



Factsheet on Peace and Democracy

Summary/Soundbite

The European Union was born out of the need for peace and reconciliation in Europe.

The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of stability unprecedented in European history. By providing a framework for peaceful cooperation grounded in democratic values, the European Union has been central to this development.

As recognised by the 2012 award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU, the expansion of EU membership has bolstered democracy and checked conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communist regimes, and continues to exert a positive influence in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Through its foreign policy and development cooperation, the EU also invests heavily in supporting the rule of law, democracy and respect of human rights elsewhere in the world. Prominent UK development experts have forcefully argued that EU membership increases the UK's ability to act on the global stage to fight poverty and promote environmental sustainability¹.

A bit more detail...

The EU is a shining example of the common benefits that can be achieved when regional groupings of states are able to put aside old conflicts and work together to achieve peace and prosperity. European integration has allowed historical enemies such as France and Germany to become close partners, whilst at the same time unleashing powerful economic benefits. It has also brought the peoples of Europe closer than ever before. Among many other actions to bring communities closer together, including the twinning of towns and cities, is the *Erasmus* scheme which has created a 3 million-strong 'Erasmus generation' of young Europeans who have studied in another EU country.

The EU is grounded in the values of peace and respect for human rights

According to Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, the EU is founded on 'the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. Respect for these values is a prerequisite for EU membership, and the Treaty provides for mechanisms to prevent and sanction systemic threats to the rule of law in EU Member State.

Promoting peace and human rights outside of Europe

Promoting human rights is a silver thread running through everything the EU does on external action. For example, all EU cooperation as well as trade agreements with non-EU countries contain a clause

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/24/only-inside-the-european-union-can-the-uk-help-fight-global-poverty>



enshrining human rights as an essential element in relations between the parties. The EU also has a dedicated Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights worldwide, with a budget of over €1.3 billion for 2014-20, which funds initiatives ranging from electoral observation missions, to support for human rights defenders or capacity building for governments.

Additional Resources

EU strategic framework and action plan on human rights and democracy:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131181.pdf

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights: <http://www.eidhr.eu/highlights>