on a wide range of Canadian products. CETA would eliminate, for example, the 8% tariff on Canadian maple syrup exported to EU countries.

Will it be easier for EU citizens to work in Canada?

Yes, in some cases.

CETA will make it easier for company staff and other professionals to work on the other side of the Atlantic, and for firms to move staff temporarily between the EU and Canada.

This will help European companies run their operations in Canada.

It will be also easier for other EU professionals to temporarily supply legal, accounting, architectural or similar services.

How will CETA make it easier for European firms to invest in Canada?

CETA is the first EU trade agreement that offers benefits to EU companies investing outside the EU. CETA will:

- remove barriers for EU firms wanting to invest in Canada.
- ensure all European investors in Canada are treated equally and fairly
- improve the investment climate and offer more certainty to investors by:
 - not discriminating between domestic and foreign investors
 - not imposing new restrictions on foreign shareholdings.

Isn't it true that CETA will make it easy for big business to sue governments over things they don't like?

CETA introduces a new system for resolving disputes between governments and business called the Investment Court System (ICS). The new ICS will be public and have professional and independent judges appointed by both the EU and Canada. It will be held to the highest ethical standards through a strict code of conduct and work transparently by opening up hearings to the public and by publishing documents submitted during cases. CETA will limit the grounds on which an investor can challenge a State and prevent public bodies from being forced to change legislation or pay damages. Firms will not be able to sue governments simply because profits might be affected. They will only be allowed to bring a claim in a limited number of well-defined cases that breach CETA and discriminate against the investor because of their nationality.

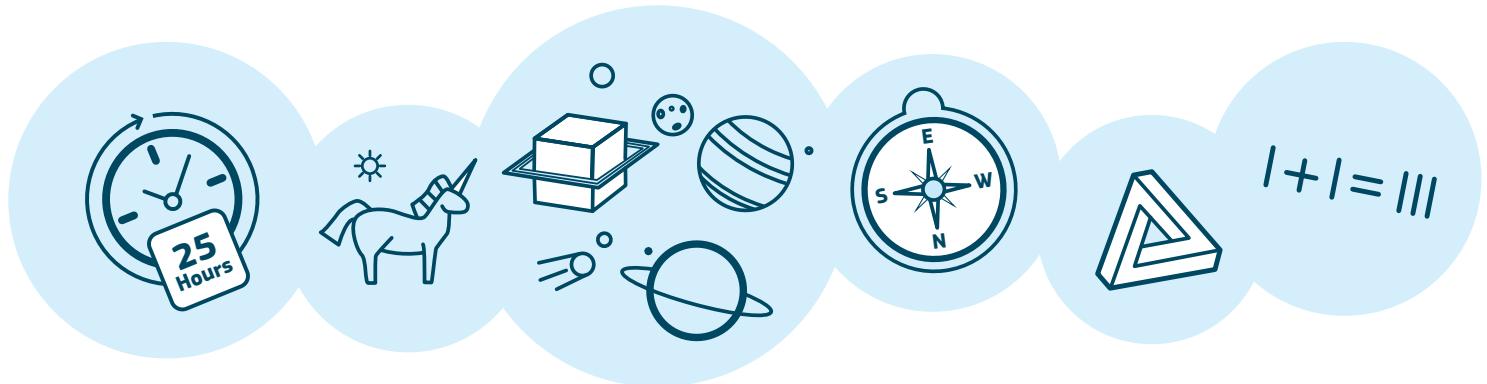
Who negotiated CETA and what happens next?

The European Commission negotiated CETA with the Canadian Government at the request of the EU's 28 national governments. However, CETA must be signed and concluded not only by the EU but also by its individual member states. As such, it requires a double set of approvals, an approval at the EU level with the Council's and the Parliament's vote, and an approval by each individual EU country, according to its own constitutional rules.

On February 15 the European Parliament voted in favour of CETA. It must now be ratified by all Member States.

Looking beyond CETA, the EU and Japan are closing in on a deal that would make it easier for European exporters to sell their products and services to a wealthy market of almost 130 million people. The EU exports over €80bn of goods and services to Japan every year. More than 600,000 jobs in the EU are linked to exports to Japan and Japanese companies employ more than half a million people in the EU, forming an integral part of the EU's economy. It is expected that the EU-Japan free trade agreement will be signed during 2017.

The Commission will meanwhile step up its efforts to broker a deal with South American trade bloc Mercosur, with a new round of negotiations scheduled soon. There are also plans to update the trade deal signed with Mexico in 2000.



Myth 3: Free Movement of Workers in the EU

“

**THE MYTH
EU WORKERS
ARE STEALING JOBS
FROM NATIONALS
AND ABUSE SOCIAL
BENEFITS SYSTEMS**

- The free movement of workers fills skills gaps and provides a valuable contribution to the European economy
- Thanks to the free movement of workers, anyone, from any EU country, can go and settle in any other country
- Free movement is an opportunity for ALL, depending on their skills, personal situation and career plans, and not just for those from less affluent EU countries

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- **A loss.** The arrival of EU workers creates demand for goods and services, as well as new jobs, meaning there is no negative effect on the rates of employment or the wages of nationals
- **A burden.** EU workers come to work and not to claim benefits in another country

WHAT IT IS

- **A win.** The free movement of workers gives everyone the chance to broaden their horizons, filling skills gaps in the process
- **A contribution.** EU workers contribute actively to both the economic and social well-being of the place where they live

2 Debunking the myth



The Skills Gap: Supply and Demand

Free movement of workers means that doctors, nurses, engineers, IT experts and architects can find work across the EU, performing essential services where there is demand. Workers with technical or manual skills in sectors such as domestic work, construction, or agriculture can also take advantage of the opportunity that intra-EU mobility offers. In many cases, it has proven efficient in filling the skills gap in European cities and regions resulting from a discrepancy between supply and demand for labour. This has been to the benefit of the economies in question, making business more competitive and helping to create more jobs.

Impact on Jobs and Wages

In the UK, where the issue has been subject to extensive research due to the Brexit referendum, studies have shown no negative effect on the rates of employment or any substantial negative effect on the wages of Brits after the arrival of EU workers. On the contrary, overall unemployment has remained low and the number of British people active in the workforce is at a record high. Wages may have been affected, but only to a very small extent (1% over a period of 8 years) in some low-skilled jobs (care workers, shop assistants, restaurant and bar workers). The impact on average wages across the economy was, however, negligible, if existent at all. Whatever fall was registered in employment rates or wages in the last decade, it was largely related to the economic and financial crisis rather than immigration.

EU workers can and do compete for jobs, but they also create new jobs, notably by setting up their own companies, which according to the [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor](#), they do at a higher rate than nationals. The contribution of foreign entrepreneurs to the host economy was acknowledged by countries like Italy or Germany which introduced specific policies to support them, such as "[Entrepreneurs without Borders](#)" in Germany and "[Starting a Business – Instructions for New Citizens](#)" in Italy. This support aims to encourage migrant entrepreneurs who create jobs and make a valuable contribution to the country in which they live.

It is important to remember that in an economy, there is no fixed number of jobs, so an increase in the number of EU workers in the labour force can actually help increase employment opportunities. Increased employment, in turn, means greater demand for goods and services (because EU workers are also consumers!) and, as supply increases to match this demand, even more jobs may be created.

Social Benefits

It is often said that EU workers cost money in terms of social benefits and public services. Despite this often heard assertion, EU workers actually contribute to public finances. In 2013, mobile EU citizens had on average an activity rate (comprising both employed and unemployed, but actively seeking work, people) of 77.7% compared to 72% for nationals, and their employment rate was also higher (68%) than that of nationals (64.5%) and non-EU nationals (52.6%). As such, they are likely to pay more into host countries' budgets in taxes and social security than they receive in benefits. This means they are net contributors to host countries' public finances and not a burden. Their contribution is particularly vital when they live and work in a country with an ageing population and with fewer workers.

The European Court of Justice has meanwhile confirmed in several judgements that only EU citizens who have a right to reside in the “receiving” country (these are mostly workers) are entitled to social benefits. Although the free movement of people is guaranteed, there is no automatic right to claim social benefits in another EU State, in particular for economically non-active EU citizens.

EU citizens living in another country than their own, who are not actively in work, account for a very small share of social benefit users and their impact on national welfare budgets is very low. In fact, a recent study has shown that less than 1% of all the benefits given to EU citizens across six EU countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Malta and Portugal) went to EU workers. In five other countries studied (Germany, Finland, France, The Netherlands and Sweden) this figure rose, but only to between 1 and 5%. Spending on healthcare for EU workers was also a very small share of total health expenditure, averaging in at 0.2%.

3 Did you know?



- In 2015, out of a population of **over 500 million, a little under 11.3 million EU-28 citizens (3.7%)** of working age (20-64) were residing in a Member State other than their country of citizenship.
- For **EU citizens residing in another Member State**, Polish citizens were registered among the five main citizenships of foreigners in 10 Member States, Germans in 9 and Italians and Romanians in 8 each.
- There are **1.3 million cross border workers in the EU**, totaling 0.6% of the EU's total employment.
- The list of countries with the **largest shares of EU-28 workers in 2015** relative to population is: Luxembourg (43%), Cyprus (15%), Ireland (10%) and Belgium (9%).
- In cooperation with Member States, the European Union runs a platform called EURES to provide information, advice and job-matching services, advertising nearly **1.5 million vacancies from almost 10,000 employers**.

4 Case Study



Clavister is a network security vendor in Sweden delivering a full range of network security solutions for both physical and virtual environments. Henrik Olsén who is in charge of Clavister's Customer Services and Recruitment emphasizes that the company is eager to “meet and evaluate a lot of experienced programmers and software architects who want to move to Sweden,” saying it is “a great help as we are continually working on applications”.

In the first half of 2015 alone, the company recruited software developers from Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Finland, France and Netherlands to work at their HQ in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden. “Talent knows no borders” says Henrik. “We can expand our recruitment efforts to the whole European Union and meet our skills needs”.

5 Questions in the pub



Intra-EU mobility: what does it mean?

Markku, a successful Finnish entrepreneur, wants to set up a business in Denmark. He won't have to worry about getting a work permit and additional red tape, which means he can dedicate more time to his business project.

Fábián, a Hungarian jobseeker, can look for a job in Lithuania and enjoy the same benefits, opportunities and rights as nationals in terms of social security and taxes.

Laura, a German entrepreneur in the car industry, can't find staff due to a skills shortage, and her company is at a risk of closing down. After months of desperate searching, her offer of employment was taken up by a number of Bulgarians looking for a job in Germany. Thanks to the free movement of workers in the EU, she can hire them right away as if they were German nationals. Laura can now get her business back on track.

Dublin Bus, the largest public transport provider in the Greater Dublin Area (Ireland), has 16.3% of its workforce coming from outside Ireland. To fill the skill shortage, the company offered integration programmes and language lessons to foreign workers, particularly Poles.

Who can benefit from workers' mobility?

- Jobseekers, i.e. EU nationals who move to another EU country to look for a job, under certain conditions
- EU nationals working in another EU country and their family members
- EU nationals who return to their country of origin after having worked abroad.

Rights may differ somewhat for people who plan to be self-employed, students, and retired or otherwise economically non-active people. For more information on these groups, see [Your Europe](#).

What are the different types of intra-EU mobility available to EU citizens?

There are 3 types of labour mobility:

Long-term labour mobility: a person decides to move from his/her country of origin to look for or take up work. In most EU Member States, people must register after 3 months living there.

Cross-border mobility: someone resides in one country but is employed or self-employed in another country.

Posting of workers: a worker from a Member State is sent by the employer he/she works for to another Member State to work temporarily.

What are the rights given to an EU worker in an EU country other than their own?

Any EU national has the right to:

- look for a job in another EU country
- receive the same assistance from the national employment offices as nationals of their host country
- stay in the host country for a period long enough to look for work, apply for a job and be recruited

Jobseekers cannot be expelled if they prove that they continue to seek employment and have a genuine chance of finding a job. Once in work, an EU national has the right to **equal treatment with nationals of the host Member State** as far as conditions of work, education, training, and social and tax advantages are concerned.

Are family members of EU workers abroad entitled to the same rights?

When an EU national is working abroad in another EU country, family members also have the right to reside and work in that country, regardless of their nationality. Family members do not need a permit to work, even if they themselves are non-EU nationals. They also have the right to equal treatment, including access to all social advantages. Children have the right to education in the host country and have the right to access study grants like nationals.

Can Member States put in place safeguards to preserve the integrity of their welfare systems?

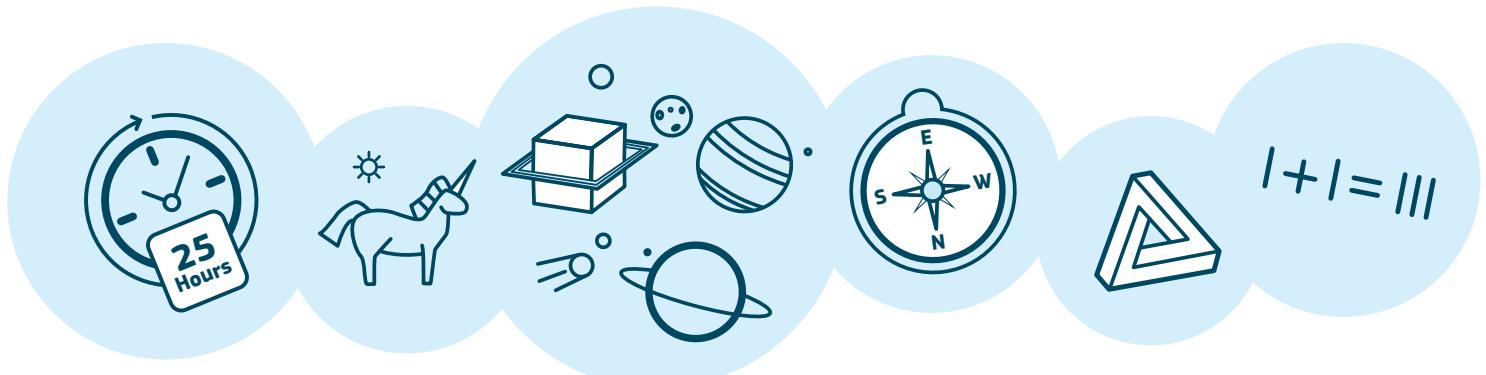
Member States can apply a series of safeguards provided for in EU rules on free movement. Germany, for example, has recently proposed a stricter application of the current EU law on free movement, including improved coordination between different national authorities to fight abuse, exploitation and undeclared work. EU rules provide for the so-called “habitual residence test” which ensures that citizens who are not working may only have access to social security in another Member State once they have genuinely moved their “centre of interest” to that country (for example their family is there).

According to EU rules, EU citizens can reside in another Member State for up to three months without any preconditions. To stay longer, however, those who are not working (such as students or retirees) need to prove that they have sufficient financial means so as to not become a burden for the host country, as well as comprehensive sickness insurance. Jobseekers can stay up to six months or even longer if they are actively looking for employment and have a “genuine chance” of finding a job. If after an individual assessment, authorities conclude that a mobile EU citizen has become an unreasonable burden, they may terminate his/her right of residence there.

What are the recent mobility trends?

When comparing the characteristics of more recent EU migrant workers (2009-13) to the previous five-year period (2004-2008), it appears that:

- EU migrant workers are increasingly going to Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Nordic countries, and less to Spain and Ireland
- Overall Germany and the UK are the top two destination countries
- In terms of age, people moving within the EU remain mostly young, but the share of those aged 15-29 declined (from 48% to 41%)
- EU migrant workers are increasingly highly educated (41% had tertiary education in the years between 2009-13 vs. 27% in 2004-08).



Myth 4: Migration and Management of External Borders

“ **THE MYTH**
**THE EU IS
 DOING NOTHING
 TO CONTROL
 MASS IMMIGRATION
 FROM THIRD COUNTRIES**

- The EU supports border management that ensures security in the Union and respects the fundamental freedoms and human rights
- The EU has worked hard to improve its external border management and control of immigration. This work is showing concrete results – we are now protecting Europe's external borders more effectively
- Common borders and common protection must go hand in hand
- The EU is active at both a policy level and on the ground, helping Member States cope better with the challenges
- We must act responsibly to return those who do not qualify for international protection to their countries of origin and, wherever possible, work with third countries to address the root causes of irregular migration

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A failed and ineffective system that makes it impossible to control who gets into the EU
- An open door to irregular migrants

WHAT IT IS

- A modern and strengthened border management system
- A secure Europe that opens its doors to those in need

2 Debunking the myth



The refugee crisis drew attention to certain deficiencies inherent in EU border management and immigration policy. Appalling scenes such as those witnessed at the Calais Jungle, on some Greek islands, or in parts of Italy, have shocked people across the continent. The EU has, however, worked hard since then to secure our borders and control migration through a common policy response alongside the allocation of funding. The EU is helping those countries that are most affected, while fostering better cooperation among all Member States. Such joint response is essential also from the point of view of security as threats do not stop at borders. Here are some of the measures taken by the EU to manage our external borders and control mass migration from third countries:

Helping the most affected Member States

The EU has set up screening and registration centres, called hotspots, including five in Greece and four in Italy, and sent personnel, including experts from the Member States, to help the authorities in these countries manage the flow of migrants. The EU has helped equip these teams with modern fingerprinting machines to make sure people are registered, processed and screened in a way they weren't before.

The EU is also helping with funding. Since the beginning of 2015 Greece has received over €353 million in emergency assistance, and Italy – €149.5 million since 2014. Bulgaria's €167 million in emergency assistance helps to provide accommodation, food and medical supplies to migrants and equip the national border guards. Through the new Emergency Support Instrument we have already provided €401 million in humanitarian aid to improve the living conditions of refugees in Greece. We are working on new ways to support Italy both financially and by enhancing regional cooperation. Spain, which has recently seen an increase in arrivals, is also receiving funding to support its border management.

Tackling criminal networks

In order to stop thousands of people from risking their lives when crossing the Mediterranean, the European Border and Coast Guard and Europol pool their resources to investigate and dismantle networks of smugglers and traffickers. A new European Migrant Smuggling Centre has been opened to support EU Member States in this work. The EU also actively identifies, captures and destroys sea vessels operated by criminals.

Partnerships with third countries

The EU cooperates with third countries, including countries of origin and transit for migrants, in areas such as conflict prevention and state building so as to reduce pull factors. We also seek to foster sustainable development in those countries to tackle poverty, ensure food security and access to energy, anchor good governance and respect of human rights, and give youth a chance to build a future. In Africa, the EU works with the African Union, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the national authorities of Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal to help them stop criminal smuggling. Finally, the EU provides [humanitarian and development aid to refugees](#) and migrants in the countries affected by the refugee crisis, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, and those countries from which most migrants travelling to the EU come. Beyond addressing root causes of migration, all these actions contribute to building and maintaining stability and security in the world, which also means increasing the security of Europe.

The EU-Turkey Statement

Following the agreement of March 2016, all new irregular migrants or asylum seekers whose application has been deemed unfounded or inadmissible, crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands, will be returned to Turkey, following an individual assessment of their asylum claims in line with EU and international law. For every Syrian being returned to Turkey, another Syrian who has not sought to make the journey in an irregular way will be resettled to the EU directly from Turkey. This agreement has reduced migrant arrivals in Greece by 97%. In parallel, the EU has made €3 billion available for 2016 and 2017 to support refugees in Turkey (under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey).

Protecting the EU's external borders

In October 2016, the EU launched the [European Border and Coast Guard](#) to manage and defend our borders where they are at their most vulnerable, adding to Member States' own resources and strengthening their hand. It currently has around 1,700 officers operating at external borders (888 officers in Greece, 407 in Italy, 193 in Spain, 126 in Bulgaria, 55 in the Western Balkans), with an additional pool of 1,500 ready to intervene if support is needed. This complements the over 100,000 border guards already deployed by EU Member States.

... but we are aware that some areas still need improvement:

- Member States have agreed, in a laudable example of responsibility-sharing, to relocate eligible asylum seekers in clear need of international protection from Greece and Italy to other EU countries by September 2017. In 2017 the pace of relocation has significantly increased and as of September 2017, over 29,000 individuals have been relocated but continuous efforts are needed on all sides. The Commission has had to start infringement procedures against Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, which have not met their legal obligations.
- Although arrivals via Greece have dropped thanks to the EU-Turkey Statement, Italy remains under pressure, with a record number of nearly 123,000 asylum seekers in 2016 (cf. Eurostat) – even if arrivals in August 2017 were down by 81% compared to the same month last year.
- The low numbers of migrants who returned to their country after their asylum application was rejected (8,608 returns in 2017 as of 6 September; only 36% of irregular migrants are returned) is a real issue and results largely from a lack of cooperation on the part of third countries. This has led to the EU introducing readmission agreements that set clear obligations on how a third country should process people returned from the EU. Beyond this, EU Member States have agreed to apply rules on the return of migrants more stringently, with the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency committing to providing assistance. This is the only way Europe will be able to show solidarity with refugees in real need of protection.

3

Did you know?



- Since the EU-Turkey Statement came into effect, the number of migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece has gone down from a high of **10,000** in a single day in October 2015 to an average of **76** a day now. Overall, arrivals to the Greek islands from Turkey have dropped by **97%** over this period.
- The EU has offered legal pathways to Europe for **over 17,305 refugees since July 2015**, as part of a European Resettlement Scheme which will have provided homes to **over 23,000 people by the end of 2017**. In September 2017, the Commission proposed a new scheme to bring a further 50,000 of the most vulnerable people in need of international protection to Europe.

- Italian and Greek rescue operations, FRONTEX Operations Triton (Italy) and Poseidon (Greece), as well as Operation Sophia, have helped save **620,000 lives** since 2015. Operations such as Triton and Poseidon are effective means for the EU to provide national authorities with support. This support can take many forms, including, personnel to help register/identify migrants and other resources such as planes, patrol vessels and helicopters.
- To date, over **2,500** suspected smugglers and traffickers have been caught and over 470 boats seized..
- The proportion of migrants fingerprinted in Greece has risen from 8% in September 2015 to 100% in December 2016.

4

Case Study



Sophia, the EUNAVFOR (European Union Naval Force) military operation in the Mediterranean, was launched in 2015 as a reaction to a shocking series of shipwrecks carrying migrants. The aim is to disrupt the business model of criminal networks that engage in human trafficking and smuggling and prevent further tragedies.

The name of the operation was adopted after a baby was born on 24 August 2015 on board the German frigate Schleswig-Holstein, operating in the Mediterranean. Born to a Somali mother rescued together with another 453 migrants, she reached the EU that very same day, disembarking at Taranto. The new born would later take the name of the Princess the German ship was dedicated to (Sophia of Schleswig-Holstein, 1866 - 1952).

Sophia is an example of successful cooperation, with 25 Member States contributing military assets and personnel. There is also a common budget allocated by the EU, which for the period July 2016-17 was € 6.7 million.

So far, thanks to Operation Sophia, more than 100 suspected smugglers and traffickers have been prosecuted by the Italian authorities and 440 boats were prevented from being re-used by smugglers. Last but most certainly not least, 36 600 lives have been saved at sea.

5

Questions in the pub



EU management of the refugee crisis: what does it really mean?

Alisha, a 17 year old refugee from Raqqah who fled from the war and destruction caused by Daesh, is offered a second chance in Sweden thanks to the resettlement program. Once she has arrived safe and sound, she will be integrated in the partly EU-funded integration program for refugees called «Understandably, all the way». Since she is an unaccompanied minor, she will receive dedicated care from specialists.

Ali, from Pakistan, says his boat had to be rescued by the Greek authorities. He says he left his home in north-west Pakistan, crossing Iran on his way to Turkey because the Taliban wanted him to join their jihad. Ali has been registered, processed and screened at one of Greece's hotspots and is having his individual asylum claim being examined before hopefully settling in Europe to get a job and build a new life.

Mohammed (26), has recently moved to Roscommon in Ireland thanks to the EU's Relocation and Resettlement Programme. His parents still live in Aleppo. The former microbiology student spent a year in Greece, living for several months in a tent and he hopes one day to return to his home in Syria. While his asylum status is being determined, he is being accommodated in a centre where he receives full board, meals and other services. He also receives a weekly allowance for personal expenditure.

What is the future of the common migration policy?

The Commission has proposed an overhaul of the current system. Our proposals are anchored in international law and look to reform every aspect of our asylum law — from reception conditions to asylum procedures to qualifications, to the Dublin rules on identifying responsibility. By harmonising protection standards, and ensuring stricter rules to combat abuse, the reforms will put an end to asylum shopping and the so-called 'secondary movements' of applicants moving irregularly from one Member State to another. At the same time, the reforms should ensure that, in times of high crises, there is the right balance of responsibility and solidarity amongst the EU's Member States.

The Commission will look at the possibility of developing, with Member States, a new legal migration policy, using an «expression of interest». This would provide a selection of potential migrants, with employers invited to identify attractive applicants from the pool of candidates and offer them jobs. An EU-wide pool of qualified migrants would be created, accessible by both employers and Member State authorities, but the selection and the admission procedure would remain national, based on Member States' actual labour market needs.

Which countries receive the most asylum seekers?

Only five EU Member States received three quarters of all asylum applications in 2015 and only three EU Member States received the same proportion in 2016 (cf. Eurostat).

How is the money given to Turkey under the Facility for Refugees being spent?

The money goes directly to projects on the ground to address the needs of refugees and host communities, with a focus on humanitarian assistance, education, health, municipal infrastructure and socio-economic support. As of September 2017, 48 projects worth €1.66 billion have been signed off on. This money is being used, for example, to provide social assistance to 1.3 million refugees and access to education for 230,000 refugee students in Turkey by the end of 2017.

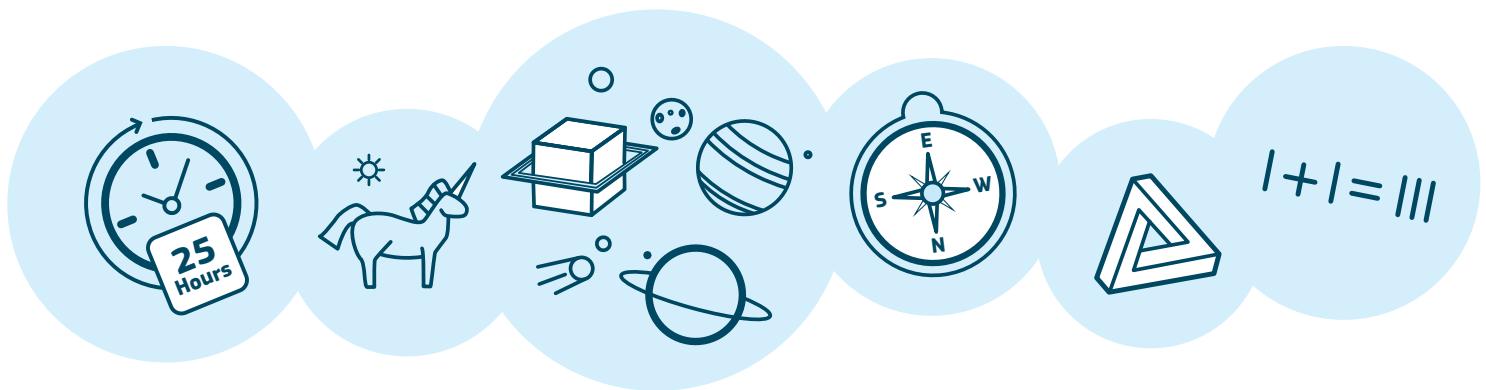
Please always check the latest figures when engaging in communication activities

Additional links:

Recent progress reports on migration: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3081_en.htm

Progress on the Commission's 10 priorities (priority 8: migration): https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state-union-2017-brochure_en.pdf

DG HOME factsheets on migration: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information_en



Myth 5: Democracy and the EU institutions

“ **THE MYTH**
THE EUROPEAN
UNION IS UNDEMOCRATIC
AND RUN BY UNELECTED
BUREAUCRATS

- The European Parliament represents the people of Europe and is directly elected by them
- The European Commission proposes laws and the democratically elected European Parliament together with the Council of the European Union (national government ministers) votes on them
- The European Union is about pooling and sharing sovereignty, not losing sovereignty.
- Commissioners are usually (former) elected leaders from national Member States.

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- An undemocratic organisation
- An organisation run by unelected bureaucrats

WHAT IT IS

- An organisation founded on representative democracy and the rule of law
- A political organisation where elected representatives are assisted by civil servants

2 Debunking the myth



European Parliament: the voice of the people

Members of the European Parliament are directly elected. Citizens in every Member State choose their representatives every five years. Over time, the European Parliament has gained more democratic powers and it now adopts most of the laws together with the Council of Ministers (national government ministers).

The Parliament elects the President of the Commission on the European Council's proposal, endorses a new Commission, holds the Commission to account, and can even force the Commission to resign in a so called "motion of censure".

European Institutions: led by elected representatives, supported by civil servants

A team of 28 Commissioners, one from each Member State, forms the day-to-day political leadership of the European Commission and are led by a President. Each national government puts a candidate for Commissioner forward. These candidates have to be confirmed by the European Parliament before being appointed. In the past, the Parliament has sometimes found candidates unsuitable, with their governments having to replace them. Very often, candidates are former members of national governments or even former Prime Ministers (there are four former PMs in the Juncker Commission). The consent of the European Parliament gives Commissioners further democratic legitimacy.

Commissioners are supported by a civil service. Civil servants are recruited through open pan-European competitions. Every EU Member State has a civil service; there is nothing new, novel or overly-bureaucratic here. In fact, the European Commission's civil service, for example, has less staff than some European city councils (e.g. around 55,000 for Birmingham or 50,000 for Paris).

"Brussels has decided..."

It is often said in the media that "Brussels has decided" something, giving the impression that the EU is a secretive and distant club. The European decision-making process is complex but certainly not secret. The European Commission proposes new laws. National Ministers representing democratically elected governments in the Council of Ministers and the democratically elected European Parliament then discuss and vote on these laws. In other words, people who adopt laws proposed by the Commission are all elected and represent the interests of their electorates, i.e. of European citizens. Sometimes it is difficult to reach a consensus because the representatives of 28 Member States tend to defend their own electorate's interests first.

In advance of presenting a new initiative, the European Commission gathers facts and opinions in order to evaluate its possible impact. The Commission consults Member States at an early stage, asks civil society and the business community for their opinion, and publishes its proposals online, inviting feedback from citizens.

The Commission is "big on big things and small on small things." In the EU, decisions and actions should be taken at the most local level possible, and limited to the issue being addressed. These principles are known as subsidiarity and proportionality.

The role of national parliaments

Since 2006 the Commission has sent all new proposals and consultation papers directly to national Parliaments and invited them to respond. As such, national parliaments have a formal role in the scrutiny of EU legislative proposals. If they think a draft proposal does something that should be handled on the national or local level rather than on the European level, they can vote for the draft to be reviewed ("yellow card"). Since 2012, three "yellow cards" have been issued. As a result, one legislative proposal was withdrawn (on the right to strike), while two others were maintained (the establishment of a European prosecutor's office and the revision of the directive on posting workers).

The role of citizens

The European Union is an example of participatory democracy in action. The EU constantly tries to involve citizens in decision making, engage them in debate, and better inform them, at many levels and in many different ways.

Everyone can influence decision making – not just lobbyists. All public EU documents are available in every EU language. The Commission has created a multilingual website ("Contribute to Law-Making") where citizens and stakeholders (experts, researchers, companies, NGOs, trade unions, consumer groups, civil society associations, and others) can track initiatives and express their views. The EU considers the feedback received at every stage of the legislative process and during any evaluation of the efficacy of any given piece of legislation. Different opinions, perspectives and expectations expressed during public consultations help the Commission shape its proposed policy.

3

Did you know?



- The Commission goes out and meets people. [Citizens' Dialogues](#) take place in every Member State and on a regular basis – so far over 200 were held by members of the Juncker Commission across EU Member States.
- Since 2012 citizens have been able to launch a [Citizens' Initiative](#). This means that if a petition is signed by at least 1 million people from seven different countries, the European Commission must react by either proposing a law or justifying its decision not to do so. So far, three initiatives have reached the number of required signatures (universal right of access to water and sanitation; the protection of embryos; and the banning of animal testing).
- You have the right to correspond, in any of the 24 official languages of the EU, with European institutions, and receive a reply in the same language within 15 working days.
- You can ask one of the [Europe Direct Information centres](#), scattered across Member States for information about funding, research, or any other topic, by mail or phone.
- The Commission reduces unnecessary rules. In an effort to make regulation better, reduce burdens and simplify laws, the Juncker Commission has proposed 80% fewer initiatives each year than previous Commissions, and over 100 proposals have been withdrawn so far. The [REFIT platform](#), chaired by First Vice-President Timmermans, [collects suggestions](#) on how to simplify laws.
- We tell you who we are talking to. To let you know who Commissioners are meeting, there are now over 11,000 organisations on the EU Transparency Register.

4 Case Study



The democratic election of the President of the European Commission.

In 2014, the President of the European Commission was appointed in a new, democratic way. The main European political parties running in the European Parliament elections each chose their lead candidate and Member States, through the Council, proposed the candidate of the largest party following the elections as Commission President. As lead candidate of the victorious European People's Party (221 out of 751 votes), **Jean-Claude Juncker** became the President of the Commission.

This change had two goals. One was to reinforce the role and visibility of European political parties in the Parliament and give more power to elected representatives. The other was to give more legitimacy to politicians who run for the presidency of the Commission. This means that citizens take an active part in electing not only those who vote and adopt laws (the European Parliament and, indirectly, the Council), but also those who propose them (the Commission).

5 Questions in the pub



Democracy: what does it mean for European citizens?

Elena, a Greek entrepreneur, has set up a company that exports vegetables and fruit to Italy. She wants the best quality products to reach her consumers. She has in-depth knowledge of the challenges in this field. She will give her opinion on upcoming legislation, proposed by the European Commission, via a website designed to gather citizens' feedback on proposals for new laws.

Patrick, an Irish employer, has run a transport company for over 10 years. A skills shortage in Ireland seriously threatened the existence of his company. He saved it by employing EU workers from Poland and now that his company is thriving again he would like to do more to promote cultural diversity. He found a Citizens' Initiative that concerns the improvement of social inclusion of minorities and has given his support by signing it.

Tomasz from Poland would like to know more about what the EU is doing for his country. He is going to write an e-mail to the Europe Direct centre in Cracow, knowing that he will receive a swift, comprehensive response in his native language.

How does the EU tackle conflicts of interest?

Thanks to the Transparency Register, anyone can check who is trying to influence the Commission. Widespread lobbying has led to criticism regarding the transparency of European decision-making. In order to remedy that, the [Transparency Register](#) was set up for representatives of interest groups who want to interact with the European institutions. Their registration makes it possible to demonstrate what interests are being pursued, by whom and with what budgets. The Commission has also committed to publish online all meetings held by Commissioners, members of their cabinets and Directors-General.

Most Member States do not have any kind of register for lobbyists. Mandatory transparency registers for lobbyists currently exist in six EU countries (Ireland, UK, Austria, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia). Four countries have voluntary registers (France, Croatia, Germany, and Romania).

What powers does the European Parliament have?

The Parliament votes on laws – together with the Council. It adopts the EU's budget and monitors its implementation. It also holds the Commission to account by making sure it is doing its job properly. It can force the Commission to resign through a 2/3 vote of the Members of Parliament (so-called censure vote). The Parliament has to consent to the conclusion of international agreements in the large majority of cases, and in those that it is not, it is still consulted. The Parliament can conduct hearings and investigations into the incorrect administration of EU law by the Commission or Member States, or ask parliamentary questions to be answered by the Commission and the Council.

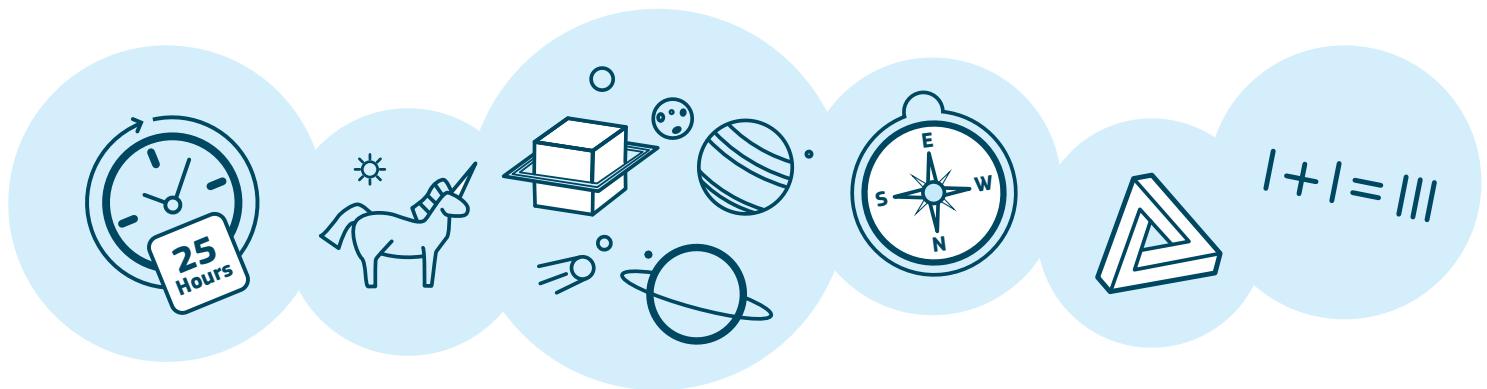
The Parliament and the Council now make joint decisions on more than 40 new policies, e.g. in the areas of freedom, security and justice, trade, environmental policy and the Common Agricultural Policy, putting the European Parliament and the Council on an equal footing. The European Parliament's legislative power is more limited in areas such as competition, taxation, the harmonisation of legislation not related to the internal market, and some aspects of social policy. In those fields, it is consulted but the Council does not have to take Parliament's opinion into account.

Are civil society and regional authorities consulted?

Consultation of civil society, including employers, trade unions and groups such as professional and community associations, youth organisations, women's groups, consumers, environmental campaigners and many more, has always been an integral part of the EU. This began in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome, through the creation of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The EESC gives representatives of Europe's organised civil society a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues. The Committee's opinions are forwarded to the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. As such, it has a key role to play in the Union's decision-making process.

EU regions also have a privileged say in Europe. The European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of local and regional representatives from all Member States, providing a formal structure through which their opinion on EU legislation that directly impacts regions and cities can be heard.

Please always check the latest figures when engaging in communication activities



Myth 6: EU competition policy

“ **THE MYTH**
**EU COMPETITION
 POLICY STOPS
 EUROPEAN COMPANIES
 FROM THRIVING**

- By making European companies more competitive at home, EU competition policy helps European companies to thrive on world markets.
- Competition policy is about applying rules to make sure companies compete fairly with each other in an open and fair Single Market.
- The EU wants to make sure that all companies, big and small, can compete on fair terms and so best serve the interests of their customers.
- Competition rules have a tangible influence on our daily lives: they encourage companies to innovate and offer more choice, meaning lower prices and better quality products for consumers.
- Uncontrolled government subsidies and tax breaks can harm competition just as much as unfair practices of private business, which is why the EU has state aid rules.
- The European Commission uses state aid rules to make sure companies can compete with each other on fair terms, without Member States offering some companies unfair subsidies or tax breaks that are not available to other companies in the Single Market.

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- An example of the EU meddling where it shouldn't
- Detrimental to European business

WHAT IT IS

- A cross-border issue which needs to be dealt with at European level
- Vital to ensure economic growth that works for consumers across the EU

2 Debunking the myth

Here are some of the ways in which EU competition policy benefits European business and most importantly, European citizens:



Rules on state aid

A company that receives government subsidies ([state aid](#)) gains an unfair advantage over its competitors. Therefore, the EU only allows state aid where it contributes to general economic development. EU Member States have given the European Commission responsibility for ensuring that state aid complies with EU rules. Letting a company pay less tax than others is one such form of unfair state aid and the Commission believes that no company, however big or powerful, should avoid paying its fair share of tax.

Government intervention can constitute “good aid” when it stimulates economic growth and job creation and is therefore in the interest of EU citizens. It can take the form of investment incentives for poorer regions or other forms of support, for example, in areas with very high unemployment. Examples include training aid, support for small and medium-sized businesses, infrastructure support, emergency aid after natural disasters, regional development, research and innovation and energy projects. Currently, about 94% of total state aid spending is allocated to such objectives (“good aid”).

More than 95% of all state aid measures are granted by Member States directly without having to be approved by the Commission because Member States take responsibility to make sure it does not unduly distort competition.

The Commission intervenes to block state aid that acts against the interests of industry or business by delaying much needed restructuring and damaging efficient competitors that do not get subsidies, who may be driven out of the market.

The EU can demand the recovery of state aid if it damages competition and distorts trade, and the sums can vary greatly. In 2015, Member States were instructed to recover €1.8 billion from companies in their jurisdiction, while in 2016 this figure was more than €14 billion (largely because of the Apple case in Ireland). This tax revenue is recouped for Member States’ budgets and can then be spent on public services such as schools, healthcare, security, for growth-enhancing aid or for the reduction of public debt.

Supervision of mergers

[Mergers](#), or the combining of two or more companies into one, can be good for the economy as companies become more competitive. It can reduce production or distribution costs, and offer consumers higher-quality goods at fairer prices. However, some mergers can reduce competition, for example by creating or strengthening a dominant player and pushing others out of the market. This often harms consumers by inflating prices and reducing choice and innovation. It may also harm EU companies that require competitive and innovative input and services to compete globally. It is for this reason that large companies that operate across European borders must in most cases gain the EU’s approval before merging or forming associations.

If the Commission finds that a proposed merger could distort competition, the parties can still take steps to correct this, for example by selling parts of the combined business or by licensing technology to another market player. Only once these steps have been taken can the merger be approved.

The vast majority of notified mergers pose no competition problems and are cleared after a routine review: over the past ten years, the Commission has cleared over 3000 mergers and blocked only seven. For instance, in 2016 the EU prohibited the [acquisition of Telefónica UK by Hutchison](#) because it concluded that mobile telecom customers in the United Kingdom would have had less choice and payed more as a result of the takeover, and that the deal would have harmed innovation in the mobile telecom sector.

Enforcing antitrust rules and breaking up cartels

“[Antitrust](#)” rules prohibit agreements between competitors that restrict competition. The clearest example of such an illegal agreement is a [cartel](#) between competitors, where companies fix the prices at which their products are sold, share markets between themselves or otherwise agree to avoid competing with each other. The Commission decided in 2016 that five truck manufacturers had colluded for 14 years in order to fix prices and pass on the costs of complying with stricter emission rules. They were [fined a record €2.9 billion](#). In 2017 the Commission found another truck manufacturer took part in the same cartel and fined it €0.88 billion.

Antitrust rules also prohibit firms that hold a dominant position on a market from abusing that position, for example by charging unfair prices aimed at eliminating a competitor, by limiting production, or by refusing to supply goods or services, which may operate to the detriment of consumers.

Holding a dominant position is not anticompetitive in itself. However, abusing a dominant position to eliminate competition can be illegal and considerable fines can be imposed.

In 2017 the Commission fined Google €2.42 billion for abusing its market dominance as a search engine by giving an illegal advantage to another Google product, its comparison shopping service.

Opening up markets

The EU believes that monopolies are inefficient: when a company has a monopoly, generally prices are too high and production is too low. In addition, monopolists may make it difficult for new businesses to enter the market.

This is why the Commission has proposed rules, now agreed by Member States, to open up markets for services, including essential services like energy, telecommunications, transport and post to competition. What's more, in the railway, electricity and gas industries, for example, network operators are now required to give competitors fair access to their networks. This means consumers can choose the supplier offering the best conditions and lowest prices.

Sometimes, however, providing public services is not profitable (for example maintaining a large network of post offices), but it is still essential for customers to be able to access these services, in which case they may need to be funded by the state. The EU may even agree to a company having a monopoly if it is important to safeguard a public service or if, for example, expensive infrastructure is involved that other companies cannot afford to provide.

In the two markets that the EU first opened up to competition (air transport and telecommunications), average prices have dropped substantially. This has not necessarily happened in markets that were opened up to competition later or not at all (electricity, gas, rail and postal service), where prices have remained similar unchanged or may even have increased. While there are several factors at play in these cases - for example, gas prices may have increased because they are closely linked to oil prices - overall, the opening of markets is good news for businesses and consumers as it provides new opportunities and more choice.

3 Did you know?



- In order to detect cartels more effectively, and successfully break them up, the Commission waives or reduces fines for companies that report cartel behaviour and cooperate with the Commission's investigation. Fine reductions are also available to companies that admit that they were involved in a cartel. This saves a lot of money for the EU, Member States and ultimately the taxpayer – money that would otherwise be spent on possibly lengthy investigations.
- The European Commission has a [dedicated email address and phone number for whistleblowers](#) who wish to help in the fight against cartels and other anti-competitive practices, such as agreeing on prices or procurement bids, keeping products off the market or unfairly excluding rivals. Individuals are encouraged to identify themselves as this will give their statement more credibility and help in any investigation – but they can also remain anonymous.
- 74% of EU citizens consider that effective competition has a positive impact on them as a consumer, while 68% say that they have experienced a lack of competition that resulted in higher prices, less product or supplier choice, or lower quality.
- EU citizens have identified the energy sector (28%), transport services (23%) and pharmaceutical products (21%) as the sectors where they most commonly experience such problems¹.
- In 2016, the observable customer savings from European Commission's cartel prohibition decisions ranged between €6.8 and €10.2 billion, while those resulting from European Commission's horizontal merger interventions were in the range of €7.4-€18.5 billion.
- The European Commission works with countries worldwide – including emerging economies – both bilaterally and multilaterally, in order to promote fair competition on global markets.

4 Case Study



State aid: Ireland gave illegal tax benefits to Apple worth up to €13 billion

Following an investigation launched in June 2014, the European Commission [concluded that two tax rulings issued by Ireland to Apple artificially lowered the corporate tax paid by Apple in Ireland from 1991](#). As a result, Apple effectively paid a corporate tax rate that declined from 1% in 2003 to 0.005% in 2014. In 2016, the Commission decided that the selective tax treatment of Apple in Ireland was illegal under EU state aid rules because it gave Apple a significant advantage over other businesses. As the Commission can order the recovery of illegal state aid for a ten-year period, Ireland must now recover the unpaid taxes from Apple for the years 2003 to 2014 of up to €13 billion, plus interest.

In his State of the Union address in September 2016, President Juncker noted that “every company, no matter how big or small, has to pay its taxes where it makes its profits. This goes for giants like Apple too. In Europe we do not accept powerful companies getting illegal backroom deals on their taxes”.

¹ Source: Flash Eurobarometer 403 (March 2015), Citizens' Perception about Competition Policy, available at http://ec.europa.eu/competition/publications/reports/survey2014/citizen_full_en.pdf

Antitrust: Google fined €2.42bn for abusing its market dominance as a search engine

Google was fined €2.42bn by the European Commission in 2017 for abusing its market dominance as a search engine. It had been giving an illegal advantage to another Google product, Google Shopping, a comparison shopping service. Google Shopping consistently appeared at the top of search results, above rival services. Google had to end this practice within 90 days or face a further penalty of up to 5% of the average daily worldwide turnover of Alphabet, Google's parent company. The Commission is assessing Google's compliance with the decision.

The Commission had been investigating this issue since late 2010, following complaints from a number of players in the market. Whilst the fine is the largest ever imposed on a single company, it represents 3.1% of Google's annual revenue, whereas the Commission has the power to fine a company up to 10% of its annual revenue.

State aid: Commission finds Luxembourg gave illegal tax benefits to Amazon worth around €250 million

The European Commission concluded in October 2017 that [Luxembourg granted undue tax benefits to Amazon of around €250 million](#). This was illegal under EU state aid rules because it allowed Amazon to pay substantially less tax than other businesses. In fact, almost three quarters of Amazon's profits from sales in the EU were not taxed due to these illegal tax benefits. Luxembourg must now recover the illegal aid.

5 Questions in the pub



EU Competition Policy: what does it really mean?

Ryanair, the Irish low-cost carrier, informed the Commission in 2012 that it wanted to take over Irish national carrier Aer Lingus. The Commission looked into the potential impact on competition and consumers, especially for the (then) 11 million passengers who travelled each year to and from Dublin, Cork, Knock and Shannon. The Commission concluded that the merger would have harmed consumers by creating a monopoly or a dominant position on 46 routes where, at that time, Aer Lingus and Ryanair competed vigorously against each other. The merger would have reduced choice and, most likely, would have led to fare increases for consumers travelling on those 46 routes. The Commission therefore [blocked the takeover](#). This decision followed a previous decision by the Commission to block a Ryanair takeover bid for Aer Lingus in [2007](#).

In 2015, **Fiat and Starbucks** were found to have benefited from an artificially reduced tax burden from Luxembourg and the Netherlands respectively. This is illegal under EU state aid rules and it was ruled that the tax must be returned. National tax authorities cannot give any company, however large or powerful, an unfair competitive advantage over others. As a result, between €20 and €30 million was recovered from each company.

In July 2015, the Commission authorised public funding of €270 million to build a new [cross-Channel terminal in the Port of Calais](#) that would improve sea transport services. As the terminal operator's income from the use of the infrastructure would be insufficient to cover the investment costs, the project could not have been carried out without public funding. The harm to competition will be limited given that traffic is expected to grow as a result of the improved transport connections. Moreover, the amount of public funding necessary was reduced through the participation of private investors.

Additional links:

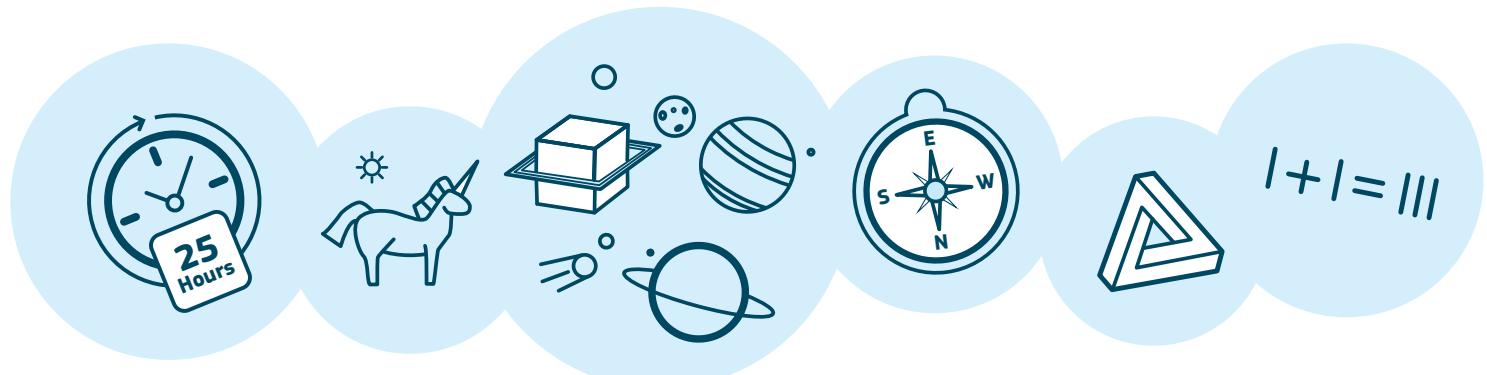
DG COMP on competition rules: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html

DG COMP brochure “EU competition policy in action”: <https://publications.europa.eu/s/eilg>

DG COMP brochure “compliance matters”: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/antitrust/compliance/index_en.html

DG COMP factsheet on fines for breaking EU competition law: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/cartels/overview/factsheet_fines_en.pdf

EUROPA on competition rules: https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/competition_en



Myth 7: EU refugee policy



THE MYTH

**THE EU DOESN'T CARE
ABOUT REFUGEES
AND WANTS TO KEEP
THEM FROM COMING
TO EUROPE**

- Solidarity and responsibility are at the very heart of our response to a migration crisis.
- Our priority is to save lives at sea and fight criminal smuggling networks.
- It is our moral duty to maintain migrants' dignity, prevent loss of life and share among Member States the challenge of helping those in the greatest need.
- Beyond this moral duty, Europe has the legal obligation to give safe refuge to people fleeing war and persecution.
- EU Member States granted protection to and resettled more than 724,000 asylum seekers in 2016 – three times as much as the United States, Canada and Australia combined.
- The EU is also active beyond its borders, including in conflict zones, where it provides humanitarian and development aid. By helping to stabilise our neighbourhood, we help secure the future of Europe.

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A strategy to keep refugees away and prevent them from seeking asylum in the EU
- A system that aims to shift responsibility from the EU to other countries

WHAT IT IS

- A set of policies, based on international and EU law, that protects the most vulnerable people from violence and terror
- A way to help refugees and people in need of international protection wherever they are in the world

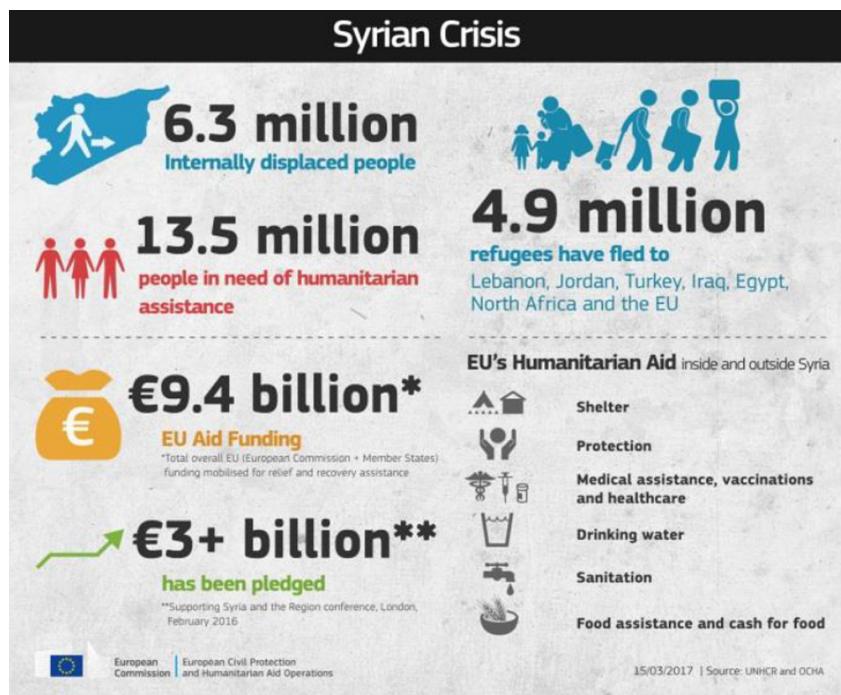
2 Debunking the myth

The European Union is doing a lot to protect refugees and improve their living conditions both in Europe and abroad – in their countries of origin and those they travel through.



Humanitarian aid and assistance

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the EU has provided life-saving humanitarian assistance and support to the Syrian people and neighbouring countries where Syrian refugees have found shelter, such as Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon. The EU and its Member States are together the leading donor in the international response to the Syrian crisis, with more than €9.4 billion in humanitarian and development assistance already delivered. Thanks to this aid, millions of people have gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene supplies.



The Facility for Refugees in Turkey

Created under the EU agreement with Turkey (the so-called [EU-Turkey statement](#)), the Facility focuses on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure, and social and economic support. It has a budget of €3 billion for 2016-2017. This is made up of €1 billion from the EU budget and €2 billion from EU Member States. 52 projects worth €1.69 billion have been accepted so far.

Resettlement from third countries

The EU is playing its part, offering help to people and in solidarity with other countries that are also dealing with increased levels of migration. The European resettlement scheme (the transfer of refugees to the EU from non-EU countries where they sought refuge) offers a safe and legal route to the EU for those in need of protection. The aim of the scheme is to discourage people from using dangerous criminal smuggling networks. Over 17,000 people (out of the 22,504 agreed in 2015) have already been resettled through the scheme as of 6 September 2017. The Commission has for the time being set aside €377.5 million to support financially the resettlement of at least 37,750 persons during 2018.

The agreement with Turkey, meanwhile, is a second scheme whereby a Syrian refugee is resettled to the EU directly from Turkey for every Syrian returned to Turkey from Greece. In May 2017 almost 1,000 Syrian refugees travelled to Europe in this way – a record high – and over 8,800 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey overall so far.

Helping refugees integrate into our communities

The primary responsibility for integration lies with Member States but the EU is supporting them, notably via the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](#) (AMIF) which has a €3 billion budget for the 2014-2020 period. Many other EU funds and programmes, even if not dedicated exclusively to refugees, support various projects that benefit refugees (e.g. European Social Fund, Creative Europe, European Fund for Strategic Investments, The Urban Agenda for the EU, etc.).

In June 2016 the European Commission's [Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals](#) was adopted. It aims to support Member States to integrate legally resident third-country nationals and promote their economic and social contribution to the EU. While it covers all third country nationals in the EU, it pays special attention to refugees.

3 Did you know?



- On the United Nations' World Refugee Day (20 June 2017), the European Commission released the '[EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals](#)' to help reception centres, integration services and public employment services guide non-EU nationals to education, training, and employment opportunities.
- In 2016, the EU gave more than €1.9 billion, or some 87% of its annual humanitarian aid budget, to help forcibly displaced people and communities hosting them in 56 countries (Turkey, Greece, Syria, Iraq and South Sudan being the top 5).

4 Case Study



Beyond the EU's borders, the [Emergency Social Safety Net](#) is one of the projects run under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. The project is managed jointly with the World Food Programme and the Turkish Red Crescent.

Launched in October 2016, it is an innovative way to provide humanitarian aid. It offers the most vulnerable refugee families a debit card with monthly cash allowances to they can cover their basic needs such as food, rent, medicine and clothes. More than 860,000 refugees have already received these cards which can be used in shops or to withdraw money from ATMs. The programme provides roughly €26 per person every month. It ensures dignity for families, helps the local economy and allows government services to offer support in an efficient way, without bureaucratic costs.

Inside the EU's borders, 12 refugee integration projects are receiving [Creative Europe](#) funding for activities that recognise and celebrate the contribution refugees and migrants make to cultural diversity in Europe. The projects have been awarded a total of €2.35 million and involve 62 organisations from 20 countries, with Italy and Sweden being the best represented. The projects each receive just under €200,000 on average.

One of the projects is [Future](#) (Fostering the Integration of Unaccompanied Refugee minors), running in Italy, which gives refugee children an opportunity to express themselves in the universal language of images and tell their story in a feature-length film, as well as during events and conferences.

5 Questions in the pub



EU refugee policy – what does it really mean?

Nahed and Adnan: a sister and a brother who fled with their family from the devastation of Aleppo. In the Child and Family Support Centre in Ankara, financed by the EU and UNICEF, they both receive psychological and educational support. The Centre's social workers also helped the family access the necessary medical care for Adnan, who had been injured by a bomb, so that he can learn to walk again.

Yaman and Amir: two Syrian brothers who escaped from Aleppo and came to Belgium in 2013. An accountant and an IT specialist, they adapted to their new reality and started to study. They learned the local language and opened their own snack shop in the city centre of Mons.

Khalil: a baby born in a refugee camp in Greece after his parents fled from Afghanistan when heavy fighting broke out between extremist groups in their city. Throughout her pregnancy, Khalil's mother, Lemar, visited the "Mother and Baby Area" of the refugee camp where she had access to healthcare. She now brings Khalil along every day so that she can breastfeed and get advice on health and nutrition. The centre is run by the international NGO "Save the Children", with the support of the European Union.

What are the rules of international law?

The 1951 [Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and its 1967 Protocol set out who can receive refugee status and what kind of legal protection, social rights and other assistance a refugee is entitled to. Beyond their rights, the Convention also defines the refugee's obligations to countries that receive them and specifies the categories of people who do not qualify for refugee status (such as war criminals).

The Convention was initially intended to protect European refugees after World War II. However, the 1967 Protocol expanded its scope to include the whole world. This helped inspire important regional initiatives, including the development of the EU's Common European Asylum System.

Who is an asylum seeker or a refugee?

EU law defines an asylum seeker as an applicant for international protection. They are granted asylum seeker status until a decision on the asylum application is taken and is allowed to remain on the territory of an EU state until then. If the person is granted asylum, they can obtain refugee status.

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as a person outside of their own country of nationality or habitual residence, who has reason to fear persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion. This person must be unable or unwilling to obtain protection from their own country, or to return there, for fear of persecution. A refugee is therefore someone who must flee because of a direct threat to their life and because their country can't provide protection.

Where do the majority of refugees and asylum seekers come from?

In 2016, the top countries of origin for asylum seekers and refugees arriving the EU were Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. In total 1,236,325 asylum applications were recorded in the 28 EU Member States, as well as in Switzerland and Norway.

Are refugees coming to claim benefits? Can they have access to benefits right away?

Nobody becomes a refugee by choice, but because they face persecution or life-threatening circumstances in their country of origin. People who are granted refugee status have the right to access housing, food, clothing, medical and psychological care and a financial allowance. Children under 18 can access education and applicants should have access to employment within 9 months of the date of their application. Most Member States do, however, offer access to employment earlier. If applicants have sufficient resources they may be asked to cover or contribute to the cost of material reception conditions and health care.

Additional links:

DG HOME factsheets on migration:

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information_en

DG ECHO factsheets on the refugee crisis:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en

DG ECHO material on Syria:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east-north-africa/syria_en

Other factsheets by DG ECHO:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/factsheets_en

EEAS factsheets on migration:

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/9880/Factsheets%20on%20Migration

Commission progress reports on the European Agenda on Migration:

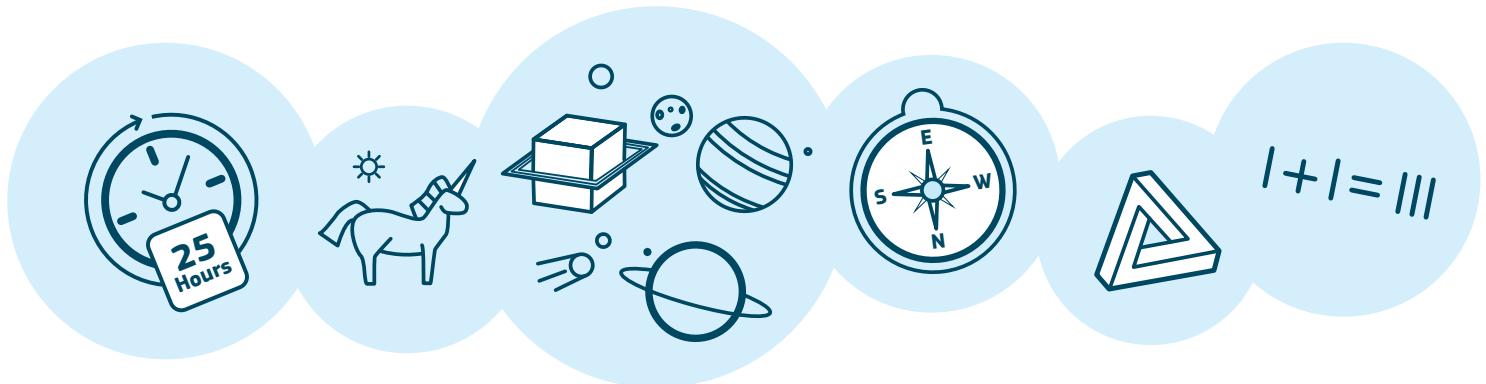
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3081_en.htm

The implementation of the Action Plan on Integration of Third-Country Nationals:

<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-brands-new-tool-to-monitor-eu-actions-for-integration>

Progress on the Commission's 10 priorities (priority 8: migration):

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state-union-2017-brochure_en.pdf



Myth 8: EU army



THE MYTH THE EU WANTS TO CREATE ITS OWN ARMY

- EU citizens want more security, stability and a coordinated response to current threats – that's why we are encouraging Member States to cooperate more closely on defence.
- The future of European Security and Defence is not an EU army, but greater and closer cooperation.
- Member States remain sovereign when it comes to their defence and military decisions.

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A European army created against the wishes of Member States and a threat to national sovereignty
- The EU assuming power in a new area
- A threat to the idea of the EU as a peace project

WHAT IT IS

- Cooperation in the area of defence that saves Member States money and makes them stronger together
- The EU responding to the wishes of its citizens who want more security
- A means of securing peace in Europe for future generations

2 Debunking the myth

Rising instability in Europe's neighbourhood, as well as new global economic, environmental and technological threats, all pose challenges to our security. Terrorism in Europe and around the world is more and more prevalent, while the frequency and impact of cyber-attacks continue to increase. Citizens feel concerned about security and look to the EU for protection with large majorities in all Member States wanting to see 'more Europe' in security and defence. Many of the threats we face today do not stop at national borders and are best prevented and tackled together. If we are to deliver on our peace promise to the next generations, security and defence must play a more prominent role in the European project. We want stronger cooperation between EU Member States on security and defence, through better cooperation and joint development of technologies and capabilities.



Within the EU, military and defence matters are handled between Member States

The EU Treaty provides clear rules for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. EU decisions on military operations or defence issues are taken by Member States in the Council. In fact, the European Commission, which proposes new laws in other policy areas, is not allowed to propose any new laws about defence except in the area of defence industry and the defence equipment market. Almost all decisions related to defence require **unanimous agreement in the European Council**, where EU heads of state or government come together to decide the EU's policy agenda. Any decision also has to be ratified by national parliaments and, in some cases, in national referendums.

The Lisbon Treaty paved the way for a **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** in defence, enabling willing Member States to move forward with closer defence cooperation based on more binding commitments. In November 2017, Ministers of from 25 EU Member States signed a joint notification on the PESCO, including a list of commitments they have agreed to undertake, and handed it over to the High Representative and the Council. Following the notification, PESCO was officially launched by the Council in December 2017. The first 17 collaborative projects for concrete cooperation between participating Member States are now being developed and Member States remain in control of decisions, in the Council and in the projects. So this is not about an 'EU Army' – no soldier is placed under permanent command of the European Union.

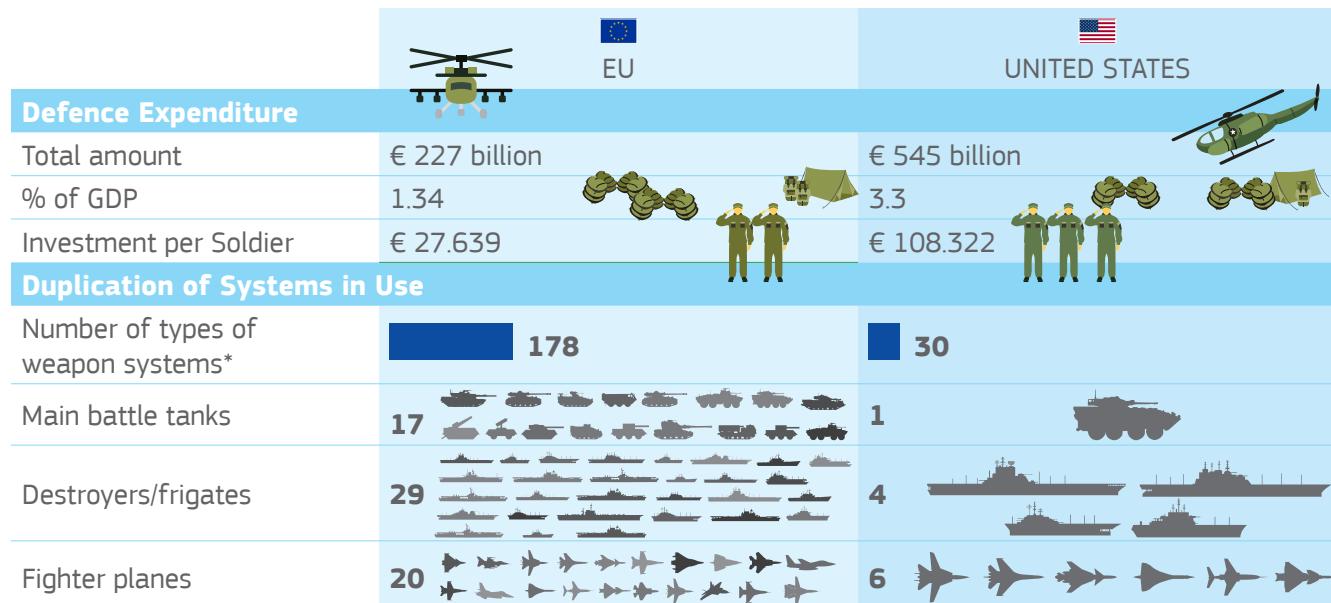
Military operations under the EU flag already exist but this is not the same as an EU army

The EU manages military and civilian missions and operations at an EU level under the [Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\)](#). The CSDP makes it possible for the EU to undertake military and civilian missions and operations abroad to help manage and resolve conflicts and crises.. The EU takes decisions for new operations or missions together with all Member States and then relies on Member States to provide the civilian and/or military personnel and equipment for these operations. Such contributions remain a sovereign national decision and each Member States can decide how much to contribute. The common costs of EU military operations are not financed from the central EU budget but rather from a dedicated pot based on sharing costs between all Member States, and so this money does not take resources from other EU programmes.

It makes sense, in economic terms, to cooperate

To carry out military operations more effectively, Europe needs to have the right military forces, equipment and the ability to work together. Collectively, Europe is the world's second largest military spender. But it is not the second largest military power because the fragmentation of the European defence sector along national lines leads to inefficiency in spending and sometimes hampers the ability of European armies to work together.

The lack of coordinated spending means that, even if EU Member States collectively spend around 30% as much as the US on defence (over €200 billion annually), the output of Europeans together is much lower in comparison to the US. This has led to a number of important military shortfalls in Europe's ability to undertake especially the more demanding military operations (e.g. strategic transport, drones, intelligence, protection of ground forces, etc.). The EU (as well as NATO) is addressing those shortfalls and aims to improve coordination and cooperation in developing new capacities – for example through PESCO but also through the EDF (see below). In 2013, for example, 84% of all equipment buying took place at the national level, while bigger cost savings could come with scale. To get more from the taxpayer's money, the Member States have now agreed to aim to collectively spend 35% of their national investments in collaborative projects.



* Number of types of weapon systems for selected weapon systems categories

Source: NATO, International Institute for Strategic Studies, SIPRI, Munich Security Report 2017

The European Defence Fund

The future of European Security and Defence is not an EU Army, but rather increased cooperation, and this is best illustrated by the [European Defence Fund](#). The Fund will coordinate, supplement and amplify national investments in defence. Through joint investment, Member States will be able to develop defence technology and equipment that would otherwise not have been achievable. The Fund will also encourage innovation and allow economies of scale so that the EU defence industry can become more efficient and more competitive.

The Commission will allocate €590 million to the Fund up to 2020, and it is proposing to allocate the Fund a minimum of €1.5 billion per year. Together with Member States' contributions, the Fund could generate a total investment in defence research and capability development of €5.5 billion per year after 2020.

3 Did you know?

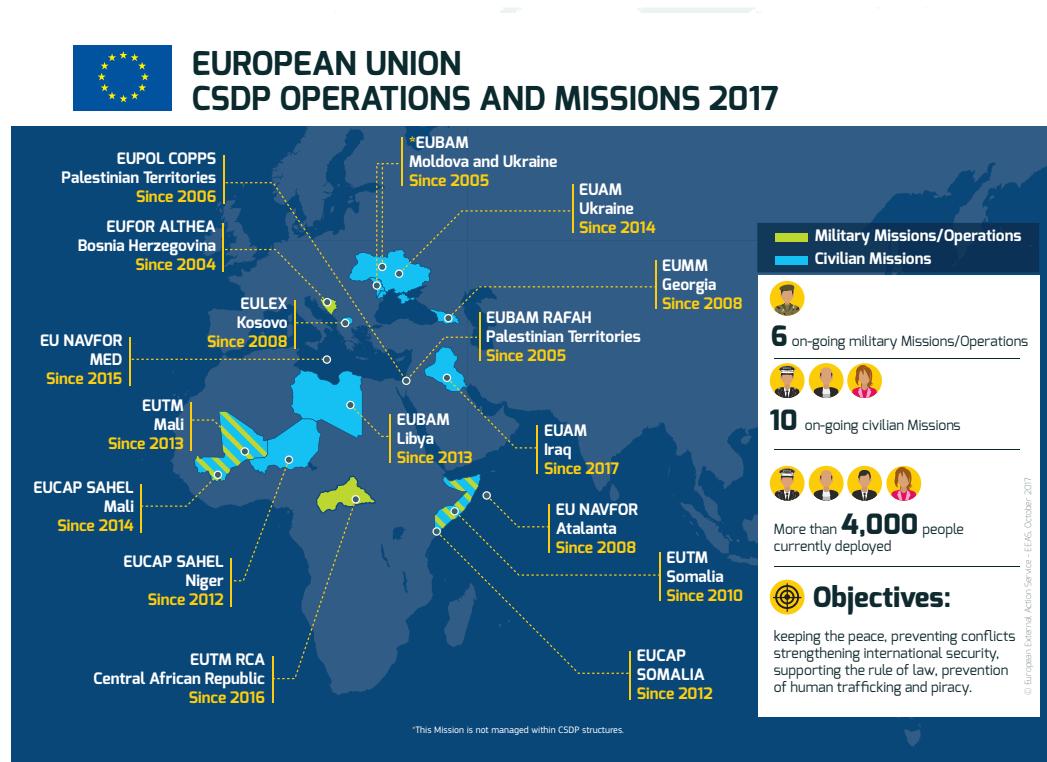


- 75% of Europeans are in favour of a common security and defence policy according to [Eurobarometer](#).
- €600 million could be saved if European armies shared infantry vehicles and €500 million if they had one certification system for ammunition.
- In March 2003, **Operation Concordia** deployed to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as the EU's first military operation. Two months earlier, an EU Police Mission deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the EU's first autonomous civilian mission.
- Defence cooperation extends beyond military operations. In June 2017, the European Defence Agency, in cooperation with the Commission, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the European External Action Service, started a project ([GOVSATCOM](#)) to offer EU Member States and defence services reliable access to satellites. This will be achieved by pooling and sharing existing satellites.

4 Case Study



The European Union currently deploys 16 civilian and military missions and operations, with thousands of men and women serving under the European flag in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. They contribute to peace-keeping and help ensure that human rights and the rule of law are respected.

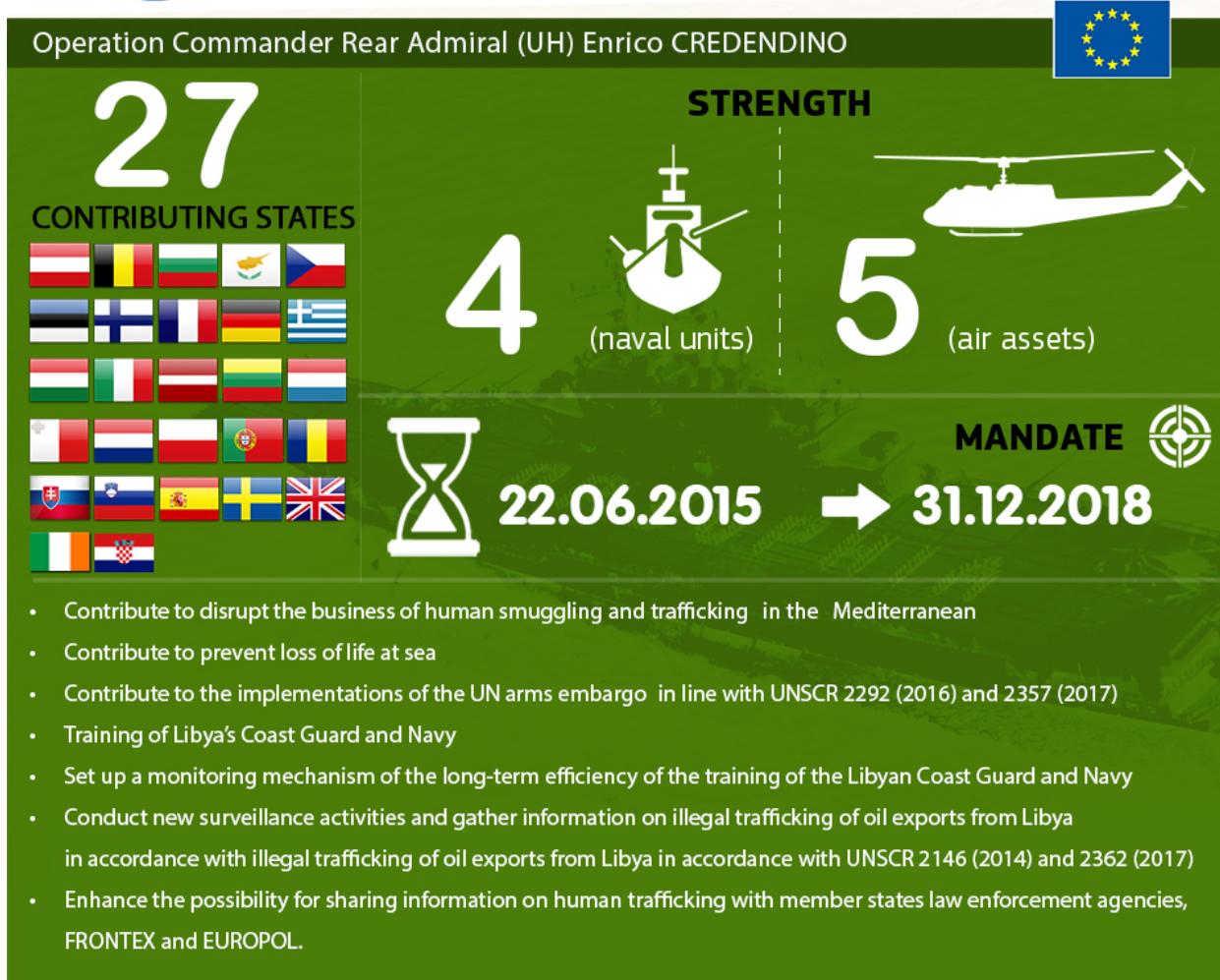


One of them is Operation Sophia run by the European Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR-MED). It was launched in 2015 as part of the European Union's response to rising migration. 27 EU Member States contribute to it. With four ships and five aircraft, the operation's aim is to identify, capture and dispose of vessels used by migrant smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean and prevent the further loss of life at sea. The operation also helps to train the Libyan coast guard.



EUNAVFOR Med

European Union Naval Force - Mediterranean
Operation Sophia



Infographic created by the European External Action Service (EEAS)



This graphic and its contents are meant for illustrative purposes only

Another example is a civilian mission, [EUCAP SAHEL Niger](#), launched in 2012 to support Niger in its fight against terrorism and organised crime. EUCAP Sahel Niger provides strategic advice and training to the Nigerien Police, Gendarmerie, and National Guard. The mission helps to develop criminal investigation capacities and coordinate the complex fight against terrorism and organised crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks. It also improves the sustainability of the security forces.

Additional links:

[Factsheet on the case for greater EU cooperation on security and defence](#)

[Factsheet on the European Defence Fund](#)

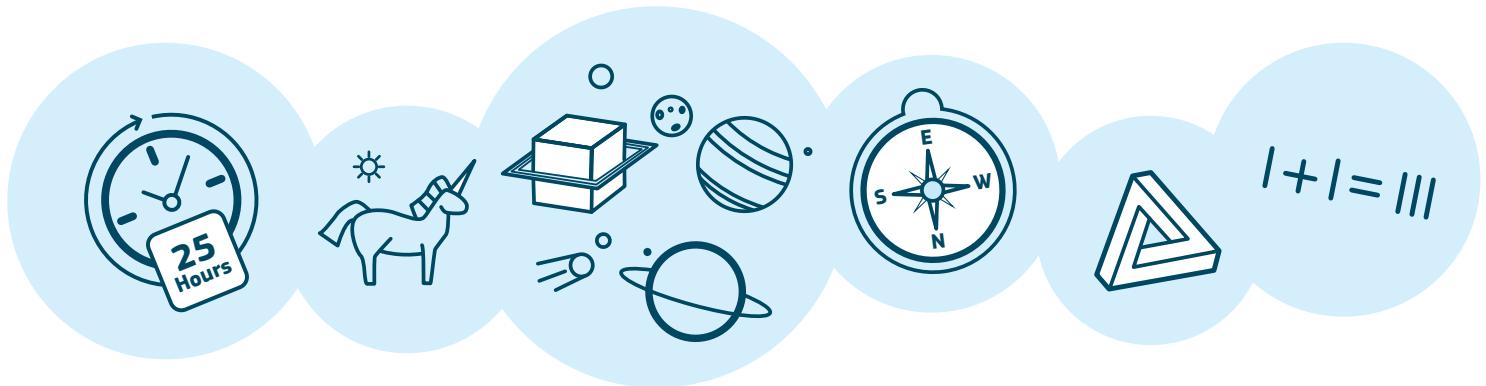
[The European Defence Fund – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Questions and Answers – The Future of European defence](#)

[Communication “Launching the European Defence Fund”](#)

EEAS factsheets:

- [Defence Package](#)
- [Permanent Structured Cooperation – Deepening Defence Cooperation among EU MS](#)
- [EU Missions and Operations – As part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy](#)
- [Defending Europe: European Defence Fund](#)
- [European Defence Action plan](#)
- [EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia](#)
- [EU-NATO cooperation](#)
- [Implementation plan for Security and Defence](#)
- [EU Battlegroups](#)
- [The Military Planning and Conduct Capability-MPCC](#)
- Timeline on recent events on [European cooperation in the area of security and defence](#) (June 2016 – today)



Myth 9: Globalisation



THE MYTH

**THE EUROPEAN UNION
DOES NOTHING TO
PROTECT ITS CITIZENS
FROM THE EFFECTS OF
GLOBALISATION**

- The EU is the world's biggest trade bloc, allowing it to support jobs and boost economic growth and prosperity.
- The European economy, businesses and citizens enjoy many benefits from globalisation.
- The EU wants to shape and harness globalisation to build a sustainable future for European citizens.
- Since globalisation affects people and regions differently, the EU offers support in line with our principles of solidarity and sustainability.
- In the face of ever increasing automation, the EU is investing in research, innovation and skills to create the next generation of jobs and a workforce equipped to fill them.

1 Myth vs Reality

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A system where wealth remains in the hands of the few
- A byword for job losses, social injustice and low environmental, health and privacy standards
- A laissez-faire Europe, passive and helpless to prevent unfair external competition and dumping practices

WHAT IT IS

- A more connected world full of opportunities where we all must play our part in caring for the most vulnerable
- Open global trade and knowledge-sharing that increases competitiveness and innovation
- Europe as a strong and active global player, harnessing globalisation, refusing protectionism but offering support to vulnerable people, businesses and regions

2 Debunking the myth



In a more connected world, people travel, work, learn and live in different countries. International competition, global climate action, scientific cooperation and the exchange of ideas stimulate creativity and accelerated innovation. Global trade openness has boosted EU economic growth, raising prosperity and keeping us competitive. However, the benefits of globalisation are not automatic or evenly distributed among European regions and citizens. Many Europeans feel concerned about possible job losses, compromises on social justice and environmental, health and privacy standards. To address these concerns, the EU is pursuing a sustainable and transparent trade policy, based on our values, and is working to make the European economy resilient to globalisation. In parallel, the EU offers concrete support to those who have been affected negatively by globalisation.

An open and fair trade policy

Trade creates jobs for European citizens, and new trade and investment opportunities for European companies. European exports have grown as customers worldwide demand the high-quality goods and services we supply. For every EUR 1 billion the EU gets in exports, 14,000 extra jobs are created across the EU. And more than 30 million jobs – 1 in 7 of all jobs in the EU – depend on exports. Imports, in turn, provide European consumers with greater choice and lower prices.

Europe is open for business but open trade must be fair and be based on rules. Trade agreements with partners across the globe will be negotiated in full transparency, with the European Parliament having the final say, so that citizens can be assured that no standards, be they social or environmental, relating to data protection or food safety, will be compromised. In trade, like in other policy fields, the EU defends Europe's strategic interests. In particular, the EU is pushing for globally shared rules and standards, so European businesses are not harmed by unfair practices by foreign countries or companies, such as social dumping or public subsidies. We also have instruments to shield our industries and jobs against unfair trade. And exporting our standards abroad increases our global influence on issues like human rights, working conditions and environmental protection.

Supporting workers with the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) was set up to support workers that have been laid-off for a reason directly linked to globalisation (for instance, when a company relocates to another country because of cheaper labour, or when a company loses market share due to tough competition). It tops up national support for workers involved in mass lay-offs, and helps them move on, which is particularly important in light of the most recent financial crisis. The fund finances training schemes that help workers acquire new skills, get a new job, benefit from coaching and mentoring schemes or start a business.

Since its creation in 2007, the EGF has assisted around 140,000 laid-off workers and 3,000 young people out of employment, education or training. It is a tangible demonstration of EU solidarity when addressing the employment and social consequences of globalisation. Beyond helping individuals, it's also important for businesses because improving skills creates a better and more competitive European workforce.

A long term commitment to better and fairer access to the labour market

[The European Social Fund](#) (ESF) is the European Union's main instrument to invest in people, ensuring everyone in the society has access to employment opportunities. The ESF finances projects contributing to employment, social inclusion, education and training, and administrative capacity reform. The financing depends on the economic and social needs of Member States. The fund works jointly with partners such as NGOs and wider civil society.

Supporting regions

Globalisation often has local costs. While some regions prosper, others suffer in the face of technological change and increased international competition. The [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) helps regions restructure their economies by focusing on innovation and competitiveness.

Protecting rural communities

Rural communities are among the most vulnerable to globalisation. Farmers and fishermen receive support through the [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#) (EAFRD) and the [European Maritime and Fisheries Fund](#) (EMFF). These aim to reduce poverty and social exclusion, to promote innovation, and to encourage professionals to adopt more sustainable fishing and farming practices.

Investment and innovation

The EU wants to invest in the industries and workers of the future, focusing on new manufacturing technologies and related services. We design policy initiatives such as the European digital single market and innovation strategies to help European companies become global players and quickly pick up on new technological trends. Promoting innovation, excellence and cutting-edge technology is one of the best ways to increase the EU's resilience to the effects of globalisation.

European Structural and Investment Funds

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) help promote essential investments to improve infrastructure and innovation, as well as to develop human capital and employment.

[Horizon 2020](#) is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020), in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.

And there is more to come... Tackling tax evasion

In 2017, the EU established a common list of non-cooperative jurisdictions (non-EU countries that refuse to adhere to international tax standards on transparency, information exchange and fair competition). The EU is putting in place stronger instruments to tackle external tax avoidance and to deal with third countries that refuse to play fair. The Commission will also continue negotiating international rules that prevent European companies established in third countries from avoiding direct and indirect tax obligations, thereby safeguarding Member States' tax bases.

3 Did you know?



- The European Social Fund (ESF) celebrated 60 years of existence in 2017, as it was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome (1957) in the early days of the European Union. At least 9.4 million Europeans found a job and 8.7 million people gained a qualification or certificate between 2007 and 2014 thanks to its support.
- An average of €170 million will be available from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund every year until 2020. In 2015 and 2016, the average re-employment rate achieved with the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund's (EGF) assistance was 47%. 9,072 workers found new jobs or became self-employed. This is a good result, particularly as the workers supported by EGF are among those facing the greatest difficulties in the labour market.
- The budget of the European Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2014-2020 amounts to €638 billion, including national contributions.

4 Case Study



After **Saab's bankruptcy** in December 2011, more than 3,000 people lost their jobs in the town of Trollhättan in southern Sweden. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund stepped in to provide €5.4 million to help 1,350 of the workers who were made redundant and were in need, as well as 16 of Saab's suppliers.

Since then, the town has fought back and reduced unemployment by a quarter in spite of the layoffs. Unemployment today is even lower than it was before the closure, dropping from 16 to 12%. Those laid off by Saab were offered the possibility to study without losing their unemployment benefits, so many took the chance to train for a new career.

5 Questions in the pub



When the EU responds to globalisation, what does that really mean?

The bankruptcy of the **Alytaus Tekstile** in Alytus, Lithuania, due to the shifting of textile and clothing production to lower cost markets, led to 1,089 redundancies between October 2007 and February 2008. With help provided by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, 53 % of the workers who received it found jobs.

AREUS, a project co-financed by the EU (Horizon 2020), focuses on reducing energy loss and optimising resource use in robotised manufacturing. Its main outcome is a smart grid that saves both energy and materials. Overall, it can save 5-9 % of a factory's energy consumption but potentially up to 20 %. This makes European factories more cost-efficient and competitive in the face of global rivals. Denmark, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Finland and Sweden participate in this programme.

A **Portuguese SME** has developed an app that allows shoppers to scan products to avoid checkout queues and to combine shopping lists with shop layouts. Funded by Horizon 2020 with €1.2 million, they have expanded internationally with offices in Porto, Berlin and San Francisco. This kind of innovation can boost the EU's export of products and services in newly-opened global markets.

Under the **Vanguard initiative**, 30 European regions work together in innovation investment, for example by developing projects, in collaboration with industry, which use 3D printing technologies to create metal inserts that are much lighter and more flexible than other offers in the global marketplace.

How can I apply for support from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund? How many workers can benefit from it?

Only Member States can apply to the Fund. Individuals, representative organisations or employers affected by redundancies should get in touch with the EGF [Contact Person](#) for their Member State.

The EGF can be used where a minimum of 500 workers are made redundant by a single company (including its suppliers and downstream producers), or if a large number of workers are laid off in a particular sector in one or more neighbouring regions. Furthermore, since 2014, self-employed, temporary workers and fixed-term workers can also benefit from the fund's support.

How did the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund help the workers laid-off after the financial crisis of 2007?

In 2013 and 2014, the EGF fund helped a wide range of sectors that had been hit badly by the financial and economic crisis: food products (Nutriart-Greece), cars (PSA-France), chemicals (Zachem-Poland), glass (Saint-Gobain Sekurit-Belgium), computers (Aleo Solar-Germany), jewellery (Andersen-Ireland), shipbuilding (STX Rauma-Finland), building construction (Gelderland and Overijssel-the Netherlands) and domestic appliances (Whirlpool-Italy).

Given all the challenges created by globalisation, why is the EU refusing to take protectionist measures?

A majority of Europeans view globalisation as an opportunity for economic growth. An even larger percentage is confident about the economic outlook (cf. [standard Eurobarometer 86](#), 2016). Protectionism may provide short-term relief, but it has never had lasting success and has often led to disastrous outcomes (in the autarchic experiments of the Soviet Union, in Albania until the 1990s, China until the 1970s, Argentina between the 1970s and the 2000s, and more recently in Venezuela). The Great Depression of the 1930s was exacerbated by tit-for-tat protectionism and ultimately contributed to the outbreak of war.

If we close our borders, others will do the same; we would all be losers. Protectionism would disrupt production and increase costs and prices for consumers. European exports would become less competitive, putting even more jobs at risk. An increase in trade restrictions by 10% is estimated to lead to a 4% loss of national income. We would lose access to new products, services, technologies and ideas. By hitting the poorest hardest with price increases, protectionism would work counter to the desired effect.

How will globalisation change the world further in the years to come?

Virtually all sectors will be changed, such as:

- transport: driverless and connected cars, drones and car-sharing;
- energy: smart grids, renewable energy and distributed generation;
- agri-food: climate-friendly farming and applications to reduce food waste;
- telecommunications: more powerful networks, virtual reality and virtual workspace;
- distribution: the growing importance of e-commerce;
- financial services: virtual banks and insurance and crowdfunding;
- factory production: automation;
- health care: online diagnosis and increased cross-border mobility of medical professionals.

So how is the EU preparing for these changes, beyond the instruments and programmes available now?

Following the [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#) presented on 1 March 2017, the Commission has recently published a [Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation](#). It discusses – and aims to start a debate on – how the EU and its Member States can shape globalisation in a way that anticipates the future and improves the lives of Europeans.

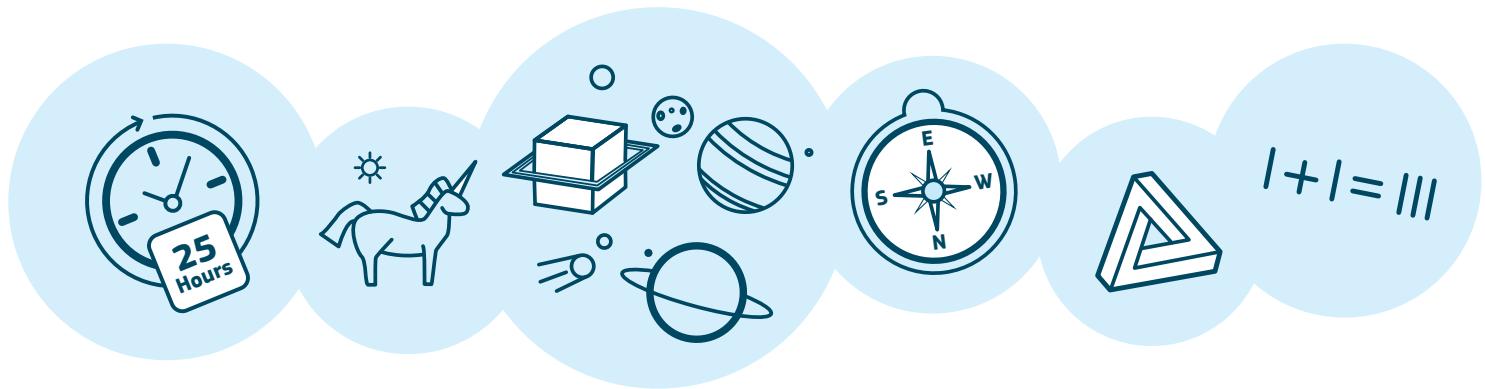
Additional links:

DG EMPL documents on the implementation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=326&langId=en&furtherPubs=yes>

The European Social Fund: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en>

The European Structural and Investments Funds on EUROPA: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/european-structural-and-investment-funds_en

Open Data portal for the European Structural and Investment Funds: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>



5th Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit in Brussels

Myths about the Eastern Partnership



Myth 1

Participation in the Eastern Partnership leads to EU membership

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership initiative is **not an EU accession process**. Its aim is to build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. The Eastern Partnership initiative provides an **inclusive framework** for the European Union Member States, plus Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to cooperate notably on: (1) economic development and market opportunities; (2) strengthening institutions and good governance; (3) connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; and (4) mobility and people-to-people contacts. Each country is free to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union.

Myth 2

The Eastern Partnership initiative was designed by the EU to provoke Russia

FALSE: Russia was invited to join the **European Neighbourhood Policy** at its conception, but declined the invitation. The Eastern Partnership initiative is **not against any country**; it is a **mutually beneficial and constructive** platform for countries in the region to build a closer relationship with the EU, if they so choose. The EU does not demand that any of its partners need to make a choice between the EU or any other countries. We stand for good neighbourly relations. The Eastern Partnership respects the individual aspirations and ambition of each partner country.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine mean that relations with the European Union are not what they were previously. The European Union maintains a dialogue with Russia on a number of foreign policy issues and continues to reach out to and support Russian civil society and youth, in particular through Erasmus+ and other exchange programmes.

Myth 3

The Eastern Partnership engenders destabilisation or regime change

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership's transformative agenda aims at bringing positive change to the lives of citizens of the European Union and of the Eastern Partnership countries. One of the key ways to achieve this is through embedding and encouraging democratic rules and principles. **The EU does not impose any action or programme on the partner countries.** The overall aim of cooperation is to **build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability** in line with each individual country's aspirations.

Myth 4

The Eastern Partnership agenda is pushed onto partners against their wishes

FALSE: The Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative of the European Union and the six partner countries. It was not imposed and countries have the choice as to the level of their engagement and of their ambition. The EU does not impose any reform agenda or values onto partner countries. It is actually the opposite. **Partner countries choose to align with EU standards.** This is done through, for example, the adoption of transparent and accountable governance structures and the harmonisation of industry standards to benefit from mutual trade opportunities.

Myth 5

EU money is being lost due to corruption

FALSE: Corruption hits everyday people the hardest, and that is why one of the top priorities supported by the EU in partner countries **is the fight against corruption:** reform of the judiciary; constitutional and electoral reforms; the overall improvement of the business climate, and reform of public administration. Supporting these reforms, which aim at establishing a fair system, with checks and balances, is in the interest of the EU citizens and the citizens of the partner countries.

Myth 6

The Eastern Partnership has allowed mass migration from these countries to the European Union

FALSE: The European Union has agreements in place with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine that allow their citizens who hold biometric passports to travel to the Schengen Area without a visa for 90 **in any 180-day period.** **They can come** for tourism, to visit relatives or friends, or for business purposes, but not to work. Visa



facilitation agreements are in place with Armenia and Azerbaijan whereby visas are still required, but there is less of an administrative burden for their citizens to travel to the Schengen Area. These agreements are accompanied by **readmission agreements**, which establish the procedures for **the return of illegal immigrants to their countries**, including those involved in criminal activity. There are systematic checks against relevant databases on people crossing the external borders of the EU, to verify that they do not represent a threat to public order, internal security or public health. These databases include the Schengen Information System and Interpol's database on stolen and lost travel documents. A project run by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, is working to **strengthen border management** in the six partner countries. Tailored training is offered to relevant authorities to help them improve security, protect vulnerable people (e.g. asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking), prevent cross-border crime and decrease corruption.

Myth 7

Free trade opens the door to unfair competition of partner countries' products on the EU market and cheaper labour

FALSE: Trade relations between the EU and partner countries are **mutually beneficial**. The eastern partnership countries offer new markets and consumers to European businesses, and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine allow citizens in those countries to benefit from greater choice, quality and safety of products available to them thanks to increased standards of consumer protection. EU exports to the six partner countries have nearly doubled, increasing from €16.3 billion in 2004 to €30 billion in 2016. The figures for the first eight months of 2017 are also promising, showing a clear growth in bilateral trade in all six countries. Customs controls at the EU's external borders mean that imported products must still comply with EU standards and requirements. The EU can also take measures if an EU-based industry complains about the damage caused by unfair practices such as dumping or subsidies.

Myth 8

Through the Eastern Partnership, the EU cooperates with authoritarian leaders that don't respect democracy or human rights

FALSE: The European Union was founded on **the principles of democracy and the respect for human rights**. It is a proponent and defender of these values both within the European Union and beyond its borders. The added value of the Eastern Partnership is that it offers a platform for the Member States of the European Union and the six partner countries to come together, share experience and good practice. Stronger governance, including the strengthening of institutions and good governance, is one of the priority areas of the Eastern Partnership (add here: and a number of specific projects/forums/programmes are ongoing to bring positive change in this respect). Outside of the Eastern Partnership framework, which is a multilateral framework, the European Union also enjoys strong bilateral relations with each of the individual countries, and addresses issues related to democracy and human rights in dedicated, annual dialogues.



Myth 9

Membership of the Eastern Partnership means that those countries can't be members of the Eurasian Economic Union

FALSE: Involvement in the Eastern Partnership initiative **does not exclude membership** of the Eurasian Economic Union. Armenia and Belarus, for example, participate in both. The EU is a **supporter of regional integration** in all areas of the world. But its support is based on the free choice of the participating countries and the respect for international law, including the respect for international borders. When it comes to the European Union's own cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union, engagement is possible if the EU Member States decide to pursue this, in synchronisation with the implementation of Minsk agreements.

Myth 10

EU citizens don't benefit from the Eastern Partnership

FALSE: Stable, secure and prosperous countries in our neighbourhood **are essential for the EU's own stability, security, prosperity**, and of direct benefit to EU citizens. Building a common area that possesses these qualities is the objective of the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership brings **new markets and consumers for businesses on both sides**, especially through the signature of Association Agreements which include Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. Under such agreements, geographical indications and intellectual property of EU citizens, businesses and regions are protected. Other benefits of the Eastern Partnership and of close relations with our eastern neighbours are the increase of tourism and of opportunities for exchanges, particularly for young people (e.g. [Erasmus+ programme](#), [Eastern Partnership Youth Forum](#)). The European Union is also supporting **independent media in the Eastern Partnership countries** as a critical and free media environment is crucial to democracy, which in turn promotes stability in the EU's neighbourhood.

[Learn more about the 5th Eastern Partnership summit](#)





FACTS MATTER

European Commission responds
to Hungarian National Consultation

In April 2017, the Hungarian government launched a national consultation of all Hungarian households, entitled «Stop Brussels», focusing on 6 specific issues. Several of the claims and allegations made in the consultation are factually incorrect or highly misleading. The European Commission would like to set the record straight – based on hard facts.

The European Union is not and has never been about «Brussels» but a project driven and designed by its Member States, each of which has decided unilaterally and democratically that this is the path they wish to adopt, including Hungary. Each and every one of those Member States, including Hungary, takes both the responsibility and the credit for the decisions taken collectively.

1 FALSE CLAIM: “Brussels wants to force us to abolish the reduction in public utility charges”

TRUTH: The Commission shares the Hungarian government’s objective to have affordable energy for households. The best way to achieve this is to establish competitive energy markets and promote energy efficiency and innovation and to work together at European level to ensure security of supply.

Functioning markets offer people the choice between suppliers competing for lower prices and better service. Hungarian businesses buying and selling their energy on competitive markets are able to enjoy and offer decreasing electricity prices. In other EU countries where power prices are not regulated, household customers have seen their electricity prices decrease. Besides, Member States can use other means to reduce public utility charges than regulated prices.

2 FALSE CLAIM: “Brussels wants to force Hungary to let in illegal immigrants”

TRUTH: The European Union is fighting irregular migration and is helping Member States to manage their external borders.

Europe’s new Border and Coast Guard will strengthen the collective European efforts to manage borders more effectively. The EU is also working with countries where migrants come from or pass through to tackle the source of the problem. For example, the EU-Turkey Statement reduced arrivals by 98% in Greece. We are also working to improve the rate of return of irregular migrants who have no right to stay in Europe.

Irregular migration needs to be distinguished from seeking asylum. For genuine asylum seekers, the European Union lives up to the international obligations of all democracies to protect people – men, women and children – who have to leave their homes because of war. Because Europe now is an area in which all our citizens have the opportunity to move freely and live and work in other countries, responsibility for upholding basic humanitarian rights is shared among Member States. The Council of Ministers, in which Hungary has a fair say alongside other governments, has set the conditions for a dignified reception and fair legal process for asylum seekers. The Commission proposed to relocate up to 54,000 asylum applicants from Hungary to other Member States, but this proposal was opposed by the Hungarian Government. Hungary is therefore asked to accept a very limited number of asylum seekers (1,294) – not “illegal immigrants” – from the two most overburdened Member States, Greece and Italy. These people are carefully identified and include only those with a high chance of being genuinely eligible for refugee status. Relocation follows a thorough procedure and security screening by the future host country.

3 FALSE CLAIM: “Illegal immigrants heading to Hungary are encouraged to illegal acts by not just the human traffickers but also by some international organizations”

TRUTH: The European Union has zero tolerance for human trafficking and has taken action for many years to combat this exploitative crime.

Saving lives at sea and looking after vulnerable people who have fled bloodshed and war and are in need of international protection is not the same thing as promoting irregular migration. There is no evidence of NGOs working with criminal smuggling networks to help migrants enter the EU. In case of any suspicions, Member States – and not the EU – have the power to investigate. Hungary is right to expect that its laws are respected, with the full support of the Commission and EU agencies such as Europol.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other international organisations are, on the contrary, among the most reliable and valuable partners in dealing with the refugee crisis. They offer asylum seekers information and legal advice and also provide reception and care facilities, helping to ease the burden of Member States.

4 FALSE CLAIM: “More and more organizations supported from abroad operate in Hungary with the aim to interfere in Hungarian internal affairs in a non-transparent manner”

TRUTH: The conditions under which Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) carry out their activities are in principle a matter of national law. The European Union, for its part, has strict rules on transparency and lobbying of the European institutions.

NGOs are an important component of civil society and provide valuable support for a democratic system of government. The EU institutions, like national governments and international organisations around the world, maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society. Sometimes they agree with EU policies and sometimes they don't, but we are never afraid to explain our work and allow them to do theirs, and it would be good to see the same space for this discussion at national level too.

Anyone seeking to influence EU policies by meeting the institutions is required to disclose their budget for the most recent financial year, including the amount of funding they receive from the EU. EU rules on transparency apply to all interest groups and all are treated alike. This transparency allows the public – in Hungary and across the EU – to be the judge of our work, and this public debate helps build a stronger democracy.

5 FALSE CLAIM: “Brussels is attacking our job-creating measures”

TRUTH: Neither the Commission, nor the European Union, is attacking Hungarian job-creating policies.

On the contrary, the EU is massively supporting job creation in Hungary, having provided for example more than €21 billion to Hungary to support growth and jobs through regional policy funding alone in the period 2007-13. The Hungarian authorities have reported that this contributed to creating more than 150,000 jobs. Under the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), €26 million has so far been dedicated to operations in Hungary, which are expected to trigger €626 million in total investments in the country. The EU is a vital source of finance. For 2007-2013 the EU financed 57 % of all government capital investment in Hungary (the highest rate in the EU). Hungary is due to receive over €25 billion in EU investment during the period 2014-2020, the equivalent of €368 per Hungarian per year.

What's more, the Hungarian government is responsible for its own national economic policy. EU law only provides for coordination of economic policies between the Member States. Any policy guidance is discussed and agreed by the Ministers of Finance or Ministers for Employment of all the Member States, with the full involvement of the Hungarian government.

6 FALSE CLAIM: “Brussels is attacking our country because of tax cuts”

TRUTH: The European Commission does not interfere in national taxation policies, nor does it propose to do so. EU taxation rules must be agreed by all Member States unanimously, which means all current rules were approved by the Hungarian government.

The setting of corporate tax rates and income tax rates is a sovereign right of every Member State and the EU has no intention to meddle in that. All issues related to tax can only be agreed by the EU if all Member States – including Hungary – agree. And whilst the EU Member States have agreed only minimum VAT levels, the Hungarian government has decided to set the rate at 27%. This is the highest VAT rate in the entire EU.

EU minimum tax rules can only be amended if all Member States agree to it, so there cannot be any change without the agreement of the Hungarian government. Hungary has adopted a reduced VAT rate for internet services which breaches the rules which Hungary has agreed to at EU level. This is why the Commission has reminded Hungary of the rules it had agreed to. The Commission will make proposals this year for Member States to have more freedom on VAT rates. This will need unanimous support of all Member States.

