



A Vision for Europe

"Europa in quattuor partes divisa est."

This illustration is based on the EEA as it currently stands, not the EU per se. These would be the North, South, East and West zones that have free trade and free movement within them but potentially border control at their edges, along with the ability to collectively negotiate separate free trade deals around the world and *possibly* even sharing a currency, where this was found to be beneficial. As one very minor example, there would be no need for Britain to apply tariffs to oranges because those happen to be grown in France. The groupings would create common travel and free trade areas where those factors have not been a major issue in the past. How free trade would work *between* those groups would be a matter for pragmatic negotiation by the four regional parliaments, mediated by a central commission whose members would also have to be MEPs in their own right, directly accountable at the ballot box – just as a Cabinet Minister is in Britain. Term limits could also be considered. Furthermore, any MEP could propose new legislation or amendments, either in their own parliament or to the central commission, unlike today.

The European nations would be divided into blocs that are *actually similar* in both cultural and economic terms, whose closer association and shared body of laws and regulations would be unlikely to cause too many problems. The regional parliaments would be based in Oslo, Paris, Budapest and Athens, with the central commission headquartered in Berlin. These would all make sense geographically, while also minimising the environmental impact from travel.

Border control may not be necessary, but if it were, there could be very small separate borders between Denmark and Germany, and Poland and Lithuania, with larger ones between Greece and Bulgaria, around the top of Italy, and down the middle between East and West – geography takes care of the rest. These borders would be staffed but also electronically automated, such that genuine residents living within 50(?) kilometres on either side of a border, and certainly any hauliers, could register for a digital scan pass to move across them at will, on foot or by road, thereby minimising disruption to local communities, commuters and businesses.

If border control were in place, then the migration crisis points in Greece and Italy would be relieved because movement further up through Europe would not be possible for unregistered migrants, the news of which would quickly spread. The resources saved there could then go towards policing the border between Spain/Portugal and the North African nations, where people trafficking remains rife.

The Southern economies would have the time they need to recover properly, moving back towards full employment and a healthy economy through implementing economic policies of mutual interest that suit their own circumstances, but without being beholden to France and Germany's financial interests. Economic contagion arising from shared currencies, or indeed the next financial crisis, would be contained within regions that are similar enough to employ collective measures to weather it.

Free movement to settle or to seek work would exist within each bloc, but not between them as a basic right, unless this was negotiated separately and bilaterally agreed. However, there would be a sensible mobility framework between all four blocs. People with job or interview offers, as well as holiday-makers and those visiting friends or family, could apply for a visa waiver, which would function much in the way it does between Britain and the US – an online application would take about 10 minutes and be approved within half an hour as long as their identity was deemed valid and their onward itinerary could be held to account. Travelling performers such as comedians or musicians, or indeed business people, could do something very similar with time-limited permits that could be continually renewed as needed, via their agents/employers.

Were the EU ever to find itself facing collapse if it failed to consider comprehensive reforms, and Europe had to go back to the drawing board, this could be a pragmatic way forward that keeps the continent broadly united while also making sense for the disparate groups of nations that it contains.