



A growing success story

The European Union has grown from six founding members to become an economic and political alliance of 27 nations on the path to closer integration.

Facts and figures

The early decades of the 20th century were marred by the two most devastating conflicts the world had ever seen. Although there were hopes that World War I would be the “war to end all wars”, this wish has not materialised.

However, the European integration project has brought an end to conflict in Europe and an era of peace and prosperity to much of the continent in the decades following World War II. In fact, this is the European Union’s fundamental *raison d’être*. That is why, in the space of half a century, the European integration project went from the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community¹ and the European Economic Community² to today’s 27-member EU, with more waiting in the wings for entry.

What is behind this success? Well, countries that enter the EU gain access to an integrated single market, the possibility to join the euro, and a plethora of joint actions and policies to help Member States meet the collective challenges facing them. This has made the Union so attractive that neighbouring countries not in Europe geographically are also keen to join. And so the EU is likely to continue growing. For existing

Member States, enlargement offers greater work and travel opportunities, access to a larger market and a more powerful European voice on the world stage.

Most citizens in the Union appreciate and are aware of the benefits of EU enlargement. For instance, a Eurobarometer survey in 2009 found that three-quarters of EU citizens believed that enlargement had increased the EU’s global role, while about two-thirds felt that the Union’s eastward expansion improved the quality of life and situation of the central and eastern European countries³. In addition, 76% thought it had helped the newer Member States to modernise and grow, as well as facilitated the spread of democratic values and human rights.

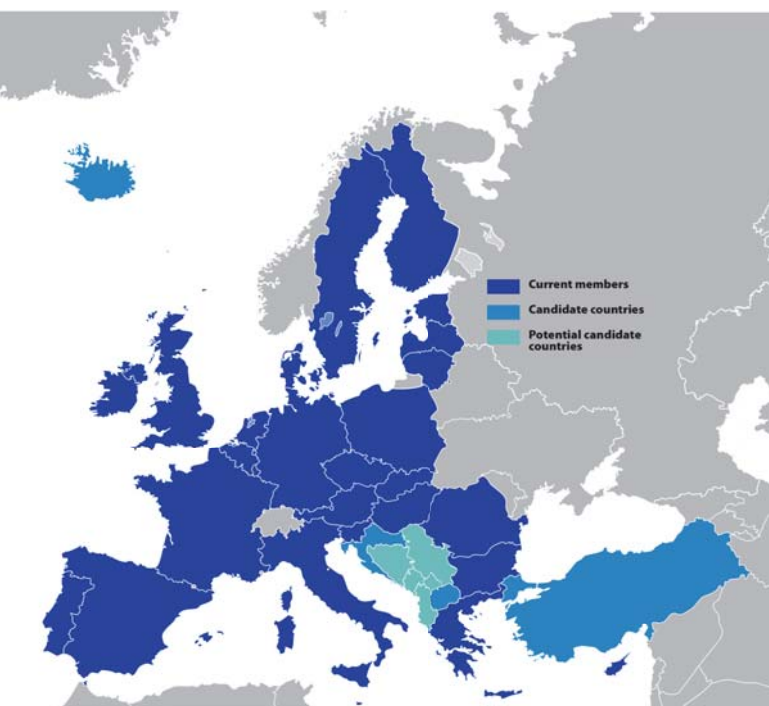
However, a certain measure of what has been labelled as ‘enlargement fatigue’ has set in and this, coupled with the economic crisis, may slow down the future enlargement process. In the survey mentioned above, over half of the respondents considered that enlargement had made the EU more difficult to manage and had contributed to job losses in their country.

EU policy

The six founding Member States of what has become known as the European Union were Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Since then, the EU has experienced four main waves of enlargement: in 1973, in the 1980s, and in 2004/2007. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973. In the 1980s, it was the turn of Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (both in 1986). In 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden became members.

Since the turn of the millennium, 12 countries have entered the EU fold: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004; and Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. Waiting for future EU membership are four candidate countries: Turkey, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Iceland⁴.

The other countries of the Western Balkans – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo – are all ‘potential candidate countries’, i.e. they have been promised the prospect of EU membership as and when they are ready. To help prepare them for eventual entry, the Union has set in place a Stabilisation and Association Process⁵.





The rules

According to the 1992 Maastricht Treaty⁶, the European Union is open to any European country which is democratic, has a market economy and possesses the administrative capacity to handle the rights and obligations of membership⁷.

EU governments fleshed this out further at a meeting in Copenhagen the following year. They set up a number of requirements which applicant countries must meet by the time they become members⁸. These were:

- Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- The ability to take on the obligations of membership, including support for the aims of the Union. They must have a public administration capable of applying and managing EU laws in practice.

These requirements became known as the 'Copenhagen criteria' or 'Accession criteria'⁹.

In 1995, in Madrid, EU leaders agreed to further clarifications¹⁰: a candidate country must also be able to put EU rules and procedures into effect. This means that it needs not only to put Union legislation on to its national law books, but also to implement and enforce this effectively through the appropriate administrative and judicial structures.

Long road to membership

Becoming a Member State is a long and rigorous process which involves meeting all the criteria outlined above. The first step to becoming an EU member is, quite naturally, submitting an application, which is usually based on an already strong bilateral relationship with the Union. The speed with which a given country advances depends solely on its own progress towards a set of commonly agreed goals.

Policy milestones

- 1957 Six countries establish the European Economic Community in Rome
- 1973 Denmark, Ireland and UK join
- 1981 Greece joins
- 1986 Portugal and Spain become members
- 1992 Maastricht Treaty outlines general criteria for future membership
- 1993 More detailed 'Copenhagen criteria' agreed
- 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden bring membership to 15
- 2004 Ten countries join the EU in biggest enlargement ever
- 2007 Romania and Bulgaria bring membership up to 27

Future challenges

- Dealing with the membership applications of candidate and potential candidate countries



Support for ethnic minorities

In the Western Balkans, there is a significant socio-economic gap between the population as a whole and certain minorities, including the various Roma communities. In Montenegro, the main problem areas where inequalities exist are health, social care, regional development, ecology, education and employment.

An EU-funded grass-roots project, Second Chance¹¹, is seeking to tackle two of these problem areas: education and employment among Roma communities, where the illiteracy rate is as high as 70%.

The project provides literacy and vocational training courses that enable young illiterate adults to acquire basic skills – including reading, writing and arithmetic – that are necessary for them to become active members of the labour force and society. Second Chance undertook some 30 different activities to achieve its ambitions, including training in ten different occupations, as well as assistance in obtaining a driving licence or IT skills.



► Diffusing explosive situations

The conflicts that erupted in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s left not only a heavy toll in human terms but also on the environment. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as many as a million landmines are scattered throughout the country. These concealed killing and maiming machines present a major obstacle to the normal resumption of life and economic activity.

Before any work can start on reconstruction of housing, roads or bridges, de-miners have to clear the area. To help tackle this lethal issue, the EU has provided some €26 million to support de-mining activities, including the clearance of some 3.7 million m² of land and a thousand buildings.

As part of a sustainability and capacity-building arrangement, Bosnia and Herzegovina took over responsibility for mine clearance in 2006¹².

The application is submitted to the Council of the European Union. The European Commission provides a formal opinion on the applicant country, and the Council decides whether to accept the application. When the application has been accepted, the applicant country then embarks on the accession process which involves three distinct stages: the mandate and framework, screening and monitoring, followed by closure of negotiations and the sealing of an accession treaty.

Once the Council unanimously agrees a negotiating mandate¹³, negotiations may be formally opened between the candidate country and all the Member States. For each candidate country, the EU sets a negotiating framework and identifies the reforms and adaptations that the candidate country must undertake.

Before any actual negotiations begin, the Commission 'screens', in collaboration with national officials, each area (known as 'chapters') in which the candidate country is expected to take action. The Commission reports to the Council on results of the screening and recommends whether to open negotiations on it or to require that certain conditions, known as 'opening benchmarks', should be met first.

Negotiations take place at the level of ministers and ambassadors and focus on the conditions and timing of



the candidate's adoption, implementation and enforcement of all the EU rules already in force which, because they are part of European law, are not negotiable. The talks also cover financial arrangements, as well as possible transitional arrangements.

The Commission is tasked with monitoring the fulfilment of benchmarks, and progress in applying EU legislation and respecting other commitments¹⁴. This monitoring continues right up until the candidate country joins the Union. This makes it possible to give additional guidance as countries assume the responsibilities of membership, and also gives guarantees to the current Member States that new ones are meeting the conditions for accession. Each candidate country draws up an action plan setting out what it will do, and when, to bring its administration and judiciary up to the required level.

The closing of each chapter of negotiations requires the unanimous agreement of all existing Member States. When all the chapters have been closed, the detailed terms and conditions they contain are incorporated into a Draft

► Did you know that ...

- The EU has gone through four successive waves of enlargement, expanding from six founding members to 27
- Three-quarters of EU citizens believe that enlargement has increased the Union's global role
- Two-thirds believe that the Union's eastward expansion helped improve the quality of life in the new Member States there
- Over half of citizens believe enlargement has made the EU more difficult to manage and led to job losses in their home countries



► Breaking the silence on domestic violence

In a bid to combat domestic violence in Turkey and break the taboo surrounding the subject, the EU has funded a telephone support service¹⁵. The hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides psychological, medical and legal assistance to thousands of abused women every year.

The hotline is operated under the guidance and supervision of trained psychologists in collaboration with law enforcement officials, healthcare units and legal experts. *Hurriyat*, one of Turkey's leading national newspapers, has supported the initiative with a high-profile publicity campaign.

Accession Treaty, which lists all transitional arrangements and deadlines, as well as details of financial arrangements and any safeguard clauses¹⁶. Once the Accession Treaty is signed, the candidate country is entitled to a number of interim privileges until it becomes a bona fide Member State.

Further information

- More unity and more diversity – the EU's biggest enlargement¹⁷
- EU enlargement and other external relations news¹⁸
- Enlargement-related press releases¹⁹
- Statistical leaflets on enlargement²⁰
- Enlargement newsletter²¹
- Enlargement publications²²

Communicator's toolkit

- Enlargement videos²³
- Enlargement quiz²⁴
- Video: EESC – a key partner in enlargement²⁵
- Leaflet: 'Good to know about EU enlargement'²⁶
- Leaflet: 'Understanding enlargement'²⁷
- Key facts and figures about the candidate countries²⁸
- Leaflet: economic developments in candidate and potential candidate countries²⁹
- Leaflet on instrument for pre-accession (IPA)³⁰

¹ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/treaties_ecsc_en.htm

² http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/treaties_eec_en.htm

³ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/publications/eurobarometer_feb2009_summary_20090506_en.pdf

⁴ http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/candidate_countries/index_en.htm

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accession_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/sap/index_en.htm

⁶ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/economic_and_monetary_affairs/institutional_and_economic_framework/treaties_maastricht_en.htm

⁷ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/expert/displayFtu.do?language=en&id=74&ftuld=FTU_6.3.1.html and http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002M/htm/C_2002325EN.000501.html#anArt59

⁸ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/93/3&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

⁹ http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm

¹⁰ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/95/9&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/projects-in-focus/selected-projects/socio-economic-development/social-development/montenegro_second-chance-in-education-and-employment_en.htm

¹² <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/?akcija=clanak&CID=19&jezik=2&LID=34#6>

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/process-of-enlargement/mandate-and-framework_en.htm

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/process-of-enlargement/screening-and-monitoring_en.htm

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/projects-in-focus/selected-projects/social-inclusion-and-education/social-inclusion/turkey_call-don-t-be-silent_en.htm

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/process-of-enlargement/closure-and-accession_en.htm

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/move/41/index_en.htm

¹⁸ http://europa.eu/news/external-relations/index_en.htm

¹⁹ <http://europa.eu/rapid/searchResultAction.do?search=OK&query=ENLNEIG&username=PROF&advanced=0&guiLanguage=en>

²⁰ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/candidate_and_potential_candidate_countries/publications/leaflets

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/newsletter/index_en.htm

²² http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/publications/index_en.htm

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/videos/index_en.htm

²⁴ http://www.elargquiz.eu/flash/index_flash.html

²⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPBXdT87fw>

²⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/publication/screen_mythfacts_a5_en.pdf

²⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/publication/enl-understand_en.pdf

²⁸ http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/candidatecountries/index_en.htm

²⁹ http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU-Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=KS7809732&CatalogCategoryID=6R8KABstikAAAEjvJEY4e5L

³⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/publication/ipa_brochure_2009_en.pdf