



## Enrichment Activity

# The European Union

## Background

Today a person can travel across most of Europe without carrying a passport or being stopped at each border. This was not always the case, however. A series of treaties between many of the nations in Europe have removed passport checks, labor restrictions, and trade barriers. These treaties culminated in the Treaty on European Union (also called the Maastricht Treaty) in 1991, which created the European Union (EU) in 1993. The EU includes most of the nations of western Europe, as well as many eastern European countries.

Because the European Union is the result of a series of treaties, its political structure can be difficult to understand, even for Europeans. In 2004 a constitution was written for the EU, at least partly to address some of the confusion about its structure and functions. Ratification by all EU member nations is needed, however, before the constitution can go into effect.



## For Investigation

Conduct research to learn more about the structure and functions of the European Union. As you read, look for answers to the following questions:

- 1. Defining** Is the European Union a federation, a confederation, or something else?

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- 2. Specifying** When nations become members of the EU, do they retain their national sovereignty? Explain.

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- 3. Listing** What are the three major criteria that countries must meet before they can join the EU?

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## Enrichment Activity

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**4. Identifying** What are the three main "institutions" of the EU?

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**5. Comparing and Contrasting** Which two institutions share legislative power? What is the difference between these two institutions?

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**6. Differentiating** Are the Council of the European Union and the European Council the same thing? Explain.

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**7. Describing** What is the executive branch of the EU? What role does it have in the legislative process?

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**8. Explaining** What institutional changes would the proposed EU constitution make?

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