

Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, with the ten new members of the EU preparing to join. On the day when the Accord came into force early in 1995 there were 24-hour queues at the German-Polish border.

**?** *As the external borders of Europe are strengthened it could be argued that a form of "fortress Europe" is being built. How far do you agree with this analysis?*

Having sketched some of the major developments on our continent and its relations with other parts of the world, it is time to examine closer what is happening on the ground.

## Minorities in Europe

Attention! A minority in one place can easily be a majority in another place.

**?** *When is a minority not a minority? When is a powerful elite! Do you agree?*

### Local Minorities

In nearly every state there are "traditional" minorities: ethnic groups who have been present for centuries but who have different characteristics, manners, habits and ways of life from the majority. Multitudes of examples could be cited; here are some, you can find many more. European history is littered with expansionist movements, trading relations, religious and military conquests. All of these have provoked movements of peoples, of cultures. The eleventh century Norman knights managed to set up dominions as far apart as Britain, Spain and Sicily; the forces of the Ottoman Empire reached the walls of Vienna in 1529 and again in 1683; Lithuania was the biggest state in fourteenth century Europe. (We have to be careful with historical "facts" like this; for instance, depending on your point of view, the biggest state in fourteenth century Europe could be described as Polish, not Lithuanian - this difference in analysis is a matter of controversy even today). Many places have seen terrible times; as Richard Hill points out, the town of Ilok now on the eastern border of the independent state of Croatia is an illuminating example. At the time of the Ottoman Empire, Ilok was a Muslim settlement. Before that it was Catholic. In 1930, many of the inhabitants were German and Jewish. In 1991 it counted 3000 Croats, 500 Serbs and 1900 Slovaks descendants of migrants from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A year later, in 1992, the population consisted of 3000 Serbs. Since the war finished, the majority population is once again Croat.

**?** *Does a town near you have a similar history?*

For Spain these traditional minorities are, mainly, the Roma and Sinti (or Gitanos) people, who are also an ethnic minority in many other countries, and the Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities residing at Ceuta and Melilla. In Sweden there is a sizeable Finnish

minority. In Turkey an estimated 17 per cent of the population are Kurds. There are 21,000 Travellers in Ireland. About nine per cent of the population of Rumania are Hungarians.

Until the 1980s it seemed, from the outside - as though Yugoslavia was one of the most positive examples of different peoples living peacefully together. Now it is difficult to know how far that picture was false or to know to what extent real inequalities were hidden from view. What is clear is the complexity of relations between Slovenians, Bosnians, Croats, Muslims, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Albanians, Gypsies and Greeks - to name just those included in the 1991 census.



*How many people do you need to be to form a "minority group"?*

Having been in the minority within the federation of Yugoslavia, Slovenians are now the majority in Slovenia with around 88 per cent of the population. Declarations of independence and the carving up of territory after wars have played an enormous role in "creating" minorities. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians were living outside of the Russian Federation and - particularly in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia - formed minorities of some magnitude in the newly independent countries. In 1920 the Treaty of Trianon cut off two-thirds of Hungarian territory together with one third of its population and many of those people stayed in their towns and villages. Their descendants can be found mainly in the Slovak Republic, Romania and the states that used to make up Yugoslavia.

The decision to recognise or define a group of people as a "minority" is a fundamental challenge and a danger. It is dangerous because it can lead to increased discrimination and segregation. On the other hand it can lead to an increase in the rights and responsibilities of a particular group.

No state in Europe has within its borders people who only speak one language, although there are some that choose to have only one official language. Language plays an enormous role in the culture of a people. Particularly in the last few decades, speakers of minority languages have been demanding official recognition, to receive schooling in their language, and to be provided with the opportunity to set up their own media (publications, radio, television programmes).



*What other types of rights could/should such minorities have?*

The Council of Europe has examined the situation of "national minorities" on a number of occasions since 1949, the first year of its existence. Although it is possible to understand that the term refers to those peoples who have been forced to migrate to another country or who find themselves living in another country because of border changes, it has proved impossible to reach consensus on the interpretation of the term "national minorities". The Vienna Summit's Declaration of 1993 [see Appendix I] gave new impetus to the drive to protect such minorities. As a result, the member States have decided to use a pragmatic approach in the Framework Convention for the Protection

of National Minorities adopted in November 1994: the convention contains no definition of “national minority”, allowing each case to be viewed according to the particular circumstances in each State. Those States that sign and ratify the convention commit themselves legally to enable national minorities to preserve the essential elements of their identity, in particular their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage. Self-definition is also important and Article 3.1 acknowledges the right of individuals freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as belonging to a national minority.

**?** *Has the country where you live signed and ratified this convention?\**

\*Have a look here:  
[www.coe.int/  
minorities](http://www.coe.int/minorities)

## **Migrants, Immigrants, Refugees**

Terminology is difficult also in this area. It is accepted practice in many European countries to talk of “migrants” as people who have origins in another country, there is even a Migrants Forum funded by the Commission of the European Communities. To those young British passport holders from Manchester who are of, say, Jamaican origin and whose parents were born in Britain, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that this Forum could be for them. Some talk of “immigrants”, others of “guest workers” and some Council of Europe reports speak of “stocks of foreigner populations”. Although it would suit some forces if migrants were to remain just that, it has become increasingly clear that most of them are here to stay. And many of them are nationals of the countries where they live.

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**?** *If a foreign couple have a child in your country, is the child also a “foreigner”?*

Problems of definition and different methods of collecting statistics mean that, often, comparable data between countries does not exist. Almost by definition “illegal immigrants” are incredibly difficult to count but, especially for unscrupulous politicians, incredibly easy to estimate. (It is a little like the concept of the silent majority - as it is silent anyone can claim to speak for it). People are not “illegal”, it is the legal system which defines them so. If you add to these considerations the fact that each country has different rules and rates for processing applications for naturalisation, it seems obvious that statistics have to be viewed with extreme care. Yes, even the few we use in this education pack.

**?** *Where can you find such information? Who produces it? Who uses it?*

We have referred earlier to the differing patterns of migration within and into Europe. Until the beginning of the 1990s the main cause of immigration was the re-unification of the families of migrant workers who had settled in the sixties and seventies. Italy, Portugal, Greece and Spain have recently become countries of immigration, having been countries of emigration before. (Did you realise that Melbourne in Australia has the largest Greek population after Athens and Thessaloniki?) Along with France, Italy

and Spain are the main destinations of immigrants from North Africa.

At a migration conference of the Council of Europe in 1991 it was being predicted that, within three years, up to twenty million people would emigrate westward from the countries of the ex-Soviet Union. This has not happened but such wild predictions have helped produce public support for increasingly strict immigration controls in Western Europe.



*What is the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?*

Throughout the world there has been a massive increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the last decades. One estimate placed the increase in Europe at 980 per cent in the period 1983 -1992: from 70,000 to 685,700. Their origins were world-wide, with the majority coming from Eastern Europe and Turkey. Clearly, the horrific conflict in former Yugoslavia produced the highest increase in the movement of refugees and internally displaced people in Europe. According to the High Commission on Refugees in January 2004, the total number of “people of concern to them” in Europe were 4,403,921. Worldwide, the ten largest movements of refugees were all to African countries.



*The 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention provides definitions and procedures for the acceptance of asylum seekers. How does the country where you live implement them?*

## The Legal “Welcome” to Those Coming from Outside

Depending on where you live, your nationality and your financial status, you will find it easier or harder to move to and work in a European country (or from one to another).

If you have at least 100,000 dollars in the bank you will experience few problems in obtaining a visa or a residents permit in most countries. Many countries have stopped issuing visas to foreign nationals who are already within their borders. Take the example of someone who is visiting their family on a tourist visa and wishes to remain; this person must then leave the country and apply for a new visa, with all the costs and stresses of separation this would entail. Strict regulations have been placed on transport companies to ensure that they carry only passengers with the right to enter a particular country. A company in breach of the regulations is liable to be fined and must cover the cost of repatriating the passengers concerned.



*What is the difference between a Visa and American Express?*

Unless you work for a large transnational company, you will have massive problems in obtaining permission to live and work in any of the countries within the European Economic Area (EEA). But nationals of those countries are allowed to move relatively freely from one to another. Although regulations do differ in nuance, the basic challenges