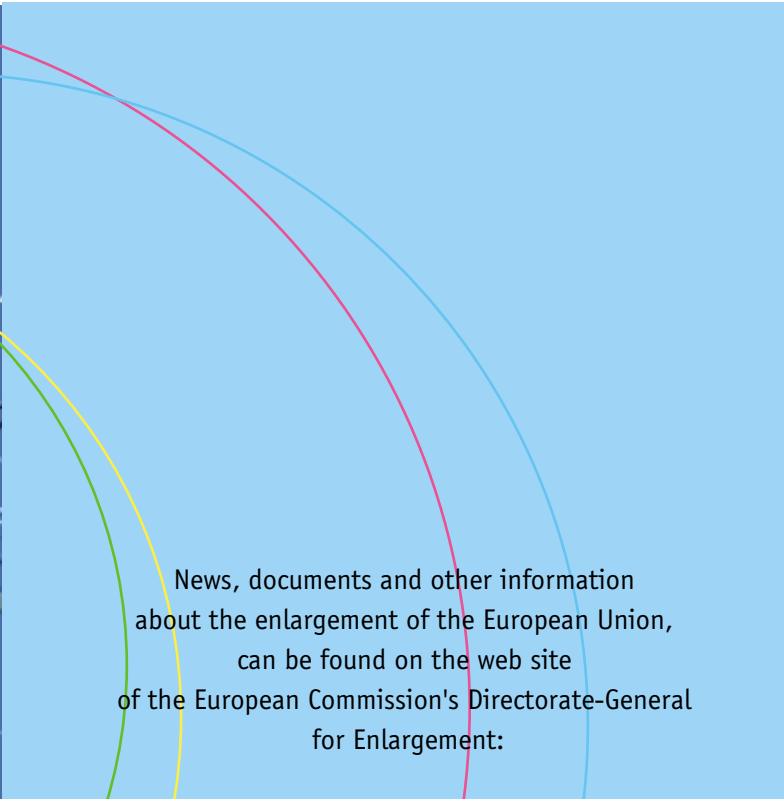


Enlarging the European Union





News, documents and other information
about the enlargement of the European Union,
can be found on the web site
of the European Commission's Directorate-General
for Enlargement:



europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement



Enlargement for a stronger and wider Europe

The European Union is currently engaged in its most ambitious enlargement ever. The aim is to reunite the European continent and thus to consolidate peace and democracy and enable its peoples to share the benefits of progress and welfare generated by European integration.

The 13 countries described in this folder have applied to become members of the EU. Negotiations about the circumstances for accession are under way between the EU and 10 candidate countries of central Europe, as well as Cyprus and Malta.

Each candidate country progresses towards membership at its own pace depending on the situation in the country. In order to become a member of the EU, a country must have a stable democracy that guarantees the rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities. It must also have a functioning market economy as well as a public administration that is able to apply and manage EU laws.

The EU helps the candidate countries to modernise their societies through 'accession partnerships', which include substantial financial support from the EU and exchange of experience and knowledge.



Bulgaria

[*Bǎlgarija*]

BG



© EKA

Capital: Sofia [*Sofija*]

Language: Bulgarian [*bulgarski*]

Currency: lev [*lev*]

Bulgaria is situated in south-east Europe and has a highly diverse landscape. The vast lowlands of the Danube plains dominate the north and in the south there are highlands and elevated plains.

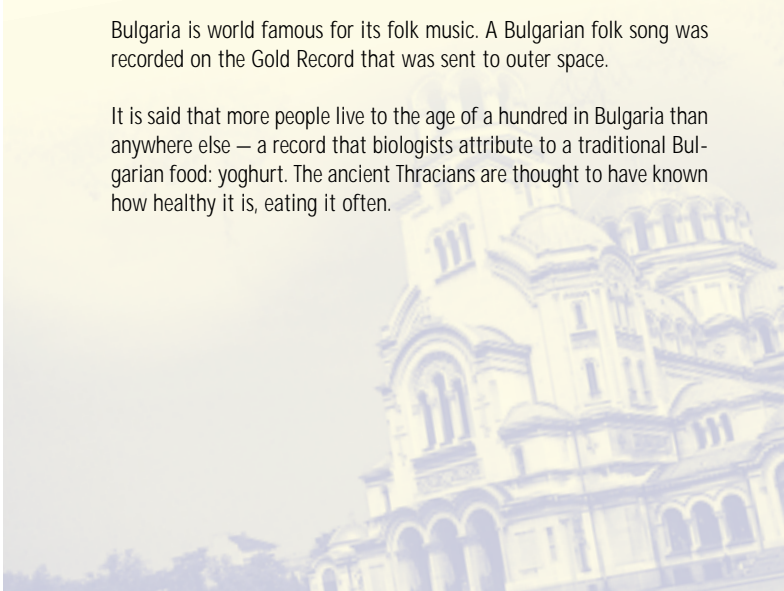
Founded in 681, Bulgaria is one of the most ancient states on the European continent. Some 85 % of Bulgarians are Christian Orthodox, whereas 13 % of the population profess Islam. The Bulgarian ethnic group represents about 86 % of the population. Other major ethnic groups are the Turks (10 %) and the Roma (3 %).

A major attraction for visitors to Bulgaria is the Black Sea coast. The water is less salty than the oceans and the absence of tides makes swimming and diving very safe. Nesebur, nestling on a small peninsula linked to the mainland only by a narrow causeway, is regarded as the 'jewel' of the Black Sea coast. With architectural treasures spanning 3 000 years, Nesebur is now on the Unesco world cultural heritage list.

Besides its Black Sea coast and beautiful mountains that attract tourists all the year round, Bulgaria is also known for its Rose Valley. The rose oil produced here is a precious ingredient in Bulgarian and world perfume production. Otherwise, Bulgaria's main exports are light industry products, foods and wines, which are successfully competing on European markets.

Bulgaria is world famous for its folk music. A Bulgarian folk song was recorded on the Gold Record that was sent to outer space.

It is said that more people live to the age of a hundred in Bulgaria than anywhere else – a record that biologists attribute to a traditional Bulgarian food: yoghurt. The ancient Thracians are thought to have known how healthy it is, eating it often.





Czech Republic

[*Česká Republika*]

(CZ)



© EKA

Capital: Prague [*Praha*]

Language: Czech [*čeština*]

Currency: Czech koruna [*Česká koruna*]

This landlocked country is situated in the geographic centre of Europe and consists of three historical areas – Bohemia, Moravia and the Czech part of Silesia. The Czech Republic is called the roof of Europe since all the rivers whose sources rise in the area flow into neighbouring countries.

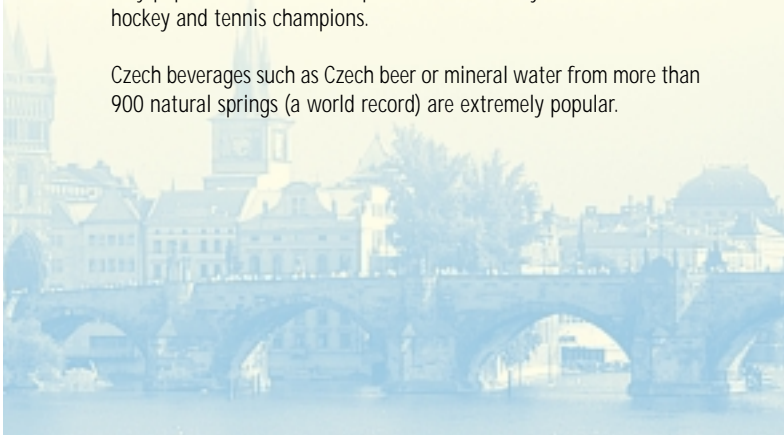
The territory of the Czech Republic was historically one of the most economically developed and industrialised parts of Europe. As the only country in central Europe to remain a democracy until 1938, the then Czechoslovakia was among the 10 most developed industrial States of the world before the Second World War.

The attractiveness of the Czech Republic and especially of its capital city, Prague, lies in its remarkable historical and architectural heritage stretching back over 1 000 years, and brings over 100 million visitors a year to the Czech Republic. Throughout the centuries Prague preserved its unrivalled richness of historical monuments of different styles. Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Art Nouveau and cubism form a unique aesthetic unit.

The Czechs love travelling, both abroad and inside their own country, visiting a multitude of castles and country houses built in past centuries and which still dominate the Czech landscape.

Goethe called this country 'a continent within a continent' because, he said, 'it has everything a continent needs except a coastline'. With hills, highlands and mountains covering more than 95 % of the territory, it is ideal for skiing, mountain biking and hillwalking. Sport is very popular in the Czech Republic, which is very famous for its ice hockey and tennis champions.

Czech beverages such as Czech beer or mineral water from more than 900 natural springs (a world record) are extremely popular.





Estonia

[*Eesti*]

(EST)



© EKA

Capital: Tallinn [*Tallinn*]

Language: Estonian [*eesti keel*]

Currency: Estonian kroon
[*eesti kroon*] [*EEK*]

The ancestors of today's Estonians — a reserved people speaking a Finno-Ugric tongue related to Finnish and, distantly, to Hungarian — lived on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea for thousands of years. In the past eight centuries, however, they have barely enjoyed 35 years of independence.

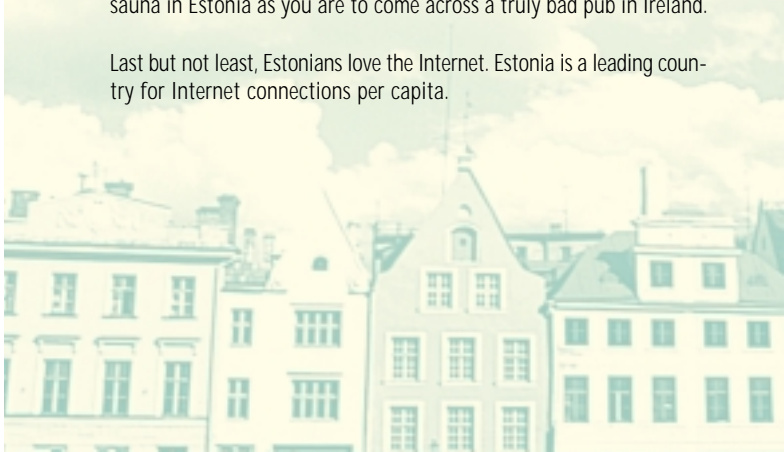
The independent Republic of Estonia was born in the aftermath of the First World War in 1918 and has been continuously recognised as a State by other countries since 1920 despite the occupations by the Soviet Union (1940-41, 1944-91) and Nazi Germany (1941-44).

The country is mostly flat with 1 400 lakes and 1 521 islands. Much of the land is farmed or forested, with industrial production concentrated around Tallinn and in the north-east.

Tallinn is one of the best-preserved mediaeval cities in Europe. It is a city with an air of old romance; of grey towers topped with red tiles; of stone stairs beneath arching gateways; of narrow winding streets, cobbled pavements and towering ramparts. Tourism accounts for 15 % of Estonian GDP.

Throughout the centuries an integral part of Estonian life has been the sauna. When settlers arrived, the first buildings they constructed were saunas. One theory is that the sauna evolved as a substitute for the sun, giving Estonians the psychological benefits of intense heat during the long, dark months of the year. It is a theory one will appreciate after living in Estonia for several consecutive winters which can seem to last nine months. You are as likely to come across a truly bad sauna in Estonia as you are to come across a truly bad pub in Ireland.

Last but not least, Estonians love the Internet. Estonia is a leading country for Internet connections per capita.





Cyprus

[*Kypros – Kibris*]

(CY)

Capital: Nicosia [*Lefkosia – Lefkosa*]

Languages: Greek and Turkish
[*ellinika – turca*]

Currency: Cyprus pound
[*lira kyprou – kibris lira*]

Prehistoric habitats, ancient sanctuaries, Roman theatres and villas, Paleochristian basilicas, Byzantine churches and monasteries, Crusader castles, Gothic churches and Venetian ramparts; these are among the attractions on offer to the tourists at this crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa.

Before developing tourism as its core economic activity, Cyprus mainly exported agricultural produce and mineral ores. The clothing and craft trades now account for half its exports. Merchant shipping is also of great importance: Cyprus is the world's fifth largest country in the business, measured by the number of vessels flying its flag.

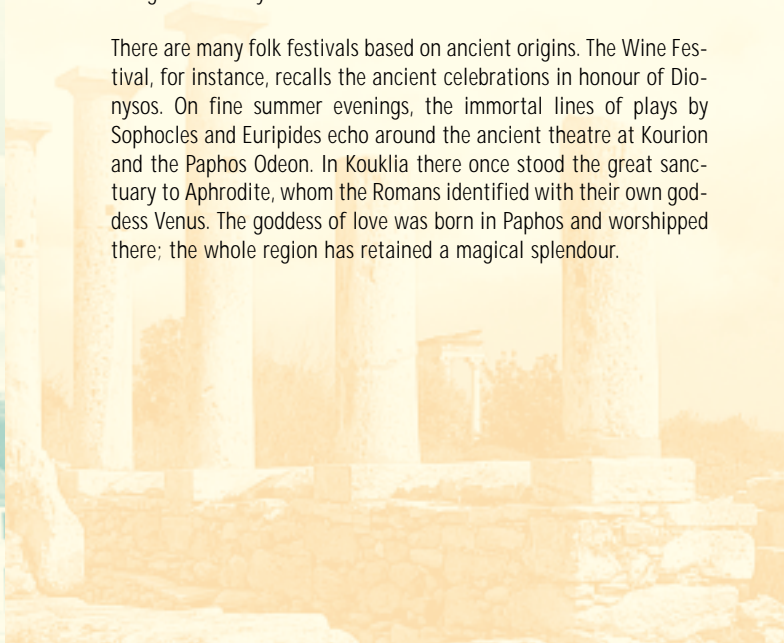
The northern part of the country was occupied by Turkey in 1974 and since then the Greek Cypriot community in the south and the Turkish Cypriot community in the north have been divided.

In the villages, the customs and traditions of yesteryear remain as active as ever. In Lefkara the young girls are still doing the same embroideries as their grandmothers used to. The potters at Foini are still inventing strange anthropomorphic forms for their clay vases. In the narrow streets of the old town of Lefkosia, the copper-beaters are pursuing the 5 000 year-old traditions of their ancestors .

There are many folk festivals based on ancient origins. The Wine Festival, for instance, recalls the ancient celebrations in honour of Dionysos. On fine summer evenings, the immortal lines of plays by Sophocles and Euripides echo around the ancient theatre at Kourion and the Paphos Odeon. In Kouklia there once stood the great sanctuary to Aphrodite, whom the Romans identified with their own goddess Venus. The goddess of love was born in Paphos and worshipped there; the whole region has retained a magical splendour.



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Latvia

[*Latvija*]

(LV)

Capital: Riga [*Rīga*]

Language: latvian [*latviešu valoda*]

Currency: lats [*LS – lats*]

Latvia is the middle one of the three Baltic States. It is basically covered by forests and meadowland and has a humid climate. Most of the territory is less than 100 metres above sea level. It is a highly urbanised country – more than a third of the population live in the capital Riga. Forests cover more than 40 % of the country and supply large quantities of timber for construction materials and for paper pulp.

Industry, which dominates the economy, produces railway hardware and a wide range of consumer goods, especially household electrical appliances. The textile mills are well known for their woollens. Exports include machine tools, food products and textiles.

Wild deer and boar flourish in an environment which is rich in flowers and birds; black storks are common. Fishing is a major activity, especially for cod and herring. The average summer temperature is 18 °C, the average winter temperature –5 °C.

About 56 % of the population are ethnically Latvians. As a consequence of the settlement policy at the time when the Soviet Union ruled the country, Russians make up around 30 % of the population. Most Latvians are Lutheran Christians, but the Russian Orthodox Church is also important in the country.

Riga was founded in 1201 and is the largest city in the Baltic States. Its Statue of Liberty is the highest statue in Europe, at 43 metres. Legend has it that every hundred years a devil emerges from the source of the river Daugava and calls out: 'Is Riga finished?' If anyone has the unfortunate idea of answering 'yes', the city will be washed away. So the process of improving the city goes on.

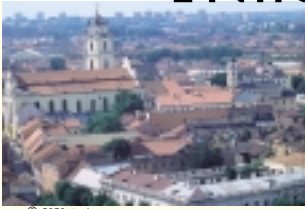


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Lithuania



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[*Lietuva*]

(LT)

Capital: Vilnius [*Vilnius*]

Language: Lithuanian [*lietuvi*]

Currency: litas [*litas*]

Lithuania lies in central Europe, with the Baltic Sea to the west. It is the most southerly and also the largest of the three Baltic States.

The name of Lithuania first appeared in written sources in AD 1009. In particular in the 14th and 15th centuries the country flourished as a major regional power. The modern Lithuanian State was established in 1918 and regained its independence in 1990 after 50 years of foreign rule.

Lithuania borders Poland, Latvia, Belarus and the Kaliningrad district of the Russian Federation. It boasts 99 km of sand-laid sea-shore and has its own tiny Sahara – the sand dunes on the Curonian peninsula in the Baltic Sea. Dozens of fine lakes, rivers and virgin forests form five national parks and other recreation areas.

Around 80 % of the population are Lithuanian, 11 % are Polish and 7 % are Russians. The dominant religion is Roman Catholic.

25 km north of Vilnius the cartographers set the geographic centre of the European continent. It is sign-posted 'Europos Centrėas' in the village of Bernotai.

Vilnius, sometimes described as 'Baltic Rome', is a picturesque city of churches and towers. Legend has it that on the bank of the River Vilnia a Grand Duke once dreamed of a wolf with a body of iron that could not be harmed by weapons. On a nearby hill he set out to build a castle that would be equally impregnable. This, so the story goes, is how the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius was founded.

At the heart of the old town is the university, founded in 1579 and one of the oldest in Europe. It is an extensive, mainly Renaissance-style complex with countless inner courtyards, forming what almost amounts to a city within the city.



Hungary

[*Magyarország*]

(H)



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Capital: Budapest [*Budapest*]

Language: Hungarian [*magyar*]

Currency: forint [*forint*]

Hungary is a central European country, surrounded by the Alps, the Carpathian Mountains and the Dinaric Alps. The east of Hungary consists of a flat and fertile plain, whereas the west is dominated by hills and small to medium-sized mountains. The Danube River flows from north to south; it is an important transport route, offering easy access to central and south-east Europe.

The Great Hungarian Plain – steppeland – is a veritable paradise for a wide range of migratory birds. Hares, foxes, deers and wild boars proliferate in the mountains.

In terms of their linguistic history the Hungarians are an island people – Hungarian shows no relationship of any kind with the surrounding Germanic, Slav or Romance languages. Very distant roots can be found only in Finnish, Estonian and Lapp.

The capital city Budapest straddles the Danube. Its name was created simply by joining together the names of two former cities: Buda, the old city on the hills above the right-bank, with its rich history and cultural treasures; and Pest, the more modern city in the plain on the left-bank with its fine town houses, which is a hive of activity. The numerous thermal and curative springs deservedly elevate the capital to the rank of 'city of spas'.

Hungary is the home country of Franz Liszt, Béla Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly, whose music was inspired by the rich national folk traditions. It is still a highly musical country and its violinists are particularly celebrated virtuosi.

One of the main tourist attractions, Lake Balaton – the largest lake in central and eastern Europe – is a highly popular resort, much favoured by sailing, rowing and windsurfing enthusiasts. It covers an area of some 600 km², but, on average, is only 3 m deep.



Malta

[Malta]

M

Capital:	Valletta [<i>Valetta</i>]
Languages:	Maltese and English [<i>Malti – English</i>]
Currency:	Maltese Lira [<i>Lira Maltija</i>]

Malta, a crossroads between Europe and Africa at the southern tip of the European continent, is a melting pot of civilisations in the heart of the Mediterranean.

Malta boasts a rich legacy from its centuries-old history, from the unique megalithic temples built *circa* 3200-2700 BC to its capital Valletta, a jewel of baroque architecture, and its massive fortifications which witnessed the bravery of the Maltese people over the centuries. In 1942, the courage and endurance of the Maltese people was again recognised when the United Kingdom awarded Malta the George Cross, which is now an integral part of the national flag.

Malta also has a long tradition of hospitality. One of the most famous 'guests' of the archipelago was the apostle Paul – the future St Paul – who was shipwrecked on Malta in the year AD 60.

There are few natural resources, except for the famous golden stone (glo-bigerina), and no rivers. Nevertheless, farmers succeed in producing a wide variety of products in their small terraced fields.

Yet, Malta is not only an island in the sun and an open-air museum in the Mediterranean, it is also an island looking towards the future. Apart from the tourism and manufacturing industries now firmly established, Malta is currently developing its service economy and it also aims to become a hub for communications in the Mediterranean. To this end, Malta's trump card is its human resources – a flexible labour force easily adaptable to new circumstances and with a gift for languages.

The national language of Malta is Maltese. However, both Maltese and English are recognised as official languages. Practically all Maltese are bilingual and many are also conversant in Italian.



Poland

[*Polska*]

PL

Capital: Warsaw [*Warszawa*]

Language: Polish [*polski*]

Currency: zloty [*złoty*]

The Polish State is over 1 000 years old. In the 16th century, under the Jagiellonian dynasty, Poland was one of the richest and most powerful States on the continent. On 3 May 1791, Poland ratified its first constitution. Soon after, Poland ceased to exist for 123 years, upon being partitioned by its neighbours Austria, Prussia and Russia. The country regained independence in 1918. In 1989, the first partially free elections in Poland's post-war history concluded the Solidarity movement's 10-year struggle for freedom and resulted in the defeat of Poland's communist rulers.

The country has a variety of natural resources including coal, copper, zinc, iron, gypsum, lignite and some oil and natural gas reserves. Rock salt is extracted in sometimes surprising ways: the Wieliczka mine, for example, contains an entire town – complete with sanatorium, theatre, church and café, 135 metres below ground.

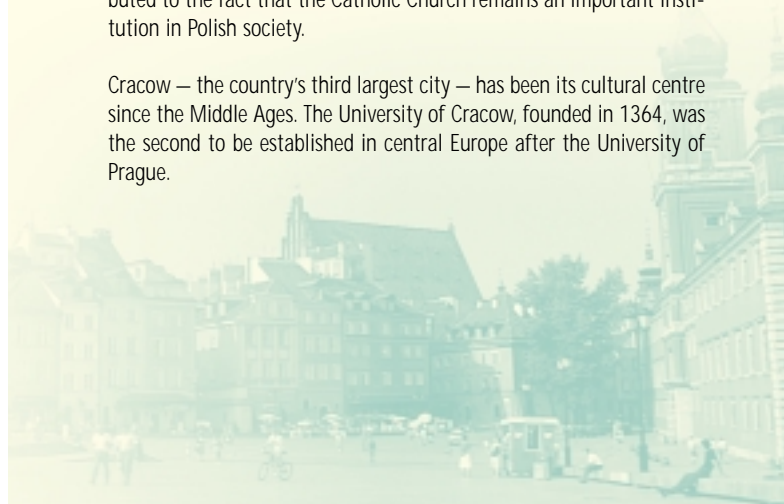
For centuries, Polish culture has been an integral part of European culture. Among the greatest Polish contributors to European culture are: the astronomer Copernicus, who, in 1543, was the first to prove that the Earth was not at the centre of the universe; the great composer and pianist Fryderyk Chopin and the outstanding scientist Maria Curie-Skłodowska. Films by Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieślowski and Roman Polański contributed greatly to world and European cinema.

One of the most famous Poles of the present time is Pope John Paul II. He was born in southern Poland in 1920 as Karol Wojtyła and has contributed to the fact that the Catholic Church remains an important institution in Polish society.

Cracow – the country's third largest city – has been its cultural centre since the Middle Ages. The University of Cracow, founded in 1364, was the second to be established in central Europe after the University of Prague.



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Romania

[*România*]

(RO)



© EKA

Capital: Bucharest [*București*]

Language: Romanian [*română*]

Currency: leu [*leu*]

Romania lies in south-east Europe and is part of the Balkan peninsula. The Carpathian Mountains cross the country in the form of a huge bow, bound on both sides by hills and high plains. The Danube wends its way through the country for 1 075 km — almost two thirds of the river's total length — and flows into the Black Sea in Romania.

Some 90 % of the population are Romanian, while Hungarians, accounting for about 7 %, are the largest minority group. The Romanian language descends from Latin, unlike most of the neighbouring countries, where languages of the Slavonic family are spoken. Most Romanians are Orthodox Christians.

The capital Bucharest is a green city; there are parks and gardens and fine old houses, not to mention a unique open-air museum — the 'Muzeul Satului' — grouping 300 or so authentic buildings from all corners of the country.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the peasants in Moldavia followed their feudal lords to church. But the churches were so small that they often had to stand outside. So the idea arose of painting the outside walls of the churches to depict the lives of the saints — a sort of illustrated Bible for the poor. This gave birth to an art form that is unique in the world.

The spine-chilling tale of 'Count Dracula' is associated with Romania, but this is actually a novel written in 1897 by an Irish author. In fact, there actually was a Count Vlad Dracul who lived in 15th-century Wallachia. However, it was his son, Vlad Tepes, whose behaviour was diabolical — when he participated in the wars of Christians against the Turks, he impaled captured enemies on stakes.

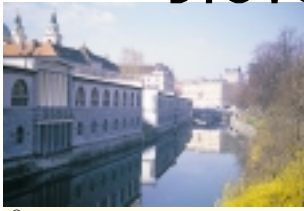




Slovenia

[*Slovenija*]

(SLO)



Capital: Ljubljana [*Ljubljana*]

Language: Slovene [*slovenščina*]

Currency: tolar [*tolar*]

The Republic of Slovenia is located in central Europe, on the south side of the Alps. During its history it has been part of, among others, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and of Yugoslavia.

Slovenes are very keen on sports and have won Olympic medals in downhill skiing, kayaking and athletics. Their favourite leisure activities are downhill skiing in winter and hiking in summer as the country, about the size of Wales or Israel, is full of hills and mountains.

Adrenaline seekers should not miss the three-headed Mount Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain at 2 864 metres. Early Slavs believed the mountain to be the home of a three-headed deity who ruled the sky, the earth and the underworld. Today, Triglav is prominently placed on the national flag and is one of the national symbols.

Ljubljana, which was founded as the Roman town of Emona, is rich in baroque architecture. Its inhabitants enjoy varied cultural life with numerous summer festivals stretching from early spring to late autumn. The 20 000-plus students who attend the University of Ljubljana keep the city young.

Lipica, located near the Italian border and world famous for its Lipizzaner horses, is probably the world's oldest stud farm. This world centre of dressage was founded in 1580.

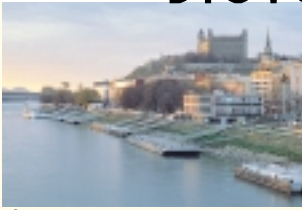
Over two million years, water has created a fantastic decor of stalactites and stalagmites in the 20 km of caves and underground passages at the famous grottos at Postojna. This impressive spectacle is said to have attracted more than 25 million visitors so far: graffiti show that the first tourists came here in 1213.



Slovakia

[*Slovenská*]

(S K)



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Capital: Bratislava [*Bratislava*]

Language: Slovak [*slovenský jazyk*]

Currency: Slovak koruna
[*slovenská koruna*]

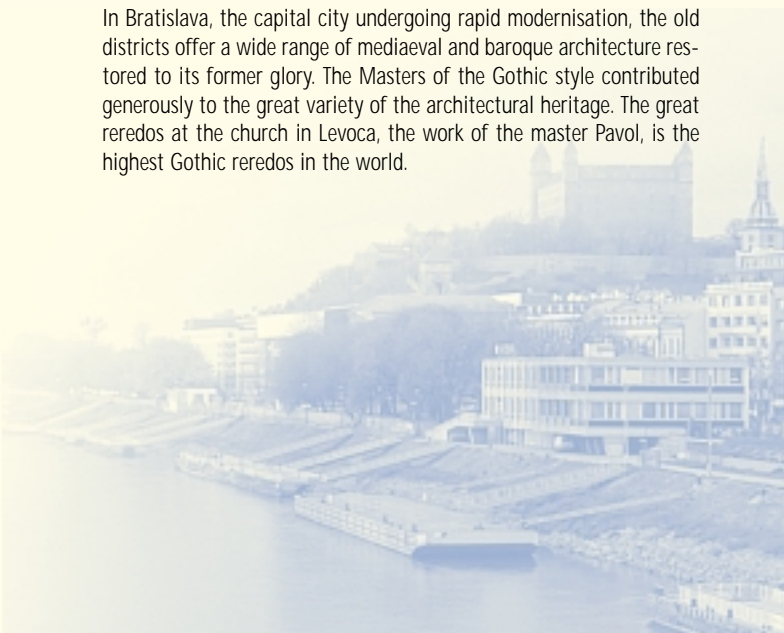
Slovakia lies in central Europe, between Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. The Carpathian Mountains reach into central and northern Slovakia, while southern and eastern Slovakia is flat. The Danube is the most important river, linking Slovakia with Vienna, the Rhine-Main canal and the Black Sea ports.

For large parts of the 20th century, the country, together with the Czech Republic, formed Czechoslovakia. In 1993 they separated peacefully, becoming two independent States. Slovaks make up about 86 % of the population, while Hungarians represent the largest minority. Roman Catholicism is the most widespread religion.

The Upper Tatra is the world's smallest alpine range – just 26 km long and 16 km wide, yet there are 20 peaks over 2 500 metres. The region from the Upper Tatra to the Metal Mountains, known as the 'Spis', is a paradise for those who wish to discover the beauties of a karstic landscape where forests cover deep ravines criss-crossed by footpaths.

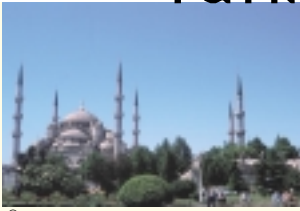
Over the centuries, Slovakia has seen a regular series of invasions: this explains the frequent fortifications perched high on the peaks and affording a perfect view over the hills and valleys.

In Bratislava, the capital city undergoing rapid modernisation, the old districts offer a wide range of mediaeval and baroque architecture restored to its former glory. The Masters of the Gothic style contributed generously to the great variety of the architectural heritage. The great reredos at the church in Levoca, the work of the master Pavol, is the highest Gothic reredos in the world.





Turkey



© EKA

[*Türkiye*]

(TR)

Capital: Ankara [*Ankara*]

Language: Turkish [*Türkçe*]

Currency: Turkish Lira
[*Türk Lirası*]

Founded in 1923 as a western style State on an Islamic imperial heritage, which still influences both its socio-political life and its international relations, the Republic of Turkey has had an association agreement with the EU since 1964. Since December 1999, it is formally a candidate for European Union membership.

The history and the geo-strategic location of this country are the source of its multi-religious, multicultural and multiethnic richness. Kurds, Albanians, Pomaks, Circassians, Lazs, Arabs, are only some of the colours of the Turkish population. Mosques, churches and synagogues coexist in Istanbul, as well as in many Anatolian cities. From Antioch (Antakya), St Paul journeyed to Anatolia, spreading Christianity in the region, arriving in Ephesus between AD 53 and 56, and founding the first churches at Ephesus (Selcuk), Smyrna (Izmir), Pergamum (Bergama), Sardes (Sart), Philadelphia (Alasehir), Laodikeia (Denizli) and Thyatira (Akhisar). Ephesus is also accepted as the place where the Virgin Mary spent her final days and died.

Spread over a territory exceeding 800 000 km² extending from Western Thrace to the Georgian borders and reaching as far as ancient Mesopotamia, with long coastlines on both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Turkey offers a rich variety of landscapes – from mountains, forests, beaches, wheat fields, and vineyards to orchards with apricots, figs, bananas, pistachios – the range is astonishing.

As for cultural heritage, after the earlier pre-Christian civilisations including Hittites, Phrygians, Lycians, Urartians came the Romans and Byzantines who produced the church of Hagia Sophia, a landmark of world architecture. The Turks, in turn, produced their masterpieces during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, including the Selimiye and the Süleymaniye Mosques built by Mimar Sinan, who is the symbol of Ottoman architecture.

As to the Turks' contribution to contemporary culture, Yılmaz Güney the film director, Yasar Kemal, author of the novel *Mehmed My Hawk* and Orhan Pamuk, post-modern novelist whose books have been translated into more than 20 languages, are perhaps the most familiar names.

Enlarging the European Union

The European Union is currently engaged in its most ambitious enlargement ever. The aim is to reunite the European continent and thus to consolidate peace, democracy and welfare. In this folder you can read about the cultures and the geography of the 13 countries which have applied to become members of the EU.

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