

European Union Member States and applicant countries

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The European Union has encompassed 27 Member States since 1 January 2007.

The founding States were the six western European countries which, in the post-war years, signed and ratified the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) of 18 April 1951 and, six years later, the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) of 25 March 1957: **Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands**.

Before the European Union was established in 1993, the European Communities were enlarged three times:

— the **United Kingdom, Ireland** and **Denmark** acceded on 1 January 1973. This was the first wave of ‘Anglo-Scandinavian’ countries, two of which (Denmark and the United Kingdom) came from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Norway, another EFTA country which should have been part of the same group, rejected accession in a referendum in September 1972. The European Communities then had nine Member States.

The fall of the military dictatorships in Greece, Spain and Portugal then enabled the Communities to be enlarged to include those southern European countries:

— **Greece**, linked to the Communities through an Association Agreement since 1962, acceded on 1 January 1981 as the 10th Member State.

— The accession of **Spain** and **Portugal** on 1 January 1986 then brought the number of Member States to 12.

Since the Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992, came into force on 1 November 1993, the European Union (which incorporated the Communities but did not replace them) has been enlarged twice:

— On 1 January 1995, the number of Member States rose to 15 with the accession of **Austria, Finland** and **Sweden**. This was the second wave of countries from EFTA. Norway, which was attempting to accede for the second time, again rejected accession in a referendum held in November 1994.

— The Union of 25 was born on 1 May 2004 with the accession of the **Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia** and **Slovakia**. As well as involving a second enlargement to include two Mediterranean countries (Malta and Cyprus, Associated States since 1971 and 1973 respectively), this was the first enlargement to include Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) from the former Soviet bloc. The two other CEEC countries, **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, which negotiated accession simultaneously, signed the Accession Treaty on 25 April 2005 and acceded to the European Union on 1 January 2007. The European continent was symbolically unified after almost 60 years of division between East and West.

The applicant countries

Turkey, linked to the Community through an Association Agreement since 1964 (the Ankara Agreement),

which provided for a customs union that has been in operation since 1996, applied for accession in April 1987. At the Helsinki European Council held on 10 and 11 December 1999, it was accorded the status of a candidate State destined to join the Union. On 16 and 17 December 2004, on the basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, the Brussels European Council decided that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria to an extent sufficient for accession negotiations to be opened, on condition that it brought into force six specific items of legislation identified by the Commission, with particular regard to the aspects relating to fundamental freedoms and full respect for human rights. The European Council asked the Council to reach agreement on a framework for negotiations with Turkey with a view to negotiations being opened on 3 October 2005.

Following the Santa Maria da Feira European Council held on 19 and 20 June 2000, which held that the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro) were potential accession candidates, **Croatia** applied for accession in February 2003 and was granted official applicant country status at the European Council held on 16 and 17 June 2004. It has been linked to the European Union through a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) from February 2005. The European Council held on 16 and 17 December 2004 asked the Council to reach agreement on a framework for negotiations with Croatia with a view to negotiations being opened on 17 March 2005, provided that Croatia cooperated fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). On 16 March 2005, the General Affairs and External Relations Council postponed the opening of accession negotiations in the absence of a joint agreement. On 3 October 2005, on the basis of a positive assessment of Croatia's cooperation with the ICTY, the Council gave the go-ahead for negotiations on Croatia's accession to the European Union and, at the same time, approved the framework for negotiations with Turkey.

The **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** applied for accession on 22 March 2004 and was granted official applicant country status at the European Council held on 15 and 16 December 2005. It has been linked to the European Union by an SAA since April 2004.