Dear Mr. Matthew Ericson,


First of all, let me say that I find the representation insightful and original, and helps create a good picture of the economic crisis in Europe, and even to some extent, in the world.

In the following lines, I’ll try to summarize a few elements that I found particularly useful in understanding the state of the European economy by interacting with this graph, and some ideas of improvement.

I like the way the sizes of circles correlate to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The chart makes it easy to make a comparison between the most important players in today’s world economy. One thing that I would have liked to also see depicted in a visual manner, rather than by numbers, is the Gross Government Debt (GGD) as a percentage of the GDP (see the first figure, below). As it’s designed now, a user has to hover over each node representing a country, read the figure, and try to understand its meaning by repeating the process with other countries. My suggestion is to also represent these percentages as circles of lighter colors with the center in the GDP circle (the second figure below).

Moreover, one interesting fact that is only represented by text is the ratio between internal and external debt, which in cases like Japan is an important factor in determining whether it may be considered high or low risk. Same as before, this could be represented as yet another circle, colored differently (see the third figure).
Figure 1: A screenshot of the current chart, and depiction of GGD as a percentage of GDP

Figure 2: A screenshot of the current chart, with purple circles representing the GGD as a percentage of GDP

Figure 3: A screenshot of the current chart, with purple circles representing the GGD as a percentage of GDP and orange circles representing the amount of external debt out of the total GGD.

One other element that I find extremely useful is being able to see a view of the Euro zone by itself, with a few prognoses (Figure 4). Here too however, it would have been interesting to see a broader picture of the entire Euro zone, the entire European Union, and even more, neighboring countries with their
impact over the Euro crisis (Figure 5). For example, it was surprising for me not to find Russia taken into account in any way, which is something I’m sure a lot of your readers would be interested in seeing.

One final thing that I would have found useful is a way of predicting how the crisis might come to an end: for example, show the state of the Euro zone without Greece’s debt.

In spite of having a lot of suggestions for improvement, I’m impressed with the representation of the Euro zone economic situation, and I think it’s a good step towards giving the world a better understanding of where we are and where we’re all going.

Sincerely,

Florin Chelaru