

The Treaty of Nice

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The process of enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs), Malta and Cyprus, which began at the end of the 1990s, required more substantial institutional reforms than those introduced in 1997 by the Treaty of Amsterdam. The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which met throughout 2000, endeavoured to find solutions to the problems which had been the subject of lengthy debate at the Nice European Council of 7, 8 and 9 December 2000. This summit saw the official proclamation, on the fringes of the European Council, of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, drawn up by a Convention between December 1999 and September 2000 and listing all the rights of European citizens. However, the discussions proved to be particularly difficult in relation to the delicate issue of the representation of states, either Member States or states about to accede, within the Community institutions. Furthermore, it proved impossible clearly to define the future of the European Union, which might well lose some of its effectiveness. Consequently, the Treaty of Nice was vociferously criticised by certain Member States who did not wish to see their influence diminished.