

The accession of Spain

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In Spain, the death of General Francisco Franco on 20 November 1975 opened the way for political reform. Prince Juan Carlos, his designated successor, became King of Spain and began the process of democratising and normalising his country. However, the fragile nature of the fledgling democracy became apparent once again during the failed coup attempt of 23 February 1981 led by a few army officers who sought the return of Francoism. However, thanks to the decisive intervention of the King, a convinced democrat, constitutional order was quickly restored, and the coup leaders were tried and imprisoned. Having made a formal application for association in February 1962 that had remained a dead letter, and linked to the EEC by the preferential tariff agreement of October 1970, Spain officially submitted its application for accession to the European Community on 28 July 1977, barely one month after the first democratic parliamentary elections were held. Four months later, on 24 November, Spain also joined the Council of Europe. Replying to the Council's request, and despite certain difficulties that it foresaw, the European Commission submitted a favourable opinion on 29 November 1978. The lengthy and extremely difficult negotiations began on 5 February 1979 and culminated in the signing of Spain's Treaty of Accession to the EEC on 12 June 1985 in Madrid.