

Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia



The Neuschwanstein Castle in Schwangau, Germany

POLITICAL & ECONOMIC MAP

EUROPE'S HISTORIC ALLIANCE

Nearly 30 countries in Europe are united in a unique political and economic partnership. Its goal is to encourage peace and stability across a continent that was once ravaged by war. **BY BROOKE ROSS**

ISTOCKPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES (EIFFEL TOWER, OLD TOWN SQUARE); CHIN PING, GOM/GETTY IMAGES (SANTORINI); SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (ALL OTHER IMAGES)



The Old Town Square in Prague, Czechia



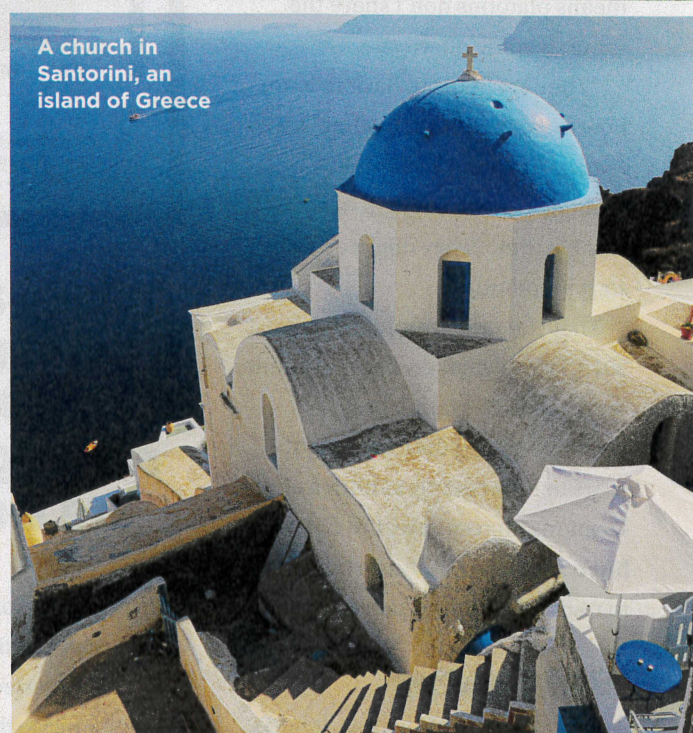
The Colosseum in Rome, Italy

GEO QUEST

The Eiffel Tower
in Paris, France



A church in
Santorini, an
island of Greece



Ireland's Cliffs
of Moher



After recently losing one of its members, the European Union (E.U.) is focused on its future.

The E.U. is a political and economic partnership made up of 27 countries across Europe. It makes laws and has its own form of money (the euro). E.U. countries share free trade, meaning nations within the E.U. can buy and sell goods and services across E.U. borders without having to pay additional taxes. And citizens of E.U. nations (nearly 450 million people) have the right to live and work in any E.U. country.

In 2016, the United Kingdom (U.K.) stunned the world when its people voted to leave the E.U. Many U.K. citizens believed that the partnership had too much control over their country. The U.K.'s departure from the E.U., known as "Brexit," became official in early 2020. But it took another year for the U.K. and the E.U. to negotiate how they would interact and trade with one another going forward. Those new rules went into effect this past January.

Formed After War

The E.U. has its roots in the wreckage of World War II (1939-1945). After the war, much of Europe—and its economy—was devastated.

With the idea that countries that trade with one another would be less likely to go to

war, six European nations decided to unite their steel and coal industries. In 1957, those countries formed the European Economic Community (EEC), which established free trade among its member nations. More countries joined over the years. What had begun as an economic union eventually grew to include policies to protect human rights, the environment, and more. To reflect those changes, the EEC became the E.U. in 1993.

No country had ever left the alliance—until the U.K.

Looking Ahead

With Brexit now behind them, E.U. officials are moving forward with a number of goals.

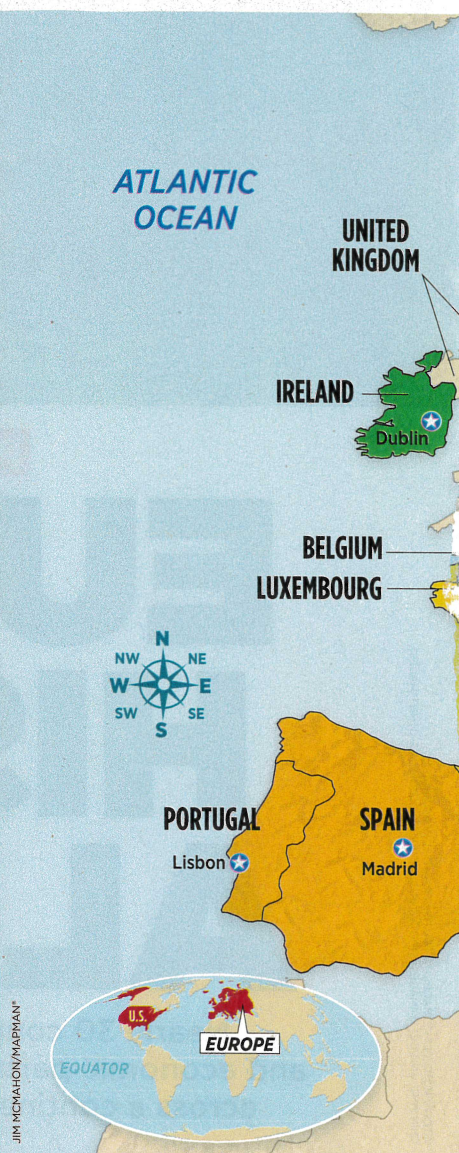
Today, the E.U. is the world's largest humanitarian donor. It has also taken an aggressive stance on combating climate change. This past December, E.U. countries vowed to cut their production of greenhouse gases in half by 2030.

And the partnership recently agreed to raise \$850 billion to help E.U. nations hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Exceptional situations require exceptional measures," said Angela Merkel of the deal. She is the leader of Germany, an E.U. nation. "A very special [group] of 27 countries of different backgrounds is actually able to act together, and it has proven it." ♦

The European

This map shows the 27 countries that



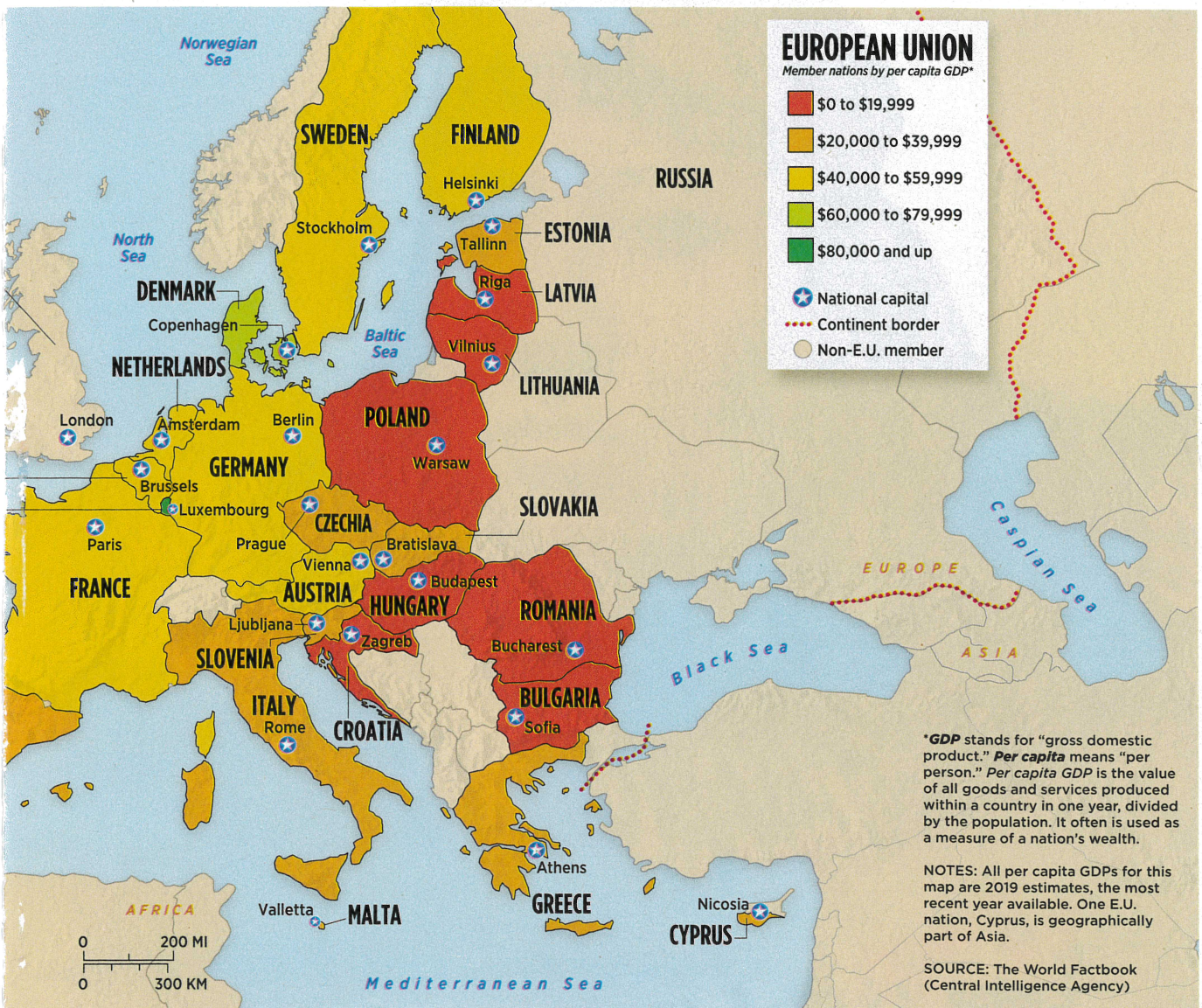
Political and Economic Maps

This map of Europe is a political and economic map. **Political maps** show government-defined information, including country boundaries, plus the location of capitals. They often use colors to distinguish countries from one another or to provide another layer of information. **Economic maps** show the wealth of each nation.

Union

make up the European Union. Use it to answer the questions below.

Check out
**MAP SKILLS
 BOOT CAMP**
 at junior.scholastic.com
 for more geography practice.



Map Skills

1. The headquarters of the European Union (E.U.) is in the capital city of Belgium. What is the name of that city?
2. Portugal is in which per capita GDP range?
3. How many other E.U. member nations are in the same range?
4. Which E.U. countries border France?
5. Of those countries, which one has the highest per capita GDP?
6. Which E.U. nation is bordered by Romania to the north and Greece to the south?
7. That country is in which per capita GDP range?
8. From the capital of Sweden, in which direction would you travel to reach Warsaw, Poland?
9. The two northernmost E.U. countries are in which per capita GDP range?
10. One E.U. country has a per capita GDP of \$66,350. Which country is it? How do you know?