

Investing in our common future

The budget of the European Union



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Building our common future

The EU touches our lives in ways we now take for granted. They include low air fares, cheaper phone calls, cuts in car prices and borderless travel across much of the European continent. We also have the EU to thank for a cleaner environment, safer food, the right to healthcare when we travel and a single currency for nearly two thirds of the EU's citizens.

Many of the achievements result from the economies of scale and greater efficiency that can come from pooling resources in order to create more and better jobs, and preserve our way of life for ourselves and future generations.

The EU budget pays for roads, railways, bridges, airports, waterways, power lines and pipelines; it promotes the information society, and cultural and linguistic diversity; it provides training for the unemployed and funding for job creation; it fights discrimination and disability; it keeps rural

economies alive; it funds research into children's diseases, the natural habitat, dangerous chemicals, safe food, more environmentally friendly vehicles, new energy resources, and safety at sea; it fosters student and youth exchanges; it funds urban renewal; it helps small businesses set up and grow; it pays for peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and secure borders; it builds closer relations with the EU's neighbours to the south and east, and it helps with Third World development.

At some €270 per citizen per year and around 1% of the EU's national wealth each year, the investment in our future represented by money spent by the EU is one which delivers a great deal.

Slovenia was the first country to use euro coins showing the enlarged EU.



© ECB

Easing introduction of lead-free electronics

The use of lead in electronic equipment is severely restricted under EU rules. This is part of an EU policy of high environmental standards with equal protection for all its citizens and the same competitive conditions for all its businesses.



To help producers develop and test lead-free alternatives, Germany's Fraunhofer Institute for Silicon Technology has used funding from the EU LIFE programme for environmental projects to provide demonstrations and training in lead-free soldering and component placement.

This programme is especially useful for small and medium-sized electronics suppliers because they can change over to lead-free production and train staff in new production methods without reducing their productivity. Companies can benchmark their own products and samples at the institute before deciding which specific new procedures to adopt.

Providing help for small and medium-sized enterprises is an EU priority because they account for more than 90% of European businesses. Making their life easier will increase competitiveness, create jobs and bring growth.

Lead-free soldering meets the EU's high environmental standards.

Breaking down barriers

Where borders are still a barrier, they are often best broken down by the EU as a whole. This applies in areas as diverse as national product standards and transport networks, research and crime. Having a comprehensive, single European research area and a European arrest warrant produces better results than ad hoc cooperation between a handful of countries.

These policies often embrace the EU's neighbours as well, but the starting point is the ability of the EU itself to agree on a single policy through

recognition of a shared interest in making the most of the free movement of people, goods and capital and shared social and cultural values, while respecting cultural diversity.

Before the EU takes on any activity, however, the rationale and the cost are closely scrutinised by our elected representatives in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers of the European Union. They work on the principle that a euro spent through the EU budget is only justified if it brings a better return than a euro spent nationally.



Trains in Tallinn – one stop on the Baltica rail line which will eventually link Helsinki with Berlin thanks to EU funding.

Keeping rural communities alive

Over the centuries, the island of Grimsay, tucked between North Uist and Benbecula in Scotland's Western Isles, has depended on fishing and this industry itself depended on local boatbuilders. But boatbuilding was a dying industry until funding was made available from the EU's Leader+ programme, which helps rural communities improve their quality of life and develop economically.

This funding enabled the creation of the Grimsay Boatshed Trust training project, 'An t-ionnsachadh Og'. The name recalls an old Gaelic saying that learning young is learning well.

The project apprenticed a young local man, Cailean MacAulay, to an experienced boatbuilder, and Cailean now teaches secondary school pupils who attend the Boatshed's new boatbuilding centre. The Boatshed has created a new two-year course in traditional boatbuilding skills for secondary school pupils, which is now a recognised boatbuilding qualification, the first in Scotland in traditional boatbuilding skills.

Boatshed manager, Ronald Maclean, is enthusiastic about this training. 'It is preserving an important part of this island's heritage, it provides an opportunity for young people to learn traditional skills which have relevance for today's world, and it also provides a valuable service for the local community. We like to work with young people because they are enthusiastic. Boatbuilding gives them something they can really get involved in, and improves their skills and concentration.'



Passing on traditional boatbuilding skills to the next generation.

Making a difference

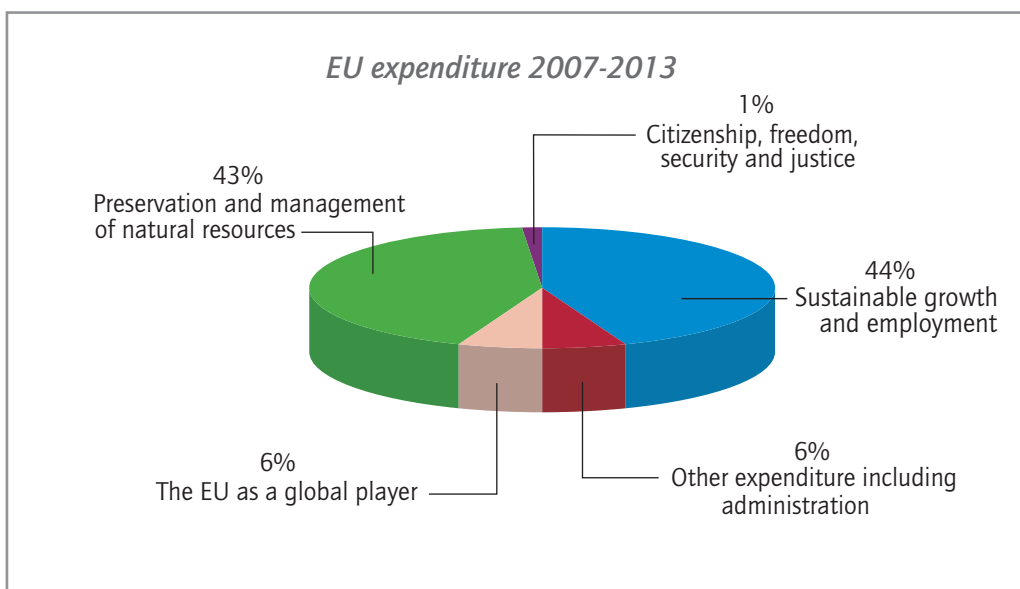
EU budgetary resources are used to make a difference in particular in:

- growth and employment, by spending money in ways which will make the EU more competitive and also reduce economic and social disparities;
- better preservation and management of natural resources;
- improvements to the quality of life of all EU citizens;
- supporting the position of the EU as a global player with global responsibilities.

Delivering growth and employment, the objective of the largest chunk of expenditure, is easier said than done. Today's successful economies are characterised by the way they innovate

and use knowledge, but many EU economies have been underperforming in these areas.

The EU needs to become more competitive in order to grow and create jobs. At the same time, solidarity with all its citizens is a basic tenet of the EU. In other words, the benefits of more growth and employment, and of high levels of protection of the environment and public health, must be distributed as equitably as possible.



High-tech in the footsteps of Nicéphore

The origins of photography can be traced to the work of a Frenchman, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in the 1820s. Born in 1765, Niépce was from the French city of Chalon-sur-Saône. Now the city, more than 200 years later, is again at the forefront of new developments in imaging technology with help from the European Regional Development Fund.

The Fund put up half the funding for Nicéphore Cité, a technology park focusing on helping companies develop digital imaging and sound technology, including ways of using them in traditional industries.

The goal is for this technology park to form the nucleus of a cluster of high-tech industries in the region in sectors as diverse as cars, aerospace, cultural heritage, medicine, audiovisual products and video games. Small companies can test their ideas at Nicéphore Cité and then set up with help as part of a business incubator scheme. They also receive assistance with patenting their discoveries and finding partners to develop them.

The project was immediately successful with several small businesses attracted to the region, creating new jobs as a result of this programme. They ranged from a company locating the headquarters of its European photo archives in the Chalon area to one providing sound equipment for music festivals.

The EU's Regional Fund co-finances infrastructure, job creation and maintenance, local development and small and medium-sized enterprises. The focus is on areas with below-average economic development.

Competitiveness and cohesion

Competitiveness and cohesion are cornerstones of the EU's spending plans. This is why the amount being spent on these between 2007 and 2013 has been increased by 23% compared to the amount spent in the previous seven years.

Regional and social development will take the lion's share of the €431 billion (431 000 million) available for competitiveness and cohesion. The EU's Regional Fund concentrates on economic development, with much of the money spent on improving infrastructure in the regions with the most serious economic handicaps. The Social Fund, on the other hand, invests in people. It provides money for improvements in productivity, working conditions and skills, where need is greatest. It also promotes equal opportunities.

A separate Cohesion Fund invests only in the poorest regions, particularly in transport, energy and environmental infrastructure projects.



Improving infrastructure in Riga: EU funds play a crucial role.



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Giving young people a second chance

Young people leaving school in Ireland with few or no qualifications have been given a second chance to finish their schooling through the Youthreach programme, which has received significant funding from the European Social Fund. 'These young people are the most vulnerable in the labour market,' says Dermot Stokes, Youthreach national coordinator at the Department of Education and Science in Dublin. 'They are five times more likely to be unemployed than those with a school leaving certificate.' Nearly one in five young people leaves school in Ireland without that certificate.

Youthreach provides a combination of general education, vocational training and work experience to 15–20-year olds who have dropped out of school the first time round. This includes part-time options for those who have found work, but nevertheless want to improve their education, and childcare services for those who are already parents. Some 30% of the young women who take part are already single mothers. The programme also includes guidance, counselling and psychological services, since many participants come from dysfunctional families, have already had brushes with the law or take drugs.

There are more than 90 Youthreach centres in Ireland, mainly in poorer areas. 'We focus heavily on developing these young people's sense of self-worth and identity, as well as pride in their own abilities and work. We concentrate on what they can do, not on their past failings,' says Stokes. 'We ask them what they think their strengths are, how we can help them to maximise them, and what they think their weaknesses are and how we can help address them.'

Participants can choose from a range of different vocational training options, from photography to sports, from hairdressing to computing. However, developing information technology skills is core to all the training because it is now seen as a social and economic necessity. Each centre has its own website.

The success rate is high: three quarters of the participants go on to some form of further education after completing a Youthreach programme.

Fighting discrimination

Some 700 000 Spaniards are of Roma origin. They are one of Spain's largest ethnic minorities, albeit with very diverse social and cultural roots. For many years, they have suffered from social prejudice and stereotyping in access to employment, social services and justice. Although there have been improvements, more forceful action seemed justified.

Funding from the European Social Fund has helped change what began as a small pilot scheme in Madrid at the end of the last decade into a virtually nationwide programme to create employment opportunities and combat prejudice. It now extends to 54 job centres in 13 of Spain's 17 regions and involves a network of 40 non-governmental organisations and international cooperation projects covering 12 countries.

More than 20 000 Roma have received assistance under the Acceder (Access) programme run by the Roma Foundation Secretariat (Fundación Secretariado Gitano – FSG). This helps Roma acquire job skills and find jobs and housing, and it provides education and health services. More than half the Roma who have been helped by Acceder are under 30.

Combating prejudice and preconceived notions about Roma is part of the programme and part of the EU's wider fight against all forms of discrimination. The campaign 'Your prejudices are what you hear from others: get to know them before you pass judgement' was part of this goal of seeing the issue not just as one of finding jobs or improving the skills of Roma, but also of fostering a recognition of their culture and place in society based on fact not urban myths.



*Your prejudices are what you hear from others –
an EU-funded anti-discrimination campaign.*

The EU budget:

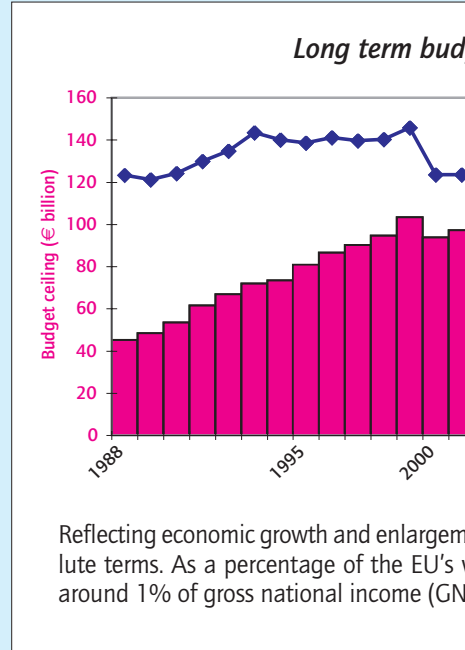
Who decides what to spend?

The EU does not spend money lightly. The annual process of thorough scrutiny of expenditure plans starts every spring when the European Commission makes proposals for the following year.

The Commission's proposals are debated by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers of the European Union, who then negotiate with each other on what fine-tuning is needed before the budget is finally adopted in December each year. The Parliament has the last word on just over half the individual items of expenditure. This includes most spending on less prosperous regions, the environment, investment in people, and research and education programmes. The ministers have the final say, on the other hand, on most forms of agricultural expenditure, and on decisions affecting justice, freedom, citizenship and security.

Even so, the budget only goes ahead if a majority of members of the European Parliament agree to the full budget, and three fifths of the votes actually cast are in favour. Whatever the disagreements along the way, the final outcome will be a balanced budget. Deficits are not allowed.

Each year's budget falls within a long-term spending plan known as the 'financial framework'. This is a seven-year framework, currently running from 2007 to 2013. It allows the EU to plan expenditure programmes effectively for several years in advance.

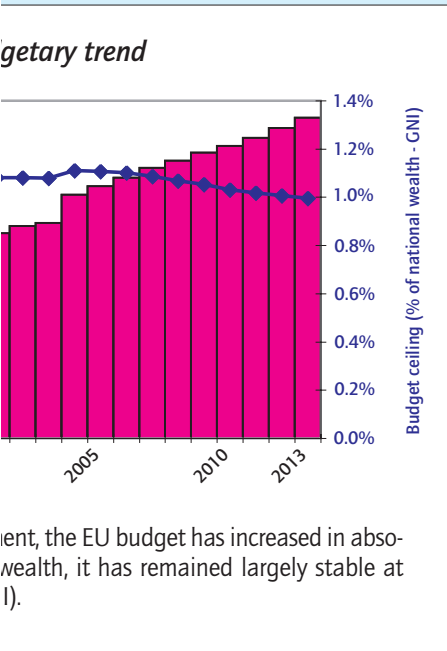


Where the money comes from

The EU budget is mainly financed from three 'own resources'. A large part – close to three quarters – of this money is based on the member states' ability to pay as measured by their national prosperity, expressed as gross domestic product. The basic principle behind the calculation of each member state's contribution is one of solidarity and ability to pay. However, adjustments are made if this seems to be producing an excessive burden on some member states.

The remaining money comes from customs duties and agricultural levies (a form of import duty on agricultural products) and a fixed proportion of the

how it works



the European Commission, which manages the budget, is accountable to the European Parliament for how the money has been spent each year.

Moreover, there are numerous checks and balances along the way. The expenditure is subject to internal audit, external evaluation to learn lessons for the future from the way the money was spent in the past, reports from the EU's own independent watchdog, the European Court of Auditors, and – if something has after all gone wrong – to investigation by the EU's independent fraud office, OLAF. OLAF investigates money spent improperly. It also works with its member state counterparts to stop smuggling at the expense of the EU's budget. Smuggling avoids import duty, a key component of the EU's income.

money member states collect in value added tax (VAT). These forms of revenue cannot be said to come from a particular member state. Thanks to the EU's single market, they may be collected in a very different part of the EU from where the underlying business that produced the revenue was actually done: goods on which import duty is paid in Valletta in Malta may actually be destined for a consumer in Pécs in Hungary.

Checks and balances

The EU countries are not writing a blank cheque, however. Not only are each year's expenditure plans scrutinised thoroughly in the process of setting the annual budget, but, ultimately,

Central European women and youth in science

If you have ever wondered

- why women are represented in higher education in large numbers, but are not quite making it to the top;
- how to combine parenthood and a scientific career;
- what young scientists gain or lose by deciding to be mobile or not;
- what is the connection between mobility and gender;
- what legacy state socialism in central Europe has left for women and young people in science,

then you are asking some of the same questions as the Central European Centre for Women and Youth in Science operated from Prague. The Centre has funding from the EU for a three-year programme to boost the involvement of women and youth in science, and in EU-funded research programmes in particular.

The project's backers believe that despite, or even because of, the equal treatment policy of state socialism, the traditional division of roles and labour, both outside and inside the family, has not changed. As a result, many women (and men) scientists lack the networks, skills and self-confidence necessary for participation in international research projects. Those returning from abroad can encounter hostility to young scientists with newer skills.

There are exceptions, 'but as long as there are some facing marginalisation or even discrimination, there is work to be done,' says Marcela Linkova, who coordinates the project for the Institute of Sociology and the Czech Academy of Scientists.

Also participating in the project are the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique in France, the Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea in Italy, Bucharest Polytechnic University in Romania, the Jozef Stefan Institute in Slovenia, the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and the Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation.

The importance of research

Of the many EU programmes specifically seeking to improve Europe's competitiveness, the research programme is the largest. The particular importance of research and innovation in providing jobs and growth, and at the same time ensuring that economic development is environmentally sustainable, has been recognised by increasing the research budget for 2007–2013 by 40% compared to the money available for 2000–2006.

EU-funded research programmes are not abstract. They provide the knowledge needed to make the implementation of EU policies more effective in areas such as health, consumer protection, energy, the environment, development aid, agriculture and fisheries, biotechnology, and information and communication. They also fund programmes to make sure that opportunities are equal for all scientists and that barriers to mobility come down.

Beyond the mobile phone revolution

Major technology projects are a clear example of where a euro spent by the EU will get a better return than fragmented efforts. Often, pooling resources is the only financially feasible course. Galileo is a case in point. It is the next generation of satellite navigation systems – one that will be 'made-in-Europe' and be used for a range of applications from more efficient traffic management to search-and-rescue at sea. It is a technological advance expected to revolutionise society in the same way the mobile phone has done, and one which could create 100 000 highly skilled jobs in future years. A joint effort of the EU and the European Space Agency, with its administrative headquarters in Toulouse, France, and its operational headquarters in London, it will draw primarily on the expertise of companies in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.

Galileo – high technology 'made in Europe'.



New approaches for the EU sugar industry

The EU sugar industry needs new ideas on production technology, engineering and management as it embarks on the restructuring necessary as a result of reforms and price cuts which took effect on 1 July 2006. The issue is a crucial one for Poland, the third largest sugar producer in the EU. So it is appropriate that the Warsaw University of Technology from its campus at Płock is leading a research project on using innovative technologies to improve the quality and safety of ready-to-eat products and semi-prepared foodstuffs which use sugar.

The 2006 reforms cut the guaranteed minimum price for EU beet sugar by 36%, opened up the EU market to more cane-based sugar from developing countries, in the process turning the EU from a sugar exporting region to a sugar importing region. Producers who leave the sugar business are receiving compensation and financial incentives, but the remaining industry will nevertheless need to become more competitive and look for alternative uses for its products.

Known as 'TOSSIE' (Towards Sustainable Sugar Industry in Europe), the Polish-led project will build on the results of earlier EU-funded research on new manufacturing processes, reduction of environmental impacts and the application of biotechnology to sugar by-products. It will also look at how to optimise the use of raw materials and resources, such as energy and water.

The ultimate goal is to draw up a strategy for a competitive and environmentally friendly sugar sector and set up a technology platform for this industry. The EU is meeting the full cost of the project, which also involves the University of Graz in Austria, the University of Ferrara in Italy, the University of Maribor in Slovenia, and technology and sugar processing groups in Denmark, Germany, Italy and Poland.



Polish researchers are leading the way in making sure the sugar industry does not become a dinosaur.

Preserving our natural environment

EU citizens today demand safe, quality food, produced without unnecessary waste, and a healthy environment. In our seas, declining fish stocks present us with tough challenges. So the funds provided for preserving our natural environment cover a wide range of programmes. They include support for thriving, competitive rural economies, assistance for the fisheries sector as it adjusts to falling fish stocks, and environmental programmes. These environmental programmes underpin the integration of the environment into all policymaking and complement environmental funding in other areas, such as regional and cohesion policy, agriculture and rural development, fisheries, external relations, civil protection and research.

Much of the money for preserving our natural environment goes to farmers both because the common agricultural policy is the most integrated of all EU policies and one of its oldest, and because farmers play a fundamental role in supplying basic foodstuffs and in maintaining the landscape as we know it.

However, the common agricultural policy today is very different from the image many people still have of it as a source of surpluses with no regard for demand or the potential to import food more cheaply. Ongoing reforms are ensuring a more balanced approach, where food safety and quality, animal welfare and the needs of the wider rural community have a much greater place.

EU funds help rural communities keep up with the times.



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Keeping us secure with the latest technology

Keeping up with criminals in a borderless Europe is a growing challenge, particularly as the number of cases continues to grow and the volume of evidence collected for complex crimes can be encyclopaedic. Judges and police need to be able to exchange information quickly and securely both domestically and across borders if justice is to be effective. Greater efficiency in the exchange of information will cut the amount of 'dead time' in investigations and trials waiting for information, evidence and witnesses to arrive.

The Secure-Justice project, funded by the EU and coordinated by an Italian company, aims to make the life of judges and the police much easier by developing a system for the secure electronic exchange of information relating to a crime, particularly during the investigative phases and the trial itself. That information may be written evidence, but it may also be the use of videoconferencing technology to obtain interpreters' translations or allow witnesses needing protection or anonymity to give evidence remotely.

The project is testing the most advanced techniques for protecting the information, including biometry, cryptography and digital watermarking. Biometric authentication can be used, for example, to identify remote users, such as witnesses. Thanks to cryptography, judges and policemen will be able to communicate over long distances safe in the knowledge that no criminal can hack into the system. Digital watermarking will guarantee the authenticity of documents.

There are six Italian partners in the project, including the Italian Ministry of Justice, together with companies, universities and government entities from Denmark, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The system will be tested in court rooms in Varese, in Italy, and in Wrocław in Poland, and by investigators in the Canary Islands of Spain.

Citizens of Europe

The EU's land and sea borders with other countries extend along tens of thousands of kilometres. Removing internal border controls so that we can move freely within the EU requires a consistently high standard of controls at its external frontiers. This is a shared responsibility. Each country's frontiers must be managed in the interests of all.

Within its borders, the EU is creating a single area of freedom, justice and security, so that European citizenship goes beyond a set of shared values to become a concrete reality. Europe's citizens should be able to feel equally safe and enjoy the same rights wherever they go in the EU, while criminals should not feel safe just because they have crossed the border into another EU country.

Making citizenship work also means improving the quality of life for EU citizens, by:

- investing in public health to reduce inequalities in the incidence of major diseases and tackle jointly any threat of a pandemic;
- promoting the same level of consumer protection throughout the EU, as well as promoting European linguistic and cultural diversity;
- encouraging exchanges between people and communities.

Biometric identification is making cross-border justice more effective.



© SP4/Amr Pnrys Mccella

That 'European' feeling

Small sums of money can have a major impact. Educational and training exchange programmes take less than 2% of the budget, but are highly successful. More than 2 000 universities participate, and some 175 000 students and 29 000 university lecturers receive grants under the Erasmus scheme each year. There are other schemes for vocational training, schools and young people.

Then there are Marie Curie fellowships for scientists, which enabled Árpád Bokor of Hungary to spend six months at the Animal Breeding and Genetics Group at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. 'There are very few research opportunities in horse breeding in Hungary, so this was a great opportunity,' he explains. 'Whilst there, I also joined a research group that had attained significant results in the related field of population genetics. I gained a lot of theoretical knowledge and learned how to use sophisticated genetic programmes running on high performance computers.' But it was not all work and no play: 'There was hardly enough time for all the extra-curricular activities I wanted to participate in,' he laments.

Helene Schönheinz of Austria spent a year in Valencia in Spain under the Erasmus programme as part of her studies at a UK university – taking advantage of the fact that EU citizens have facilitated access to universities anywhere in the EU. 'Thanks to the EU,' she says, 'I have lived in two foreign countries and could experience the EU's motto "United in diversity". Through this programme, I have changed as a person and increased my chances of a successful career. People sometimes accuse the EU of being too distant from the citizens, but personally I experienced the European spirit everyday. I think that the Erasmus programme leads to a stronger pan-European "we" feeling.'

Katy Ayres of the UK agrees. 'After studying international law in Utrecht in the Netherlands, I learned what it is to feel European. Indeed, I now truly think of myself as a European, and proudly so.'

Global responsibilities

With nearly 500 million inhabitants, a quarter of the world's economic wealth and as the world's largest trading bloc and aid donor, the EU is in a position to have a major influence on world events. There are occasions when the history or geography of individual member states will mean that they have particular resources or diplomatic influence which it is most useful for them to deploy themselves, but a collective EU effort is generally more than the sum of its parts.

Through its common trade policy, the EU already wields considerable economic clout. Increasingly, moreover, the EU speaks with a single voice on foreign policy and security issues to exercise political clout. The EU's position in the world also gives it a responsibility for sustainable development, poverty eradication and peace beyond its borders. In a global world, the EU cannot turn its back on these issues. The EU therefore spends some €9 billion annually on development aid, humanitarian assistance, technical support and peacekeeping.

The EU's neighbours are the other priority. This includes countries which will one day become members of the EU, and its other immediate and close neighbours around the Mediterranean, and in south-eastern and eastern Europe.

The EU works with these countries to dovetail their policies with those of the EU in trade, environmental and business regulation, energy and communications, education and training, and immigration. Helping these countries reform their economies and consolidate democracy and the rule of law is in the interests of stability along the EU's borders and the economic expansion will benefit trade.

Help for hurricane victims from the EU's humanitarian aid office.



© ECHO/Humanitarian Aid

The EU administration: much smaller than you think

The EU is sometimes accused of being a bloated bureaucracy. In practice, the total staff of all the institutions of 40 000 is much the same as that of a single government ministry in many member states. Indeed, many member state ministries are larger, even though they generally do not have to work in more than one language.

Administration of the EU takes less than 6% of the budget, but this covers the cost not just of running the European Commission, but all the institutions, including among others the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, and it covers the costs of operating in all the EU languages.

Using many languages costs money, but is an important principle. It is only right that EU ministers and members of parliament should be able to defend their citizens' interests in their own country's language and citizens themselves should have laws which affect them available in their own language. Moreover, the EU sets store by cultural diversity.

In practice, most of the money is spent in the member states, and, far from being an ivory-tower institution cut off from the world around it, the EU is in fact very close to its citizens as the examples in this brochure have shown.

Further reading



Activities of the European Union:
europa.eu/pol/index_en.htm

Panorama of the European Union:
europa.eu/abc/panorama/index_en.htm

The European Commission's budget website:
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ec.europa.eu/budget/publications/budget_in_fig_en.htm

European Commission

Investing in our common future

The budget of the European Union

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Using only 1% of its overall wealth each year, the EU is building our common future and assuming global responsibilities. Spending decisions are based on whether each euro is best spent by the EU or national governments. The focus is on meeting the challenges of the modern world to our society in the interests of a better life for the citizens of the EU. The money is primarily spent, therefore, on reducing income and social disparities across the EU, promoting the mobility which open internal borders make possible, on freedom, security and justice within the EU's external borders, and on reinforcing the EU's cultural diversity. Significant sums are also spent outside its border because the EU's economic and political weight in the world confers global responsibilities.

Other information on the European Union



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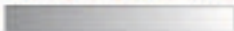
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The European Union



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 Candidate countries

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Using only 1% of its overall wealth each year, the EU is building our common future and assuming global responsibilities. Spending decisions are based on whether each euro is best spent by the EU or national governments. The focus is on meeting the challenges of the modern world to our society in the interests of a better life for the citizens of the EU. The money is primarily spent, therefore, on reducing income and social disparities across the EU, promoting the mobility which open internal borders make possible, on freedom, security and justice within the EU's external borders, and on reinforcing the EU's cultural diversity. Significant sums are also spent outside its border because the EU's economic and political weight in the world confers global responsibilities.



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