European Union

History of the EU
The EU began in the 1950s as the European Economic Community with six founding members – Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. They were joined by Denmark, Ireland and the UK in 1973, Greece in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1992, a new treaty gave more responsibilities to the Community institutions and created the European Union. Sweden, Austria and Finland joined in 1995. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia joined in 2004, followed in 2007 by Bulgaria and Romania. Croatia joined the EU in 2013.

Size and population
The EU is smaller than the United States, but its population is over 50 % bigger. The EU population is the world's third largest after China and India. The EU covers more than 4, 000, 000 km^2. The biggest EU country by area is France, the smallest one is Malta. The biggest EU country by population is Germany – it has more than 80, 000, 000 inhabitants.

Quality of life
A good quality of life depends on many factors, including having enough money and being in good health. EU standards of living are among the highest in the world. The GDP (gross domestic product) per capita is highest in Luxembourg and lowest in Bulgaria. Standards of living can also vary from region to region within a single country. All EU countries have social protection systems – pension, healthcare and unemployment benefits.

Education
The EU invests heavily in research and in education and training. People have to learn new skills throughout their working life and the number of adults taking part in learning activities has been rising. Research and development, especially in new technologies, is very important for economic growth and jobs.

Work
In the 1950s, more than 20 % of the EU's population worked in farming and around 40% in industry. By 2004, more than two thirds of jobs in the EU were in the services sector and only 5 % of the EU's population worked in agriculture and 27.9 % in industry.

Business
The EU's gross domestic product (GDP) is steadily growing and it is now higher than the GDP of the United States. In all EU countries, over 60% of GDP is generated by the service sector. The EU is the biggest exporter in the world and the second biggest importer. The United States is the EU's most important trading partner, followed by China.

SOURCE: http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/eu_glance/66/en.pdf

Answer the following questions.

1) How many members did the European Economic Community have in the 1950s?
2) When did the UK join the EU?
3) When did the Czech Republic join the EU?
4) How many countries joined the EU in 2004?
5) What is the smallest EU country by area?
6) Which EU country has the highest GDP per capita?
7) Which EU country has the lowest GDP per capita?
8) How many EU citizens worked in industry in the 1950s?
9) How many EU citizens worked in industry in 2004?
10) Which country is the EU's most important trading partner?

ANSWER KEY

1 Six.
2 In 1973.
3 In 2004.
4 Ten.
5 Malta.
6 Luxembourg.
7 Bulgaria.
8 Around 40 %.
9 27.9 %.
10 The USA.