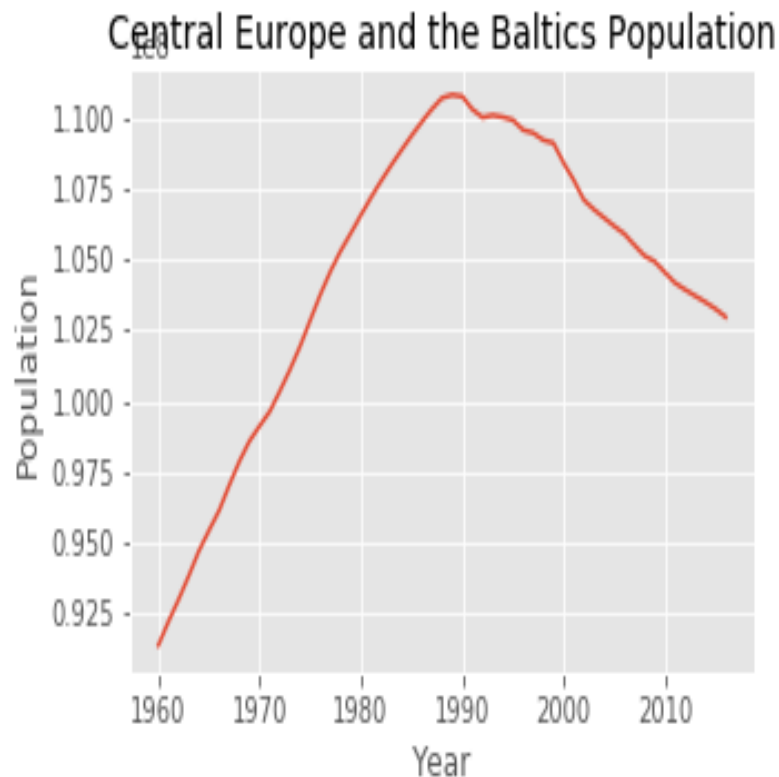


Central Europe and the Baltics



Central Europe is the region comprising the central part of Europe. It is said to occupy continuous territory that are otherwise conventionally Eastern Europe and Western Europe. The concept of Central Europe is based on a common historical, social and cultural identity. Central Europe is going through a phase of "strategic awakening", with initiatives such as the CEI, Centrope and the Visegrád Four. While the region's economy shows high disparities with regard to income, all Central European countries are listed by the Human Development Index as very highly developed. == Historical perspective ==

=== Middle Ages and early modern era ===

Elements of unity for Western and Central Europe were Roman Catholicism and Latin. However Eastern Europe, which remained Eastern Orthodox Christian, was the area of Graeco-Byzantine cultural influence; after the schism (1054), Eastern Europe developed cultural unity and resistance to the Western world (Catholic and Protestant) within the framework of Church Slavonic language and the Cyrillic alphabet. According to Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs, foundations of Central European history at the first millennium were in close connection with Western European development. He explained that between the 11th and 15th centuries not only Christianization and its cultural consequences were implemented, but well-defined social features emerged in Central Europe based on Western characteristics. The keyword of Western social development after millennium was the spread of liberties and autonomies in Western Europe. These phenomena appeared in the middle of the 13th century in Central European countries. There were self-governments of towns, counties and parliaments. In 1335 under the rule of the King Charles I of Hungary, the castle of Visegrád, the seat of the Hungarian monarchs was the scene of the royal summit of the Kings of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary. They agreed to cooperate closely in the field of politics and commerce, inspiring their late successors to launch a successful Central European initiative. In the Middle Ages, countries in Central Europe adopted Magdeburg rights. === Before World War I ===

Before 1870, the industrialization that had developed in Western and Central Europe and the United States did not extend in any significant way to the rest of the world. Even in Eastern Europe, industrialization lagged far behind. Russia, for example, remained largely rural and agricultural, and its

autocratic rulers kept the peasants in serfdom. The concept of Central Europe was already known at the beginning of the 19th century, but its real life began in the 20th century and immediately became an object of intensive interest. However, the very first concept mixed science, politics and economy – it was strictly connected with intensively growing German economy and its aspirations to dominate a part of European continent called Mitteleuropa. The German term denoting Central Europe was so fashionable that other languages started referring to it when indicating territories from Rhine to Vistula, or even Dnieper, and from the Baltic Sea to the Balkans. An example of that-time vision of Central Europe may be seen in J. Partsch's book of 1903. On 21 January 1904, Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein (Central European Economic Association) was established in Berlin with economic integration of Germany and Austria–Hungary (with eventual extension to Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands) as its main aim. Another time, the term Central Europe became connected to the German plans of political, economic and cultural domination. The "bible" of the concept was Friedrich Naumann's book *Mitteleuropa* in which he called for an economic federation to be established after the war. Naumann's idea was that the federation would have at its centre Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire but would also include all European nations outside the Anglo-French alliance, on one side, and Russia, on the other. The concept failed after the German defeat in World War I and the dissolution of Austria–Hungary. The revival of the idea may be observed during the Hitler era. === Interwar period === According to Emmanuel de Martonne, in 1927 the Central European countries included: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Switzerland. The author use both Human and Physical Geographical features to define Central Europe. The interwar period (1918–1939) brought new geopolitical system and economic and political problems, and the concept of Central Europe took a different character. The centre of interest was moved to its eastern part – the countries that have (re)appeared on the map of Europe: Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Central Europe ceased to be the area of German aspiration to lead or dominate and became a territory of various integration movements aiming at resolving political, economic and national problems of "new" states, being a way to face German and Soviet pressures. However, the conflict of interests was too big and neither Little Entente nor Intermarium (*Międzymorze*) ideas succeeded. The interwar period brought new elements to the concept of Central Europe. Before World War I, it embraced mainly German states (Germany, Austria), non-German territories being an area of intended German penetration and domination – German leadership position was to be the natural result of economic dominance. After the war, the Eastern part of Central Europe was placed at the centre of the concept. At that time the scientists took interest in the idea: the International Historical Congress in Brussels in 1923 was committed to Central Europe, and the 1933 Congress continued the discussions. Hungarian scholar Magda Adam wrote in her study *Versailles System and Central Europe* (2006): "Today we know that the bane of Central Europe was the Little Entente, military alliance of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia), created in 1921 not for Central Europe's cooperation nor to fight German expansion, but in a wrong perceived notion that a completely powerless Hungary must be kept down". The avant-garde movements of Central Europe were an essential part of modernism's evolution, reaching its peak throughout the continent during the 1920s. The Sourcebook of Central European avantgards (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) contains primary documents of the avant-gardes in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, and Poland from 1910 to 1930. The manifestos and magazines of Western European radical art circles are well known to Western scholars and are being taught at primary universities of their kind in the western world. === Mitteleuropa === The German term *Mitteleuropa* (or alternatively its literal translation into English, Middle Europe) is an ambiguous German concept. It is sometimes used in English to refer to an area somewhat larger than most conceptions of 'Central Europe'; it refers to territories under Germanic cultural hegemony until World War I (encompassing Austria–Hungary and Germany in their pre-war formations but usually excluding the Baltic countries north of East Prussia). According to Fritz Fischer *Mitteleuropa* was a scheme in the era of the Reich of 1871–1918 by which the old imperial elites had allegedly sought to build a system of German economic, military and political domination from the northern seas to the Near East and from the Low Countries through the steppes of Russia to the Caucasus. Later on, professor Fritz Epstein argued the threat of a Slavic "Drang nach Westen" (Western expansion) had been a major factor in the emergence of a *Mitteleuropa* ideology before the Reich of 1871 ever came into being. In Germany the connotation was also sometimes linked to the pre-war German provinces east of the Oder-Neisse line which were lost as the result of World War II, annexed by People's Republic of Poland and the Soviet Union, and ethnically cleansed of Germans by communist authorities and forces (see expulsion of Germans after World War II) due to Yalta

Conference and Potsdam Conference decisions. In this view Bohemia and Moravia, with its dual Western Slavic and Germanic heritage, combined with the historic element of the "Sudetenland", is a core region illustrating the problems and features of the entire Central European region. The term "Mitteleuropa" conjures up negative historical associations among some elder people, although the Germans have not played an exclusively negative role in the region. Most Central European Jews embraced the enlightened German humanistic culture of the 19th century. German-speaking Jews from turn of the 20th century Vienna, Budapest and Prague became representatives of what many consider to be Central European culture at its best, though the Nazi version of "Mitteleuropa" destroyed this kind of culture instead. However, the term "Mitteleuropa" is now widely used again in German education and media without negative meaning, especially since the end of communism. In fact, many people from the new states of Germany do not identify themselves as being part of Western Europe and therefore prefer the term "Mitteleuropa".

==== Central Europe behind the Iron Curtain ====

Following World War II, large parts of Europe that were culturally and historically Western became part of the Eastern bloc. Czech author Milan Kundera (emigrant to France) thus wrote in 1984 about the "Tragedy of Central Europe" in the New York Review of Books. Consequently, the English term Central Europe was increasingly applied only to the westernmost former Warsaw Pact countries (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) to specify them as communist states that were culturally tied to Western Europe. This usage continued after the end of the Warsaw Pact when these countries started to undergo transition. The post-World War II period brought blocking of the research on Central Europe in the Eastern Bloc countries, as its every result proved the dissimilarity of Central Europe, which was inconsistent with the Stalinist doctrine. On the other hand, the topic became popular in Western Europe and the United States, much of the research being carried out by immigrants from Central Europe. At the end of the communism, publicists and historians in Central Europe, especially anti-communist opposition, came back to their research. According to Karl A. Sinnhuber (Central Europe: Mitteleuropa: Europe Centrale: An Analysis of a Geographical Term) most Central European states were unable to preserve their political independence and became Soviet Satellite Europe. Besides Austria, only the marginal Central European states of Finland and Yugoslavia preserved their political sovereignty to a certain degree, being left out of any military alliances in Europe. According to Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon, Central Europe is a part of Europe composed of Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Switzerland, and northern marginal regions of Italy and Yugoslavia (northern states – Croatia, Vojvodina and Slovenia), as well as northeastern France.

==== Current views ====

Rather than a physical entity, Central Europe is a concept of shared history which contrasts with that of the surrounding regions. The issue of how to name and define the Central European region is subject to debates. Very often, the definition depends on the nationality and historical perspective of its author. Main propositions, gathered by Jerzy Kłoczowski, include: West-Central and East-Central Europe – this conception, presented in 1950, distinguishes two regions in Central Europe: German West-Centre, with imperial tradition of the Reich, and the East-Centre covered by variety of nations from Finland to Greece, placed between great empires of Scandinavia, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. Central Europe as the area of cultural heritage of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth – Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian historians, in cooperation (since 1990) with Polish historians, insist on the importance of the concept. Central Europe as a region connected to the Western civilisation for a very long time, including countries such as the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Kingdom of Croatia, Holy Roman Empire, later German Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Crown of Bohemia. Central Europe understood in this way borders on Russia and South-Eastern Europe, but the exact frontier of the region is difficult to determine. Central Europe as the area of cultural heritage of the Habsburg Empire (later Austria-Hungary) – a concept which is popular in regions along the Danube River. A concept underlining the links connecting Belarus and Ukraine with Russia and treating the Russian Empire together with the whole Slavic Orthodox population as one entity – this position is taken by the Russian historiography. A concept putting an accent on the links with the West, especially from the 19th century and the grand period of liberation and formation of Nation-states – this idea is represented by in the South-Eastern states, which prefer the enlarged concept of the "East Centre" expressing their links with the Western culture. According to Ronald Tiersky, the 1991 summit held in Visegrád, Hungary and attended by the Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak presidents was hailed at the time as a major breakthrough in Central European cooperation, but the Visegrád Group became a vehicle for coordinating Central Europe's road to the European Union, while development of closer ties within the region languished. Peter J. Katzenstein described Central Europe as a way station in a

Europeanization process that marks the transformation process of the Visegrád Group countries in different, though comparable ways. According to him, in Germany's contemporary public discourse "Central European identity" refers to the civilizational divide between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. He says there's no precise, uncontested way to decide whether the Baltic states, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria are parts of Central Europe or not. Lonnie R. Johnson points out criteria to distinguish Central Europe from Western, Eastern and Southeast Europe: One criterion for defining Central Europe is the frontiers of medieval empires and kingdoms that largely correspond to the religious frontiers between the Roman Catholic West and the Orthodox East. The pagans of Central Europe were converted to Roman Catholicism while in Southeastern and Eastern Europe they were brought into the fold of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Multinational empires were a characteristic of Central Europe. Hungary and Poland, small and medium-size states today, were empires during their early histories. The historical Kingdom of Hungary was until 1918 three times larger than Hungary is today, while Poland was the largest state in Europe in the 16th century. Both these kingdoms housed a wide variety of different peoples. He also thinks that Central Europe is a dynamic historical concept, not a static spatial one. For example, Lithuania, a fair share of Belarus and western Ukraine are in Eastern Europe today, but 230 years ago they were in Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Johnson's study on Central Europe received acclaim and positive reviews in the scientific community. However, according to Romanian researcher Maria Bucur this very ambitious project suffers from the weaknesses imposed by its scope (almost 1600 years of history). The Columbia Encyclopedia defines Central Europe as: Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. The World Factbook uses the same definition adding Slovenia too. Encarta Encyclopedia and Encyclopædia Britannica do not clearly define the region, but Encarta places the same countries into Central Europe in its individual articles on countries, adding Slovenia in "south central Europe". The German Encyclopaedia Meyers Grosses Taschenlexikon (Meyers Big Pocket Encyclopedia), 1999, defines Central Europe as the central part of Europe with no precise borders to the East and West. The term is mostly used to denominate the territory between the Schelde to Vistula and from the Danube to the Moravian Gate. Usually the countries considered to be Central European are Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland; in the broader sense Romania too, occasionally also Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. == States == The comprehension of the concept of Central Europe is an ongoing source of controversy, though the Visegrád Group constituents are almost always included as de facto C.E. countries. Although views on which countries belong to Central Europe are vastly varied, according to many sources (see section Current views on Central Europe) the region includes the states listed in the sections below. Austria Croatia (alternatively placed in Southeastern Europe) Czech Republic Germany Hungary Liechtenstein Poland Slovakia Slovenia (sometimes placed in Southeastern Europe) Switzerland Depending on context, Central European countries are sometimes grouped as Eastern or Western European countries, collectively or individually but some place them in Eastern Europe instead: for instance Austria can be referred to as Central European, as well as Eastern European or Western European. === Other countries and regions === Some sources also add neighbouring countries for historical reasons (the former Austro-Hungarian and German Empires, and modern Baltic states), or based on geographical and/or cultural reasons: Romania (Transylvania and Bukovina) Serbia The Baltic states, geographically in Northern Europe, have been considered part of Central Europe in the German tradition of the term, Mitteleuropa. Benelux countries are generally considered a part of Western Europe, rather than Central Europe. Nevertheless, they are occasionally mentioned in the Central European context due to cultural, historical and linguistic ties. The following states or some of their regions may sometimes be included in Central Europe: Italy (South Tyrol, Trentino, Trieste and Gorizia, Friuli, occasionally Veneto or all of Northern Italy) Ukraine (Transcarpathia, Galicia and Northern Bukovina) == Geography == Geography defines Central Europe's natural borders with the neighbouring regions to the North across the Baltic Sea namely the Northern Europe (or Scandinavia), and to the South across the Alps, the Apennine peninsula (or Italy), and the Balkan peninsula across the So■a-Krka-Sava-Danube line. The borders to Western Europe and Eastern Europe are geographically less defined and for this reason the cultural and historical boundaries migrate more easily West-East than South-North. The Rhine river which runs South-North through Western Germany is an exception. Southwards, the Pannonian Plain is bounded by the rivers Sava and Danube- and their respective floodplains. The Pannonian Plain stretches over the following countries: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia, and touches borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska) and Ukraine ("peri- Pannonian states"). As southeastern division of the Eastern

Alps, the Dinaric Alps extend for 650 kilometres along the coast of the Adriatic Sea (northwest-southeast), from the Julian Alps in the northwest down to the Šar-Korab massif, north-south. According to the Freie Universität Berlin, this mountain chain is classified as South Central European. The Central European flora region stretches from Central France (the Massif Central) to Central Romania (Carpathians) and Southern Scandinavia. At times, the term "Central Europe" denotes a geographic definition as the Danube region in the heart of the continent, including the language and culture areas which are today included in the states of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and usually also Austria and Germany, but never Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union towards the Ural mountains. == Statistics == == Data == Area: 1.036.370 km² (2012) Population: (calculated data) 163.518.571 (July 2012) Population density: (calculated data) 157.78/km² (2012) GDP (PPP) per capita: US\$34.444 (2012) Life expectancy: (calculated data) 78.32-year (2012) Unemployment rate: 8.2% (2012) Fertility rate: 1.41 births/woman (2012) Human Development Index: 0.874 (2012) (very high) Globalization Index (regional): 80.09 (2013) == Demography == Central Europe is one of continent's most populous regions. It includes countries of varied sizes, ranging from tiny Liechtenstein to Germany, the largest European country by population (that is entirely placed in Europe). Demographic figures for countries entirely located within notion of Central Europe ("the core countries") number around 165 million people, out of which around 82 million are residents of Germany. Other populations include: Poland with around 38.5 million residents, Czech Republic at 10.5 million, Hungary at 10 million, Austria with 8.5 million, Switzerland with its 8 million inhabitants, Slovakia at 5.4 million, Croatia with its 4.3 million residents, Slovenia at 2 million (2014 estimate) and Liechtenstein at a bit less than 40,000. If the countries which are occasionally included in Central Europe were counted in, partially or in whole – Romania (20 million), Serbia (6.9 million), Lithuania (2.9 million), Latvia (2 million), Estonia (1.3 million) – it would contribute to the rise of between 25–35 million, depending on whether regional or integral approach was used. If smaller, western and eastern historical parts of Central Europe would be included in the demographic corpus, further 20 million people of different nationalities would also be added in the overall count, it would surpass the 200 million people figure. == Economy == == Currencies == Currently, the members of the Eurozone include Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland use their currencies (Croatian kuna, Czech koruna, Hungarian forint, Polish złoty), but are obliged to adopt the Euro. Switzerland uses its own currency, Swiss franc. == Human Development Index == Countries in descending order of Human Development Index (2014 data): Switzerland: 0.917 (ranked 3) Germany: 0.911 (ranked 6) Liechtenstein: 0.889 (ranked 18) Austria: 0.881 (ranked 21) Slovenia: 0.874 (ranked 25) Czech Republic: 0.861 (ranked 28) Poland: 0.834 (ranked 35) Slovakia: 0.830 (ranked 37) Hungary: 0.818 (ranked 43) Croatia: 0.812 (ranked 47) == Globalisation == The index of globalization in Central European countries (2015 data): Austria: 89.83 (ranked 4) Switzerland: 87.01 (ranked 5) Hungary: 85.78 (ranked 9) Slovakia: 83.62 (ranked 16) Czech Republic: 83.60 (ranked 17) Slovakia: 83.55 (ranked 18) Poland: 79.90 (ranked 23) Germany: 78.24 (ranked 27) Slovenia: 76.24 (ranked 32) Croatia: 75.59 (ranked 35) Liechtenstein: not listed (ranked 180 in 2015 with 29.23) == Prosperity Index == Legatum Prosperity Index demonstrates an average and high level of prosperity in Central Europe (2016 data): Switzerland (ranked 4) Germany (ranked 11) Luxembourg (ranked 12) Austria (ranked 15) Slovenia (ranked 20) Czech Republic (ranked 27) Poland (ranked 34) Slovakia (ranked 36) Croatia (ranked 43) Hungary (ranked 47) == Corruption == Most countries in Central Europe score tend to score above the average in the Corruption Perceptions Index (2015 data): Switzerland (ranked 7) Germany (ranked 10, tied) Austria (ranked 16, tied) Poland (ranked 30, tied) Slovenia (ranked 35) Czech Republic (ranked 37, tied) Croatia (ranked 50, tied) Hungary (ranked 50, tied) Slovakia (ranked 50, tied) According to the Bribe Payers Index, released yearly since 1995 by the Berlin-based NGO Transparency International, Germany and Switzerland, the only two Central European countries examined in the study, were respectively ranked 2nd and 4th in 2011. == Infrastructure == Industrialisation occurred early in Central Europe. That caused construction of rail and other types of infrastructure. == Rail == Central Europe contains the continent's earliest railway systems, whose greatest expansion was recorded in Austro-Hungarian and German territories between 1860-1870s. By the mid-19th century Berlin, Vienna, and Buda/Pest were focal points for network lines connecting industrial areas of Saxony, Silesia, Bohemia, Moravia and Lower Austria with the Baltic (Kiel, Szczecin) and Adriatic (Rijeka, Trieste). Rail infrastructure in Central Europe remains the densest in the world. Railway density, with total length of lines operated (km) per 1,000 km², is the highest in the Czech Republic (198.6), Poland (121.0), Slovenia (108.0), Germany (105.5), Hungary (98.7), Slovakia (73.9) and Croatia (72.5). when compared with most of Europe and the rest of the

world. ===== River transport and canals ===== Before the first railroads appeared in the 1840s, river transport constituted the main means of communication and trade. Earliest canals included Plauen Canal (1745), Finow Canal, and also Bega Canal (1710) which connected Timișoara to Novi Sad and Belgrade via Danube. The most significant achievement in this regard was the facilitation of navigability on Danube from the Black sea to Ulm in the 19th century. ===== Branches ===== Compared to most of Europe, the economies of Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland tend to demonstrate high complexity. Industrialisation has reached Central Europe relatively early: Luxembourg and Germany by 1860, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland by 1870, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia by 1880. ===== Agriculture ===== Central European countries are some of the most significant food producers in the world. Germany is the world's largest hops producer with 34.27% share in 2010, third producer of rye and barley, 5th rapeseed producer, sixth largest milk producer, and fifth largest potato producer. Poland is the world's largest triticale producer, second largest producer of raspberry, currant, third largest of rye, the fifth apple and buckwheat producer, and seventh largest producer of potatoes. The Czech Republic is world's fourth largest hops producer and 8th producer of triticale. Hungary is world's fifth hops and seventh largest triticale producer. Serbia is world's second largest producer of plums and second largest of raspberries. Slovenia is world's sixth hops producer. ===== Business ===== Central European business has a regional organisation, Central European Business Association (CEBA), founded in 1996 in New York as a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting business opportunities within Central Europe and supporting the advancement of professionals in America with a Central European background. ===== Tourism ===== Central European countries, especially Austria, Croatia, Germany and Switzerland are some of the most competitive tourism destinations. Poland is presently a major destination for outsourcing. ===== Outsourcing destination ===== Kraków, Warsaw, and Wrocław, Poland; Prague and Brno, Czech Republic; Budapest, Hungary; Bucharest, Romania; Bratislava, Slovakia; Ljubljana, Slovenia and Zagreb, Croatia are among the world's top 100 outsourcing destinations. == Education == Central European countries are very literate. All of them have the literacy rate of 96% or over (for both sexes): == Languages == Languages taught as the first language in Central Europe are: Croatian, Czech, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Romansh, Slovak and Slovenian. The most popular language taught at schools in Central Europe as foreign languages are: English, French and German. Proficiency in English is ranked as high or moderate, according to the EF English Proficiency Index: Slovenia (position 6) Luxembourg (position 8) Poland (position 9) Austria (position 10) Germany (position 11) Hungary (position 21) Czech Republic (position 18) Switzerland (position 19) Slovakia (position 25) Croatia (not ranked) Liechtenstein (not ranked) Other languages, also popular (spoken by over 5% as a second language): Croatian in Slovenia (61%) Czech in Slovakia (82%) French in Romania (17%), Germany (14%) and Austria (11%) German in Slovenia (42%), Croatia (34%), Slovakia (22%), Poland (20%), Hungary (18%), the Czech Republic (15%) and Romania (5%) Hungarian in Romania (9%), Serbia (5%) Slovakia (12%) Italian in Croatia (14%), Slovenia (12%), Austria (9%) and Romania (7%) Russian in Poland (28%), Slovakia (17%), the Czech Republic (13%) and Germany (6%) Polish in Slovakia (5%) Slovak in the Czech Republic (16%), Serbia (2%) Spanish in Romania (5%) == Education performance == Student performance has varied across Central Europe, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment. In the last study, countries scored medium, below or over the average scores in three fields studied. In maths: Liechtenstein (position 8) – above the OECD average Switzerland (position 9) – above the OECD average Poland (position 14) – above the OECD average Germany (position 16) – above the OECD average Austria (position 18) – above the OECD average Slovenia (position 21) – above the OECD average Czech Republic (position 24) – similar to the OECD average Slovakia (position 35) – below the OECD average Hungary (position 39) – below the OECD average Croatia (position 40) – below the OECD average Serbia (position 43) – below the OECD average In the sciences: Poland (position 9) – above the OECD average Liechtenstein (position 10) – above the OECD average Germany (position 12) – above the OECD average Switzerland (position 19) – above the OECD average Slovenia (position 20) – above the OECD average Czech Republic (position 22) – above the OECD average Austria (position 23) – similar to the OECD average Hungary (position 33) – below the OECD average Croatia (position 35) – below the OECD average Slovakia (position 40) – below the OECD average In reading: Poland (position 10) – above the OECD average Liechtenstein (position 11) – above the OECD average Switzerland (position 17) – above the OECD average Germany (position 19) – above the OECD average Czech Republic (position 26) – similar to the OECD average Austria (position 27) – below the OECD average Hungary (position 33) – below the OECD

average Croatia (position 35) – below the OECD average Slovenia (position 38) – below the OECD average === Higher education === Universities ===== The first university east of France and north of the Alps was the Charles University in Prague established in 1347 or 1348 by Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor and modeled on the University of Paris, with the full number of faculties (law, medicine, philosophy and theology). The list of Central Europe's oldest universities in continuous operation, established by 1500, include (by their dates of foundation): Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic (1348) Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland (1364) University of Vienna in Vienna, Austria (1365) University of Pécs in Pécs, Hungary (1367) Heidelberg University in Heidelberg, Germany (1386) Cologne University in Cologne, Germany (1388) University of Zadar in Zadar, Croatia (1396) University of Leipzig in Leipzig, Germany (1409) University of Rostock in Rostock, Germany (1419) University of Greifswald in Greifswald, Germany (1456) University of Freiburg in Freiburg, Germany (1457) University of Basel in Basel, Switzerland (1460) Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in Munich, Germany (1472) University of Tübingen in Tübingen, Germany (1477) ===== Central European University ===== The Central European University (CEU) is a graduate-level, English-language university promoting a distinctively Central European perspective. It was established in 1991 by the Hungarian philanthropist George Soros, who has provided an endowment of US\$880 million, making the university one of the wealthiest in Europe. In the academic year 2013/2014, the CEU had 1,381 students from 93 countries and 388 faculty members from 58 countries. ===== Regional exchange program ===== Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS) is an international exchange program for students and teachers teaching or studying in participating countries. Its current members include (year it joined for the first time in brackets): Albania (2006) Austria (2005) Bosnia and Herzegovina (2008) Bulgaria (2005) Croatia (2005) Czech Republic (2005) Hungary (2005) Kosovo* (2008) Macedonia (2006) Moldova (2011) Montenegro (2006) Poland (2005) Romania (2005) Serbia (2005) Slovakia (2005) Slovenia (2005) == Culture and society == Research centres of Central European literature include Harvard (Cambridge, MA), Purdue University == Architecture == Central European architecture has been shaped by major European styles including but not limited to: Brick Gothic, Rococo, Secession (art) and Modern architecture. Six Central European countries are amongst those countries with higher numbers of World Heritage Sites: Germany (position 5th, 42 sites) Poland (position 18th, 16 sites) Czech Republic (position 22th, 12 sites) Switzerland (position 25th, 12 sites) Austria (position 27th, 10 sites) Croatia (position 29th, 10 sites) == Religion == Central European countries are mostly Roman Catholic (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) or mixed Catholic and Protestant, (Germany and Switzerland). Large Protestant groups include Lutheran and Calvinist. Significant populations of Eastern Catholicism and Old Catholicism are also prevalent throughout Central Europe. Central Europe has been a centre of Protestantism in the past; however, it has been mostly eradicated by the Counterreformation. The Czech Republic (Bohemia) was historically the first Protestant country, then violently recatholicised, and now overwhelmingly non-religious, nevertheless the largest number of religious people are Catholic (10.3%). Romania and Serbia are mostly Eastern Orthodox with significant Protestant and Catholic minorities. Before the Holocaust (1941–45), there was also a sizeable Ashkenazi Jewish community in the region, numbering approximately 16.7 million people. In some of these countries, there is a number of atheists, undeclared and non-religious people: the Czech Republic (non-religious 34.2% and undeclared 45.2%), Germany (non-religious 38%), Slovenia (atheist 30.2%), Luxembourg (25% non-religious), Switzerland (20.1%), Hungary (27.2% undeclared, 16.7% "non-religious" and 1.5% atheists), Slovakia (atheists and non-religious 13.4%, "not specified" 10.6%) Austria (19.7% of "other or none"), Liechtenstein (10.6% with no religion), Croatia (4%) and Poland (3% of non-believers/agnostics and 1% of undeclared). == Central Europe church buildings gallery == == Cuisine == Central European cuisine has evolved through centuries due to social and political change. Most countries share many dishes. The most popular dishes typical to Central Europe are sausages and cheeses, where the earliest evidence of cheesemaking in the archaeological record dates back to 5,500 BCE (Kujawy, Poland). Other foods widely associated with Central Europe are goulash and beer. List of countries by beer consumption per capita is led by the Czech Republic, followed by Germany and Austria. Poland comes 5th, Croatia 7th and Slovenia 13th. == Human rights == History ===== Human rights have a long tradition in Central Europe. In 1222 Hungary defined for the first time the rights of the nobility in its "Golden Bull". In 1264 the Statute of Kalisz and the General Charter of Jewish Liberties introduced numerous rights for the Jews in Poland, granting them de facto autonomy. In 1783 for the first time, Poland forbid corporal punishment of children in schools. In the same year, a German state of Baden banned slavery. On the other hand, there were also major

regressions, such as "Nihil novi" in Poland in 1505 which forbade peasants from leaving their land without permission from their feudal lord. ===== Present ===== Generally, the countries in the region are progressive on the issue of human rights: death penalty is illegal in all of them, corporal punishment is outlawed in most of them and people of both genders can vote in elections. Nevertheless, Central European countries struggle to adopt new generations of human rights, such as same-sex marriage. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland also have a history of participation in the CIA's extraordinary rendition and detention program, according to the Open Society Foundation. ===== Literature ===== Regional writing tradition revolves around the turbulent history of the region, as well as its cultural diversity. Its existence is sometimes challenged. Specific courses on Central European literature are taught at Stanford University, Harvard University and Jagiellonian University The as well as cultural magazines dedicated to regional literature. Angelus Central European Literature Award is an award worth 150,000.00 PLN (about \$50,000 or £30,000) for writers originating from the region. Likewise, the Vilenica International Literary Prize is awarded to a Central European author for "outstanding achievements in the field of literature and essay writing." ===== Media ===== There is a whole spectrum of media active in the region: newspapers, television and internet channels, radio channels, internet websites etc. Central European media are regarded as free, according to the Press Freedom Index, although the situation in Poland, Hungary and Croatia is described as "problematic". Some of the top scoring countries are in Central Europe include: Switzerland (position 7) Austria (position 11) Germany (position 16) Slovakia (position 17) Czech Republic (position 23) Liechtenstein (position 32) Slovenia (position 37) Poland (position 54) Hungary (position 71) Croatia (position 74) ===== Sport ===== There is a number of Central European Sport events and leagues. They include: Central European Tour Miskolc GP (Hungary)* Central European Tour Budapest GP (Hungary) Central Europe Rally (Romania and Hungary)* Central European Football League (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey) Central European International Cup (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Yugoslavia; 1927–1960) Central Europe Throwdown* Football is one of the most popular sports. Countries of Central Europe had many great national teams throughout history and hosted several major competitions. Yugoslavia hosted UEFA Euro 1976 before the competition expanded to 8 teams and Germany (at that times as West Germany) hosted UEFA Euro 1988. Recently, 2008 and 2012 UEFA European Championships were held in Austria & Switzerland and Poland & Ukraine respectively. Germany hosted 2 FIFA World Cups (1974 and 2006) and are the current champions (as of 2014). ===== Politics ===== Organisations ===== Central Europe is a birthplace of regional political organisations: Visegrad group Centrope Central European Initiative Central European Free Trade Agreement Middleeeuropean Initiative Central European Defence Cooperation Three Seas Initiative ===== Democracy Index ===== Central Europe is a home to some of world's oldest democracies. However, most of them have been impacted by totalitarian rule, particularly Nazism (Germany, Austria, other occupied countries) and Communism. Most of Central Europe have been occupied and later allied with the USSR, often against their will through forged referendum (e.g., Polish people's referendum in 1946) or force (northeast Germany, Poland, Hungary et alia). Nevertheless, these experiences have been dealt in most of them. Most of Central European countries score very highly in the Democracy Index: Switzerland (position 6) Germany (position 13) Austria (position 14) Czech Republic (position 25) Slovenia (position 37) Poland (position 40) Slovakia (position 45) Croatia (position 50) Hungary (position 51) Liechtenstein (not listed) ===== Global Peace Index ===== In spite of its turbulent history, Central Europe is currently one of world's safest regions. Most Central European countries are in top 20%: Austria (position 3) Switzerland (position 5) Czech Republic (position 11) Slovenia (position 14) Germany (position 17) Slovakia (position 19) Poland (position 23) Hungary (position 22) Croatia (position 26) Liechtenstein (not listed) ===== Central European Time ===== The time zone used in most parts of the European Union is a standard time which is 1 hour ahead of Coordinated Universal Time. It is commonly called Central European Time because it has been first adopted in central Europe (by year): Hungary Slovakia Czech Republic Germany Austria Poland (1893) Slovenia Switzerland Liechtenstein ===== In popular culture ===== Central Europe is mentioned in 35th episode of Lovejoy, entitled "The Prague Sun", filmed in 1992. While walking over the famous Charles Bridge, the main character, Lovejoy says: " I've never been to Prague before. Well, it is one of the great unspoiled cities in Central Europe. Notice: I said: "Central", not "Eastern"! The Czechs are a bit funny about that, they think of Eastern Europeans as turnip heads." Wes Anderson's Oscar-winning film The Grand Budapest Hotel is regarded as a fictionalised celebration of the 1930s in Central Europe and region's musical tastes ===== See also ===== Geographical midpoint of Europe Central and Eastern Europe Central European Initiative Central European Time (CET) Central European University East-Central

Europe Eurovoc Life zones of central Europe Międzymorze (Intermarum) Mitteleuropa == References == Bibliography ==

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The dictionary definition of central europe at Wiktionary

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