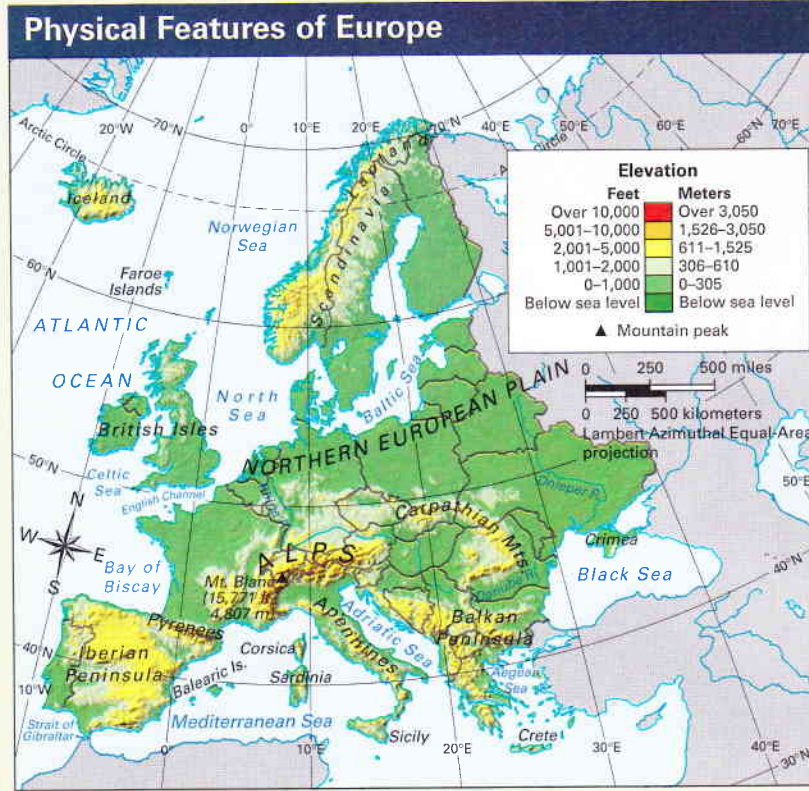


Introducing the Region: Physical Geography

Europe and Russia occupy part of the huge **landmass** called Eurasia. Eurasia reaches from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. It is so large that geographers divide it into two continents, Europe and Asia.

Europe is the world's second smallest continent. Oceans and seas border Europe to the north, south, and west. Asia borders Europe on the east.

Russia is the world's largest country. It spreads over two continents. Western Russia lies on the continent of Europe. Eastern Russia stretches across Asia to the Pacific Ocean. The Ural Mountains, at 60°E longitude, mark the dividing line between Europe and Asia, and between western Russia and eastern Russia.



Physical Features

Europe and Russia share a **landscape** of sweeping plains and rugged mountains. Large rivers wander across the broad plains. These rivers drain into three of the world's four oceans—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic oceans.

Europe

On a map, the European landmass looks like a giant **peninsula** attached to Eurasia. Smaller peninsulas jut out from all sides of Europe. They include the Balkan Peninsula, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and Scandinavia. Various seas, bays, and gulfs are tucked in between. Several big islands are also part of Europe.

Much of Europe lies on the Northern European Plain. This plain is one of the largest expanses of flat land on Earth. From east to west, it extends almost 2,500 miles. Several mountain ranges cut across Europe. The snowcapped Alps form a major barrier between central and southern Europe. The Pyrenees range separates France and Spain. The Apennines run through Italy.

Europe's large rivers serve as water highways. They are also a source of drinking water and of power for electricity. The Danube River flows through six countries, more than any other major river in the world.

Russia

Much of Russia also lies on broad plains. The western, or European, part of Russia shares the Northern European Plain. Western Russia



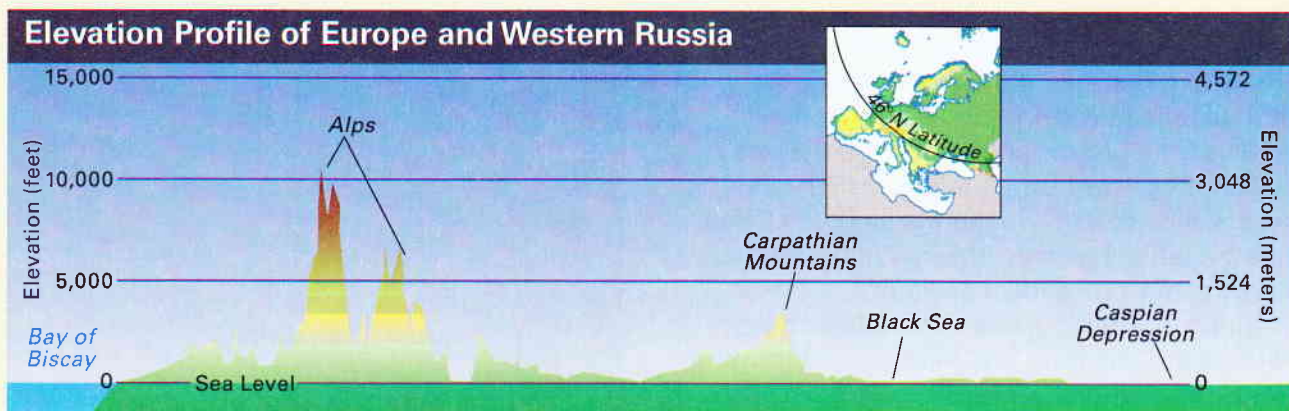
The Alps cut through France, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, and Slovenia.

extends to the Ural Mountains in the east and to the Caucasus Mountains in the south.

From the Ural Mountains, eastern Russia spreads across the full width of Asia. This area is called Siberia. The West Siberian Plain is a large area of flat land with many lakes and swamps. To the east lies the Central Siberian Plateau. Rivers have carved narrow canyons through this high, flat plateau.

Russia has thousands of lakes. The largest of these, Lake Baikal, is the oldest and deepest lake in the world. It holds one fifth of Earth's fresh water. In winter, the lake is frozen with ice up to three feet deep. In summer, Baikal is warm enough for swimming.

At the eastern edge of Russia, the Kamchatka Peninsula reaches out into the Pacific Ocean. More than 100 **volcanoes** rise from this finger of land. No roads or railroads connect the peninsula to Siberia. Everything must arrive by airplane or boat.



Climate

Two factors shape the climates of Europe. The first is latitude. Areas to the south of the Alps enjoy more **temperate** climates than those areas to the north.

The second factor is **relative location**. Areas near the ocean have a **marine climate**. *Marine* means found in or close to the sea. Ocean winds and warm ocean currents help keep temperatures about the same all year.

Inland areas far from the sea have a **continental climate**. *Continental* means influenced by a large landmass, like a continent. Cooling ocean breezes in summer and warming ocean currents in winter do not affect places with a continental climate. As a result, summers are usually hotter than near the sea, while winters are longer and colder.

Europe

Every year, crowds of tourists head to the Mediterranean Sea for vacation. Southern Europe has a **Mediterranean** climate. Its summers are longer, hotter, and drier than in northern Europe. Mediterranean winters are short and mild.

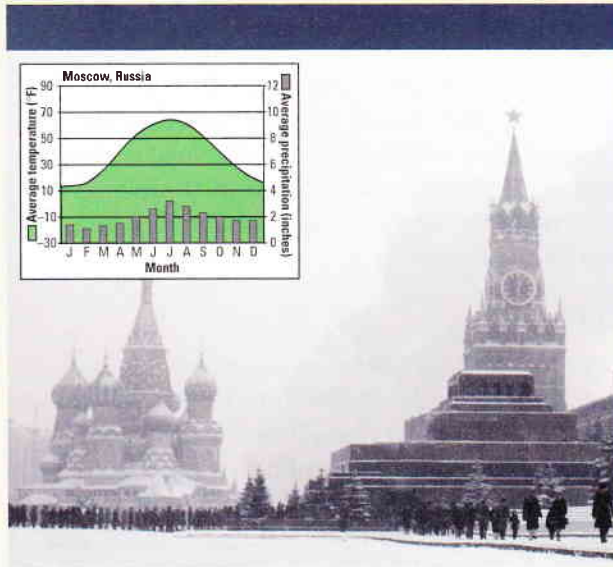
Most of northern Europe enjoys a **marine west coast** climate. A warm current that flows across the Atlantic Ocean from the Gulf of Mexico keeps winters from becoming too cold. Cool ocean breezes keep summers from becoming too hot. These same breezes bring year-round rain to northern Europe.

Russia

Russia is known for its long, harsh winters. The Arctic Ocean on Russia's northern border is frozen most of the year. As a result, it does not have a marine influence on Russia's climate. In some areas, snow covers the ground for eight or nine months of the year.

The most northern part of Russia has a **tundra** climate. The weather is so cold all year that the land is always frozen. Winter temperatures can drop as low as -90°F .

Much of Siberia has a **subarctic** climate. Winters are still long and very cold. Summers are too cool and short for farming.



Moscow, the capital of Russia, has a humid continental climate. When are people living in Moscow likely to have very high heating bills?

Areas to the south and west have milder climates. Much of western Russia has a **humid continental** climate. Winters here are still freezing cold, but summers can be hot and steamy. The most southern parts of Russia have a **semiarid** climate. Here the hot summers and cool winters are both fairly dry. Most of Russia's crops are grown in these areas with longer growing seasons.



Vegetation

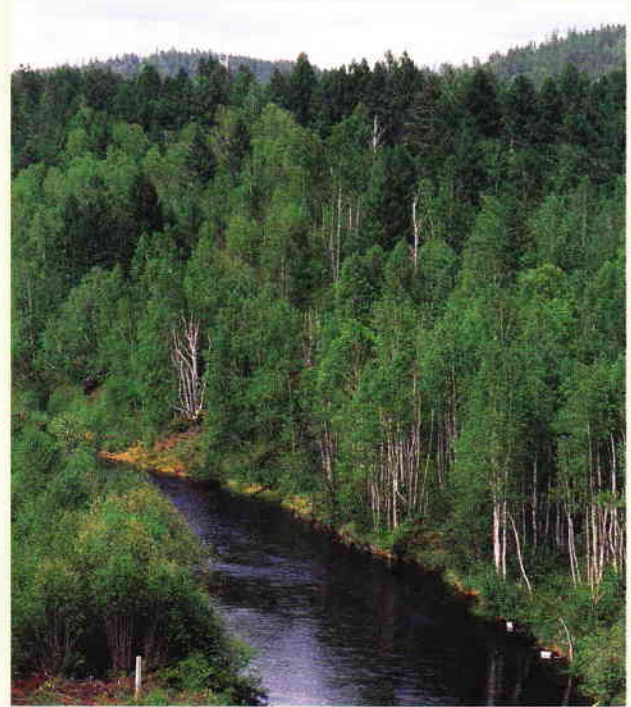
Europe and Russia have a mix of **vegetation zones**, but forests are the most common. The largest forest on Earth, the Russian **taiga**, stretches across most of the Eurasian landmass.

Three types of forests are found in this region—**deciduous**, **coniferous**, and **mixed forests**. All three are named for the types of trees that are found in them. Deciduous trees have broad, flat leaves that drop each fall. Coniferous trees have needle-like leaves that stay green all year. Mixed forests have both deciduous and coniferous trees.

Europe

All three types of forests once thrived in Europe. But over time, people cleared the forested areas to use the land for farming. Pockets of deciduous and mixed forests can still be found. Large coniferous forests survive in the far northern parts of the continent.

The coastal parts of Europe bordering the Mediterranean Sea are covered with **chaparral**. Here the small trees and bushes are well adapted to long, rainless summers. They send their roots deep into the soil to search for hidden water sources. Most have thick bark and small leaves that keep them



The Russian taiga accounts for about one fifth of Earth's total forested area.

from losing water during the dry season. Olive trees and cork trees are common in this vegetation zone.

Russia

In northern Russia, the **tundra** is treeless. Because the ground is always frozen under the surface, trees cannot send their roots down into the soil. During the short summer, the top layer of soil thaws. Then, for about two months, mosses, grasses, and scrubs cover the ground.

South of the tundra lies the taiga, a vast region of thick, dark forests. The taiga consists mainly of coniferous trees such as cedar, fir, pine, and spruce. Further south, the taiga becomes more mixed forest with the addition of aspen, birch, and other deciduous trees.

Far to the south lie the **steppes**, or grassy plains, of Russia. This region of **temperate grasslands** is too dry to support trees. The steppes have mostly been plowed for farms.

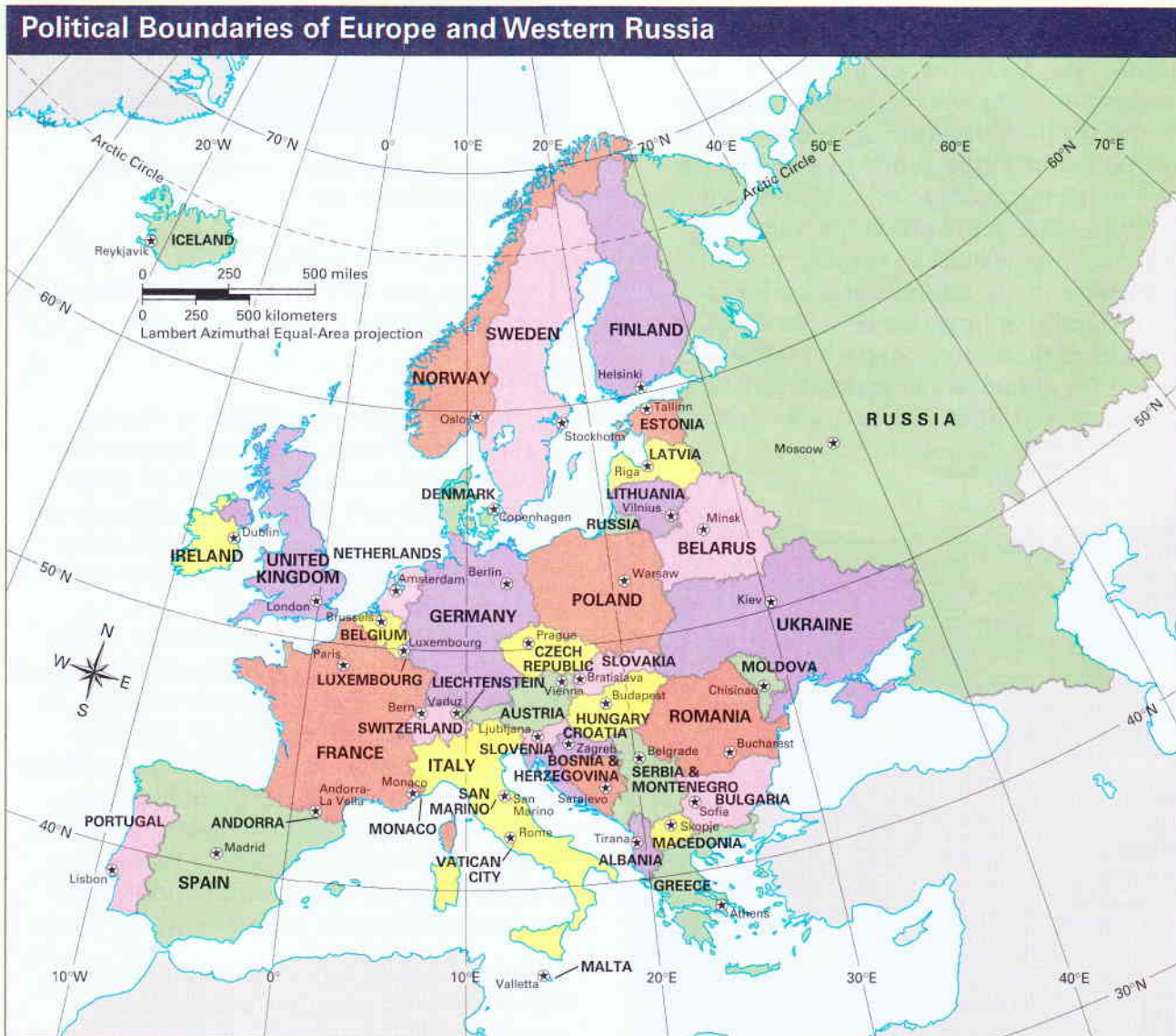
Summer sun thaws the surface of Siberia's tundra. With the return of winter, this boggy area will freeze solid.



Introducing the Region: Human Geography

The region of Europe and Russia is home to 43 countries. You've learned that Russia is the world's largest country. It covers about 6.6 million square miles. At the other extreme, Vatican City is the world's smallest country. It covers only 109 acres. It lies in the center of the city of Rome, Italy.

The people of Europe and Russia are linked together by language and culture. At least 50 languages are spoken here. Yet most of them belong to just three language families: Latin, Germanic, and Slavic. Europeans and Russians also share many elements of culture. These include art, music, and religion.



History

Europeans and Russians are also linked together by history. Over thousands of years, peoples and armies have moved back and forth across this region. Ideas and ways of life have moved with them.

Early Times

Two great civilizations appeared in Europe in ancient times. The first arose on the Greek peninsula in the 700s B.C.E. The Greeks created distinct styles of art and literature. They also invented the idea of democracy.

The second great civilization arose on the Italian peninsula. Around 500 B.C.E., the city of Rome began to grow. It would become a mighty **empire**. At its peak, the Roman Empire included most of Europe.

Roman rule collapsed in the late 400s. But the Romans left behind their language and ideas about law and government.

The Rise of Nations

After the fall of Rome, many small kingdoms appeared across Europe and Russia. A local chief or lord ruled each one.

In time, some rulers expanded the lands under their control. Sometimes this was done through marriage. In 1469, for example, Prince Ferdinand of Aragon married Princess Isabella of Castile. The union of Aragon and Castile led to the rise of the **nation** of Spain.

More often, nations were built through war. In 1533, a ruler known as Ivan the Terrible became the Grand Prince of Moscow. Ivan

used his army to conquer vast lands south and east of Moscow. In 1547, he had himself crowned czar, or ruler, of all Russia.

As nations grew in power, their rulers looked for new lands to conquer. For the czars of Russia, this meant expanding east across Asia. For rulers in Europe, it meant founding colonies in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

The Modern Era

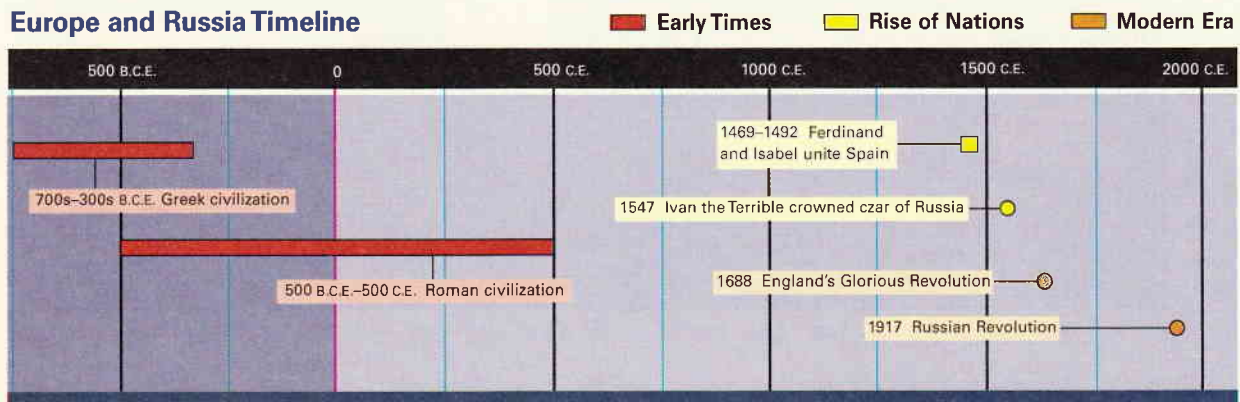
Two kinds of revolutions shaped Europe and Russia in more recent times. The first was economic. The **Industrial Revolution** began in the 1700s. It moved the production of goods out of homes and into factories. Machines began to take over work that had been done by hand. European nations led this revolution. They became the world's first **developed countries**.

The second kind of revolution was political. Political revolutions led to changes in how countries were ruled. In some cases, they led to the rise of democratic governments. The Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 is an example. It limited the power of England's monarchs. This was a step toward democracy.

In other cases, political revolutions led to the rise of **dictators**. A dictator is a leader who rules a country with absolute power, and often with brutal force. In 1917, the Russian Revolution drove the last czar from power. A series of dictators then ruled for more than 70 years.

Today, elected governments rule most countries in this region.

Europe and Russia Timeline



Population

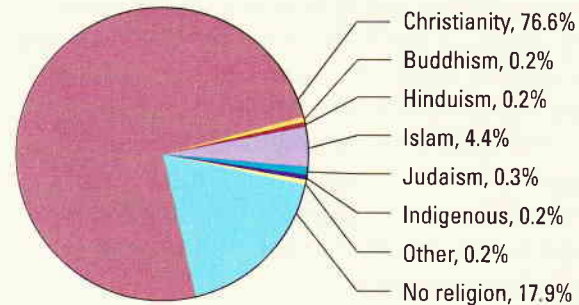
Europe and Russia are home to one seventh of the world's people. In 2000, about 875 million people lived in this region. Most of them live west of the Urals.

Europe has long been very **urban**. Rome was the first city to reach 1 million people. That was 2,000 years ago. In 1810, London became the first modern city to reach a million people. Today, most Europeans and Russians live in towns and cities. **Rural** eastern Russia is thinly settled.

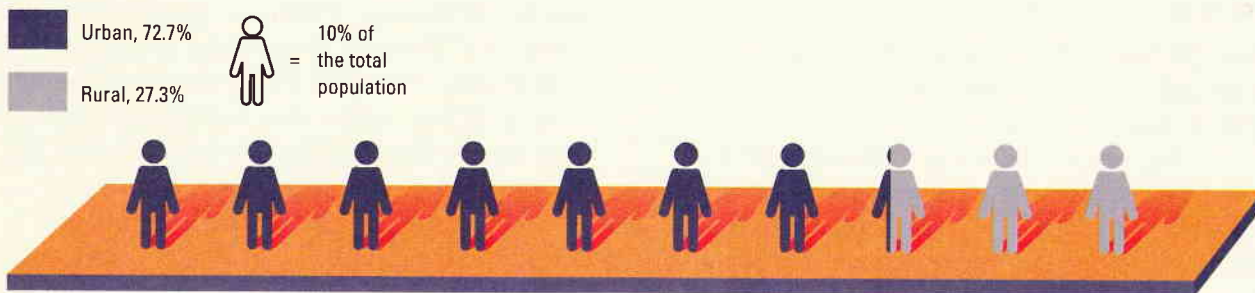
Most parts of the world have growing populations. But in parts of Europe and Russia, populations have stopped growing. Some are even shrinking. The main reason is a drop in the **birth rate**, or the number of births per 1,000 people.

Christianity is the most common religion in Europe and Russia. More than half of all Europeans belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Most Christians in Russia follow the Russian Orthodox faith. Islam is the second largest faith in this region.

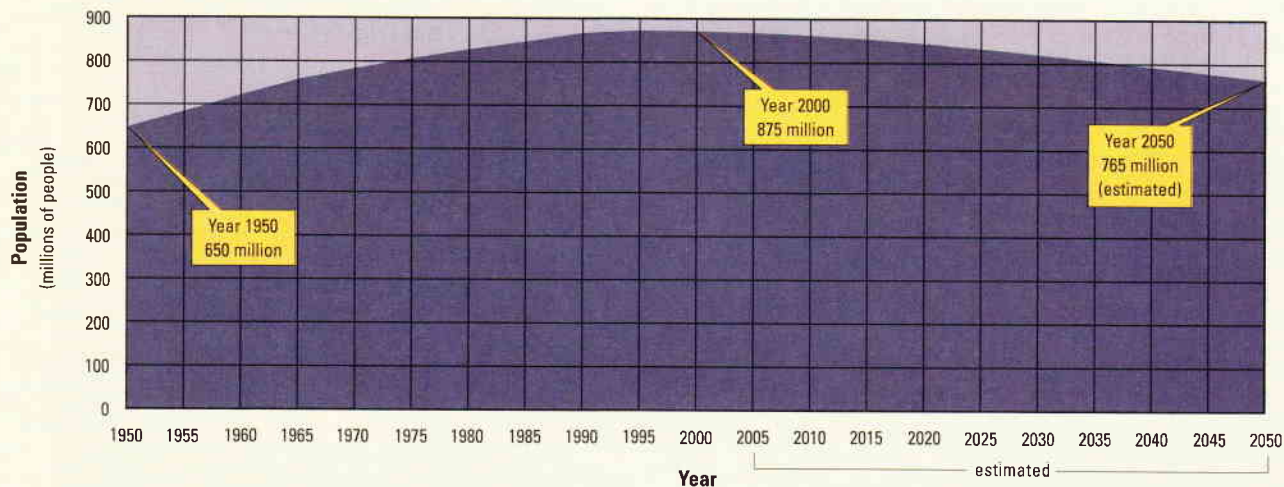
Europe and Russia: Major Religions



Europe and Russia: Urban and Rural Population, 2000



Europe and Russia: Population Growth, 1950–2050



Sources: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, "World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision" and "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision," esa.un.org/unpp, "Religion," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2005, *Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service*, www.britannica.com.



In Poland, much of the land is used for commercial farming.

Economic Activity

Europe and Russia are both important industrial areas. Russian factories produce heavy machinery, such as tractors and electric motors. Factories in Denmark turn out stereos, furniture, dishes, and silverware. German factories produce steel, automobiles, and electronics. Swiss factories turn out watches, chocolate, and medicines. Global trade has made Europe and Russia one of the world's richest regions.

Resources

Europe and Russia are rich in **natural resources**. These include **fossil fuels** and minerals. About a third of the world's coal reserves are found in Siberia. In addition, Siberia has mines for gold, copper, lead, and diamonds.

In the North Sea and Russia, people drill for petroleum and **natural gas**. Russia is also a major producer of **hydroelectric power**. Most of this power comes from dams located along Russia's rivers.

Land Use

Outside of its cities, Europe is largely a land of farms. Commercial farms are spread along river valleys and across the Northern European Plain. In Western Europe, farmers use machines to produce large **cash crops**. In poorer parts of Eastern Europe, however, some families are limited to **subsistence farming** on small plots of land.

In Scandinavia, **forestry** and fishing are both big industries. Even though Norway is very far north, a warm ocean current keeps some ports free of ice. As a result, fishing can continue all year. Fishing is also the main industry of Iceland.

Manufacturing has become important to Russia over the last 75 years. But many Russians still use their land in more traditional ways. In southern Russia, farmers grow a wide variety of crops, from wheat to apples. Across the taiga, forestry is a major industry. On the northern tundra, people herd reindeer. Reindeer are a source of meat and hides.