

Lesson 2

The Geography of Europe

Lesson Focus Question

Where in the world is the European Union?

Introduction

In this lesson students will examine the physical geography of Europe and learn which countries are in the European Union. Land size, population data, and other attributes are examined as they compare to the United States and other nations around the world.

What's the Big Idea?

- ☑ The European Union, with 27 Member States, is larger in population than the United States and many other nations. In terms of land area, the EU is about half the size of the United States. The population density of the EU is high. European Union countries share a Mediterranean coastline with North African and Middle Eastern nations and borders former Soviet countries to the east (Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova).

NCSS Themes Addressed

- III – People, Places, and Environments
- IX – Global Connections

Knowledge

The student will know

- relative size of the EU to other nations in terms of population and land area.
- Which European countries are EU members

Core Skills

The student will be able to

- read for information.
- transfer data from graphs into tables.
- use data to determine population density.

Materials Needed

- [Map of Europe](#) Visual
- *Comparative Maps* Worksheet
- *Population Density* Worksheet
- Tape or string to mark off a 6' x 6' area on the classroom floor
- Calculators
- Scissors
- PowerPoint for Lesson 2

Time Needed to Complete this Lesson

One 55 minute class period

Procedures

1. Begin this lesson by projecting the *Map of Europe* Visual showing the 49 countries in Europe. There is an interactive [map online](#). Of these countries, 27 are members of the EU, while four are candidates for EU membership, and another five "potential candidates" are on the path to membership. Ask students "How does one define Europe?" Explain to students that even the EU's own treaty does not elaborate: "Any European state...may apply to become a member of the Union." [Treaty on the EU, Art. 49(1)] There is no universal definition. More conventional definitions could exclude a current candidate for EU membership, Turkey, for example. For purposes of this lesson, Europe is defined by membership in the European Union. Distribute the *Comparative Maps* Worksheet and a pair of scissors to students. Ask them to cut apart the five maps and use them as overlays to each other in order to estimate their relative sizes. For example, China and the United States are approximately the same size. The United States is approximately half the size of Russia. The United States is about 25 times larger in land area as Japan.
2. Point out to students that their comparisons of the European Union to the other regions included EU member countries and non-member Switzerland. The total land area of the EU member states is 4,234,000 km².
3. Show students *Comparative Size Data* Handout bar graph comparing the land area of the EU to the land area of China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. This comparison indicates that the EU is relatively small in comparison to China, Russia and the United States.

Next, draw attention to the bar graph of the population of the EU, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. While large compared to other world powers, the population of the EU member states is only about 1/3 of the population of China. The bar graph includes only the EU member states.

4. The more significant understanding for students to grasp is the relationship between land area and total population, or *population density*. Population density can be computed by the students for the five geographic areas by dividing the land area by the total population. Have students complete the Population Density worksheet.
5. To actively engage students in an understanding of the high population density of Europe, mark off an area on the classroom floor that is approximately 6' x 6'. Ask 4 students to stand in the square. This represents the population density of the United States. Ask students if they feel that they have plenty of "elbow room", feel free to move about, and aren't constricted. Most students will say they are comfortable. Ask students to hypothesize as to how many additional students need to be added to the square to approximate the population density of the EU. Add 11 additional students (for a total of 15) inside the square. Again

ask students if they feel as they have plenty of “elbow room”, feel free to move about, and aren’t constricted. Answers will change from earlier when describing the US. Ask students why they think these are important questions for governments to ask. Answers might include that the information would be helpful in determining the numbers of roads, hospitals, police and fire stations, etc. that a state or country needs.

6. To gain a better understanding of the individual countries within Europe and their relative size (land area and population), show students PowerPoint slides 7 and 8. Give students the same information for the 50 US states and have students find states that are similar in size to the countries of Europe.

Resource: [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Summary/Review – To review the key points of this lesson, show students the PowerPoint presentation.

Assessment

1. In comparison to the United States, the land area of the 27 countries that make up the European Union is roughly
 - A. the same size.
 - B. twice as large.
 - C. one half the size. *
 - D. 25 times the size.
2. In comparison to the United States, the population density of the 27 countries that make up the European union is roughly
 - A. the same size
 - B. 1/3 the size
 - C. 2/3 the size
 - D. 3 ½ times the size. *
3. Why is population density important?
 - A. population density impacts lifestyle
 - B. population density influences behavior
 - C. population density determines use of natural resources
 - D. all of the above *

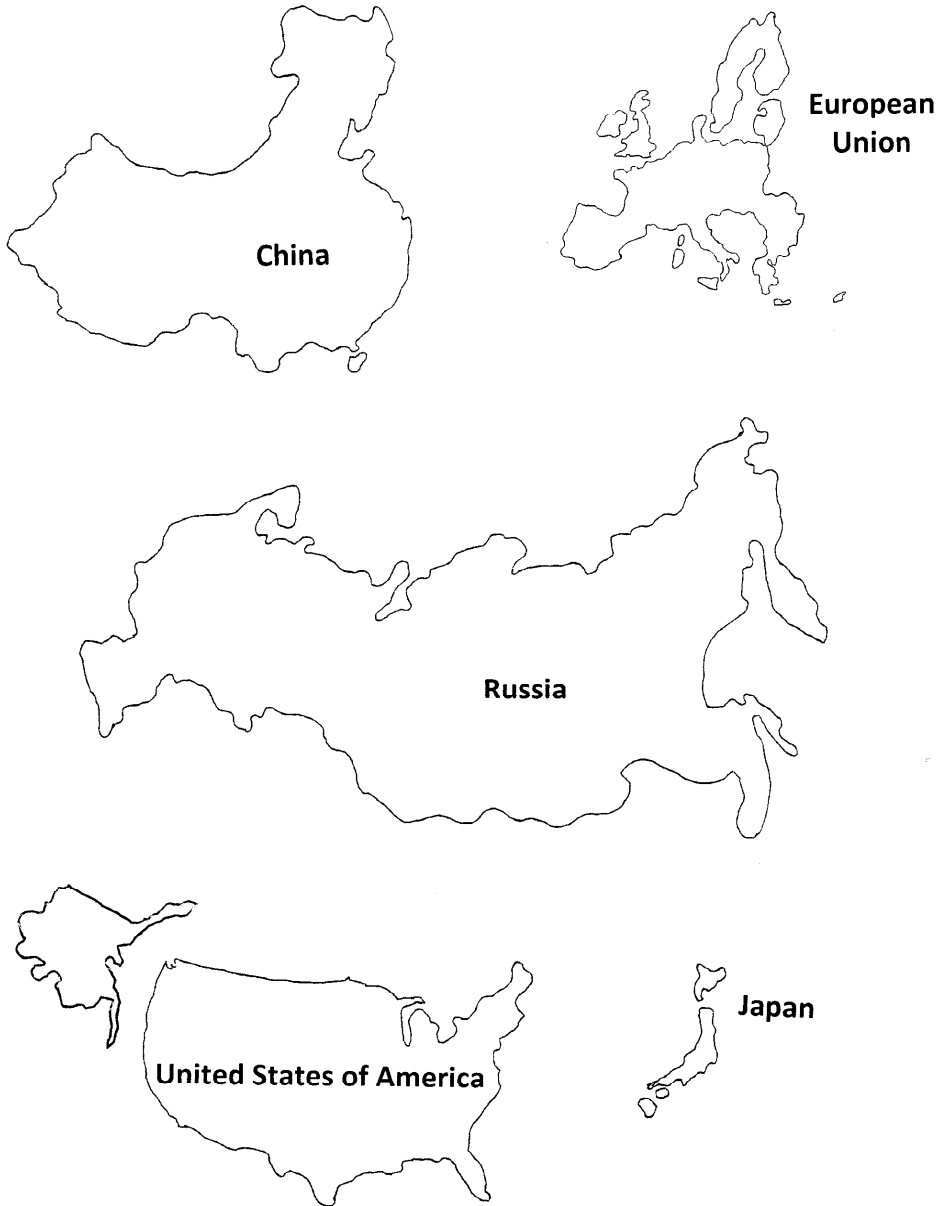
Map of Europe

* Countries shaded purple are candidates for EU membership



Comparative Maps

Directions: Cut the five maps apart and overlay them to determine the ratio of their relative size.



Population Density

Directions: Use the data in the bar graphs to calculate the population density of each area.

	Land Area	Population	Population Density
European Union			
China			
Japan			
Russia			
United States			

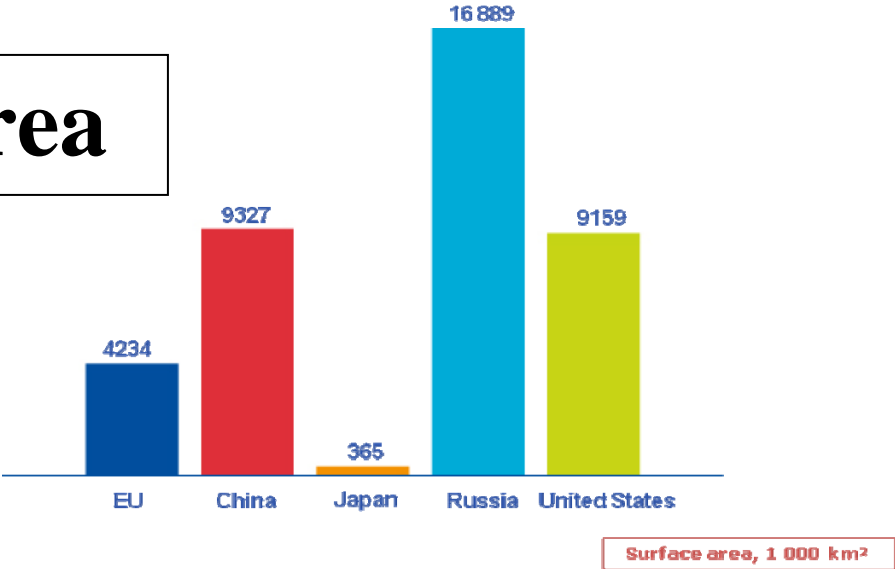
Population Density

Directions: Use the data in the PowerPoint to calculate the population density of each area.

	Land Area	Population	Population Density
European Union	4,234,000 km ²	500,000,000	118 people per km ²
China	9,327,000 km ²	1,339,000,000	143 people per km ²
Japan	365,000 km ²	128,200,000	351 people per km ²
Russia	16,889,000 km ²	142,000,000	8 people per km ²
United States	9,159,000 km ²	307,000,000	34 people per km ²

Comparative Size Data

Land Area



Population

