Fifteen countries are now united as the European Union (EU). The EU enhances political and social cooperation, as well as strengthening economies of member nations. Formally known as the European Community (ECU) or European Economic Community (EEC), the EU has made Europe a powerhouse. Member countries include: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Europe Countries Unite

The EU researched the member countries to find a symbol to best represent the European Union. The research included people from 18 to 75 years old. They had eight different symbols to choose from. According to the committee, the symbol was chosen “for its stability, combination of modern look and classic lines, and because it projected a strong image.” The symbol for the Euro dollar was chosen and called the Euro.

The Euro

On January 1, 1999 eleven EU countries voted to change their currency over to the euro. Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Ireland, and Luxembourg were the original countries. On January 1, 2000, Denmark was to join this illustrious group, however, a referendum was defeated and Denmark did not join. Greece becomes the 12th member to adopt the euro as of January 1, 2001. Out of the fifteen member countries of the EU, only Great Britain and Sweden did not agree to use the euro as their currency. Now there are only twelve.

The financial markets changed over and checks, bank cards can be paid in euros in 2000. Since January 1, 2001 there has been a limited time to convert all coins and notes into euro currency. However, the actual date for the all notes and coins will be in effect on January 1, 2002.
EU and US Fight Terrorism Together

The United States and the European Union have agreed to meet at least four times a year to evaluate terrorism threats. Europol (European Police Office) and United States law enforcement agencies will cooperate with each other to fight against world terrorism. In the EU-US Ministerial Meeting Press Conference on September 20, 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, “my colleagues and I discussed how the European Union and the United States can join forces with other nations from around the world in a wide variety of areas. As set out in our joint statement, we have agreed to intensify cooperation among our law enforcement authorities and to facilitate the exchange of information; to tighten up on aviation security, our immigration and visa controls and our export control and non-proliferation regimes; to disrupt terrorists’ plans, dry up their sources of support and roll up their networks; and bring terrorists to justice and bring those aiding and abetting them to account.” President Louis Michel of the European Union replied to Colin Powell’s statement by saying “...The EU transport ministers will continue to work on innovative, more effective air safety measures. It is important that, not only the US, but every country takes immediate measures to ensure security of flights to, from and within its territory. EU foreign ministers will examine ...concrete measures that will increase the EU capacity to effectively fight terrorism together with the US and all the partners. EU finance ministers will urgently address the issue of financing of terrorism...And EU justice and interior ministers have met today and agreed on the need for a European arrest warrant...EU member states will strengthen their intelligence capacities and increase their cooperation in this field...” Eurojust (European Justice Court) and the US are now organizing judges and prosecutors to work on terrorism.

Countries Apply to Become Members of EU

The EU is growing, but slowly and carefully. Trial membership started in 1993 for Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. These countries will not become full members, however, until they meet all the EU requirements for membership. Many other countries such as Cyprus, Malta and Turkey are submitting their applications as well.

The EU Has History of Cooperation

Europe suffered an immense destruction in the many wars between various countries. French citizen, Jean Monet’s vision of an united Europe was to help prevent wars and conflicts in the future. His plan for a united Europe had at its core a non-violent Europe. Monet’s plan for a united Europe began in 1957, when the Treaty of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC) with the goal of one market. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands started the EEC. The Merger Treaty of 1965 divided the EEC into various tasks, including a Council on Ministries, European Commission, European Parliament, Court of Justice, and European Council. Great Britain, Denmark and the Irish Republic joined the EEC in 1973; Greece joined in 1981, and Portugal and Spain joined in 1986. In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was signed which changed the name of the EEC to the European Union or EU. On January 1, 1993 the EU created a common market promoting free trade and movement of people throughout the borders of member countries.

(Continued on page 3)
What is the EU?

The EU is a treaty based framework that manages economic and political cooperation among fifteen European countries. The EU may increase to twenty countries after 2001. According to the EU website, “The Union is often compared to the United States and there are some similarities. Member countries have agreed to pool some of their sovereign powers (independent powers) for the sake of unity, just as American states did to create a federal republic. In the fields where such pooling of national sovereignty (supreme and independent political authority) had occurred for example, in trade and agriculture – the Union negotiates directly with the United States and other countries. Member states retain their sovereignty (supreme and independent political authority) powers in such fields as security and defense, although since Maastricht, they can take joint action in certain agreed-upon foreign and security policy areas. Although the US federal model continues to inspire the search for political unity, Europe is constructing its own model for unification, ensuring respect for its richest asset the historical, culture, and linguistic diversity of the European nations.” Only time will tell whether the European Union will survive.

The EU Has History of Cooperation (Continued)

The Europeans went to the polls to elect representatives to the EU Parliament in 1994. Only 36 years after Monet promoted his vision of a united Europe, his dream came true.

Britain refuses the Euro and keeps the pound.

Topographic Map of Europe

The European Union’s major objective is to speak with one voice and to speak as one on all world issues. Member countries have found this fairly easy on economic and trade issues. Political decisions have not met with unity. EU member countries have disagreed on the Gulf War and the conflict in the Balkans.

EU and the World

However they are working on these difficulties and hope one day to work together politically with one powerful voice.