STATION 1: EUROPE'S SHRINKING POPULATION

CAUSES OF NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH:

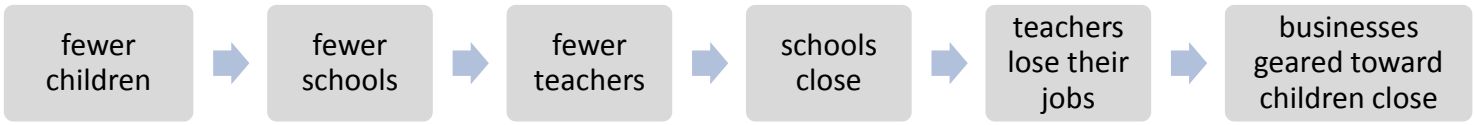
A country's total fertility rate is an important factor in determining its future population. By 2004, Italy's TFR had fallen well below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. Across Europe total fertility rates were on the decline.

There are many reasons for Europe's low birth rates. More European women are putting off having children so they can **pursue their education and careers**. Women who wait until they are older to start having babies tend to have fewer children.

Family finances also play a part in how many children people choose to have. The high cost of living in much of Europe makes people concerned about being able to support a family. Because housing costs are high, young couples often need two incomes to buy a home. As a result, young women sometimes put off having children to work.

Working couples who want children face the issue of **childcare**. In the past, mothers cared for their children at home. When both parents work, they need help to care for their children during the day. Quality childcare can be expensive and hard to find, discouraging couples from having large families.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY NEGATIVE GROWTH:



Declining population can have a serious effect on a country's economy. Babies grow up to be workers, so eventually low birth rates can lead to labor shortages. When businesses cannot find enough workers they sometimes move to countries that have a better labor supply. This change could hurt Europe's economy. Negative growth also means fewer people to serve in military forces. As a result, European countries may lose some of their power and influence in the world.

RESPONSES TO NEGATIVE GROWTH:

Cash and benefits for having babies: In 2003, Italy's government gave a "birth bonus" of 1,000 euros to families with at least one child had another baby. France gives a birth bonus for every child born in the country. A family with three or more children receives additional benefits, such as reduced rents and lower taxes. It's not yet clear whether paying cash for having babies works well over time. Sometimes birth rates will rise for a few years and then drop again. Some countries lower the costs of having children. For example, Sweden offers government assistance to help parents pay for daycare for small children.

Family-friendly policies for parents: European governments recognize that the difficulty of balancing work and family life discourages people from having children. Working parents want time off work to care for their children, but fear that if they do so they may lose their jobs. Many European governments have responded to this fear with family friendly policies to help working parents. One policy allows a new parent to stay home with a baby without losing his or her job. During the leave of absence, the parent is still paid. Other policies include flexible work hours and the right to work part time. Governments hope that policies like these will help remove some of the barriers to having children and to staying in the workforce.

Source: *Geography Alive: Regions and People*

STATION 2: EUROPE'S AGING POPULATION

CAUSES OF AN AGING POPULATION:

A population ages for two reasons: life expectancy and drop in birth rate. Both trends are taking place across Europe today. The result is that there are more old people and fewer young people than in the past—an aging population.

Europe will age even more rapidly in the years ahead because of the baby boom from 1945 to the 1960's. Europe's baby boom began not long after World War II ended. During this time women in Europe had lots of babies, meaning that there is a large population of Europe that was born during this time. In the 1970's the birth rates began to fall. By the year 2000, the first people born during Europe's baby boom were entering their 50's. In the next decade or two, many of these baby boomers will retire, swelling the elderly population of Europe.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY AN AGING POPULATION:

Most people would agree that having longer, healthier lives is a good thing. Yet an aging population also creates problems for a society. **The two biggest concerns are pensions and health care**. A pension is a fixed amount of money paid to a retired person by a government or former employer and usually paid from the time a person retires until he or she dies.

Health care is of concern because as people age, their need for health care increases. Older people are more likely to suffer from diseases such as cancer, diabetes and arthritis. They are also more likely to need expensive surgeries and costly medicines. Some need special care available only in nursing homes. All of these needs cost money.

Most European governments provide pensions and health care for its senior citizens. The money to pay for both comes from taxes paid by working people. This system works as long as the dependency ration is low, but the combination of a growing elderly population and fewer young people joining the workforce is causing the dependence ration to rise. In other words, an ever-smaller workforce is supporting an ever-larger elderly population.

RESPONSES TO NEGATIVE GROWTH:

Dealing with Pension Costs: With more retired people in Europe than ever before—who are also living longer than in the past—European countries face the challenge of how to support their seniors. One way to reduce pension costs is to cut the amount of money each worker receives, but cutting pensions too much seems unfair to people who depend on this income to live. Another approach is raising the retirement age. Keeping people in the workforce longer will shorten the time during which they will need government pensions. Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom have all increased the age at which pensions begin. Other countries give bonuses to people who delay their retirement.

Providing Health Care: Governments are also searching for smarter ways to provide health care for elderly citizens. For example, two relevant principles guide health care policies for Germany's elderly population. The first principle is that preventing health problems is better than treating them. The second is that home care is preferable to care in a nursing home. Many countries are looking at ways to encourage family members to care for older relatives at home. Home care costs less and is often preferred by older people. Italy provides special health services to families who care for relatives. Austria pays pensions to people who give up jobs to care for family members.

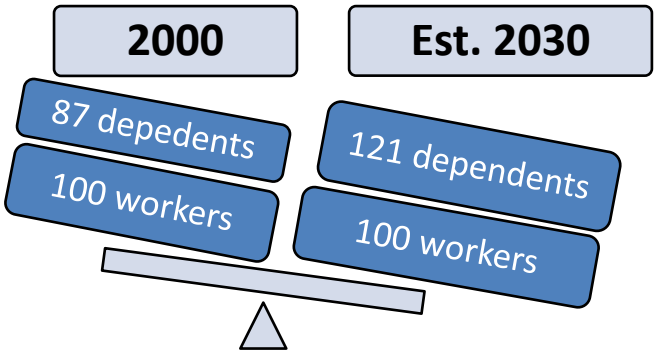
Source: *Geography Alive: Regions and People*

STATION 3: EUROPE'S DECLINING WORKFORCE

CAUSES OF WORKFORCE DECLINE:

The main cause of workforce decline across Europe is simple: more workers retire each year than join the workforce. This decline will only grow worse as baby boomers start to retire. For example, the number of workers in Germany will likely fall from 42 million to 30 million in the next 50 years. Workforce decline leads to changes in the **dependency ratio**—the ration of dependents to workers—as more and more people are dependent on fewer and fewer workers.

GERMAN DEPENDENCY RATIOS:



PROBLEMS CAUSED BY WORKFORCE DECLINE:

In many European countries, young people have trouble finding jobs. To them, a shrinking workforces sounds like a good thing: as older workers retire, there will be more jobs for younger workers. For a business, however, workforce decline can be a problem. By the year 2050, the number of highly skilled German workers will decline by about 2 million people. Faced with a shortage of skilled workers, some businesses may choose to leave Germany. Others may shrink their operations or close their doors altogether. The German economy may start to shrink as well.

Not only does workforce decline cause problems for businesses, but it also poses a big problem for the government. Workers pay most of the taxes that support government programs. Fewer workers will mean less tax money just at a time when the dependency ration is rising.

RESPONSES TO A DECLINING WORKFORCE:

Many countries in Europe are trying to slow workforce decline. One approach is to **keep older workers working longer**. Germany, for example, retrains its older workers and gives aid to companies that hire older workers. Other countries encourage older people to work part-time or at home. Another approach to slowing workforce decline is to **encourage more women to join and stay in the workforce**. In the past, a woman often left the workforce after having her first child because she found it difficult to balance work and family life. Women also made less money than men, a further disincentive to work.

Now European governments are realizing how crucial family-friendly work policies are to retaining women in the workforce. Policies such as giving parents paid time off work when they have a baby, allowing flexible work schedules and ensuring quality childcare will hopefully enable women to balance their work and family, therefore staying in the workforce longer. Germany depends on migrants to boost its economy, and has welcomed many refugees from the Middle East in the hopes it will boost their economy.

Source: *Geography Alive: Regions and People*

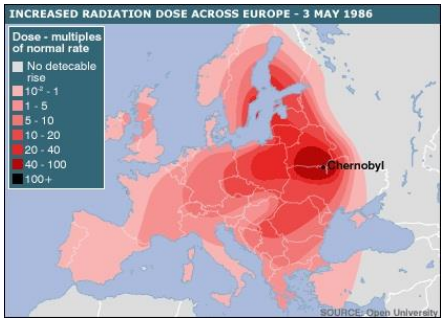
STATION 4: CHERNOBYL RADIATION ACCIDENT

Although thousands of nuclear weapons were produced during the Cold War, nuclear technology's most practical application was for power production. The Soviet government built nuclear power plants throughout its country, the most famous of these plants was located in Ukraine, about 80 miles north of Kiev. Now commonly referred to as "Chernobyl," this nuclear power plant would be the site of the worst nuclear disaster in history.

The Accident

On April 25, 1986, workers at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant initiated a series of tests on one of their nuclear reactors. These tests were thought to be a safe and routine check of how the reactor would perform under a loss of external power. However, things did not go as planned; soon the reactor's temperature had risen to a dangerous level. This was the result of numerous errors made by poorly trained workers who ignored many safety warnings.

Despite a last minute attempt to solve the problem, the **reactor exploded on the morning of April 26**. This explosion blasted the protective cover from the reactor and allowed radioactive elements to be thrown into the atmosphere. The first explosion was quickly followed by a second that threw pieces of the reactor core outward and caused the remaining section to catch fire. This fire would last for nine days. The biggest problem was not the fire, but the **radioactive cloud that formed over Chernobyl** after the explosion.



Radioactive Cloud Spreads Across Europe

The radioactive cloud did not remain over Chernobyl for long. Winds sent it north toward Sweden and south toward Central Europe. The radiation eventually moved across Asia and negligible amounts even reached the United States.

The countries closest to the Chernobyl disaster suffered the most. The hardest hit was Belarus, which received about 70% of the radioactive dust from Chernobyl. As a result, the people of Belarus eat, drink, and breathe radiation every day. This exposure to radiation has led to higher rates of cancer in Belarus than in other countries. Many people in Northern Europe were also greatly affected by the radiation, which contaminated their fishing grounds and animals.

Efforts to Reduce Radioactive Pollution

At first, the Soviet government denied that there had been an accident, but Swedish scientists sounded alarms about rising radiation levels. Finally the Soviets made an announcement:

> *An accident has taken place at the Chernobyl power station, and one of the reactors was damaged. Measures are being taken to eliminate the consequences of the accident. Those affected by it are being given assistance.*

The Soviet government sent an army of engineers to Chernobyl to build a large concrete box around the damaged reactor. This giant tomb will have to remain in place until the reactor is no longer dangerously radioactive, which will take hundreds of years. In addition to securing the reactor, the Soviet government relocated over 135,000 people to safer areas, many without prior warning. Workers were also assigned to destroy contaminated crops, food and animals. Despite these efforts, **an estimated 4,000 people have contracted cancer in Ukraine** caused by radiation.

Chernobyl was the world's worst nuclear accident. Since then, world leaders have paid greater attention to improving safety at nuclear power plants. Changes in reactors make them less likely to overheat and make it easier to shut the reactors down in an emergency. The Fukushima reactor accident in 2011 caused by a tsunami produced 1/5 the radiation of Chernobyl and caused only 2 deaths.

Source: *Geography Alive: Regions and People*, StarSuite.com, *WHO*

STATION 5: THE "BLACK TRIANGLE" AND ACID RAIN

Tourists flock to Europe each year to visit its famous stone monuments, such as ancient Greek temples and Roman bridges that are thousands of years old. They have survived wars, floods and fires, but they may not survive modern pollution. Acid rain is slowly eating away at these precious relics.

Soot from Factories Creates Acid Rain

Acid rain is caused by pollution in the air. Most air pollution today comes from burning coal, exhaust from factories and cars. One major source of air pollution, and acid rain, is the "triangle" where Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic meet. Many factories and power plants are located here, and most of them burn lignite, a soft brown coal, as their main fuel. Because soot from the burning coal blackens the air, this area is often called the "Black Triangle."

When lignite burns, it gives off two chemicals: sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. When these two chemicals react with water, they form acids. Acids are corrosive, which means they will slowly eat away at something until it is destroyed. Acid rain results from sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides mixing with water in the air. When acid rain or snow falls on lakes, it can turn the lake water acidic. In some lakes, high acid levels have killed fish. Acid rain can also harm forests, weakening trees by eating away at their leaves or needles. The Sudety Mountains are on the border between Poland and the Czech Republic, just east of the Black Triangle. That means they are downwind of some of the worst pollution in Europe. If you go there, you will see many sick trees without leaves.

Air Pollution Brings Acid Rain to Other Countries

Ever since people began burning coal as a fuel, acid rain has been a problem. In the past the problem was more severe in cities, where most factories were located and large numbers of people lived. Beginning in the 1950's, however, acid rain was no longer mostly an urban problem. Around that time, coal-burning factories and power plants began constructing very high chimneys. The smoke coming out of these chimneys was carried away by high winds. These new, taller chimneys improved the air quality in industrial cities, but led to the spread of air pollution over much wider areas.

Today air pollution from the Black Triangle results in acid rain and snow falling on many countries. In Sweden and Finland, a great majority of the pollution that causes acid rain originates in other countries, especially Germany and Poland. Naturally, these countries are very concerned about reducing acid rain and the air pollution that causes it. They recognize that such an undertaking involves the cooperative effort of many countries.

Efforts to Reduce Acid Rain

The countries of Europe are trying to reduce acid rain in many ways. One approach is to offer rewards to companies that reduce pollution. Some governments propose doing this by allowing companies that pollute less to pay lower taxes. Another approach is to promote new technologies that result in less pollution. For example, many factories and power plants that burn coal have begun installing devices called smokestack scrubbers, which chemically remove the sulfur dioxide from the gases leaving the smokestack. Catalytic converters work in a similar way to the smokestack scrubber to reduce the emission of nitrogen oxides from the exhaust pipes.

A third approach to reducing acid rain is to decrease the use of coal as fuel for power plants and factories. Scientists are looking for new ways to harness the power of the wind, water and sun, which do not pollute the air or cause acid rain.

Source: *Geography Alive: Regions and People*

STATION 6: SHRINKING OF THE ARAL SEA

In the 1960s, the Soviet Union undertook a major water diversion project on the arid plains of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The region's two major rivers, fed from snowmelt and precipitation in faraway mountains, were used to transform the desert into fields for cotton and other crops. Before the project, the two rivers left the mountains, cut northwest through the Kyzylkum Desert—the Syr Darya to the north and the Amu Darya in parallel to the south—and finally pooled together in the lowest part of the desert basin. The lake they made, the Aral Sea, was once the fourth largest lake in the world.

Evidence from Satellite Images

Although irrigation made the desert bloom, it devastated the Aral Sea. This series of images from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) on NASA's Terra satellite documents the changes in the Aral Sea throughout the past decade (See next page). At the start of the series in 2000, the lake was already a fraction of its 1960 extent (black line). The Northern Aral Sea (sometimes called the Small Aral Sea) had separated from the Southern (Large) Aral Sea. The Southern Aral Sea had split into an eastern and a western lobe that remained tenuously connected at both ends.

By 2001, the southern connection had been severed, and the shallower eastern part retreated rapidly over the next several years. Especially large retreats in the eastern lobe of the Southern Sea appear to have occurred between 2005 and 2009, when drought limited and then cut off the flow of the Amu Darya. The final image in the series is from the summer of 2010, when water levels increased slightly after the drought broke.

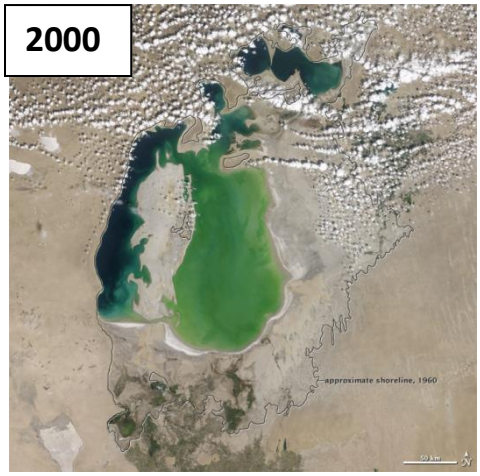
Effects of the Shrinking Lake

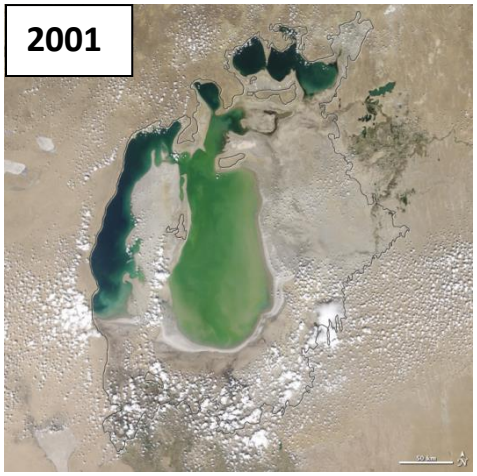
As the lake dried up, fisheries and the communities that depended on them collapsed. The increasingly salty water became polluted with fertilizer and pesticides. The blowing dust from the exposed lakebed, contaminated with agricultural chemicals, became a public health hazard. The salty dust blew off the lakebed and settled onto fields, degrading the soil. Croplands had to be flushed with larger and larger volumes of river water. The loss of the moderating influence of such a large body of water made winters colder and summers hotter and drier.

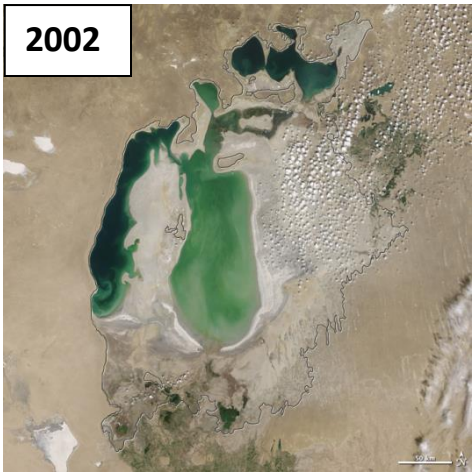
In a last-ditch effort to save some of the lake, Kazakhstan built a dam between the northern and southern parts of the Aral Sea. Completed in 2005, the dam was basically a death sentence for the southern Aral Sea, which was judged to be beyond saving. All of the water flowing into the desert basin from the Syr Darya now stays in the Northern Aral Sea. Between 2005 and 2006, the water levels in that part of the lake rebounded significantly and very small increases were visible throughout the rest of the time period. By 2014, the eastern basin was dry for the first time in 600 years.

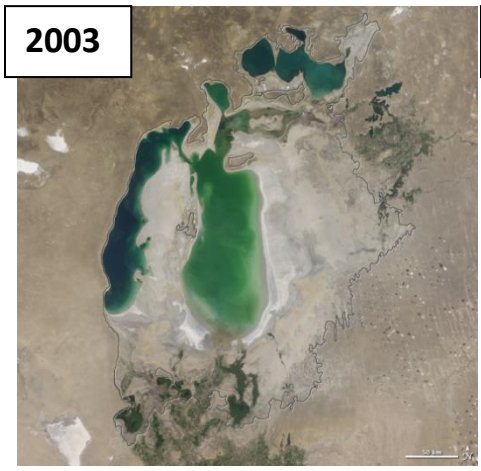
Source: NASA Earth Observatory,

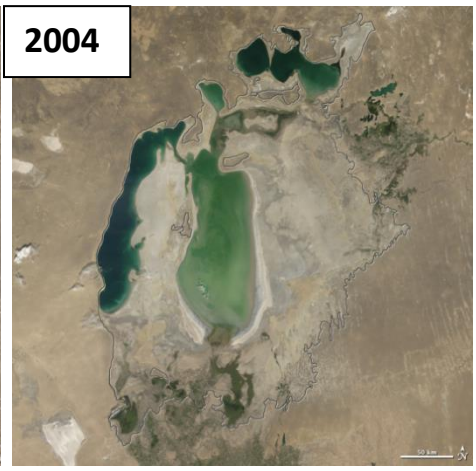
ARAL SEA SATELLITE IMAGES: 2000-2014

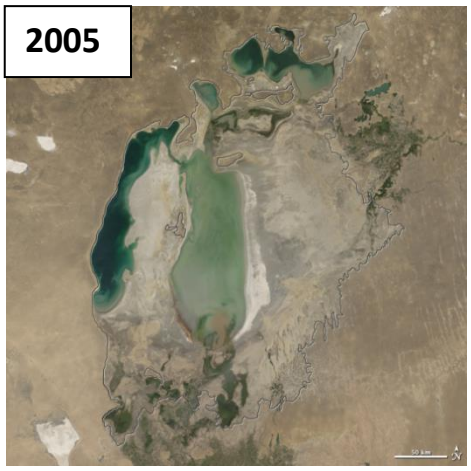


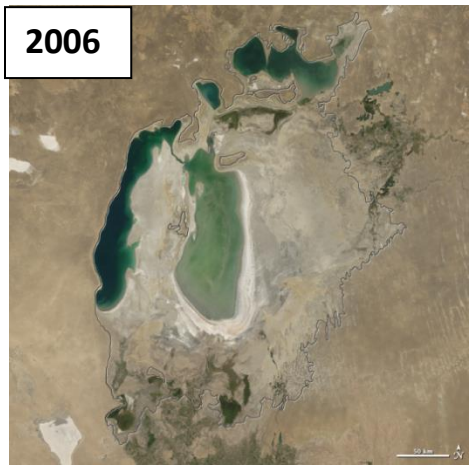


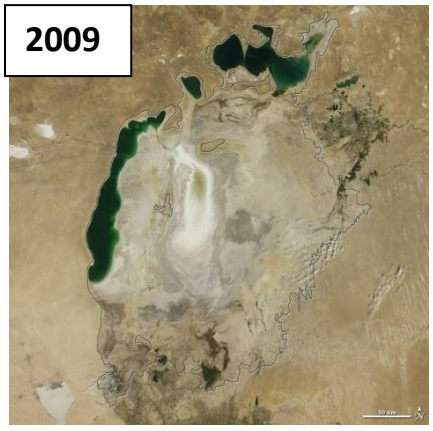


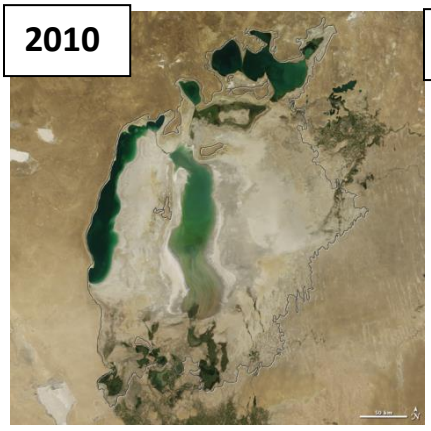












Source: NASA Satellite Images

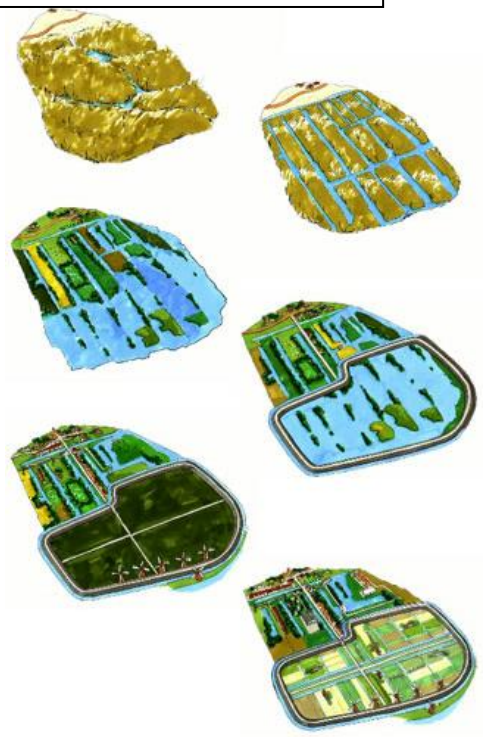
STATION 7: POLDERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

In 1986, the Netherlands proclaimed the new 12th province of Flevoland but they didn't carve out the province from already existing land nor did they annex the territory of their neighbors - Germany and Belgium. The Netherlands actually grew.

Reclaiming Land

The Dutch and their ancestors have been working to hold back and reclaim land from the North Sea for over 2,000 years. Over 2,000 years ago, the Frisians who first settled the Netherlands began to build terpen, the first dikes to hold back the water.

How a polder is made:



In 1287 the terpen and dikes that held back the North Sea failed, and water flooded the country. A new bay, called Zuiderzee (South Sea) was created over former farmland. For the next few centuries, the Dutch worked to slowly push back the water of the Zuiderzee, building dikes and creating **polders** (the term used to described any piece of land reclaimed from water). Once dikes are built, canals and pumps are used to drain the land and to keep it dry. From the 1200s, windmills had been used to pump excess water off the fertile soil; today most of the windmills have been replaced with electricity- and diesel-driven pumps. The new land led to the creation of the new province of Flevoland from what had been sea and water for centuries. The collective North Sea Protective Works is one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Every polder structure is composed of the same building materials (roads, farms, water, planting and in some cases also villages and towns) in constantly evolving configurations. The parcel of land is the most elementary component, and the basic unit with which the entire landscape of Holland is built up. Though agricultural demands always took priority in the creation of the polders, there were also colonies established by the cities, whose wealthy merchants regarded the poldering projects as attractive investments. The influence of the city therefore extended deep into the countryside. Conservationists believed in the preservation of natural areas alongside agricultural and urban areas. Preserved natural areas took the physical form of national parks.

Effects of Poldering

Today, approximately 27 percent of the Netherlands is actually below sea level. This area is home to over 60 percent of the country's population of 15.8 million people. The Netherlands, which is approximately the size of the U.S. states Connecticut and Massachusetts combined, has an approximate average elevation of 11 meters (36 feet). The Netherlands ties Lemmefjord, Denmark for claim to the lowest point in Western Europe - Prince Alexander Polder lies at 23 feet (7 meters) below sea level.

Source: Geography. about.com, Polders: Scene of Land and Water

STATION 8: THE MIGRANT CRISIS

The number of people seeking asylum in the European Union in 2015 reached 1,255,600 - more than double that of the previous year, new figures suggest. Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans topped the list of applicants, with more than a third going to German. Thousands more migrants are arriving in Greece from Turkey every day. More than 10,000 are now stranded in northern Greece on the border with Macedonia, as EU countries have re-imposed internal border controls.

At a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Paris, French President Francois Hollande said migrants had to stay in neighboring countries. He also vowed continued support for Turkey. Speaking after talks with Turkish President Recep Erdogan in Ankara, European Council president Donald Tusk said that, for the first time, a "European consensus" was emerging over how to handle the migrant crisis. The EU on Friday also announced the first payments of a €3bn ($3.3bn; £2.3bn) package aimed at helping Turkey cope with migrants on its soil.

Have EU Promises Been kept?

Thousands of migrants and refugees continue to arrive at Europe's borders, but many are not going anywhere.

New barriers are in place - and violence flared up this week at the Greece-Macedonia border. The EU is split over how to tackle the crisis, before even more migrants arrive as the weather improves. Syrians form the largest group by nationality - among the millions who have fled the country's civil war. Despite some progress, the European Commission said in a report in February that full implementation of the promised measures "has been lacking".

A major point of dispute is the EU's Dublin Regulation. It states that the country where asylum seekers first arrive has a duty to process their claim. Greece and Italy - on the frontline of the crisis in the Mediterranean - have been heavily criticized for allowing people to cross their territory unregistered. Most migrants want to reach Germany or other countries in northern Europe. Greece says it is overwhelmed by the influx, and demands that the burden be shared more equally among its EU partners. The European Commission - the EU executive - is revising the regulation.

The identification process has improved. But progress has been "slow", the Commission says, because of a delay in setting up "hotspot" reception centers at the EU's external borders. The registration process carried out there determines the next step: asylum, relocation or return.

Turkey, which is already hosting 2.5 million migrants, has been reluctant to readmit those who have managed to reach the EU. Sending people back to Turkey is also problematic for the EU. International law forbids returns of asylum seekers to countries if there is a risk of death or persecution there. Only one EU country - Bulgaria - considers Turkey "safe". However, an EU-Turkey action plan agreed last October says those who do not qualify for international protection - that is, economic migrants - can and should be sent back. It takes time however to determine genuine asylum claims.

The International Organization for Migration says 120,369 migrants have arrived in Greece from Turkey so far this year and at least 321 have died en route.

Refugee Migrant (Asylum-seeker)—person fleeing war-torn country such as Syria in fear of their life
Economic Migrant—person who is seeking job and better life by migrating

BBC News 4 March 2016

STATION 9: THE EURO

The euro

The euro is the single currency shared by (currently) 16 of the European Union's Member States, which together make up the euro area. The introduction of the euro in 1999 was a major step in European integration. It has also been one of its major successes: around 329 million EU citizens now use it as their currency and enjoy its benefits, which will spread even more widely as other EU countries adopt the euro. The euro is not the currency of all EU Member States. Two countries (Denmark and the United Kingdom) agreed an 'opt-out' clause in the Treaty exempting them from participation, while the remainder (many of the newest EU members plus Sweden) have yet to meet the conditions for adopting the single currency. Once they do so, they will replace their national currency with the euro.

Which countries have adopted the euro – and when?

1999 Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland

2001 Greece

2002 Introduction of euro banknotes and coins

2007 Slovenia

2008 Cyprus, Malta

2009 Slovakia

2011 Estonia

2014 Latvia

2015 Lithuania

The euro and Economic and Monetary Union

All EU Member States form part of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which can be described as an advanced stage of economic integration based on a single market. It involves close co-ordination of economic and fiscal policies and, for those countries fulfilling certain conditions, a single monetary policy and a single currency – the euro. When the EU was founded in 1957, the Member States concentrated on building a 'common market'. The goal of achieving full EMU and a single currency was not enshrined until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union), which set out the ground rules for its introduction.

Who manages it?

When the euro came into being, monetary policy became the responsibility of the independent European Central Bank (ECB), which was created for that purpose, and the national central banks of the Member States having adopted the euro. Fiscal policy (tax and spending) remains in the hands of individual national governments – though they undertake to adhere to commonly agreed rules on public finances known as the Stability and Growth Pact. They also retain full responsibility for their own structural policies (labor, pension and capital markets), but agree to co-ordinate them in order to achieve the common goals of stability, growth and employment.

Who uses it?

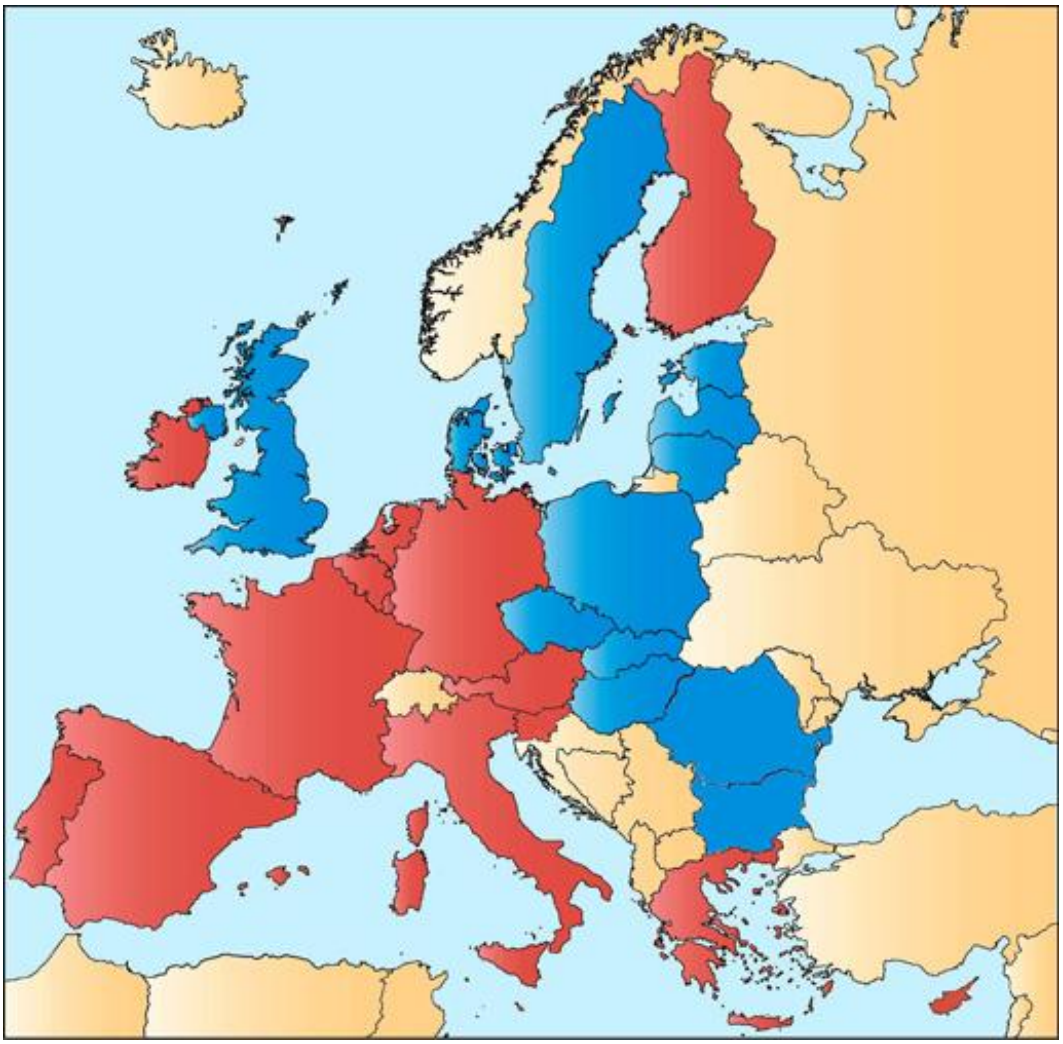
The euro is the currency of the 329 million people who live in the 19 euro-area countries. It is also used, either formally as legal tender or for practical purposes, by a whole array of other countries such as close neighbors and former colonies.

Why do we need it?

Apart from making travel easier, a single currency makes very good economic and political sense. The framework under which the euro is managed makes it a stable currency with low inflation and low interest rates, and encourages sound public finances. A single currency is also a logical complement to the single market which makes it more efficient. Using a single currency facilitates international trade and gives the EU a more powerful voice in the world. Last but not least, the euro gives the EU's citizens a tangible symbol of their European identity, of which they can be increasingly proud as the euro area expands and multiplies these benefits for its existing and future members.

Source: Europa.eu

MAP: USE OF THE EURO



Source: Europa.eu

Red: EU countries using the euro
Blue: EU countries not using the euro

STATION 10: EUROPE AND MULTICULTURALISM

Across Europe, politicians have been questioning multiculturalism and urging more assimilationist policies. The result has been greater emphasis on civic integration, linking of family reunification to integration policy and new rhetorical emphasis on loyalty, integration and commitment to European values.

Multiculturalism means different things to different people:

As a value: Relativists feel that all cultures are of equal value and it is impossible to reject particular aspects of cultures as unacceptable. This understanding of multiculturalism is shared by the ideological extremes.

As aid to integration: This is the version of multiculturalism traditionally adopted in the Netherlands, though it is now being rolled back. It holds that migrants best integrate through their own language and culture rather than that of the receiving state.

"Inclusive" multiculturalism: A third concept holds that migrants may maintain those aspects of their culture that do not violate the law or basic values of the receiving country. It is widely espoused in the United Kingdom and Canada.

There has been a recent change in tone in Europe concerning migrants' commitment to Europe's liberal values, with a new emphasis on integration. These developments have been accompanied by a change in government approaches to multiculturalism:

- **United Kingdom**. A U.S.-style citizenship ceremony was introduced in 2004; from 2005, naturalizing migrants have had to pass language and citizenship tests.
- **France**. In 2004, a ban was imposed on the wearing of Muslim hijab in school. Policymakers also adopted a "social integration contract."
- **Germany**. The government provides for 600 hours of language training and 30 hours of civics instruction for migrants. Head scarves have been banned for teachers in six German states. Berlin is currently debating new naturalization tests.
- **Netherlands**. Policymakers have explicitly embraced integration as a policy aim. Both new and settled immigrants are now required to pass an integration test. Rules on family reunification were also tightened.
- **Denmark**. All new migrants attend obligatory civics and language classes. Their family members must wait three years to enter the country and must pass an "attachment test."
- **Sweden**. The new integration minister is proposing a ban on veils for girls under 15; an end to arranged marriages; and a ban on funding for religious schools.

Both the rejection of multiculturalism as a substantive integration policy and the turn toward civic integration in Europe pre-dated the terrorist attacks in the United States, Madrid and London. They are largely a reaction to socio-economic failure among ethnic minority communities. The policies this change of mind engendered are likely to remain. The rhetorical shift is more likely to be a contingent feature of integration politics.

Yet there are limits to retrenchment as far as multiculturalism is concerned. One of its core of ideas--that individuals are free to retain their cultural attachments so long as they do not interfere with their integration into society--remains. More important, some rights that might be thought of as "multicultural"--the right to practice one's religion, to bring one's family members together, to join religious and cultural associations--are individual rights that are basic to liberal societies. The turn from multiculturalism in Europe is apparent in the realms of both policy and rhetoric. While the new interest in integrationist policies in Europe reflects the economic and educational failure of Europe's ethnic minority communities, the rhetorical shift against multiculturalism reflects the rise in Islamic extremism. These shifts are likely to be permanent. However, they do not amount to a wholesale rejection of all aspects of multiculturalism.

Source: Forbes.com

STATION 11: EUROPE AND LANGUAGE

English becomes Europe's second language
English has become Europe's second language of choice with two thirds of people in the continent able to speak it, according to a survey. The study found that English is the first foreign language studied in secondary schools in every country outside Britain and Ireland.

The results of the survey are a particular blow to the **French**, who recently launched a failed bid for their language to be made the sole official language of the **EU** headquarters in Brussels, claiming their mother tongue was "more precise". However the report by Eurostat, the EU's statistics body found that only 12 per cent of people wanted to be French speakers, compared to 66 per cent for English and 20 per cent for German. "English is far ahead of any other as the first choice as a foreign language," the report said. "Behind English, people are choosing to learn German and Russian. Knowledge of French as a foreign language is low."

It has also prompted calls for the EU to cut back on the £1 billion it spends every year translating official documents into the organization's 23 recognized languages. A spokesman for the Foreign Office said: "It's only right that the EU institutions think carefully about every penny they spend to ensure that they're getting the most from their money. "Governments across the EU are reining in their spending and EU institutions should do exactly the same."

Last month, Pascal Smet, a Flemish-speaking Belgian politician **outraged his country's French speaking community** by calling for English to become Europe's "common language". "I note that the engine of European integration is sputtering. One reason is that we do not speak the same tongue, hence my plea for a common European language," he said. "It seems logical to me that this is English, which is already the lingua franca of international economics and politics. French is not spoken anywhere in the world while English is now increasingly becoming a global language."

Source: Telegraph.co.uk

MAP: EUROPE'S LANGUAGES

STATION 12: IRON CURTAIN TRAIL

For nearly 50 years the Iron Curtain divided Europe into East and West. After 1989, in the place where the Curtain used to stand something new was created: 6,800 kilometres of cycle track.

A cycle track with history

Cramer, a member of the Green Party (Germany), has just arrived back from a trip that ended on the border between Hungary and Austria. For three days he had been travelling by bike. The politician has been travelling along the cycle route which is his passion: the track along the former Iron Curtain which passes right through the middle of Europe. "This cycle track starts at the Norwegian-Russian border and ends at the Black Sea. It passes through 20 states and 14 of those are EU members states," Cramer says. Sometimes the track passes other routes, like the cycle path along the Danube or the one along the Baltic Sea. It is a cycle track which follows the former border between Eastern and Western Europe – and it has many links to Europe's history. Michael Cramer wants to make this route more popular.

From Berlin Wall track to cross-European project

The project started shortly after the Berlin Wall fell. At that time, Cramer was a councillor in Berlin. "I went on the Zollweg on the western side of the wall in the summer of 1989. It was easy, you couldn't get lost. One year later, in spring, I went cycling on a track between the two parts of the wall where the soldiers used to patrol. But then a lot of it was destroyed, so we had to find another route," Cramer explains. The track grew longer and longer. At first it was just a route along the Berlin Wall, but then cyclists could ride along the whole former border between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Then it became a cross-European track, passing from the north to the south - the Iron Curtain Trail. The aim of the project was to take cyclists on routes as close to the former border as possible.

The cycle track – more than a sports event

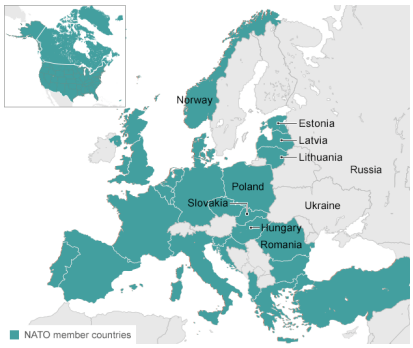
On the German section of the track the cyclists pass about 300 open-air museums and memorials on their way. Cramer also wants to integrate historical features on the borders between Finland and Russia and Austria and Hungary. "And on this cycling track you can say: This is the place where the continent was divided. It was an evil time. But now Europe is reunited and we can cycle here – either in the Eastern or the Western part," he adds.

Dismantling mental barriers

You can buy special guidebooks which show you the way and explain the most important historical events. For example, they tell you how refugees managed to escape from the GDR and in which areas. Over the next few years there are plans to enlarge the cycle track and put up special signposts so that cyclists can find their way more easily. Cramer has already cycled 2,000 kilometres of the track – and he wants to do the remaining 5,000. For Cramer crossing the former border without any problems is still a special feeling. "When I cross the border in Berlin I always recognise it. Once I went across it while I was asleep in the train – and I woke up at the moment when we reached the border. It was really weird." Biologists have found out that animals in the Czech Republic and Bavaria still stop at the place where the Iron Curtain used to be – although they could just go on. But they turn around and go back. These animals still seem to have the wall in their heads. Some people also do. "We hope that the next generations can live without this border," Cramer says. And the European Iron Curtain Trail could help.

STATION 13: NATO AND RUSSIA RELATIONS

The Ukraine conflict has pushed NATO-Russia relations to a new low, and there are fears that the old Cold War suspicions and hostility are back. Relations have been deteriorating for years, despite some fruitful co-operation in Afghanistan, anti-piracy efforts at sea and shared peacekeeping operations.



NATO accused Russia of sending regular military units and heavy armor into eastern Ukraine to help separatist forces. Some called it an invasion by stealth. Russia denies the allegations and accuses Ukraine's pro-Western government of aggression. Finally, Russia announced an annexation of the region of Crimea, in violation of international law, despite extraordinary international protest. Since then, Russia has been suspended from the G8 Conference of world leaders.

What other tensions with Russia led to the current chill?

Eastern Enlargement: The end of communism brought a clamor from East and Central European politicians for NATO membership, as a protection against any future aggression by Russia. NATO membership was also seen as a mark of commitment to Western values and standards. In 1999 - nearly 10 years after the Berlin Wall fell - NATO admitted three former Warsaw Pact countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. More former Soviet bloc countries joined NATO in 2004: the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Russia was particularly riled by the expansion of NATO to the Baltic states, which were formerly in the USSR and viewed from Moscow as part of the "near abroad". That phrase, commonly used by Russian politicians, implies that ex-Soviet states should not act against Russia's strategic interests.

Missile Defense: The US-led development of an anti-ballistic missile defense system alarms Russia. NATO argues that the missile interceptor shield will be purely defensive, posing no threat to Russia, and that it is intended to thwart any future missile attack by a rogue state. Iran and North Korea are seen as potential threats to Western security in that connection. Russia wanted an equal partnership with NATO in developing such a system. But that option was not pursued.

Georgia & Kosovo Conflicts: Russia's brief war against Georgia in August 2008 soured relations with NATO. During the war Russia backed separatists in two breakaway regions of Georgia - South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia smashed the Georgian military, which had tried to reoccupy South Ossetia. Russia poured troops into Georgia - and the West called Moscow's actions disproportionate. Later Russia recognized the two breakaway regions as independent, but in reality it is a frozen conflict, as the regions are not recognized internationally.

Serbia has never accepted Kosovo's secession - achieved with NATO help in 1999. Russia, Serbia's ally, froze military co-operation with NATO shortly after the alliance launched large-scale bombing raids on Serbia in 1999. Kosovo broke away in an armed revolt by separatists and there was international outrage at the brutality of Serb security forces. NATO intervened when civilians fled the Serb forces en masse, pouring into neighboring countries.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO): an alliance formed after WWII due to the aggressive military expansion of the Soviet Union
WARSAW PACT: an alliance formed by the Soviet Union and satellite countries for mutual protection

By Laurence Peter BBC News