

Evert **Van De Poll**

Europe and the Gospel:

Past Influences,
Current Developments,
Mission Challenges



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Robert J. Merez

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Kerry Fast

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Endorsements

If you are passionate about the Gospel and curious about Europe, this is a book for you. In a series of essays, Professor Van de Poll leads us as an able tour guide into the wide field of European culture in search for its Christian roots – written by a true European addressing his fellow Europeans.

Dr. Patrick Nullens – Rector and Professor of Christian Ethics, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven (Belgium).

This is a ground-breaking text giving a clear and easy-to-read overview of how the Bible and its message have been integral to the making and shaping of Europe. It's a story everyone – Christian or non-Christian – should be taught as it contains the keys to and values needed for a sustainable and just Europe for tomorrow.

Jeff Fountain – Director, Schuman Centre of European Studies, Heerde (Netherlands).

Twenty years after German reunification and its declared commitment to a unified Europe, the author has endeavoured to describe the role of the Christian message in the process that started 2000 years ago and is yet to be concluded. This is impressive research on the background and development of Europe – written from an evangelical perspective with the goal to find the *Sitz im Leben* for the Gospel within Europe.'

As Evangelical Christians, we are part of a long history of the development of what can be legitimately called 'Europe.' The author discusses political, psychological, social, religious, and cultural aspects of this development, which have far-reaching implications for a contextualised, meaningful Christian message if it is to fulfil its original purpose.

Dr. Klaus Müller – Professor of Missiology, Freie Theologische Hochschule, Gießen (Germany).

Remarkably attuned to current European affairs, this book presents us with other aspects of Europe than just its economic dimension. The author describes how its spiritual and religious identity has developed in the course of its history, and how the predominance of Christianity has made way for a multi-religious society.

Pastors, missionaries and other evangelists will find here food for reflection and the basis for well informed and positive action.

Dr. Christophe Paya – Professor of Practical Theology, Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine (France).

Evert Van de Poll's book on the evangelisation of Europe is one of very few books which reflects on this theme on the basis of a sound historical, sociological and missiological analysis.

With this endeavour, the author takes up the heritage of Lesslie Newbigin in *Can the West Be Converted?* (1985), and *Foolishness to the Greeks: the Gospel and Western Culture* (1986). Some have continued in the same vein, for example, Friedemann Walldorf with his historical study, *Die Neuevangelisierung Europas* (2002), and Jean-Georges Gantenbein in his doctoral thesis, *Mission en Europe* (2010).

Nevertheless, studies on evangelism in the specific context of Europe are still very rare. Evert Van de Poll's book is therefore very timely. This reflection continues to grow in importance as the continent of Europe continues its process of de-Christianisation.

Dr. Hannes Wiher, Associate Professor of Missiology, Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine (France).

Preface

Born and raised in the Netherlands, I have lived and studied in the United Kingdom for a number of years. This was followed by a period of Christian ministry and secular profession in my home country. In 1998, my wife and I moved to France where we are pastors with the Baptist Federation, involved in church development and leadership training.

We live near the southernmost city of Perpignan, in an area that has close economic links with Spain. It is also marked by an upsurge of Catalan language and culture. Many people identify with the Catalans across the Pyrenees in Spain, who have their autonomous region with a strong tendency towards independence. So we find ourselves on the crossroads of several cultural and national identities.

Meanwhile, I am part of the ministry of the Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) in Leuven, on the outskirts of Brussels, 'capital' of the European Union. I almost wrote, 'in the suburbs of Brussels,' but I realise that the cultural distance between the two is much larger than the small number of kilometres that separate the faculty campus from the office buildings in the European Quarter of Brussels.

Having pursued my walk of life from one European country into another, and having been engaged in teaching activities outside the continent, I have become increasingly aware of the specific socio-cultural character of Europe. In comparison with other regions of the world, our continent stands out as a whole, despite its cultural diversity, or maybe even because of that.

Working and living in different parts of Europe has also made me aware of the challenges of communicating the Gospel in this context. I feel the need to look at 'my' continent from different angles in order to better understand its specific socio-cultural character. This has led me to write a series of essays on the world in which I live. I am particularly interested in the influence of Christianity on the shaping of Europe, and its role in current developments such as the process of economic and political integration that has resulted in the European Union.

My purpose is to give a bird's eye view of Europe as a whole, so my position is that of a generalist. I make no claim to specialism or originality.

Each of the subjects dealt with would merit an in depth study on its own, and the available literature is enormous. While this is work for a specialist, there remains a need for generalist studies that try to present a synthesis. I have consulted English, Dutch, French, German, and some Spanish sources. My feeling is that I just gleaned the corners of the field. The more languages one masters, the more resources one will find. The more one reads, the more one realises how vast each particular subject is.

I am writing as a European, addressing fellow Europeans. As I observe what is happening in the continent as a whole, I do not pretend to be altogether neutral. I have lived and worked in the western part of Europe. That has allowed me to have an inside experience in Latin, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon cultures. While this already represents a considerable variety of contexts, it is still very limited in comparison to the cultural mosaic of Europe as a whole. I am a keen observer of, but still an outsider to Scandinavian countries, Eastern Europe, Greece and the Balkans. When people living in those countries read my text, they might sense that it bears the marks of a western point of view. To some extent, this is unavoidable. Everybody in Europe is inclined to look at the continent from the biased position of his or her own country. This is true in all directions: people look from the west to the east and vice versa, from the north to the south and vice versa, from the periphery to the centre and vice versa. As long as we are willing to accept the limits of our standpoint, we can be enriched by those of others. That is why I submit my text to the critical assessment of readers in other European contexts. Our continent is too rich in diversity to be grasped by one person only!

In these essays, I bring to light the impact of Christianity on the societies of Europe, past and present. My aim is not only to provide the inquisitive mind with answers and suggest further questions, but also to encourage the reader. The story of the Gospel and Europe began long ago, right at the beginning of the Christian era, and has developed into a remarkable history. The good news is that it has not ended yet! So let us take courage, for the sake of Christ, the communication of his Gospel, the edification of his church and the service of our neighbour in his Name.

Evert Van de Poll
Perpignan, April 2013

Introduction

Ambiguity and Paradox

When we study Europe, we have to clarify our position. Where is Europe? Are we talking about somewhere or something outside our immediate sphere of living, or about something which we are part of?

Living inside and feeling outside Europe

Curiously, many people all over the continent recognize that they're inside Europe but they feel and think and act as if they are outside. For them, Europe begins where their country ends. While they live in Europe in a matter-of-fact-way, they feel that Europe lies outside their national border, as a larger circle around it. Somehow or another, their mind's map does not correspond to the map of physical geography, according to which Europe starts where they are, right within their country.

This ambiguity is typical for Europeans. When they talk about 'Europe,' they usually mean the continent excluding their own country. It is a Europe-outside-the-wall, so to speak. 'Europeans' are the inhabitants of neighbouring countries who speak foreign languages and have other customs.

In a sense, this is only logical. Europe as a nation does not exist. There is no such thing as a European citizenship. Our identity cards are national.

Of course, we trade with other Europeans. We have educational exchanges. We translate their books. We spend our holidays in their countries; we like to discover their historic cities, their nature resorts, their touristic attractions, their restaurants and their food. But even while border controls have disappeared to a large extent within the continent, we still cross a mental border whenever we leave our national territory. Then we 'go into Europe.'

Inversely, our neighbours who from our point of view are in 'Europe' do not consider themselves to be inside Europe. In their eyes, it is us who are the Europeans because we are outside their country.

Where do Christians stand?

Christians are no exception to this tendency to think of Europe as something outside of 'us.' Their churches have a national rather than a European scope. Europe as a mission field lies outside their country.

But this is a misleading representation of reality. Whether we like it or not, Europe starts where we live. We are part of it. Of course, we are also Dutch, French, German, and so on, but at the same time we are European. This is our continent. This is our context. This is where we are called to be a light. Communicating the Gospel in Europe is not 'foreign mission' but 'home mission.' Inversely, what we do for the advancement of God's Kingdom in our own country is 'European mission.'

These affirmations go against the grain of another trend: all over Europe people reemphasize national identities, or regional identities in the case of the Flemish, Scots, Catalans and others. A growing percentage of the population is increasingly apprehensive of further economic integration, the bureaucracy of 'Brussels,' and federalist ideas. All of that is labelled 'Europe' in a pejorative sense. At first, our countries wanted to be part of the European Union; as soon as they were in it they felt called to defend national interests.

In today's multicultural societies, the majority of the population is increasingly receptive to populist ideas that capitalize on the nation, its cultural heritage, its way of life, and its tradition. All of this has to do with identity. On the one hand, there is a sense of belonging to Europe. On the other hand, people identify with their country or their region rather than with Europe as a whole.

How about Christians? To what extent do they share these trends? The question needs to be asked. All the more so since populist movements often support their ideas with a claim to the 'Christian roots' of Europe.

What is our contribution as Christians to the future of Europe? What is our position in a multicultural society? These are challenging questions to which we must respond.

Before we think about our mission, we should come to terms with this curious habit of positioning Europe outside our country, even though we are part of it. We should begin with the realisation that we are in Europe, for better or worse. We are part and parcel of it, and we are in it together with many others. Europe is not only 'them,' not only 'us,' but 'them and us.' Europe does not begin where I cross the border and when I try and understand another language. Europe begins where I live, where I speak my own language, and where I attend church.

So when we talk about Europe, we are dealing with 'us.' To be more precise, we should say 'with all of us,' because we are many countries, many languages, many religious communities and many ways of life. Studying Europe is a good way to put local things in a wider perspective. And maybe it will help us to get rid of some chauvinist pride and prejudice as we come to appreciate others.

The paradox of a Christianized and secularized continent

Besides this ambiguous way of talking and thinking about our continent, there is another ambiguity when it comes to Europe as such; i.e. paradoxical relationship between Europe and the Christian religion.

Ever since the Gospel became known to scattered Jews and their neighbours in Philippi, Corinth, Rome and other places on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, it has deeply influenced the history of the peoples in that part of the world that has come to be known as Europe. So much so that without the spread of the Gospel, the impact of the Bible and the influence of institutional churches, Europe as we know it today might never have come into existence.

A sweeping statement indeed! But a justified one, given the role of Christianity in the making of Europe. The message that originated in Galilee and Jerusalem has created a cultural, religious and social framework for the peoples living in the continent. Christianity has become the major factor in the political and cultural development of Europe as a whole, and of each European country in particular.

Europe is *the most Christianised of all continents*. No other part of the world has been exposed to the message of the Bible for such a prolonged period of time and in such a consistent way as this continent. Nowhere else is there such a rich Christian heritage. Its cultures are still rooted in Christian values.

At the same time, Europe is *marked by the abandonment of Christianity, more than any other part of the world*. It has given birth to a secularised worldview, atheism, secular lifestyles and political ideologies, so much so that it is called post-Christian.'

Having said that, the question is how the message that was important in the making of Europe can have a positive impact on the secularised and multicultural societies of today. What does it have to say about the foundational values, the identity and the future of Europe?

In order to answer these questions, we should always take into account this paradoxical love-hate relationship between our cultures and societies on the one hand, and the Christian religion on the other hand. This really is a key to understanding our continent.

Chapter 1

Look at Europe

1.1. What's in a Name?

In this opening chapter we will give a general picture of Europe, its population and its position in the world. To begin with: how did we get our name? The answer is quite a story. We owe the name to the ancient Greeks. The oldest sources date from the sixth century BCE. Most linguistic scholars agree that the word 'Europe' was originally a female Greek name. Etymologically, it is a contraction of *eurus* (εὐρύς 'wide') and *ops* (ὤψ, 'face'). *Europé* literally means: 'someone with large eyes.' In Ancient Greece, this was also a designation of the earth.

Others have suggested that the word *Europé* was originally derived from the Acadian word *erebu*, 'going down' (of the sun) or 'evening,' or from the Aramaic and Hebrew equivalents *ereb*. Indicating the direction where the sun sets, the word could also mean 'west.' Interestingly, the word for 'rising' (of the sun), and 'morning' is *asu* or *asa*.' According to some historians, this is the origin of the term 'Asia.'

Whichever theory about the etymological origin of 'Europe' is correct; one thing is for sure, the Greeks associated this name with the regions where, according to them, the sun set. And this has remained the case. Europe equals the West, the Occident. In contrast, when the Greeks looked eastward, to the regions where, according to them, the sun rose, they designated them as 'Asia.' Thus, Asia equals the East, the Orient. It begins at the coast of Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, which European merchants called the Levant, literally the land of the 'rising' (sun).

The division between the Orient (sometimes called Morning Land) and the Occident (or Evening Land) has deeply marked the consciousness of Europeans and non-Europeans alike.

Geographical and cultural meaning

The ancient Greeks used the name Europe mainly in a geographical sense. Initially, it referred to the regions north of the Gulf of Corinth. According to the ancient Greeks, this meant that Europe lay to the north of the centre of the world in which they situated themselves. Sometimes, the whole of the Greek mainland and the Greek isles were collectively called *Europé*, in order to distinguish them from the regions to the east, Asia. When used in this sense, the name took on a cultural connotation, as it denoted their own civilised culture over and against what they considered to be the inferior way of life of the Persians who dominated Asia. To the Greeks, the people of Asia were Barbarians. Greeks and Persians

fought bitter wars for many centuries. The siege of Troy is part of this ancient conflict: the city lay on the border of Greek Europe and Persian Asia. Following Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire in the fourth century BCE, Greeks sought to Hellenize the peoples of Asia.

More often than not, the name *Europé* also included the regions north of Greece, even though it was not clear where it ended. Ancient scholars discussed this matter at length, without arriving at a consensus. The famous traveller and historian Herodotus (484-425 BCE) wrote:

Concerning Europe, nobody knows whether it is not surrounded by seas, nor does anyone know where its name has come from and who has given it to this continent. Perhaps we could agree that it stems from the name of a Tyrian woman called *Europé*, for whom this continent was as nameless, however, as the other continents. Enough about this matter! As for me, I will at any rate no longer use this name that has become familiar through common usage.¹

The myth of Europe

Herodotus is referring to a Greek myth in which we meet a certain *Europé*. According to the myth, Zeus, the supreme deity, disguised himself as a bull in a meeting with the Oceanides, a group of beautiful young women who were playing on the shores of the Phoenician city of Tyre (in present-day Lebanon). However, he was interested in only one them; the young and attractive *Europé*, daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre. Captivated by her beauty, Zeus seduced her and took her for a ride on his back, but then kidnapped her, swimming to the distant isle of Crete. There he took her as a concubine, and she gave birth to Minos. The pair had two other sons. In order to honour her, Zeus named the regions north of Crete after her.

But, as Herodotus rightly remarks, this story had nothing to do with the region to which his contemporaries had attributed the name Europe. The only geographical clue that the *Europé* myth suggests is that the isle of Crete lies at the crossroads between the three major parts that made up the world for the scholars of Antiquity: *Europé* in the north, *Asia* in the east, and *Africa* in the south.

There might be another clue to this curious story. Mythology is never just a product of fantasy, nor just the distraction of storytelling. There is always a message behind these stories. Couched in mythological language, they are telling us something about the real world. What intention or what lesson

¹ "Europe, definition" in: Ancient History Encyclopedia, <http://www.ancient.eu.com/europe/> [13 November 2011].

might the ancient Greeks have had in mind as they transmitted this story from generation to generation?

At a face value, this myth might underscore the Oriental origin of the name Europe. Don't forget, they seem to admonish the Greeks that the land we live in owes its name to people of the East. It was their idea to call us 'Europe,' the 'land where the sun sets,' the 'West.' In his study of the origins of Europe, George de Reynold argues that this was indeed the point. 'Obviously, it was only in the eyes of Asians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, and Egyptians, that the Hellenic peninsula and all that lay behind were the land where the sun sets, the land of the night, the land of the north. This geographical evidence underlines the view that the word Europe has a Semitic, Phoenician origin. And history has confirmed this view.'²

Why perpetuate the story of this Oriental princess whose name we bear? Several sources attest to the fact that 'Europe' had a cultural connotation for the ancient Greeks. They sometimes used it in opposition to Asia and the Persians who lived there: 'Asiatic' meant vulgarity, lavishness, despotism and anything Persian, as opposed to 'Europe' which was identified with Greece and hence with freedom and civilisation.

Is this myth perhaps a critique of such prejudice, such feelings of superiority? Is it a reminder that the origins of their civilisation lay partly in the West and partly in the Orient? Did it convey the message to the Greeks that they needed to draw from Oriental sources to develop their philosophy? That the West cannot live without the East? That we need to remain open to what the Orient has to tell us? A number of authors commenting on the myth think that such is indeed its hidden message. The French philosopher Boucouna Seye, for example, writes: 'the image of a cultural mixture emerges from this story; Greek identity has become stronger for having opened itself to the Orient.'³

Centuries later, Christian authors like Lactantius retold the same version of the myth to point out that the spiritual origins of Europe lie in Asia. In Jerusalem to be precise. 'The real ruler of the West comes from the East,' they stated, referring, of course, to Jesus Christ. This is a tempting interpretation, even though it goes beyond what the ancient Greeks could possibly have had in mind.

In our day and age, the myth is used to tell yet another story. As of 2012, an image of this mythical princess appears on euro bank notes to illustrate the common destiny of the nations of Europe.

² George De Reynold, *La formation de l'Europe*, p. 116

³ Boucouna Seye, 'La racine idéaliste à la base de la construction du projet européen,' in: Hélène Yèche, *Construction européenne*, p. 18.

Eastern limit settled much later

From the Greeks, the name *Europé* passed on to the Romans, who took no particular interest in it. The Roman Empire united the regions north, south and east of the Mediterranean Sea, which they therefore called *mare nostrum*, 'our sea.' They also borrowed the idea of civilisation and its corollary, 'the Barbarians outside,' from the Greeks. All the conquered peoples were brought under the umbrella of a Greco-Roman civilisation. People living outside the Empire, such as German and Celtic tribes in the north, were simply called 'Barbarians,' and their ways of life considered inferior.

Maps from the beginning of the Christian era have survived on which *Europé* appears to be a reduced area in the Balkans. On a map drawn in the fourth century CE, this is the name of one of the six provinces of the Diocese of Thracia. Its territory covers approximately present-day European Turkey.

During the Roman period, 'Europe' was rarely used. The name corresponded to the regions north of Italy, while excluding Scandinavia, the British Isles, and the Iberian Peninsula.

The present-day geographical meaning of Europe began developing in the Middle Ages. Finally there was agreement over its contours in the south (Mediterranean Sea), the west (Atlantic Ocean) and the north (Arctic Sea). However, there was still uncertainty over the delicate question where Europe ended in the east. For one, the Russian 'hinterland' was unknown territory for most Europeans. Besides, no clear-cut natural division existed that marked where European Russia ended and Asian Russia began.

In the eighteenth century, with the advent of the modern era, the scientific world finally agreed on the contours of the continent. From that time onward, Europe has had the boundary with which we are now familiar. It reaches from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Ural and the Caspian Sea in the east. In the south it is bordered by the Caucasus Mountains, the Black Sea, the Bosphorus Strait, and the Mediterranean Sea.

This boundary had first been proposed by Tsar Peter the Great in the seventeenth century because he wished Russia to be part of Europe. In 1730, the German cartographer Philipp Johann Tabbert, called Strahlenberg, followed the lead given by the tsars, and presented a detailed geographical description of the eastern limit of Europe. Geographers have adopted the demarcation line as described by Strahlenberg. For that reason, Europe and Asia are now separated by the Ural Mountains and the Ural River that flows from there to the Caspian Sea.

A small continent

Europe is a small continent. Africa and North America are four times as big, Asia five times as big. Geographers often call it a subcontinent or a peninsula of Asia,

because there is no natural oceanic border between them. Together, they are called the Eurasian continent. Europe only represents one fifth of this enormous landmass, as we can see on the following map.

Europe's area is 10.4 million square kilometres. More than forty percent of that is taken up by the European part of the Russian Federation. Consequently, Europe-without-Russia covers about six million square kilometres. The surface of the twenty-seven states that make up the present European Union is about 4.4 million square kilometres.

A comparison with the ten largest nations of the world helps us to put Europe's area in a global perspective. The Russian Federation covers more than 17 million square kilometres, Canada nearly 10 million, China 9.5 million, the United States 9.4 million, Brazil 8.5 million, Australia 7.7 million, India 3.2 million, Argentina 2.8 million, Kazakhstan 2.7 million, and Sudan 2.5 million.



Figure 1.1 Europe and Asia.

1.2. Population: Ageing and Changing

Our continent, little in size, is a very crowded one, with more than 715 million inhabitants.⁴ This is the third densest population concentration in the world, after China and India, but well ahead of the United States and any emerging nation in the South.

In demographic statistics, a distinction is usually made between Europe and Russia, i.e. the Empire of the Tsars and the subsequent USSR in the past, and currently the Russian Federation. Other statistics distinguish between the 27 members of the European Union and the rest of Europe, including or excluding Russia. All of this can be quite confusing. As of 2012, the EU counts 503.5 million inhabitants, the rest of the continent 211.5 million.⁵ The latter figure includes the population of the European parts of the Russian Federation and Turkey.⁶

Although Europe's population continues to grow, its growth rate is much slower than that of the world's population. On a global scale, Europe is losing ground. This is not a recent development; it has been going on since the end of the nineteenth century, but it has accelerating since the 1960s. In 1900, Europe without the countries of the former USSR represented 18 percent of the world's population. In 1950, the percentage had diminished slightly, but still amounted to 16 percent. Fifty years later, however, it had shrunk to merely 8 percent, while at the time of writing at the end of 2012; it is down to 7.3 percent. Predictions are that this downward trend will continue.

If we would include the countries of the former USSR, the overall picture would be the same. At the moment, the whole continent represents just over 10 percent of the global population.

From baby-boom to granny-boom

Not only does Europe show less population growth than the rest of the world, its population is also ageing. The median age has been rising slowly over the last two decades; it will rise more sharply in the near future. In 2009 the average European was 40.6 years old, it is estimated that he/she will be over forty-five in

⁴ This figure includes the European parts of Russia and Turkey. Source: *Statistiques-mondiales* <http://statistiques-mondiales.com/europe.htm> [1 November 2012].

⁵ *Statistiques-mondiales* <http://statistiques-mondiales.com/europe.htm> [1 November 2012].

⁶ According to the Russian bureau of statistics *Rosstat*, 110 million Russians live in the European part of the Russian Federation, i.e. 79.3% of its total population of 138 million. The European part of Turkey has 13.5 million inhabitants, i.e. 17% of its total population of 79.8 million (*Statistiques mondiales* <http://statistiques-mondiales.com/europe.htm> [1 November 2012]).

2050. Two factors contribute to this phenomenon: (1) rising life expectancy and (2) decreasing birth rate.⁷

The baby boom after the Second World War has not continued. The birth rate has dropped to an historic low. Meanwhile, due to prosperity and increased medical care, life expectancy is still increasing. Over the last fifty years, it has risen by around ten years for both women and men, to reach 82.4 years for women and 76.4 years for men in 2008. At the moment the 'gain' is more than one month every year.

Natural growth (the difference between births and deaths) is very low. In comparison with one or two generations ago, the number of children per household has diminished considerably. Birth rates in the various European countries range between 1.5 and 2.0 children per woman. This is well below the so-called replacement rate of 2.1, which is needed to keep the numerical size of a population stable. Demographers talk about a 'baby crisis' and a 'granny boom,' fewer young people, more people of older age. This trend will go on well into the twenty-first century. In 2000, fourteen percent of the European population was sixty-five years or older. In 2050 this percentage is expected to be at least twenty-five percent, and possibly even as high as thirty-three percent.⁸

The financial implications of the current demographic trends are staggering. In Europe there are now thirty-five people of pensionable age for every one hundred people of working age. If the present demographic trends continue, there will be seventy-five pensioners for every one hundred workers by 2050. Since in most major European countries, pensions are financed out of current revenues, tax rates will have to increase substantially if benefits are not to be cut.

Immigration growth

Despite low birth rates, natural growth in the EU as a whole remains positive: 0.212% in 2012. Moreover, the EU continues to attract large numbers of immigrants. This trend has been going on for several decades now. In 2005, the immigration surplus (i.e. the number of immigrants minus the number of people leaving to settle elsewhere) of all the member states together swelled to 1.8 million. This figure has remained stable until 2008, when the economic crisis hit Europe and governments introduced more restrictive immigration

⁷ For the trends and figures mentioned in this section, see: EU and Eurostat, *Demographic Report 2010* (published in 2011).

⁸ European Commission/Eurostat, *Demographic Report 2010*, p. 42ff, and *Statistiques-mondiales* <http://statistiques-mondiales.com/europe.htm> [consulted November 1, 2012]

policies. Since then, the surplus has decreased, but it still amounts to more than 1 million per year.⁹

In 2012, the EU counted more than 20 million citizens born outside the EU, representing 4% of the population. These immigrants, who have obtained the nationality of their destination country, are mainly concentrated in the western part of Europe.

Birth rates in immigrant communities are considerably higher than among the rest of the population. Not only because immigrants are younger than the general population, but also because of different cultural patterns of family size and the caring role of women (childbearing, taking care of the household) that persist among second and following generations. This is evident in the large families and the number of Turkish-German schoolchildren in Hamburg. The same scenario can be seen among North African background French citizens, and Nigerian-British residents in London. Second-generation immigrants represent a growing proportion of the population, especially in the big cities in Western Europe.

This continued influx plus the relatively high birth rates among citizens of non-European ethnic origin and cultural backgrounds account for almost eighty-five percent of the total population growth.¹⁰

As this phenomenon has been going for some decades now, the socio-cultural and religious face of the European population is changing drastically. Our societies are becoming increasingly multicultural, and this raises further questions. Will these communities assimilate or remain distinct from the European environment? If they wish to maintain their way of life, to what extent will they integrate into society? And will old-stock Europeans accept their different cultural and religious expressions? These and other questions are taken up in the chapter on immigration, multiculturality and the issue of (Muslim) integration.

The prospect of population decrease

While the population of the EU as a whole is still growing slightly due to the factors set out above, predictions are that it will decrease in the near future. In some member states, it is already diminishing, as we can observe in the following table.¹¹

⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰ Vladimír Špidla (ed.), *Europe's Demographic Future*, p. 25. See also: *Europe: Population and Migration in 2005*. Migration Information <http://migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=402> [14 November 2011].

¹¹ *Eurostat*.

Table 1.1 Population of selected European countries in 2002 and 2011.

Country	Population in 2002	In 2011	Increase/Decrease
Germany	82,440,309	81,751,602	-0.8%
France	61,424,036	65,075,310	5.9%
United Kingdom	59,216,138	62,435,709	5.4%
Italy	56,993,742	60,626,442	6.4%
Spain	40,964,244	47,190,423	12.7%
Belgium	10,309,725	10,918,405	5.9%
Netherlands	16,105,285	16,654,979	3.4%
Ireland	3,899,702	4,480,176	14.9%
Hungary	10,174,853	9,986,000	-1.9%
Bulgaria	7,891,095	7,504,868	-4.9%
Lithuania	3,475,586	3,244,601	-6.6%
Total EU-27	484,635,119	502,489,143	3.7%

What this table does not illustrate, however, is the changing picture following the economic crisis of 2008, as fertility rates declined again and fewer immigrants entered the EU.

Between 2009 and 2012, the population of the Western countries still increased, but during the same period, Germany 'lost' one million inhabitants, as its population decreased from 82.3 to 81.3 million. All the countries in the eastern part of the EU saw their population diminish at similar rates: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, the Baltic states, Romania and Bulgaria. Further eastward, the picture is more dramatic. Between 2009 and 2012 alone, Ukraine saw its population decrease from 44.7 to 43.8 million, Moldavia from 4.3 to 3.6 million, European Russia from 112 to 110 million. During the last two decades, the whole of the Russian Federation has seen its population diminish by 13 million!

Widespread impoverishment and economic inequalities stimulate emigration and have a negative effect on the birth rate. An additional factor is the lasting effect of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. Seventy percent of the fall-out of radioactive substances has fallen in Byelorussia. Since then, this country has had the highest rates of abortion and child abandonment in Europe. It is unlikely that this country and the north of Ukraine will attract new residents in the foreseeable future.

Experts predict that between now and 2050 the total population of the EU will shrink. Figures vary from -3 to -22%, as compared to the 1995 level.

For Eastern Europe, the estimation is as high as -30% in the most pessimistic scenario.¹² It should be added that these countries do not benefit from the demographic 'benefit' of ongoing immigration; this phenomenon mainly affects the Western countries. In theory, a major increase of immigration to Eastern Europe in the coming years is possible. In that case, demographic decline will be less dramatic.

Predictions of decline

The social implications of the current demographic trends are staggering. By mid-century, if current trends continue, Europe will be a society in which most adults have few biological relatives! In a rather alarmist book on world demographic trends, Philip Longman states:

Europe doesn't face the prospect of *gradual* population decline, but the prospect of *rapid* and compounding loss of population unless birth rates soon turn upward.

Like population growth, he explains, population decline operates on a geometric curve that compounds with each generation. He predicts that if Europe's current fertility rate of about 1.5 births per woman persists until 2020, this will result in 88 million fewer Europeans by the end of the twenty-first century.¹³

The prospect of a declining population suggests economic contraction or even a possible economic crisis. Some media have alerted politicians and the general public about what they call Europe's baby crisis. Governments have noted the problem, while the EU, the UN and NGOs continue to warn of a possible crisis. History shows that, generally speaking, population decline is intrinsically related to economic decline, and this will sooner or later be coupled with political decline. This is one of the reasons why economists and sociologists speak of the 'decline' or the 'impoverishment' of Europe in the coming decades, as compared to countries with economic and demographic growth, such as the US, China, India, and Brazil.

Such predications are valuable in that they cause people to take stock. They are appeals to act according to the principle of precaution. They should incite us to change our behaviour in order that the future will not turn out to be as

¹² See: *The Impact of Ageing on Public Expenditure: Projections for the EU25 Member States on Pensions, Health Care, Long-Term Care, Education and Unemployment Transfers (2004-2050)*, Economic Policy Committee and the European Commission (DG ECFIN), 2006. http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication6654_en.pdf [2 December 2011].

¹³ Philip Longman - *The Empty Cradle*, p. 15.

bleak as the predictions. One can compare it with the catastrophic ecological scenarios that are regularly presented by scientists and transmitted by the media. Moreover, presenting a disturbing future might spark reactions that would prevent the prediction from becoming reality. In other words, the prophecy of population decline might be self-*unfulfilling*!

These predictions have only relative value because they do not take into account exceptional factors, such as an unexpected increase in immigration, an unexpected rise of the birth rate, or the inclusion of new members with a growing population such as Turkey or the Caucasian states. Neither do they reckon with unpredictable aggravating factors such as a pandemic disease or a destructive war, causing perhaps millions of deaths. At any rate, demographic prognostics always have to be used with considerable caution. In the past, such predictions have all too often been proven wrong by the facts. Nevertheless, the trend of diminishing growth and the possibility of population decrease cannot be ignored.

Surely these figures are based on assumptions with respect to the population decrease in the coming years. As we have stated above, these assumptions might well be confounded by the facts. In that case, the number of immigrants needed to keep the European economy healthy will be much lower.

Immigrants needed, at least on the short term

As the population ages, the percentage of young people diminishes and this has dire economic consequences. Younger generations are generally more innovative, energetic and enterprising than older generations, who seem to be more concerned with stabilising what has been achieved. It can be expected, therefore, that our economies will thrive less in the long run. One already notices a difference between Europe and the USA and countries with emerging economies that have younger populations and more vibrant economies.

Demographic statistics indicate a shortage of skilled labourers on a scale that will endanger economic growth and the stability of numerous industries. There are two possible solutions: increased birth rate and increased immigration. European governments are now taking measures to increase the appeal for households to have more children; one has to think of higher family allowances, prolonged parental leaves, adapted work patterns, etc. But such measures only contribute to a change in fertility rates which takes more time. These effects will be felt in the medium term and long term.

In the short term, only immigration can provide the necessary work force. Moreover, immigration will counter the demographic decline, since the median

age of immigrants is much younger than that of the majority population¹⁴ and birth rates of immigrant communities are higher. According to the Council of Europe, the EU as a whole needs 1.8 million immigrants per year until 2050 if it wants to keep its population stable at the level of 1995. But in order to keep the economies running and to maintain the current ratio between active and retired people, many more immigrants would have to come in: over three million annually.¹⁵

These figures are staggering. If the experts of the Council of Europe are right, the present level of immigration, as high as it may be in the eyes of many European citizens, is insufficient to maintain our level of prosperity and welfare. However, authorities are careful to balance the need for immigration with an emphasis on the need for integration. Several countries are adopting a policy of selective immigration. The objective is to promote and encourage highly-skilled migrants to come, if needed and where needed.

1.3. Global Influence

What is Europe's place in the world? The present world scene is characterised by what is called globalisation. It should be noted that this globalisation originated in Europe. Historically speaking, this process really is the continuation and further extension of what began as the global spread of European trade and multinational business, science and technology, transport systems (railways!), languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch), culture (dress, music, calendar, etc.), educational and administrative systems, political structures (representative and constitutional democracy), and military methods on a worldwide scale.

From initiator of economic globalisation to one of its players

Historians agree that that the first forms of economic globalisation were the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the sixteen century, followed by the East and West India Companies of England, the Netherlands and France in the seventeen and eighteenth centuries.

Of course, these were not the only forms of globalisation. Before that, the Muslim world had expanded its religion and culture to northern Africa and

¹⁴ 'Majority population' is used in French demographic studies as a reference to what others call 'autochthones' or 'old stock Europeans.' Each of these terms has its own connotations. We will generally use 'majority population,' because we find this the more neutral term.

¹⁵ See *The impact of ageing on public expenditure*, footnote 12 [2 December 2011].

southern and central Asia, and earlier still there was the cultural and political expansion of the Roman Empire, the Hellenistic conquests, not to mention the Chinese and Mongol expansions in the history of East and Central Asia. But as impressive as these empires have been, they did not yet develop a network of commerce and exploitation of resources linking the five continents to the cause of one. This is what European explorers and trading nations set out to do. Thus, they set in motion a development that would lead up to ever more interaction between the economies around the globe.

European expansion came to an end at the time of the Second World War and its aftermath. The war had devastated Europe and depleted its resources. In the following decades, the colonies in the rest of the world gained independence.

Nowadays, Europe is caught up in the maelstrom of the globalisation that it once set in motion, and of which it was the prime actor for more than four centuries. In the course of the twentieth century, the nations of the Old Continent were bypassed by the USA. Since the 1960s, they have to compete with Japan, and soon afterward with other rivals: China and the growing economies of emerging nations like India, Korea, and Brazil.

Be this as it may, Europe as a whole still counts in the world. It is likely to remain a major global player, while its cultural influence continues to be considerable.

First economic region in the world

Europe counts five of the ten largest economies of the world: Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia. Taken together, the European Union constitutes the largest concentration of economical activity, counting for twenty percent of all the gross national products of the world combined. In comparison, the United States counts for nineteen percent and China for fourteen. Here are some other figures to illustrate the weight of the EU in the global economy (as of October 2011):¹⁶ The EU is the single largest economic market, with a capital flow of 2378 billion euro in comparison to 1416 billion Euros for the United States and 2235 billion euro for Asia.

When we look at countries that share the euro, we notice a remarkable growth in employment, despite the worldwide financial crisis that hit in 2008. In this so-called Eurozone, 12.5 million new jobs were created between 1999, when the euro was launched on the financial markets, and 2011. This is nearly twice as many as the United States (6.7 million new jobs in the same period), even though the number of inhabitants is not considerably

¹⁶ Figures updated till October 2011, mentioned by Thierry Chopin et al., *L'Europe d'après*, p. 89.

different (332 million in the Eurozone, against 311 in the US). Moreover, the euro is the second most important reserve currency in the world. To date, it has preserved its high value with respect to the American dollar, the principal global currency.

The European Union is the principal actor of commercial exchange and of capital investments. Due to its good infrastructure and its solid educational systems, it remains the first destination of foreign investments in the world: 230 billion euro in comparison to 100 billion euro for the United States and 80 billion euro for China.¹⁷

Particular political influence

Moreover, the political weight of Europe in world affairs is still considerable. Three of the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations are European: Great Britain, France and the Russian Federation. In a recent publication on the development of Europe and its place in the world, Pascal Fontaine has summarised well the way in which it exerts its influence:

Europe is the first commercial power in the world. As such, it plays a decisive role in international negotiations, such as the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations. In these contexts, Europe particularly emphasizes themes like the protection of the environment, the development of sustainable sources of energy, the principle of precaution with respect to food and medicine, the ethical aspects of biotechnology, and the protection of endangered animal species.

Europe plays a pioneering role in the battle against climate change. It was to first to decide a target level for substantially reducing the emissions of CO₂. In 2008, it took the commitment to reduce them with at least 20% towards 2020.¹⁸

Russia still counts in the world

We should also take note of the continued influence of Russia, the Russian Federation to be more precise. It is often overlooked that this nation is part of Europe as far as her culture, her population and her main religion are concerned. But its borders go far beyond geographical Europe, and its political influence reaches worldwide. Russians play a dominant role in space technology. Russian language and culture as well as Eastern Orthodox Christianity are still very much present in the Central Asian Republics.

¹⁷ See also Emmanuel Sales, "Non, l'Europe n'est pas au bord du gouffre!" in *Le Figaro*, 10 October 2011.

¹⁸ Pascal Fontaine, *12 leçons sur l'Europe*, p. 9.