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Agency for European education

SHORT GUIDE

The European House: what the model tells us about the EU

The house is not a flight of fancy. It shows how the European Union is built. Every feature of the model stands for an idea behind the EU.



Top view. The house has only one storey: all the rooms are on the same level.



What it looks like

About 30 cm high and 120 cm across, foldable and plain white, so that every group can design its own room.

Where it comes from

It was developed by pupils from five European countries in the EU project ‘Building the European House’ (2010–2012).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why is the house built this way?

Why does the house have only one storey?

Under the Treaties, all member states have equal rights. None of them has any privileges.

Why are all the rooms the same size?

They do not differ by population, area or wealth: here too, equality applies. Even so, the number of Members of the European Parliament depends on each country's population.

Members of the European Parliament
www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/home

Why are the rooms hexagonal?

Enlargement is possible and welcome. This is already clear from Robert Schuman's declaration of 9 May 1950, the founding document of European integration.

The Schuman Declaration
european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_en

Why are there 12 rooms?

The number refers symbolically to the 12 stars on the European flag. In fact, the EU currently has **27** member states, **21** of which use the euro.

The rooms are arranged around a **shared courtyard**: the single market, with the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, and the Schengen area without identity checks at internal borders. Every room opens onto the courtyard, and from the courtyard you can reach every room. In other words: you can live and work anywhere in the EU.

The European flag
european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-flag_en

The member countries
european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-countries_en

Euro coins (European Central Bank)
www.ecb.europa.eu/euro/coins/html/index.en.html

Why are the columns in the centre?

They reflect the Roman heritage that many member states share. It shows, for example, in the kinship of Romance languages such as Italian, Romanian, Spanish and French.

The columns can also be read as milestones of European integration: the Treaties between the member states. The states cooperate voluntarily and have transferred powers to EU level, where they take decisions together.

Why are the rooms designed differently?

They reflect the cultural diversity of the member states and the EU's **24 official languages**. All documents are translated into these languages, and in the European Parliament everyone speaks their own language. The EU's motto is 'United in diversity'.

The EU's official languages
european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/languages_en

Why are the roofs transparent?

They stand for transparency in decision-making: every citizen can, for example, follow the sessions of Parliament live.

They also stand for sustainable, long-term policies, for instance on climate and environmental protection through the European Green Deal.

The European Green Deal
commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

Why do all the rooms have the same floor?

All member states abide by **shared values and rules**, such as respect for human rights, the separation of powers, democracy, tolerance and freedom. They agreed on this together. In some areas, they have also transferred decision-making to European level.

Where is the entrance?

The model has no marked entrance: that is left to its users. After all, there are many entrances: every state on an external border of the EU.

At the same time, it is a **common** external border, because shared rules apply within the EU, for example the free movement of people. This gives the EU a responsibility, but it can only support the states if they wish. To protect the common external border, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, has existed since 2005. Member states second staff to it, and Frontex also has staff of its own.

Frontex
www.frontex.europa.eu/