

The EU: What would it mean for me?

Four stories Four people

Enlargement

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Foreword



Since its early days the European Union has steadily taken in new Member States, sharing the values that are at its heart: peace, solidarity and democracy. Enlargement is written in the Union's genes, and it is in each and everyone's strategic interest: together, we are stronger to face global challenges. This is particularly true today, as we have to face issues with far reaching impact such as global financial turmoil, energy security or climate change.

In spite of these challenges – or should I also say because of them – the EU keeps its commitment towards countries which aspire to join. Take Croatia. It is a different country now than a decade ago when it applied for membership. Its success shows how the EU perspective can help reform states and transform societies. It also sends a strong signal to all aspiring countries: the EU's door remains open and the benefits of European integration are within reach.

The necessary changes a country needs to undergo to become ready for EU accession may raise your questions and concerns on what the everyday life will be like when you join. Will it be better? Different? Would I be better off? Will I keep my job? This is understandable: the EU integration process is lengthy, technical and demanding. To many among you it may seem like an issue of interest only to the highest political spheres. But EU integration is much more than just politics; EU membership comes with many opportunities!

In order to illustrate this for you, we have talked to citizens from the Member States that joined the European Union in the last decade. We asked them whether EU membership had changed anything for them at all, mainly when it comes to our most common concerns, namely:

- Getting a good education and professional training;
- Finding a good job;
- Staying in good health;
- · Looking after one's family.

I hope that through their stories you will get a clearer idea of what EU membership means in practice. I sincerely look forward to all of you becoming active citizens of the European Union, seizing all the exciting opportunities that come along with EU membership.

I wish you an interesting and enjoyable read.

Štefan Füle EU Commissioner for Enlargement

From a small fa business thanks

When Poland joined the European Union in 2004 many feared that small and middle-sized family farms would be crushed by global competition. They are still standing firm, though, and probably more than ever.

Family

Tomasz Obszański's farm is 21 hectares large and located in Tarnogród, close to the Ukrainian border. It is well looked after and was recently renewed and upgraded.

Like other Polish farmers, Tomasz has benefited greatly from EU membership to turn his farm into a modern competitive business.

Tomasz says he enjoys walking around his farm with his three children, Bartłomiej, Szymon, and Emilia. He takes this opportunity to explain his journey since Poland became a member of the EU.

"I wasn't sure, in fact, if it would have a real effect on my daily life or not," he says. "After a few months, however, I began to appreciate that Poland's membership was a positive thing for me, especially when I realised



I was eligible for funds to help develop my farm."

Tomasz wisely used these funds to turn his farm into a flourishing enterprise. His production and earnings have increased thanks to two major transformations in the farm. First Tomasz applied and benefited from the Farm Modernisation Programme, which allowed him to buy a tractor, modern tools and machinery for his fruit and vegetable production.

An ambitious entrepreneur, Tomasz participated in a programme for the Diversification into Nonagricultural Activities in 2010, which allowed him to further upgrade the farm and set up a new company to grow organic grain and produce high quality organic oils.

"Thanks to this fund I purchased a grain press to produce organic oil in line with the European standards on organic agriculture," he explains. "This made me stronger and ready to rise up to the challenge of an open economy."

With sales steadily rising, he now sells his products from a local organic food shop to regional fairs, markets and pharmacies. He even started selling over the Internet. He is also very proud to have been able to hire one permanent employee

rm to an online to EU funds



to manage orders and deliver the goods to the retailers.

"All this has allowed me to provide my family with good living standards," he says. "Ultimately, I wish to create a genuine family business, where my children will continue to work – and want to work – as the farm continues to develop and benefit from new ideas and technologies."



Family

The European Union is facing unprecedented challenges when it comes to family issues. Family structures are changing, parents have difficulties striking the right balance between work and life, gender equality is not always a reality and child poverty is on the rise.

The *European Alliance for Families* was created in 2007; its members aim for better provision and quality of childcare and elderly care, more family-friendly work arrangements, as well as increased gender equality and greater involvement of fathers in the upbringing of children. Here are some good practice examples that showcase some of the good work that has already been achieved:

Slovenia introduced in 2007 the Family Friendly Company certificate to encourage employers to apply family-friendly principles in the workplace. The certificate is awarded to companies in Slovenia that adopt at least three measures from a catalogue of work-family reconciliation measures, such as flexible working hours, company childcare services, job sharing, adoption leave or part-time work.

- Germany runs The Family: a Factor for Success programme to make family-friendliness a defining feature of the German economy. The programme offers employers advice on how they can organise their activities in such a way that employees can better balance their family and work lives.
- In Turin, Italy, a multi-purpose social and cultural centre for families, children and elderly people, the *Every Day Life House*, was built in 2007 with financial support from the European Urban II fund (Euro 7.3 million).
- Portugal and Romania have implemented the exchange programme *The Voice of European Seniors* (2009 – 2011) funded by *Grundtvig*, offering senior volunteers aged 50 and over three-week internships in social care institutions.

Moreover, family businesses make up to 60% of European Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). They are considered as one of the key players in strengthening and galvanising the European economy. The European Commission supports family businesses in Europe. Member





States are prompted to adopt measures to create a more favourable environment for family businesses, namely through taxation and company law.

Family businesses also include farms. The European Union offers numerous opportunities to farmers who wish to modernise or extend their activities. The agricultural expenditure is financed by two funds: the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) finances direct payments to farmers and measures to regulate agricultural markets such as intervention and export refunds, while the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EA-FRD) finances the rural development programmes of the Member States.



Did you know ...?

- 2014 will be the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family!
- In Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in 2007, the average spending in social protection per habitant increased by more than 60% after the country joined the EU.
- In the EU 67% of women and 90% of men with children work, but in 43% of families both parents have full time jobs.
- The employment rate for persons aged 60-64 increased from 23% in 2000 to 31% in 2010.
- In 2008, 74% of children in the EU27 lived with married parents, while 14% lived in a single-parent household and 12% in a household with cohabitating parents.

Employment There are many jobs out there with EURES



Peter is a 37-year-old Bulgarian national living in Cyprus. He moved there in 2008 to boost his career and work for one of the country's leading communication companies. Despite the rain that falls on Nicosia that morning, Peter walks to the office to be on time for work. "*I like to think that I am a serious professional, but also a dedicated husband and father, and my*

number one priority has always been to take care of my family," he says.

Back in 2008, when the economic crisis kicked in, it became increasingly difficult to provide his family with a decent living in his home town of Sliven, Bulgaria. Peter recalls the tough times when he was jobless, with very few employment prospects, despite qualifications that should have allowed him







to access many jobs.

When asked about his life in Bulgaria prior to EU accession, Peter frowns: *"We could travel around Europe fairly easily, but the situation* there was very difficult professionally. Bulgarians who wanted to work abroad were only offered seasonal or non-legally registered work, which was out of the question for me."

This situation changed significantly when the country joined the European Union in 2007. Bulgarian citizens could then benefit from a wide range of EU programmes, such as EURES, which Peter read about in a Bulgarian newspaper.

While many refrain from leaving their country, for Peter and his family this was never the case. "Moving abroad always appealed to us but we wanted to do it in good conditions," he says. "I think we were brave to make the leap when the right opportunity came, even if my wife's family in Cyprus helped us a lot in the process."

Peter then quickly registered on the EURES

website, and after a few months he was invited to Nicosia for an interview at a major advertising company that eventually offered him a job. After three years in the company and thanks to his colleagues' help with the language and with settling into his new job, he feels like a real team member – no longer as a 'foreigner'.

"Peter made a real effort to integrate, he has learnt the language and eased into our team very well," they say.

Later in the day, as Peter walks with his wife and five-year-old son to the beach, he explains why he believes EURES is an invaluable tool for European jobseekers.

"With EURES, looking for a job abroad is just like looking for a job at home, through your local paper or employment office," he explains. "And moving to Cyprus from Bulgaria was like moving to a different town." Besides, the Bulgarian community in Nicosia is quite large, and Peter and his wife have made lots of friends already. This makes them feel even more at home in their new environment.

"I strongly encourage employed and unemployed people in Bulgaria to consider moving to another European country, to try new things or learn new languages as there are numerous opportunities," Peter concludes.

"There is a great deal of support out there, and if you want to work abroad, you will definitely find work. EURES is a great place to start! I am fortunate to say that my job in Nicosia gives me personal fulfilment and the security I was after to take good care of my family."

Employment

n our globalised world, the employment market has become more and more competitive. Unemployment and social concerns are on the rise. EU workers and enterprises need to be flexible to adapt to new circumstances.

In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Employment Strategy seeks to create more and better jobs throughout the European Union. To reach these objectives, it encourages measures to meet three headline targets by 2020:

- 75% of people aged 20-64 in work;
- school drop-out rates below 10%, and at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education;
- at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

How?

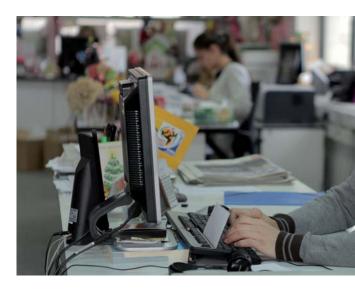
Two important initiatives include concrete actions to reach the 2020 targets.

The Agenda for new skills and jobs aims to:

- step up reforms to improve flexibility and security in the labour market ('flexicurity');
- equip people with the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow;
- improve the quality of jobs and ensure better working conditions;
- improve the conditions for job creation.

Youth on the Move is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives that aims to increase the youth-employment rate by:

- making education and training more relevant to young people's needs;
- encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country;
- encouraging EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.



The European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the European Union's main financial instrument for supporting employment in the Member States as well as promoting economic and social cohesion. Since 1957 the European Social Fund (ESF) has helped millions of Europeans to get jobs, acquire new skills and find better jobs. Nowadays it is funding tens of thousands of projects across the Union that make a real difference to the lives of millions of individuals.

Over the period 2007-2013 some €75 billion will be distributed to the EU Member States and regions to support activities such as training for job seekers to obtain new skills and improve their qualifications.

In Poland, for example, a project co-financed by the ESF helped 50 inactive or unemployed older workers to start their own business, whereas an initiative in Lithuania allowed over 50,000 citizens to obtain basic computer skills.

The ESF also supports numerous activities aimed at the European Union's 100 million 15-30-year-olds. In order to ease the transition from education and training to the labour market and to improve their job prospects, the ESF supports apprenticeship schemes, as well as training contracts or subsidised temporary job contracts for young people.

EURES

EURES, the EU's job and mobility portal offers job seekers the opportunity to consult all vacancies published by employment services across Europe.



The portal also contains the contact details of more than 850 EURES advisers who offer job seekers free advice in practical, legal and administrative matters relating to mobility at national and cross-border levels.

EURES advisers work within the Public Employment Service of each Member State, or within other partner organisations of the EURES network.

Did you know...?

In 2000, 22% of jobs required higher level qualifications while 29% required lower level qualifications. In 2010, these percentages were reversed. By 2020, 35% of jobs will require higher level qualifications.

- In 2010 the EU-27 employment rate for persons aged 15 to 64 was 64.2 %.
- According to Eurostat, the average exit age from the labour market is 61.5 years. However, 42% of Europeans believe that they would be capable of carrying out their current work till the age of 65 or beyond.



- In 2010, 81.8% of women aged 20 to 24 completed at least upper secondary education compared with 76.2% of men in the European Union.
- The most 'youthful' nations in the EU included Ireland, Cyprus, Slovakia and Poland, each with more than 24 % of young people; in Denmark, Germany and Italy, on the other hand, young people accounted for less than 18 % of the population.

Project examples:

- In Trebišov, Slovakia, the 3,500 Roma residents suffer almost 100% unemployment. A 'social fieldwork' project employs special workers and undertakes the renovation and extension of the local school for more than 600 Roma students.
- 'The Emplea Verde' or 'Green Jobs' programme in Spain is an initiative to promote employment and preserve the environment. It aims to support more than 28,000 people and create 1,000 new green SMEs and jobs.
- In Bulgaria the 'I Can' project offers any employed person the opportunity to apply and receive a voucher for key competences training or a course leading to professional qualifications. In the first two phases of the 'I Can' project, 140,000 employees took part, while in the follow-up 'I Can Do Better' project, a further 81,000 participants are expected by the end of 2013.
- In Denmark a great number of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds drop out of education too early to leave with useful qualifications. Since 2009 overall school and training drop-out rates of young people from ethnic minorities have fallen from 20% to fewer than 15%. This was achieved by 'The Hold On Tight Caravan' project, which supports educational and training processes.
- In the framework of the ESF-funded 'QUALI-FORM-IDE' project, the Belgian public employment service Forem heads a network including nine skills centres and three 'open' training centres around Wallonia and parts of Brussels. The centres equip workers for locally-based jobs in industries such as logistics, painting, tourism and catering, as well as park maintenance. In 2009-2010, the centres provided training for 8,860 persons.

Understanding enlargement

The European Union's enlargement policy

Right from the start, the European Union has pursued everdeeper integration while taking in new members. The two processes took place in parallel and have contributed to an unprecedented period of peace and stability in the countries involved. This process continues today, with the EU membership perspective open to Iceland, Turkey and the Western Balkans.

Who can join?

The Treaty on the European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them.

Any aspirant country first needs to fulfil the key criteria for accession. These have been defined by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 and are hence referred to as 'Copenhagen criteria'. Countries wishing to join need to have:

- Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;
- The ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

The EU reserves the right to decide when aspirant countries can join. It also needs to be able to integrate new members.

Who joined when?

Originally, the organisation now known as the European Union counted six members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom then became members in 1973. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986, and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995.

In 2004, in the EU's biggest-ever enlargement, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became Member States. In January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined, bringing the EU's membership up to 27.

As a result of these developments, the EU is the world's largest market, providing better opportunities for its citizens and businesses. The enlargement process is gradual and carefully managed, which creates a win-win situation for all countries concerned.

Who's next?

The governments of the EU Member States, coming together in the European Council, have agreed to extend the EU perspective to countries in Southeast Europe -Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Kosovo* and Turkey. The European Council decided to grant candidate status to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in December 2004, to Montenegro in December 2010 and to Serbia in March 2012. Accession negotiations were opened with Turkey in October 2005, with Iceland in July 2010, and should begin with Montenegro in June 2012. The accession treaty with Croatia has been signed and the country is expected to join in 2013, once the ratification process has been completed.

This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

EU support to aspirant countries

Providing financial assistance to the countries aspiring to join to help them meet the demanding conditions for accession has been part and parcel of the enlargement process. Since 2007 this funding comes through a single channel – the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The total funding under this instrument is currently €11.5 billion for the period 2007-2013. IPA funds, to give a few examples, are used to modernise public administration and increase its capacity, help reform judiciary and reinforce fight against crime and corruption, boost regional cooperation, invest in infrastructure and support environment protection and rural development.

Interested to learn more?

You will find more information on EU enlargement policy, EU financial support to the countries aspiring to join as well as their progress towards accession on our website:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement

Education



Piroska Beke is 24 years old. She teaches German at a primary school in Hungary. For one year, she studied in Austria as part of the EdTWIN programme initiated and funded by the European Union, and run by four countries: Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria.

The EdTWIN programme allowed her to study education through a different lens, something Hungary's EU membership facilitated greatly. The courses in Austria also included internships. This added to Piroska's theoretical background

Studying abroad, a life-changing

and strengthened her teaching ability.

"In the Multinational School of Vienna, I taught pupils from 26 different nationalities, and the education methods there are entirely different from those in Hungary," she explains. "They use different methods like the Montessori Method, which I had only read about in Hungary. My theoretical knowledge has become a routine by observation and practice."

Working with children from multicultural backgrounds changed her general approach to teaching.

"Children have different needs and abilities. My experience in Austria allowed me to better understand this," she proudly says. "It is a great asset in my daily work, as it taught me to evaluate and differentiate my students very quickly. It gave me a different approach to teaching languages to children, and taught me techniques yet to be implemented in Hungary!"



experience

She now applies concepts like teamwork, multilingualism, creativity and activity in her daily work, with great success, judging on the enthusiasm of her pupils.

In and out of school Piroska is a very confident woman, something she admits she also gained during her time abroad. *"Teaching and* studying in a foreign environment have been very beneficial in many ways, professionally, of course, but also personally. I learnt more about Austria and its culture, and more importantly I made great friends with whom I share common interests and whom I trust."

The fact that Hungary is an EU Member State

has been very important in Piroska's professional evolution. It gave her access to a greater variety of schemes and programmes to enhance her skills.

"Had Hungary not been in the EU, I doubt I would have been able to study in Austria and it may have taken me years to learn what I learnt there. I would have been a very different individual," she smiles.

Education

The European Union offers broad opportunities in the field of education, such as grants for studying or training abroad, exchanges, traineeships, study visits and research programmes. These opportunities are not only open to students, but also to researchers and academic staff, school pupils and teachers, or adults who want to improve their knowledge and skills to enhance their career opportunities.

EU citizens are allowed to study at any university under the same conditions as nationals, with no additional fees, and are entitled to the same grants as nationals of the country.

Here is an overview of the European Union's main programmes in the field of education and training:

• *Erasmus* is one of the most popular educational programmes of the EU. It provides an opportunity for students to receive an EU grant to study or have a traineeship for three to 12 months in another EU country. Since its launch in 1987, nearly 3 million students have benefited from the Erasmus programme. The *Erasmus Mundus* programme offers scholarships for students wanting to participate in an exchange across the EU border.

- The EU provides extensive support to young researchers. Fellowships (under Marie Curie actions) are available to launch a research project, to improve the skills of researchers or to develop research cooperation between Europe and other parts of the world. Researchers can also consult the EURAXESS (www.euraxess.eu) internet portal that provides information about job vacancies and fellowship programmes in 38 European countries.
- Through the *Comenius* programme the EU supports joint projects between partner schools in different countries. The aim is to improve education and help young people acquire the basic life skills and competences necessary for personal development, future employment and active citizenship. Teachers can receive grants through *Comenius* to boost their teaching skills and get an international outlook. More than 27,000 schools, 135,000 teachers and 1.5 million pupils every year experience Europe in their everyday life at school through *Comenius*.
- The Leonardo da Vinci programme offers traineeships abroad to vocational education students, including apprentices. Placements of young people in foreign companies are increasingly popular and bring benefits for the skills of the trainees as well as for the businesses





themselves. Some 90,000 people students will benefit in 2012.

In 2000 *Grundtvig*, a programme for adult education, was launched to create opportunities for lifelong learning. One of the aims of the programme is to allow at least 7,000 people to benefit from adult education abroad every year by 2013.

Did you know ...?

- Europe has around 4,000 higher education institutions, with over 19 million students and 1.5 million staff.
- The most popular *Erasmus* destinations are Spain, France and Germany; 40% of students who participate in *Erasmus* also come from these three countries.
- The total budget for *Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci* and *Grundtvig* for 2007-2013 amounts to Euro 7 billion.
- More than 160,000 teachers have signed up to participate in *eTwinning*, the European online community for schools, where they can meet virtually, exchange ideas and practice examples, learn together or set up onlinebased projects with partner schools in more than 30 European countries: http://www.etwinning.net.



Health



Saving lives through

Metka Srnec is 54 years old. She works as a nurse in one of Slovenia's main hospitals. She was diagnosed with breast cancer at the end of 2011 when she took part in a country-wide cancer screening programme, an initiative of the Slovenian government that was supported by medical colleagues from Scandinavian countries.

Her doctor recalls when she had to announce to Metka, one of her colleagues, that she was diagnosed with non-palpable, noninvasive breast cancer. "It is always a difficult thing, maybe this one time even more so that Metka is a colleague of mine, but thanks to the national early screening programme set up by a team of European scientists, we could diagnose the disease early enough to cure it very effectively," she says.

For Metka it was even more of a shock, of course, as she explains after finishing her shift. "*I* treat patients with cancer every day and witness their suffering. *I* always dreaded what it would be like if I had cancer... So when I was diagnosed with it in November 2011, it was very difficult to take. But thanks to early detection, my frightening diagnosis only got better," she remembers. "We are lucky Slovenia put this screening programme in place."

Soon after its accession in 2004, Slovenia got involved in the European Cancer Network (ECN) and other research programmes focusing on fighting inequalities in cancer by improving information and knowledge. It also took up the Scandinavian screening model. Medical colleagues from Scandinavian countries came to Slovenia to provide expertise.

"We participated in brainstorming sessions, attended lectures and courses, and even had one-to-one meetings with them," Metka recalls. As a result, the early screening programme in Slovenia is far advanced compared to other Member States that joined the EU in the last decade.



medical cooperation

Both Metka and her doctor agree that becoming a Member State has been a decisive moment for cancer research in Slovenia. Indeed, thanks to the early diagnosis, she only had to wait one month for the operation to remove the cancerous tumour, and just three weeks later she was healthy enough to return to work.

"Metka is now cancerfree and a very healthy woman," says her doctor, smiling. Slovenian doctors are still in contact with specialists from all over Europe to share their experience and further improve detection in the country. This constant quest for excellence was very reassuring throughout the process for Metka.

Metka is a very happy woman now and, as her doctor says, she has a bright future: *"I enjoy being healthy even more now and can't wait to see my grandchildren grow. This is thanks to the cooperation between doctors from other European countries and Slovenia. I am glad that* Slovenia is in the EU... I experienced personal benefits from it."

Health

uropean countries have always been at the forefront of medical research. Once they join the European Union they can easily cooperate to create synergies. Preserving citizens' health is one of the EU's top priorities. It has for example opened its borders for patients who need to receive quality care in another Member State, thus democratising access to high-quality medical care.

The EU also facilitates cooperation within the medical industry through programmes fostering the collaboration and exchange of specialists and know-how. While caring for individuals, the EU has also provided significant investments in the production of innovative new medicines and in medical research.

- In 2004 the EU introduced a unique project the European Health Insurance Card. It is free of charge and offers people guaranteed access to public sector health care as nationals of the Member State they are temporarily visiting.
- · An EU citizen who is entitled to healthcare in his or her home country may seek that treatment in another

Member State and be reimbursed up to the cost of that treatment in their home health system. In certain cases (e.g. for highly specialised care) patients may need to seek authorisation before travelling for treatment. EU citizens may also be referred to another Member State by their health system for treatment which is not available at home.

- The EU spends Euro 1 billion each year to support research for new medical treatments, as well as for the production and development of innovative drugs and medical technology.
- For the past 25 years the EU has been supporting cancer prevention and control activities, including the implementation of the population-based, nation-wide, organised screening programmes for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer. These activities contributed to a 9% reduction in cancer mortality, according to a study done in 2003. The objective of the latest initiative, i.e. the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer is a 15% reduction of new cancer cases by 2020.
- To encourage healthier eating habits for children, the EU advocates that more fruits, vegetables and milk products are served in schools. The EU provides Euro 50 million for the European School Milk Scheme and Euro 90 million for the fruit and vegetable scheme.



Did you know ...?

- By 2050, the number of people in the EU aged 65 and above is expected to grow by 70% and the number of people aged over 80 by 170%.
- European Health Insurance Cards have been issued to 190 million people or 38% of the population.
- The amount spent by the EU on the production and development of innovative drugs and medical technology equals that of the combined investments of all pharmaceutical companies active in Europe.
- During a school year, the European School Milk Programme distributes almost 300,000 tonnes of milk to schools.





For more information:

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