

LESSON 1 – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE EU

Introducción

The European Union is an organization that has not always existed, although the younger generations often take for granted their existence.

At this factsheet we intend to answer questions such as: What is the European Union? How did it grow along its history? Or what is its current situation?

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1. Previous concepts: International Organization, International Organization of Cooperation and International Organization of Integration

1.1. Concept of International Organization (IO)

International organizations are voluntary associations of States established by international agreements, equipped with permanent, own and independent responsible bodies for managing some interest groups and capable to express a will with legal range with independence of its members¹.

¹ “Las organizaciones Internacionales”, Díez de Velasco, Manuel. 13 ed. Tecnos, Madrid, 2003.

Within the international organizations, we can make an important classification in attention to if the member State have to assign own competences or not to the International Organization.

Following this point, we can distinguish:

- Cooperation IO.
- Integration IO.

1.2. Concept of Cooperation IO

They are the IIOO whose scope does not affect the sovereign powers of the Member States that adhere to them; that is, they have a capacity of action conciliatory without exercising powers of the Member States. They adopt postures of consultation or mediation.

- Example of co-operation IO is the Europe Council² or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

1.3. Concept of Integration IO

They are the IIOO whose scope affects the sovereign powers of the member States in with topics that they have assigned to the organization. It means that the decisions that de Integration Organizations generate, will have a binding effect in the Member States.

- Example of integration organization is the EU.

2. Historic chronology of the European Union

2.1. Precedents

The predecessor of the EU was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: the idea being that countries that trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict³.

² Please don't confuse with the European Council or the Council of the EU that there are Institutions from the EU.

³ At the official website of the [European Union](#) you can check the objectives and values of the EU.

At the 50s, the European Coal and Steel Community (EEC) it's the first step in order to reach an economic and politic union among the European countries to achieve a longer peace situation. The six founding countries are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The 1950s are dominated by a cold war between east and west. Protests in Hungary against the Communist regime are put down by Soviet tanks in 1956. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome creates the European Economic Community (EEC), or 'Common Market'⁴.

2.2. Evolution to the present

The 1960s is a good period for the economy, helped by the fact that EU countries stop charging custom duties when they trade with each other. Also, there is an improvement to a quality control on the food production that strengthened the agricultural production.

During the 70's stage, the first extension of the members in the Community it's produced, to which they adhere in 1973: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. We emphasize at this time the end of the two last dictatorships of Europe, the first in Portugal in 1974 and the second in Spain in 1975, as well as European funding to the development of the regional policy that promotes the growth of employment and infrastructures, also intensifying the policy on environmental issues.

The decade of the 80s comes by different milestones: first, Denmark becomes the tenth Member State that enters to form part to the Community in 1981; five years later, in 1986, it's the turn of Spain and Portugal, and in that same year, the Single European Act was signed European Union, an instrument of great importance, aimed at strengthening the free movement of goods that was the origin of the so-called "market only".

Due to its historical repercussion, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1 989 helped to the Unification of Germany in 1990.

⁴At the official website of the [Euroepan Union](#) you can amplify your knowledge about the different stages of the EU, since its creation to nowadays.

From 1990 to 1999, it was produced the consolidation of the 'Single Market', crystallizing in 1993 with the proclamation of the four circulation freedoms: goods, services, persons and capital.

This period is marked by the adoption of two important Treaties: in 1993, Maastricht (Treaty of the European Union), that instituted the name of European Union in substitution of European Economic Community, and the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999, that created the area of Freedom, Security and Justice. In addition, new five members took part of the EU (Austria, Finland and Sweden) in 1995 and emerges the famous Schengen area, allowing the citizen to travel without Passport at borders.

During the 2000s, the euro is established as the official European States currency (not all the member states) and happens the big enlargement of the EU, as 10 States joined in 2004 (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and) Poland). In 2007 Bulgaria and Romania are added.

The year 2008 is a critical moment in the economy with the global financial crisis. The following year the Lisbon Treaty was produced, ratified by all Member States; it contributed to modernize the Institutions of the Union and promote more efficient working methods.

The last period (2010 – present) was influence by the global economic crisis that strikes hard in Europe. The EU helps several countries to confront their difficulties and establishes the 'Banking Union' to ensure safer and more reliable banks.

Croatia becomes the 28th member of the EU in 2013.



Successive periods of the EU expansion⁵

European elections are held in 2014 and more Eurosceptics are elected into the European Parliament; this situation is promoted by the Brexit (2016) that suppose the way out of the United Kingdom at the EU.

Furthermore, a new security policy is established in the wake of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Religious extremism increases in the Middle East and various countries and regions around the world, leading to unrest and wars which result in many people fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in Europe. The EU is not only faced with the dilemma of how to take care of them, but also finds itself the target of several terrorist attacks.

⁵ The image shows in different colors the countries that have been incorporated to the EU in its different periods and the potential candidates to be new Member States. The resource of the image its from the document that the Communication General Direction of the European Commission has done: [Enlargement, 3 ed., 2015](#).

The current EU counts at 2018 with a waiting list of new Member States that want to join into the Organization as Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Accession negotiations are ongoing with Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Concretely, the negotiations with Turkey are complicated nowadays because of the difficulties that Turkey has in the adaptation into the principles that the EU defends, as could be de Human Rights.

3. What is the current situation of the EU?

At the present, the EU is an economic and politic association, integrated by 28 European countries (at the moment, depending of the Brexit negotiations), that is organized around seven Institutions (The European Parliament, the European Council, The European Commission, The Council of the European Union, The Court of Justice of the European Union, The European Court of Auditors and The European Central Bank).

The EU is funded on common values of freedom, democracy, Rule of law and the respect of the Human Rights. Among its strategic objectives, we can remark the consolidation of a democratic Europe provided with an own voice at the international stage.

The responsibilities and influence of the EU on the world are increase moment to moment, in consonance with its economic, commercial and diplomatic power: it's the first economic potency at worldwide scale counting with a reference currency and it's the principal actor at Humanitarian Aid⁶.

⁶ At the website of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation](#) you can figure it out more info about the exterior and cooperation policy of the EU.

ADICIONAL CONTENT

Websites

[The EU History](#)

[Objectives and values of the EU](#)

Videos

[History: The Amsterdam Treaty](#)

[History: the European Single Market](#)

[Eureka: Schuman, Funder Father](#)

[History: The first expansion – Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain](#)

[History: The Schengen Commitment](#)

[History: The Treaties of Rome](#)

[Eureka: The idea that originated the EU](#)



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union

"The Impact of The Euroscepticism on the construction of Europe" is a Europe for Citizens project co-financed from the European Union. Project reference: 586693-CITIZ-1-2017-1-ES-CITIZ-NT