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The four books in the *What is Europe?* series are the product of a collaborative enterprise under the direction of the Humanities Programme Committee of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU). The universities involved in the project are:

- The Open University, The Netherlands
- York Alma University, The United Open University
- The Deutscher Institut für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen
- The Centre d'Analyse des Savoirs Contemporains at the Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg on behalf of the Fédération Internationale de l'Enseignement à Distance
- The UK Open University

The Humanities Programme Committee of the EADTU was established in late 1988 with a brief to promote joint course development. The four books in this series were designed as the academic core of its first course which was first presented by the Open University in 1993. For over ten years the series has been revised and updated the original materials so that they can be made available to students of European Studies at universities and colleges not involved in the EADTU programme in Europe, the United States and Japan.

Starting to plan a course on Europe in the busy year of 1989 was both a challenge and an opportunity. With Europe on the verge of the 1992 treaty, it was clear that the idea of a course focused only on the European Community. We decided at once on the idea of a European history course, not on general history, but to focus on the various aspects of European identity in its various historical, cultural, social, political and economic aspects. This topic was at the centre of the debate on Europe, called for a wide ranging approach across disciplines and to benefit from the different national perspectives that could be brought to the project.

The course has four objectives:

1. To provide a context for the understanding of contemporary European developments through a consideration of the history of the area of Europe.
2. To consider aspects of European cultural diversity through the study of language, literature, mass media and everyday culture.