

Europe in your pocket



The European Union always at hand

Your smart guide to the EU

There are now 27 member countries in the European Union:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The EU has 497,400,000 citizens and covers 4,330,400 km².



23 official languages are spoken in the EU: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.

Our flag, our anthem, our motto, our Europe Day

The European Union has its own flag:

12 golden stars on a blue background.



The European anthem takes its tune from "Ode to Joy", from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It is played as an instrumental.

The motto of the EU is "United in Diversity".



9th of May is Europe Day.

The French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presented his vision of a united Europe for the first time on 9th of May 1950. As a result, 9th of May is celebrated as the "birthday" of the EU.

The Euro also imparts a sense of unity.

So far, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain participate in the economic and monetary union as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty.



Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom have not yet introduced the Euro.

We have had Euros in our pockets since 1st of January 2002. The Euro not only means stable prices and a reliable currency that is accepted as a means of payment all over the world, but it also enables us to travel abroad at any time, without having to exchange money in advance.

Historic steps of the European Integration process

The signing of the Treaty of Paris in **1951**, which marked the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (**ECSC**), was the very **beginning of the European integration process**. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands were the founding members of the ECSC.



The Treaty of Rome, which led to the founding of the European Economic Community (EEC), was signed in **1957**. The treaty founding the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) was signed at the same time, and the two are regularly referred to as the **Treaties of Rome**.



The Single European Act of 1987 established the single market, the purpose of which was to break down customs and excise barriers within Europe, and to facilitate trade between member countries.

The European Union finally saw the light of day when the **Maastricht Treaty** came into effect in **1993**.



The **Treaty of Amsterdam** came into effect on **1st of May 1999**. It strengthened the European Parliament and encouraged member states to make greater efforts to create jobs.



The introduction of the single European currency was another important stage in the European integration process. The **Euro** became an official currency in **January 2002**.



The **Treaty of Nice**, which came into effect on **1st of February 2003**, put in place the institutional reforms necessary for the fifth round of enlargement.

The Constitutional Treaty

On 4th of October 2003, the EU held an intergovernmental conference in Rome, the purpose of which was to draft a constitutional treaty. The Convention on the Future of the EU was adopted and the intergovernmental conference culminated in the signing of a treaty establishing a **Constitution for Europe** in Rome on 29th of October 2004. But the Treaty did not come into force because referendums in the Netherlands and in France failed.

On **13th of December 2007** 27 member states signed the **Treaty of Lisbon**, which modified the former treaties. The Treaty of Lisbon will reinforce democracy and its capacities to promote the interests of its citizens. **Europe is grappling with new issues: globalisation, climate change, the need for a sustainable development and new security threats, the goal is to face these challenges.**

Status Quo of the ratification process: the process is in a current impasse because of the non-ratification by Ireland and ratification only in parts by the Czech Republic. In Poland and Germany the ratification process has yet to be completed by the signatures of the presidents of both Republics.



Phases of the European Integration process:

- 1973 Denmark, Great Britain and Ireland join the European Economic Community
- 1981 Greece joins the EEC
- 1986 Spain and Portugal enlarge the EU to 12 member countries
- 1995 Austria, Sweden and Finland became members of the European family
- With the accession of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and Cyprus in 2004 the European Union counts 25 member states
- In 2007 the EU reached a number of 27 member states with the accession of Bulgaria and Rumania.



Croatia and Turkey are recognised as candidates for full membership. The Republic of Macedonia has been recognised as a candidate but the membership talks have not been

started yet. The EU has repeatedly stated that it will accept applications for membership of the EU of the Western Balkan states like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo if they fulfil the accession criteria.

The European Union 2008

Why work together?

The journey towards European unification that began in 1951 has facilitated **peaceful coexistence** in Europe based on **common objectives**: economic progress; social cohesion; promoting peace in the world; protecting human rights; and co-operation on police and justice matters.

From the very beginning, one of the central political objectives of the European integration process was to create a joint space without borders, with a single currency, the Euro that would enable people, services, capital, transactions and goods to circulate freely.

In order to speak with one voice outside Europe, it was necessary to appoint a High Representative, and to agree upon a **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)** which was based upon guidelines set out by the **Maastricht Treaty** signed in 1993.

A space for freedom, security and justice began to take shape with a European police agency (**EUROPOL**) and European co-operation on justice (**EUROJUST**).



Common European legislation (directives and regulations) enables the European Union to exert influence on many areas of policy. The aim is to improve the citizens' everyday lives in the fields of environmental and consumer protection, agricultural production, etc.

The European Union would also like to see an efficient infrastructure in place between the countries. **The young people** of Europe should be able to pursue studies and learn **foreign languages**. They should also have the opportunity to participate in **international exchange programmes** such as "Youth in Action," "Erasmus," "Leonardo" or "Comenius".

Citizenship of the European Union

The **citizenship of the European Union** as laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 reinforces the **protection of rights and interests of EU citizens**. To possess citizenship of the European Union, you must be a citizen of one of the member states.

Citizens of the European Union not only benefit from the rights endowed by national citizenship, they also have:

- the right to move, work, study and relocate anywhere in the Union;
- the right to take part in local and European elections in the state in which they live (this does not have to be the country of birth);
- the right to submit petitions to the President of the European Parliament on issues that fall within the remit of the Union;
- the right to bring to the attention of the European Ombudsman breaches of the EU constitution or the implementation of the guidelines.



- The right to be provided with diplomatic protection anywhere in the world, in case the country of origin is not represented.

The **European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, which catalogues the rights and values upon which the Union is based, was adopted at a ceremony in **Nice in December 2000**.

The Union also supports economic development and strives for a socially balanced and forward-looking society, one that cares for the cultural heritage of Europe but is equally dedicated to technological and scientific progress.

How does the European Union Work?

Various **European institutions** are involved in and act as engines for EU decision-making.

- The **European Council** consists of the **heads of states from the member countries**. It convenes four times a year to determine the general political direction of the Union and to evaluate progress.
- The **Council of the European Union** is also known as the Council of Ministers. The composition of its meetings, which are attended by **ministers from national governments**, depends on the topic (e.g. finance and economics, justice and internal affairs, or general affairs).



- The **European Commission** consists of **27 Commissioners** (each of whom represents a member state and is responsible for a particular policy area) and a Commission President. The Commission draws up proposals for new European legislation and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Union, e.g. the implementation of political measures and programmes, and the administration of the budget.
- **The European Parliament – the voice of the citizens**
The European Parliament has responsibilities in a range of areas. It represents the democratic will of the people and promotes their interests in discussions with other EU organs. The Parliament exercises democratic control over the other European bodies.



At present there are **736 MEPs**. They do not sit in national blocks, but in political groups.

The European Parliament shares **legislative power** with the Council of Ministers in many areas of EU policy. Direct elections ensure **democratic legitimacy**.

The Parliament also promotes new legislation by demanding the proposal of bills by the Commission. The European Parliament is elected by the citizens of the Union to look after their interests.



The **budget power** it shares with the Council of Ministers also allows the parliament to exert influence on the work of the EU.



The Parliament exercises **democratic control** over the other European bodies. By means of a vote of no confidence, it is able to force the resignation of both the Commission President and the entire Commission.



The European Parliament is based in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. The General Secretariat is based in Luxembourg. The monthly plenary session takes place in Strasbourg, and the parliamentary committees and additional plenary sessions are held in Brussels.

The **President of the Parliament** and the **14 Vice-Presidents** together constitute the **Presidium of the European Parliament**.

The Population of the Member States in millions (red)

Seats in the European Parliament (green), Parliament period 2009–2014

Austria	8,3	17	Latvia	2,3	8
Belgium	10,7	22	Lithuania	3,4	12
Bulgaria	7,7	17	Luxembourg	0,5	6
Cyprus	0,8	6	Malta	0,4	5
Czech Republic	10,3	22	Netherlands	16,4	25
Denmark	5,5	13	Poland	38,0	50
Estonia	1,3	6	Portugal	10,7	22
Finland	5,3	13	Rumania	21,4	33
France	63,8	72	Slovakia	5,4	13
Germany	82,2	99	Slovenia	2,0	7
Greece	11,2	22	Spain	45,3	50
Hungary	10,0	22	Sweden	9,2	18
Ireland	4,4	12	UK	61,3	72
Italy	59,6	72	EU in all	497,4	736

MEPs participate in both the preparations for the plenary sessions in the committees responsible for individual policy areas, and in the actual plenary sessions.

Daily schedule of an MEP: Organisation and participation in plenary sessions. MEPs work in 20 committees and sub-committees corresponding to their individual specialisation. Those committees prepare the plenary sessions. The members of Parliament travel to their home countries several times a year to stay in touch with their native citizens and to take their concerns and requests back to Brussels.

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