

## Epreuve écrite

Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2007

Section: B-9

Branche: ANGLAIS

Numéro d'ordre du candidat

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### Europe's mid-life crisis

Anybody reaching 50 naturally likes to reflect a bit on their achievements and failures. So it is with the European Union, which marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing in Rome of its founding treaty in 1957.

The fact is that the EU is caught up in a mid-life crisis. The biggest problem is economic: European economies have a record of lamentably low growth and high unemployment. This is hardly the EU's fault—the blame lies more with national governments—but it makes it hard to drum up much popular affection for the union's institutions. Indeed, economic ills make voters suspicious not only of globalisation generally but also of such EU projects as enlargement and the single market. They also contributed heavily to the rejection of the EU's constitution by the French and Dutch in 2005: France's voters might have said yes, had unemployment been 3%, not 10%.

Does this sombre mood say the project has failed? Not at all. Its early decades were spectacularly successful. The 50 years before the Treaty of Rome included two world wars and a great depression. The 50 years since have brought peace and prosperity on a scale unimaginable in Europe's history. This process culminated in 2004 in the reunification of a continent divided by the iron curtain of communism. In the past two years the EU has set out ambitious plans for an energy policy and for tackling climate change. It is the world's biggest aid donor, which gives it considerable influence in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It has sent troops as far afield as Aceh and Congo and co-ordinated big national deployments in Lebanon. And it has started membership negotiations with Croatia and, most momentously, with Turkey.

But Europe's political leaders face two big tasks. The first is to reinvigorate their economies. That requires painful changes to make labour markets more flexible, to trim overly generous welfare states and to inject new competition into product markets, especially for the service sector. The second job for the politicians is to make a lot more effort to persuade their voters that they have benefited from the enlargement of their club. All independent analyses of the expansion to take in central and eastern European countries in 2004 have found economic gains not just in the new countries but in the old ones as well—indeed, this is one reason why Europe's economies have recently picked up. Most pointedly, the gains were greatest in the three countries that fully opened up their labour markets to migrant workers from the new members: Britain, Ireland and Sweden. More such gains can be expected from any further enlargement.

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An EU that helps to restore prosperity to its members may also be able to rekindle its citizens' enthusiasm for its project. So can Europe resolve its mid-life crisis? Yes, if it concentrates on the things that matter most, instead of quarrelling over the EU constitution. The choice is between reform and revival or decline and decay.

Extracts from a special report on the EU in *The Economist*, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2007. (adapted for educational purposes)

**I. COMPREHENSION: 30 POINTS**

Answer the questions using your own sentence constructions and your own words as far as possible.

1. What are the symptoms of Europe's mid-life crisis? (10 points)
2. What are the major achievements of the EU? (10 points)
3. What are two important priorities for European politicians? (10 points)

**II. ESSAY: 30 POINTS**

Write between 250 and 350 words and indicate the number of words used.

How can we explain many people's nervousness and worries about the recent wave of EU enlargement?