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Hello everyone!

Emily is here, you ‘re listening to your favourite podcast.

I hope you are enjoying yourself and relaxing.

It’s Monday morning and it’s so sunny outside. Do you know the country where it’s warm and the sun shines all day long?

Yes, you’re right, it’s Italy. The sun, high temperature and also no rain.

Ok, it’s time for memories. When I was 7 I used to play the board game called “Eurobusiness”. There was a word Benelux. I always wondered what it meant.

My older brother explained me that it was the name of three countries : Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The countries of Benelux are situated between two huge states: France and Germany.

You may wonder why I mentioned these six countries. Let’s list them again: Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Germany. What do they have in common? The climate?- not really, the landscape? – not this time,

The language?- Are you pulling my leg? So, what is it? What is the correct answer?

The European Union? Bingo! You won the prize so you can listen to the song dedicated to you. (melody “We are the champions”)

Let me introduce some facts: The European Union comes fromthe European Coal and Steel Community created in 1951 by six countries – the first members of the EU. Talking about it it’s obvious that you should listen to the anthem written by amazing composer Beethoven and played by… guess who? Here it goes. (the athem EU). The solution of the puzzle is very simple. It was.. drums please, me! Ok, nice, nice melody. Let’s us get down. Are you ready for a trip to Germany?

With around 83 million inhabitants, Germany is the most populous country in the EU.

You tried to convince me that Germany is the largest country of EU.

No, way!

With an area of 357 square kilometres it is the fourth largest country in the EU, following France, Spain and Sweden.

So, do you believe me now?

Now let’s switch into money topic.

Germany has a gross domestic product of almost 3,5 billion euros making it the largest economy in the EU.

Another interesting fact:

The European Union has three bodies: the European Parliament mentioned before, the European Council and the European Commission

Ursula von der Leyen has been the female German President of the European Commission since 2019.

The thing that still makes me think of Germany is the sausage, for me the best duet is sausage with chips and the best chips come from Belgium.

Belgium is called the “heart of Europe” because its capital, Brussels, qualifies as the unofficial capital of the European Union. The most important institutions are situated there.

There are many languages spoken in these institutions.

 **As it happens in Belgium you can officially communicate in three EU languages:** Dutch, French and German. Do you know any of them? If so, let me know.

Belgium is a monarchy in which the king is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government in a multi-party system.

About the previously mentioned international institutions let us zoom in on the status of Belgians in the European Parliament.

There are 21 members of the [European Parliament](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-parliament_en) from Belgium.

The Commissioner nominated by Belgium to the [European Commission](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-commission_en) is [Didier Reynders](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/reynders_en), who is responsible for Justice.

So now, I have a question for you. Are Belgians good neighbours? There are two answers to this question.

The first is to ask other Belgians and the second is to ask the Dutch.

You might ask why the Dutch? Because The Netherlands is a neighbour of Belgium.

The Netherlands has been the member of the EU since 1959, just like every founder of the European Union.

This country is a monarchy with a head of government - the prime minister - and a head of state - the monarch.

From the key facts of the Netherlands’ economy, the most important sectors of it in 2020 were public administration, defence, education, human health and the social work activities.

Now, some EU facts: The Commissioner nominated by Kingdom of the Netherlands to the [European Commission](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-commission_en) is [Franz Timmermans](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/timmermans_en), the executive Vice-President for European Green Deal.

The Netherlands also includes 6 overseas countries and territories in the Caribbean, this territories aren’t part of the EU.

Now, it’s time for the third former Benelux member, Luxembourg.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is a monarchy. The head of state is a Grand Duke, who has a representation function.

What do you think, how many languages does Grand Duke of Luxembourg speak?

Hence the question, because Luxembourg has 3 official languages: French, German and Luxembourgish

A little about politics:

There are 60 deputies in the parliament, called the Chamber of Deputies.

The Commissioner of this country is Nicolas Shmit, who is responsible for jobs and social rights.

The most important sectors of the Luxembourg economy is the financial and the insures activities.

 The government is headed by a prime minister appointed by a president.

Some residents of Luxembourg, the French-speaking ones, will certainly have no problems getting along with the people of the next discussed country. Try to guess. Let this music help you and put you in the mood for the next country. (melody “Champs Elysees”) Of course I’m talking about France.

France is the republic. The president is directly elected.

The French City of Strasburg is one of the three cities where the official seat of the European constituted is located, the others are Brussels and Luxembourg.

The Commissioner nominated by France to the [European Commission](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-commission_en) is Thierry Breton , who is responsible for Internal Market.

Like some previous countries, France has 5 overseas regions and territories in Caribbean, which also belongs to EU.

Interesting fact about France is that we can find there more than 1000 kinds of cheese, not much less types of cheese We can find in Italy.

So, Au revoir France, Buongiorno Italia.

Italy is a republic. Parliament consists of 2 chambers. The chamber of the deputies and the senate.

Administratively,

Italy is divided into 20 regions, 5 of them have special autonomous status.

More EU facts,

The Italian Commissioner in the European Commission is Paulo Gentilonie. His responsibility is European economy.

Top sectors of the Italian economy are the accommodation and the food services.

Oh, again about food. Have you noticed that with almost every country discussed , we brought up the topic of food? Aren’t you a little hungry?

Because I’m for sure.

That’s it for today’s topic, listen to my podcast on streaming platforms and online. If you enjoyed it, leave a like, share with your friends, and subscribe.

Bye, bye.