

REGION #2 – EUROPE

FACT SHEET

POLITICAL

1. During the 1800's, European nations were involved in a competition to establish colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas in order to increase wealth, power, and access to natural resources.
2. Two major wars were fought primarily in Europe during the 1900's (World War I 1914-1918 and World War II 1939-1945).
3. The United States and the former Soviet Union were involved in the Cold War, competing for power and influence, from the end of World War II until the early 90's. Despite not fighting each other directly, the Cold War did lead to bloodshed as the U.S. and Soviet Union would arm rival sides in conflicts around the world.
4. After World War II, Germany was divided into two nations; West Germany was democratic and East Germany was a communist nation under Soviet influence. The two sides were united again in 1991 when communism in Eastern Europe ended.
5. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was created in April 1949 in response to concerns over an expanding Soviet Union. It originally included the USA, Canada, and ten Western European nations. Even though the threat of the Soviet Union has ended, NATO acts as a vehicle for military cooperation and now includes former communist countries such as Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. It is often a source of conflict with present day Russia.
6. Starting from 1991, the formerly Communist Yugoslavia in the Balkans broke up into several nations including: Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Croatia. Bloody civil wars followed in many of these places.
7. Civil war in Syria and instability in Iraq and Afghanistan caused a flood of millions of refugees into Europe in 2015. Greece, Hungary, and Italy were particularly affected.
8. In 2016, The UK voted to leave the European Union over concerns about immigration and sovereignty.

ECONOMIC

1. After many wars in Europe, the European Union was formed after WWII to help bring the countries of Europe closer together. It allows for free trade between member countries, free movement of people, and close political cooperation. There are now 28 member countries.
2. Germany, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy and France are among the 12 nations that began using the Euro as a common currency in 2002 .
3. Western European nations are currently more economically stable and wealthier than Eastern European nations because of the recent changes in government (from communist to democratic) and economy (from socialist to capitalist) since the end of the Cold War.

CULTURAL

1. The main branches of Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity) all have strong roots in Europe.
2. Classical Greek culture, which was later adopted and spread by the Roman Empire, has had a lasting influence on most of Europe in terms of art, science, philosophy, law, religion, and technology.
3. The five Romance languages, which are Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian, developed out of Latin, the language of the Romans.
4. Starting in the 1960s, religious differences and discrimination led to conflicts in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants, including many acts of terror against innocent civilians. The Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been successful in stopping the violence.
5. There is cultural tension in many European countries between modern European cultures and more traditional cultural views brought by recent Muslim immigrants from Asia and Africa.