

Euro 410 Research Strategies – Suggested steps with details

These steps were designed to help make your information-seeking process more logical, fast and effective. Modify this procedure as necessary, to fit the needs of your particular research problem.

Research steps	Possible sources and techniques
Step 1: Select preliminary topic (general).	Class discussion Course texts Overviews in "General Sources" Discussions with instructor
Step 2: Use general sources to gain a preliminary understanding of the topic.	General periodical indexes such as Academic Search Elite Subject-oriented web sites
Step 3: Write a statement or research question for a manageable, interesting, well-focused topic.	All sources listed above Discussions with instructor, classmates, librarians
Step 4: Identify the information needed to provide sufficient, relevant, credible support for your topic.	Primary sources: Statistics, EU documents, contemporary accounts Secondary sources: books, articles, "grey literature"
Step 5: Identify the search tools or techniques necessary to identify the needed information.	Specialized article indexes News databases
Step 6: Employ effective search statements.	Source-specific syntax Appropriate search terms
Step 7: Locate the information identified, using appropriate library or other resources.	Online catalog/Orbis Interlibrary loan
Step 8: Evaluate choice of search tools and techniques in light of information discovered, repeating search with adjustments as necessary.	Revise search statements Try additional search tools
Step 9: Evaluate research topic in light of information discovered, revising as appropriate.	Insufficient information? New information requires re-thinking?
Step 10: Cite information sources in acceptable form.	Give appropriate credit Use a standard citation form
Step 11: Evaluate critically the quality of the information discovered.	Check: Accuracy, point of view, timeliness, authority

Step 1:

Select a preliminary topic, which may be framed in very general terms.

Examples:

- "French-German rapprochement following WWII"
- "the genetically engineered food controversy"
- "the effects of the Schengen agreement on European tourism"
- "why some nations opted out of the Euro"
- "southward enlargement of the EU"

Ideas may come from any of a number of sources, including:

- Class discussion
- Course texts
- A perusal of focused web sites, such as [Europa](#)
- Overviews such as those listed in "General Sources" [link to this page]
- Periodicals dealing with EU topics, such as *Europe* or the *Bulletin of the European Union*

Step 2:

Use general sources to gain a basic understanding of the topic. You will want to develop a better understanding of the background and context of the topic, important terminology, and a knowledge of how the topic divides up into narrower sub-topics.

Good sources for general knowledge include:

- General periodicals.
 - [Academic Search Elite](#). This is a good multi-disciplinary index, with many full-text articles that you can peruse as you do your search.
- Subject-oriented web sites.
 - [Eurunion A-Z subject directory](#). The website of the European Commission's Washington delegation, is a great place to begin searching official EU web pages.
 - Or look at some of the guides at the [University of Pittsburgh's Center for Western European Studies](#).
- Course texts and readings.
- "General Sources" {link to this page}

Step 3:

Write a statement or research question for a manageable, interesting, well-focused topic.

Use the information from the sources in Steps 1 and 2, possibly combining ideas from a variety of sources. You may want to test your topic against the wisdom of your instructor, classmates, or librarians.

Step 4:

Identify the information needed to provide sufficient, relevant, credible support for your topic.

Primary sources. If you want to make conclusions and judgments on the basis of primary sources, you may want to seek out such materials as:

- statistical data
- official EU documents such as treaties, legislation, Parliamentary debate
- news reporting

Secondary sources. You may want to take advantage of the analysis, context, or interpretations of others who have written on the topic, in such sources as:

- Books
- Periodical articles
- Articles in scholarly journals
- Policy, discussion, or "working" papers (so-called "grey literature")
- Official EU information. Information from the EU institutions or agencies, that is neither statistical nor legal/legislative, may be either considered to be either primary or secondary, depending upon the use you make of it. For example, *press releases* announcing a new directive are secondary sources if your topic is the directives they describe. But if you are analyzing how the EU publicizes its actions to the world, the press releases themselves may be your primary sources.

Step 5:

Identify the search tools or techniques necessary to identify the needed information. Some ideas are given below: explore the "Research Tools" page for other possibilities.

Secondary sources may be identified through:

- specialized article indexes:
 - [Historical Abstracts](#)
 - [PAIS](#)
 - [GeoBase](#)
- news sources:
 - [Lexis-Nexis Academic](#)
 - [Newspaper Source](#)
- [individual newspapers'](#) web versions
- "grey literature" databases:
 - [CIAO](#)
 - [Country Analysis & Forecast](#)

Primary sources are often referenced in secondary sources, such as in the footnotes of articles, or in the bibliographies of books. To locate useful primary sources on your own try these techniques:

- Statistics: Use the finding tools on the "Statistics" {link}page
- EU treaties or legislation: Use the sources on the "Treaties and Legislation" {link}page.

EU publications: Good sources for EU information:

- [UO Online Catalog](#)
- [Europa](#)
- [Eurunion](#)

Step 6: