

# Let me tell you about **Europe**



Mediterranean Sea



The Pyrenees

## Europe is a peninsula attached to Asia

Europe is a **peninsula**. It is surrounded by water on three sides: to the north by the **Arctic Ocean**, to the south by the **Black Sea** and the **Mediterranean Sea** and to the west by the **Atlantic Ocean**. It is connected to Asia in the East by the **Ural Mountains** and the **Caucasus Mountains** which act as borders between the two continents. Its surface area covers more than **10 million square kilometres**. It is much smaller than Asia, America or Africa.

## Europe's vast plains

Most of Europe is **low and flat**, with mountains and hills to the northwest, in the centre and south and along its eastern borders. Its **plains** stretch almost uninterruptedly into **Northern and Central Europe**, but there are also plains here and there in the **south**. Its **highest mountain chains** are in the **central and southern parts**: the **Pyrenees**, the great arc of the **Alps**, the **Apennines** and the **Carpathians**. These mountain chains are famous for their great beauty, but also because of all the opportunities for sporting activities they provide: mountain climbing on incredibly dangerous peaks, skiing competitions and bicycle races. The **hills** extend over an even **vaster surface area than the mountains** and, in most places, rise up beside the mountains.

## Europe's many rivers and lakes

There are **numerous rivers** in Europe, but they are **shorter** than those in Asia, America and Africa. This is because the continent is smaller and because the mountains, where the rivers begin, are relatively close to the sea. The longest rivers stretch across the great



Plain in Germany



Volga River

central and eastern plains: the only European river longer than 3000 kilometres is the **Volga**, which empties into the Caspian Sea. Even though it is called a «sea» and its waters are salty, the **Caspian Sea** is actually a lake, the largest lake in the world. There are about **80,000 lakes** in Europe. Most of them are in the northern part of the continent, but there are also many in the Alps. The **coastline** of Europe is **extremely long** because the coastlines of the individual countries all have a huge number of inlets, promontories and large peninsulas and because they include the coastlines of the **islands**. Some, like those of **Great Britain, Iceland** and **Ireland**, are **extraordinarily long**.

### Europe's climate is temperate

Europe is part of the **Northern** (or **Boreal**) **Hemisphere**, where the **climate** is **temperate**. There are, however, differences between the northern and southern parts of Europe. In the far **north**, the **climate** is **very cold**, with an environment called **tundra**, which is an endless plain with no trees and which is often frozen. **Further south**, the climate is **less rigid** and there are **boreal forests** with evergreen trees and a lot of animals. In the **central part of Europe**, the climate is **continental**, colder in the areas far away the coastline and more temperate in those closer to the Atlantic. **To the south**, the climate is **Mediterranean**, with mild winters and hot summers. In the mountains, the temperature, the vegetation and the animals vary according to the altitude.

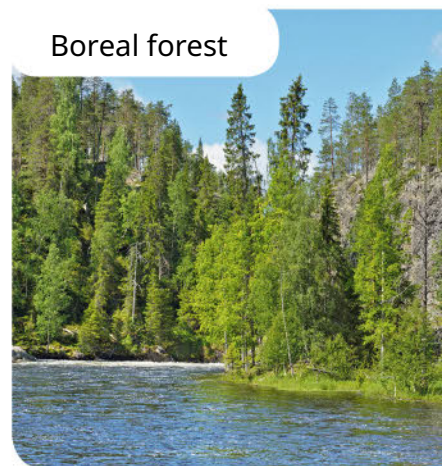
### The European population is the oldest in the world

Europe is a **crowded continent** because its more than **700 million inhabitants** live in a limited space, so the **housing density** is **very high** (**69 inhabitants per square kilometre**). The population is **distributed unevenly**; the majority of people **live in cities**. There is a huge number of **cities** in Europe, often cities of **ancient origin** which are famous throughout the world as Paris, London, Berlin. The number of cities is particularly large in western, central and southern Europe, where they are also very close to one another. Thanks to good health care and economic development, **Europeans are living longer and longer**. The **birth rate**, on the other hand, is **decreasing**. That's why the European population is **the oldest in the world**. The arrival of **young immigrants** from other continents

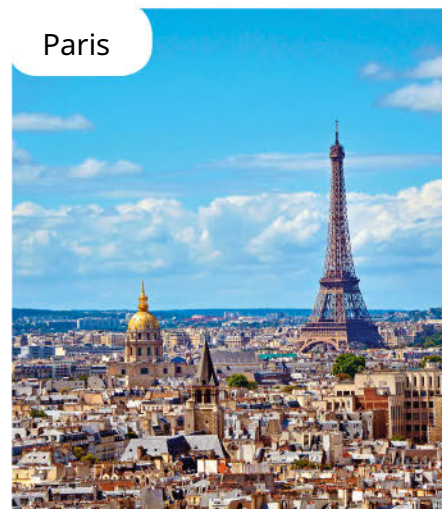
Iceland



Boreal forest



Paris





London



Berlin

is contributing to a growth in population and a reduction in the average age.

Europeans are made up of **many different populations** and speak **many different languages**. **Christianity** is the most widespread religion: there are approximately 600 million Christians in Europe, counting Roman Catholics (300 million), Orthodox Christians (180 million) and Protestants (120 million).

**Islam** and **Judaism** are also common: the **respect of religious freedom** is a fundamental principle in Europe.

There are **46 States** in Europe and **27** of these are in the **European Union**. **Freedom of expression and the principles of democracy** are profoundly rooted in the continent.

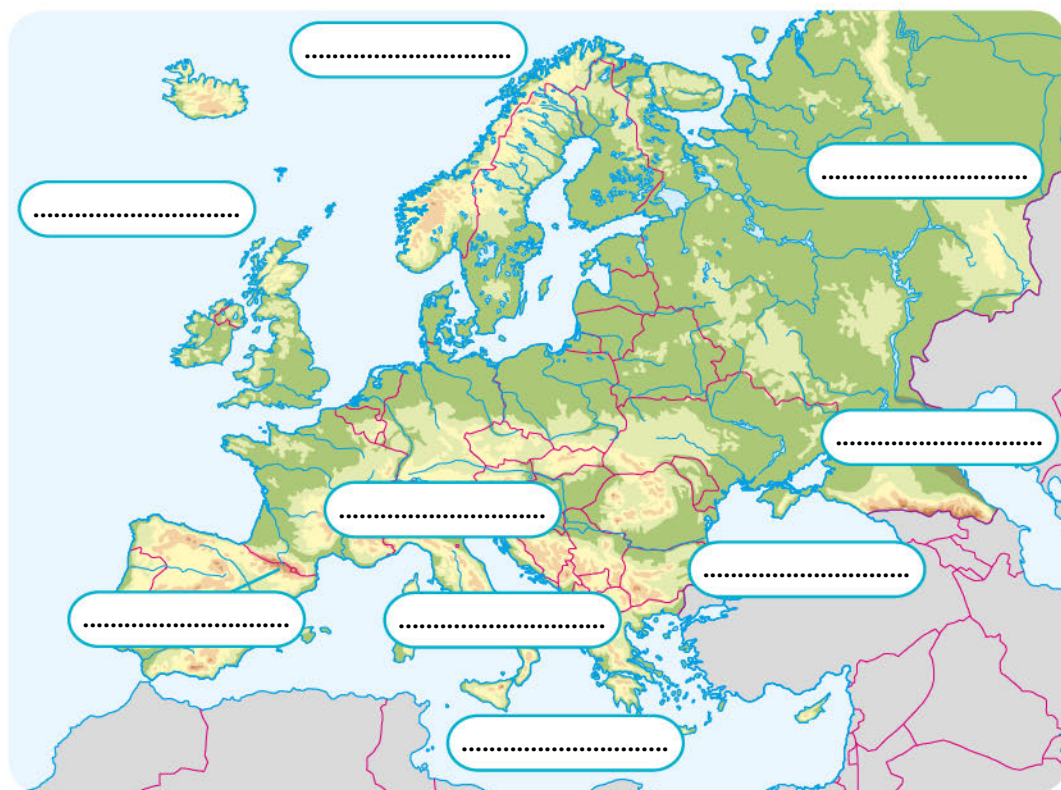
### Europe has a highly developed economy

Europe's economy is **highly developed**, but since the continent **does not have major sources of fossil fuels** many European countries have to import oil and natural gas.

European **agriculture** is **very productive**, thanks to the use of agricultural machinery. All sectors of **industry** are **highly advanced** although they face **increasingly fierce competition** from countries in other continents.

Most European workers are employed in the **service sector**, particularly in **commerce**, in **telecommunications** and in businesses connected with **tourism**.

## Activities



- Look at the map of Europe.
- In Italian, write down the names of the seas that surround the continent.
- In Italian, write down the names of the mountain chains that separate Europe from Asia.
- In Italian, write down the names of the mountain chains in Central and Western Europe.
- In Italian, write down the name of the biggest lake in the world.