The European Union

Easy to read version

Easy to read is a way
to make information accessible
so people with intellectual disabilities
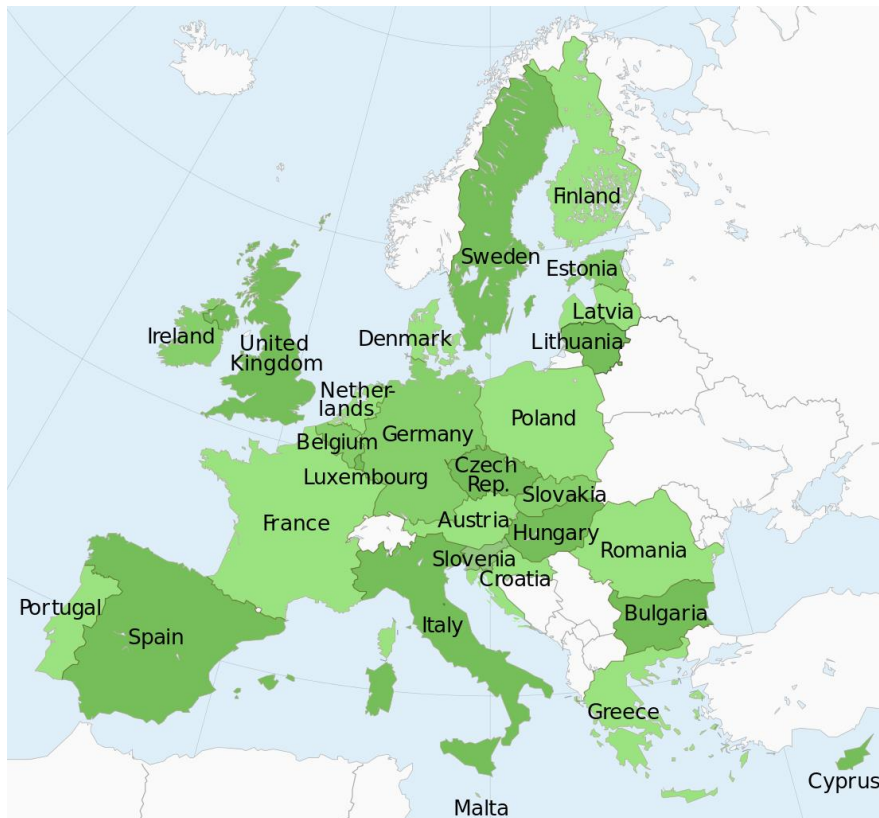and all people can understand it.

The European Union

The European Union is a group of 28 countries in Europe.
These countries came together
to make things better, easier and safer for people.
They agreed to work together and help each other.

How the European Union started

The idea to make the European Union came
after two big wars happened in Europe.
Countries in Europe saw that

it is better to work together
than fighting against each other.

In the beginning, only 6 countries in Europe
started working together:

- Belgium
- Germany
- France
- Italy
- Luxemburg
- Netherlands

Soon, more and more countries in Europe joined them
and the European Union was made.

Today, 28 countries are part of the European Union.
These countries are:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg

- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
  Recently, the United Kingdom decided
  to stop being part of the European Union.
  So from March 2019, the United Kingdom
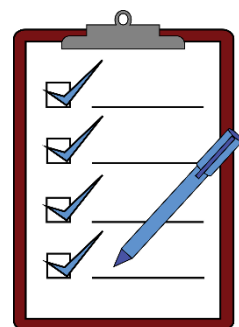 will not be part of the European Union anymore.

The goals and values of the European Union

All countries that are part of the European Union work together
to make sure that:

- there is peace in Europe
- people have good lives
- things are fair for all people and nobody is left out
- the languages and cultures of all people
  are respected
- there is a strong European economy
  and countries use the same coin
  to do business together.

The countries of the European Union
share some important values.
For example, they work to make sure that all people are equal

and their rights are respected.

Peace in Europe

After the European Union was created,
there were no more wars in Europe.
Thanks to the European Union,
all countries in Europe work together in peace.

In 2012, the European Union won a big award
which is called **'the Nobel Peace Prize'**.
This award was given to the European Union
for its good work keeping peace in Europe.

Free move

The European Union made it easier for people
to move freely from one country to another.
They can live, study or work
in any country of the European Union they want.
For example, a person from France can choose
to move to Italy and work there.
Or a student from Belgium can go study in a university in Greece.

Things, services and money can also move freely
from one country of the European Union to another.

The European Union in the world

The European Union plays an important role in the world in many ways.
For example:

- It sells many things and services to other countries.
  Also, it buys things from other countries.
  This way it helps the world economy keep going.

- It helps millions of people
  who live in poorer countries outside the European Union.

- It tries to make the world a safer place
  where people are treated fairly and laws are respected.

Becoming part of the European Union

To become part of the European Union,
a country must:

- agree with all the laws and values
  of the European Union.

- work to make sure these laws and values
  are respected.

This may take a very long time to happen.

Some countries are now working to become part of the European Union.
These countries are:

- Albania
- Montenegro
- Serbia
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Turkey

To become part of the European Union,
these countries must work
to make all laws and values of the European Union
happen in them.

The Schengen Area

The European Union made the **'Schengen Area'**.

The Schengen Area is an area without borders.
In this area, people can travel from country to country freely and easily.
They do not have to go through checks and controls
when they pass from one country to another.

Thanks to the Schengen Area, it is now easier for people
to travel for work or tourism.

The Schengen Area was made in 1985.
Today 22 out of the 28 countries of the European Union
are part of the Schengen Area.

These countries are:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania

- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden

Also, 4 countries outside the European Union
are part of the Schengen Area:

- Iceland
- Liechtenstein
- Norway
- Switzerland

That means that people can travel freely and easily
from one of these countries to another.
This way it is easier for people to visit any of these countries
for tourism or for work.

Languages of the European Union

In every country of the European Union
people speak their own language.
The European Union protects the right of people
to communicate in their own language.

That is why the European Union
makes all important information and documents
in all the languages that people speak in its countries:

- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Czech
- Danish
- Dutch
- English
- Estonian
- Finnish
- French
- German
- Greek
- Hungarian
- Irish
- Italian

- Latvian
- Lithuanian
- Maltese
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Slovak
- Slovenian
- Spanish
- Swedish

This way all people in the European Union
can get important information in their own language
and understand it.

The coin of the European Union

Most countries that are part of the European Union
use the same coin.
This coin is called **'Euro'**.
Using the same coin helps countries
in the European Union to do business together.
For example, people from Spain
can buy things they want from Denmark
easily and without extra costs.
Using the same coin
makes it easier for people to travel,
buy things online from other countries
and have more options.

The European flag

This is the flag of the European Union:

The flag of the European Union is blue
and has a circle of gold stars on it.
It is a symbol that shows that the countries of the European Union
are united and stand by each other.

The European anthem

Every country has a melody
that better shows its values and culture as a country.
This melody is called **'anthem'**.

The European Union has its own anthem too.
In 1985, people who make decisions
in the European Union
chose a melody of a very important composer
to be the anthem of the European Union.

This composer is called Ludwig van Beethoven.

The melody shows how important it is
that all people are free, live in peace
and stand by each other.
The European Union believes in these values
and that is why it has chosen this melody
to be its anthem.

If you want to listen to the anthem of the European Union, click here.

United in diversity

The European Union uses the phrase **'united in diversity'**
to show what its values are.

Being united in diversity means that:

- people in the European Union
  may have different cultures or languages
  but they stand by each other
  and work together in peace.

- there is nothing wrong
  about having different languages or cultures.
  On the contrary.
  People with different cultures
  can learn more things from each other and work well together.

How the European Union works

The European Union has 3 main bodies:

- the **European Commission**
  The people of the European Commission
  suggest laws for the European Union.

- **the European Parliament**
  The people of the European Parliament
  are elected by all people in Europe
  to stand for their rights.

- **the Council of the European Union**
  People who make decisions
  in every country of the European Union
  come together and make
  the Council of the European Union.

These 3 bodies are very important for the European Union.
They work closely together to make things better in Europe:

- The **European Commission** suggests laws.

- The **European Parliament**
  and the **Council of the European Union**
  discuss these laws and decide if they want these laws
  to happen in Europe.

- If they decide that a law must happen in Europe,
  all countries of the European Union
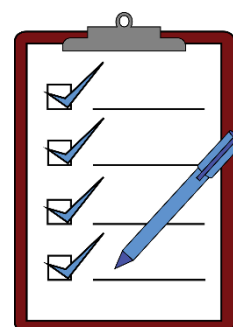 must work to make this law happen in them.

Other bodies that are important for the European Union are:

- The **Court of Justice of the European Union**
  that makes sure that all laws happen correctly
  in the European Union.

- the **Court of Auditors**
  that checks if the money of the European Union
  is spent in the right way.

There are also other bodies of the European Union
that are doing important work.
For example, there are bodies that:

- check if the European Union works in the right way
  and respects the rights of all people.

- publish useful information
  about the European Union.

- choose the people who have the skills
  to work for the European Union.

- stand for the rights of all people in Europe
  like people with disabilities, workers and others.

All these bodies work together to make sure that the European Union
works in the right way for the good of its people.

More information

[Click here](#) to find more information
about the European Union in your own language.

If you have questions about the European Union,
you can fill this [online form here](#).

The easy to read text was made by:

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communication | accessibility | easy to read
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