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The “Seven Europes”

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It is often said that Europe is the most ill-defined of continents. As a result, the size of the European population and its relative weight in the world vary according to the geographic area selected. Seven such areas can be identified.

By Gérard-François **Dumont**

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The most common perimeter, used in international statistical data bases since the implosion of the Soviet Union[1], is the **conventional geographic Europe**. It extends from the Strait of Gibraltar, including the maritime peripheral possessions of Spain (the Canaries) and Portugal (the Azores and Madeira), and from Iceland to Russia, limited by the Caucasus and the Turkish border near the Bosphorus. It numbers 736 million inhabitants[2], *i.e.* 11% of the world population.

However, in view of the great size – 17, 098,000 km² of Russia, the largest country in the group, **conventional geographic Europe** is often defined **excluding Russia**. It then numbers 594 million inhabitants, *i.e.* 8.9% of the world population.

A third approach consists in applying, within the above geographical framework, a political limitation. In this case, the focus is on the group of **conventionally European territories of institutional Europe**, namely the European Union. With 27 member countries in 2009, this group totals 496.6 million inhabitants, *i.e.* 7.4% of the world population.

But these numbers exclude territories which are institutional parts of the European Union[3] but are not included in Europe's conventional geographic perimeter. Another Europe therefore covers an **institutional Europe including territories situated outside conventional geographic Europe** – territories conventionally classified in other regions of the world, such as Cyprus (1.1 million inhabitants[4]) in Western Asia, and the four French overseas *départements*, Martinique (0.4 million inhabitants) and Guadeloupe (0.4 million inhabitants) in the Caribbean, French Guiana (0.2 million inhabitants) in South America, and Reunion (0.8 million inhabitants) in Eastern Africa. The European Union, including all its component territories from an institutional point of view, then totals 499.4 million inhabitants, still about 7.4% of the world population.

Combining the above politico-geographical criterion with an economic one, a fifth Europe gathers, in the **European Economic Area**, the 27 members of the EU and three other countries: Iceland (0.3 million inhabitants), Liechtenstein (0.04 million inhabitants) and Norway (4.8 million inhabitants). The total now rises to 504.5 million inhabitants, *i.e.* 7,5% of the world population.

In a sixth approach, European statistics cover both t**he EU member countries and the EU candidate countries**, currently Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey, which benefit from specific financings and, in view of their statute, partake in a number of institutional bodies. This group adds up to 585.7 million inhabitants, 8,7% of the world population.

Finally, the most extensive definition consists in adding together the populations, in 2009, of the 47 **member States of the Council of Europe**, an organisation whose primary goal is to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It covers an enlarged conventional geographic Europe. Indeed, its additions are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, four countries conventionally classified in Western Asia; on the other hand, it does not encompass Belarus, in Eastern Europe, nor Kosovo, independent since 17 February 2008, in Southern Europe. This "seventh Europe" represents 752.7 million inhabitants, i.e. 11,1% of the world population.

In conclusion, the total size of European populations can vary, according to the geographic scale retained, from less than 500 million to nearly 750 million, while their weight in the world population can vary from less than 7.5% to more than 11%. To evoke Europe, therefore, one needs to first specify which geography entity is referred to.

(*Translation:* Sylvie Vanston)

"To evoke Europe, therefore, one needs to first specify which geography entity is referred to."

1. In the previous period, USSR was treated in UN statistics as a separate "continent". Cf. Dumont, Gérard-François, Verluise, Pierre, *Géopolitique de l'Europe*, Paris, Sedes, 2009.

2. According to data published in *Population & Avenir*, n° 690, Nov.-Dec. 2008.

3. Cf. the study published in *Population & Avenir*, n° 693, May-Jun. 2009.

4. However, Cyprus only numbers 0.8 million inhabitants on the part of the island controlled by the government, the North part being occupied by Turkish forces.