

The EU today is based on a series of treaties, pacts and agreements between member states, which have steadily increased the areas (political and economic) in which nations states in the EU are **integrated**. This means that member states have agreed to allow many policy decisions to be made at a European level by all governments together, rather than decisions being made separately by their own national governments. Integration has tended to occur in waves, and has particularly accelerated since the early 1980s.

1951: The Treaty of Paris is signed by [Belgium](#), [France](#), West [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Luxembourg](#) and the [Netherlands](#) (the 'Original Six'), creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The [European Court of Justice](#) (ECJ) is established.

1953: A common market for coal, iron ore, scrap iron and steel is formally established in Europe.

1955: A conference of ECSC foreign ministers in June agrees to encourage free trade between member states through the removal of tariffs and quotas.

1957: The [Treaty of Rome](#) is signed by the Original Six as the first step towards establishing the common market, customs union, and free movement of capital and labour. The European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) are established. The ECJ becomes the court of the EEC to interpret the Treaty of Rome and rule in disputes over EEC decisions.

1958: The first [European Commission](#) takes office.

1963: French President Charles de Gaulle, vetoes British membership of the EEC on the grounds that Britain lacks commitment to European integration.

1965: On 8 April, the Merger Treaty is signed in Brussels. It merges the executives of the ECSC, EEC, and Euratom to become collectively known as the European Communities (EC).

1967: French President Charles de Gaulle vetoes British membership for the second time.

1970: The Werner Report sets out a path towards [Economic and Monetary Union](#) (EMU); the EC agrees to work towards greater [integration](#) and a [single market](#). Proposals are for a customs union, with the removal of all internal customs duties and the application of a common external tariff. Free movement of labour is also guaranteed.

1972: The EC launches its first attempt to harmonise [exchange rates](#): participating governments are required to confine the fluctuations of their currencies within a range of +/- 2.25% against each other. Countries that struggle to do so can request aid in the form of loans. The new system is referred to as the 'snake in the tunnel'.

1973: [Denmark](#), [Ireland](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) formally join the European Communities.

1977: Customs duties between the nine EC members are completely abolished.

1979: In March, the [European Monetary System](#) is launched as a step towards the eventual goal of EMU. It encourages countries to coordinate a central exchange rate under the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). This provides the basis for creating a single European currency in the future (i.e. the Euro). All members apart from the UK join the ERM.

In June, direct elections to the [European Parliament](#) (EP) are held for the first time (until this point, Members of the Parliament were appointed by national parliaments).

1981: [Greece](#) becomes the 10th member of the EC, marking the start of a decade of increased expansion and integration.

1985: Jaques Delors, as President of the Commission, argues that the single market programme will revive European integration by spilling over from the economic into the political arena. The [Single European Act](#) is proposed - as a revision of the [Treaty of Rome](#) - to revitalise the process of European integration.

1986: The European flag is unveiled. [Portugal](#) and [Spain](#) become members of the EC.

1987: The [Single European Act](#) (SEA) comes into force. This modifies the Treaty of Rome, aiming to complete the formation of a common market, which the earlier treaty had begun: 1992 is set as the deadline for achieving the single market. National vetoes are abolished by introducing Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers for areas relating to the single market (based on 'four freedoms' allowing goods, services, people and capital to move freely throughout the EC). The legislative power of the European Parliament is increased and the basis for a European foreign policy is laid. The Single European Act is the first commitment by member states to create a 'European Union'.

1990: Britain enters the ERM. Two Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) are launched: the first on [EMU](#); and a second on political union. Economic policy coordination and the removal of obstacles to financial integration are both introduced, as the first stage of EMU.

1992: The [Maastricht Treaty](#) turns the European Community into the 'European Union' (EU). The Treaty includes developments for monetary union and a chapter on social policy (the UK secures an opt-out from both). It also introduces the concept of [EU Citizenship](#), which gives Europeans the right to live and vote in elections in any EU country.

1994: The European Monetary Institute (EMI) is established to oversee the co-ordination of the monetary policies of national central banks. The EMI also works towards the creation of the [European Central Bank](#).

1997: The [Treaty of Amsterdam](#) is signed, which follows on from the Maastricht Treaty and prepares the EU for eastward expansion. More national vetoes are abolished as Qualified Majority Voting is expanded, and the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty becomes an official part of EU law. The [Stability and Growth Pact](#) is agreed, defining rules and penalties for the member states that form the Eurozone to make sure they keep the amount they spend and borrow under control in order to help create stable conditions for the new currency.

1998: The [European Central Bank \(ECB\)](#) is established in Frankfurt, Germany. It is responsible for setting monetary policy for the Euro countries and managing their foreign reserves. The [European Council](#) and European Parliament agree that 11 of the 15 member states meet the criteria to adopt a single currency.

1999: On 1 January, the [Euro](#) is launched as the official currency in (11 out of the 15 EU member states): [Austria](#), [Belgium](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Luxembourg](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#) and [Spain](#) (however, the Euro only exists as a virtual currency until 2002).

2000: The Presidents of the EU Parliament, the European Council and the EU Commission formally proclaim the [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), a non-legally binding declaration drafted by a group of legal experts, which sets out civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens and all persons resident in the EU.

2001: The [Treaty of Nice](#), which amends the Maastricht Treaty, is signed. This reforms the decision-making processes and prepares the EU for expansion to include ten further members.

2002: 12 EU states introduce [Euro](#) notes and coins and phase out their national currencies. The Convention on the Future of Europe prepares a draft of the [Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe](#), as the Treaty of Paris (which established the ECSC) expires after fifty years.

2003: The first troops are deployed under the [European Security and Defence Policy](#) (ESDP), following its creation in 1999. The troops are deployed to take over from a NATO mission in [FYR Macedonia](#).

2004: Enlargement goes ahead on 1 May 2004, with 10 new countries joining the EU: [Cyprus](#), [the Czech Republic](#), [Estonia](#), [Hungary](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Malta](#), [Poland](#) and [Slovenia](#). EU leaders sign the agreed text of the [Constitutional Treaty](#).

2005: The French and Dutch electorates reject the [Constitutional Treaty](#) in referenda, thus preventing its full ratification. The European Union continues to function on the basis of its existing treaties.

2007: [Bulgaria and Romania](#) become the 26th and 27th members of the EU on 1 January. Germany takes over the 6-month rotating Presidency of the [EU Council of Ministers](#), and begins new negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty. It is renamed the [Lisbon Treaty](#), with most of the original innovations of the Constitution carried over, but some of the more symbolic aspects, such as the EU anthem, dropped.

2008: [Ireland](#) holds a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. 53.4% vote no to the Treaty (turnout was 53%).

2009: An [EU Council](#) summit prepares the way for a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland - 'protocols' are promised to be attached to the treaty to provide guarantees on issues such as Irish neutrality and ethical issues. At a second referendum in October, 67% of Irish voters vote 'yes' to the treaty (turnout is 59%). In November, the [Czech Republic](#) becomes the last EU member to sign the treaty after securing an opt-out from the [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), which the treaty made legally binding. The [Lisbon Treaty](#) enters into force in December.

2010: Two new posts created by the Lisbon Treaty are filled - Britain's Baroness Catherine Ashton is appointed [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy](#) and Belgium's Herman Van Rompuy is appointed permanent [President of the European Council](#).

2011: [Estonia](#) joins the Eurozone.

2013: [Croatia](#) becomes the 28th member state of the EU.

2014: On 1 January, the Euro is launched as the official currency in [Latvia](#).

2015: [Lithuania](#) is the last Baltic State to join the Eurozone.

Technical terms:

- ❖ **Integration:** reducing barriers on transactions between countries. The process of EU integration means that states agree to allow decisions to be made at a European, rather than a national, level.
- ❖ **Single market:** trading area governed by the same basic rules, enabling the free movement of goods.
- ❖ **Exchange rate:** the ratio in which one country's currency is valued against another.
- ❖ **Qualified Majority Voting (QMV):** majority (as opposed to unanimous) voting procedure.
- ❖ **Intergovernmental Conference (IGC):** formal procedure for debating and deciding amendments to the EU's treaties.
- ❖ **Eurozone:** area formed by the states that have adopted the euro.
- ❖ **Opt-out:** the ability to decline from signing an agreement, against a presumption to do so.