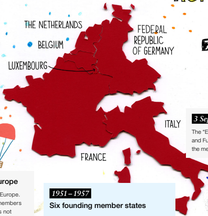
Timeline 1945 – 2019 | bpb: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung

The European Union



1 Obligation to RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS
2 RIGHT to LIFE
3 PROHIBITION of TORTURE
4 PROHIBITION of SLAVERY and FORCED LABOUR
5 RIGHT to LIBERTY and SECURITY
6 RIGHT to a FAIR TR
7 NO PUNISHMENT without LAW
8 RIGHT to RESPECT for PRIVATE and FAMILY LI
9 FREEDOM of THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE and RELIGION
10 FREEDOM of E
11 FREEDOM of ASSEMBLY and ASSOCIATION
12 RIGHT to MARRY
13 RIGHT to an EFFECTIVE RE
14 PROHIBITION of DISCRIMINA
15 DEROGATION in TIME of EME

8 May 1945 **The war ends**

Germany's unconditional surrender ends World War II in Europe.

19 June 1946 **Churchill's proposal**

In Zurich, Britain's former Prime Minister Winston Churchill proposes the founding of the United States of Europe.

5 June 1947 **Marshall Plan**

The Marshall Plan "European Recovery Program" endorses economic co-operation among European countries.

4 April 1949 **NATO**

Twelve countries form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance under the leadership of the United States.

5 May 1949 **Council of Europe**

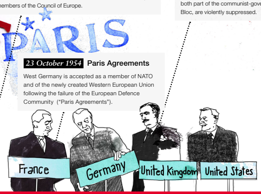
Ten countries found the Council of Europe. It is an autonomous body with 47 members (2019). This Council, however, does not constitute the founding of the future European Union.

1951 – 1957 **Six founding member states**

In the 1950s, Belgium, West Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands sign three treaties that establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC, or Euratom). The six founding member states form the nucleus for the gradual development of the European Union.

3 September 1953 **Convention on Human Rights**

The "European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" enters into force after ratification by the members of the Council of Europe.



23 October 1954 **Paris Agreements**

West Germany is accepted as a member of NATO and of the newly created Western European Union following the failure of the European Defence Community ("Paris Agreements").

1956 **Uprisings**

Democratic uprisings in Hungary and Poland, both part of the communist-governed Eastern Bloc, are violently suppressed.

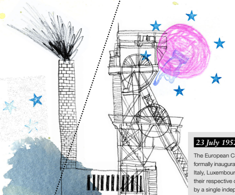
4 January 1960 **Trade**

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is set up as a counterbalance for countries that have not joined the EEC.

1951 – 1972 Six founding mem

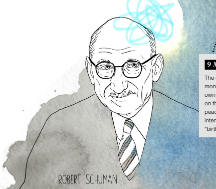
1945 | 1946 | 1947 | 1948 | 1949 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1959 | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 196

> "We must build a kind of United States of Europe."
> WINSTON CHURCHILL



23 July 1952 **ECSC Treaty**

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) is formally inaugurated. Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands agree to have their respective coal and steel industries supervised by a single independent regulatory authority (Treaty of Paris, April 18, 1951). The agreement marks the beginning of Europe's first supranational organization.

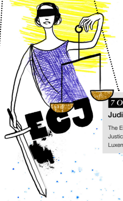


9 May 1950 **Schuman Plan**

The entire German and French coal and steel production is to be governed by a common regulatory body which is independent of the national states and can make its own decisions ("supranationality", see: July 23, 1952). Schuman's idea is based on the conviction that economically interdependent states will strive to maintain peace and resolve disagreements by non-violent means. The Schuman Plan was intended as the first step towards a more unified Europe and is often described as the "birth certificate" of the European Union. May 9 is now celebrated as "Europe Day".

30 August 1954 **European Defence Community fails**

After the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States demand military support from Germany. France is opposed to German rearmament and proposes the integration of European military forces (including a rearmed German military). In 1954, the six founding member states sign a treaty that aims to establish a European Defence Community (EDC). On August 30, the plan fails when the treaty is rejected by the French National Assembly.

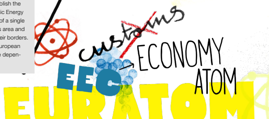


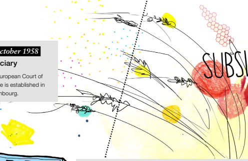
7 October 1958 **Judiciary**

The European Court of Justice is established in Luxembourg.

25 March 1957 **Treaty of Rome**

Six founding member states (see: 1951) sign treaties that establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC). Economic integration is driven by the idea of a single European market. The signatories agree on a common customs area and on the free flow of goods, people, services and capital within their borders. The European Atomic Energy Community aims to develop a European nuclear industry to meet rising energy demands and to reduce dependency on foreign oil imports.





14 January 1962 **Common Agricultural Policy**

A common agricultural market is instituted to secure adequate incon levels for farmers, steady food supplies, and appropriate prices for consumers. Guaranteed prices are established for agricultural produc If market prices drop, the European Community agrees to purchase food at pre-set price levels. Tariffs and export subsidies protect European agriculture against competition on the global markets.

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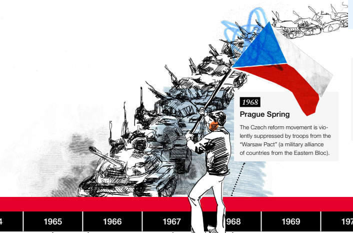
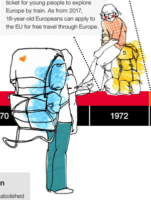


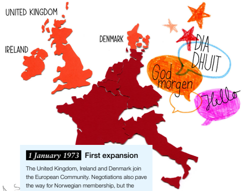
1968 Prague Spring

The Czech reform movement is violently suppressed by troops from the "Warsaw Pact" (a military alliance of countries from the Eastern Bloc).



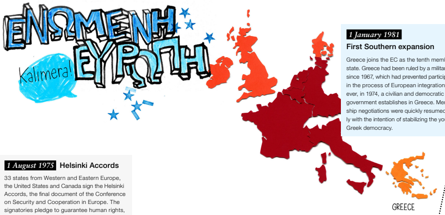
1 March 1972 InterRail

Several European railroad companies offer a cheap one-month lump-sum ticket for young people to explore Europe by train. As from 2017, 18-year-old Europeans can apply to the EU for free travel through Europe.



1 January 1973 First expansion

The United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark join the European Community. Negotiations also pave the way for Norwegian membership, but the proposal is rejected by Norwegians in a popular referendum held on September 25, 1972.

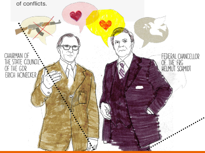


1 January 1981 First Southern expansion

Greece joins the EC as the tenth member-state. Greece had been ruled by a military junta since 1967, which had prevented participation in the process of European integration. However, in 1974, a civilian and democratic government establishes in Greece. Membership negotiations were quickly resumed, partly with the intention of stabilizing the young Greek democracy.

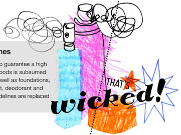
1 August 1975 Helsinki Accords

33 states from Western and Eastern Europe, the United States and Canada sign the Helsinki Accords, the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The signatories pledge to guarantee human rights, uphold the self-determination and non-discrimination of all peoples, renounce the use of violence, respect the inviolability of national borders, and pursue the peaceful settlement of conflicts.


CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF THE GDR ERICH HONECKER
FEDERAL CHANCELLOR OF THE FRG HELMUT SCHMIDT

27 July 1976 Cosmetics guidelines

The EC Cosmetics guidelines are designed to guarantee a high level of health protection. A large variety of goods is subsumed under the term "cosmetics": facial masks as well as foundations, powder and soap, perfume, bath supplement, deodorant and depilation products. On July 11, 2013, the guidelines are replaced by the European Cosmetic Directive.



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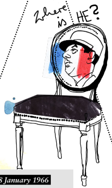
1973–1980 Nine member states

63 | 1964 | 1965 | 1966 | 1967 | 968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982



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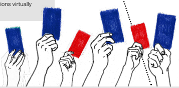
1 July 1965–28 January 1966 "Empty chair politics"

The French President, Charles de Gaulle, rejects reform proposals to finance the Common Agricultural Policy. France absents itself from all meetings of the Council of Ministers, thus rendering European institutions virtually inoperative.

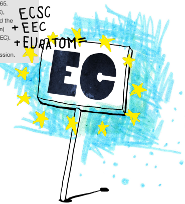


28/29 January 1966 Luxembourg compromise

The crisis of the EEC – a result of the French "empty chair politics" in the Council of Ministers – ends with the "Luxembourg compromise". From now on, the Council of Ministers can reach decisions by simple majority vote unless a country submits a veto based on "vital national interests".

1 July 1967 European Community

The Merger Treaty enters into force on April 8, 1965. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) are combined to form the European Community (EC). All three unions are subsumed under a single Council of Ministers and under the EC Commission.



1 July 1968 European Customs Union

The last tariffs within the European Community are abolished (originally planned for December 31, 1969). A common customs code is introduced for the EC borders.

28 February 1975 First Lomé Convention

The EC signs a cooperation agreement with 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific states in Lomé (Togo). It establishes financial support programmes and tariff-free access to European agricultural markets. Development cooperation of the EU is expanded to include 79 ACP states (Cotonou Agreement signed in Benin in 2000 and valid until 2020).

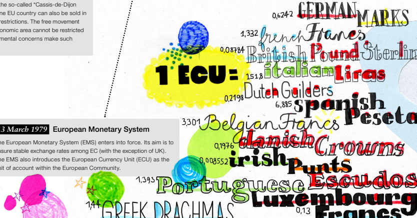
20 February 1979 Cassis-de-Dijon verdict

The German grocery chain "Rewe" sues against restrictions that prevent the import of French cassis (a blackcurrant liqueur) from Dijon. The European Court of Justice overturns the import prohibition. The verdict leads to the so-called "Cassis-de-Dijon principle": products on sale in one EU country can also be sold in all other member states without restrictions. The free movement of goods within the European economic area cannot be restricted unless grave health and environmental concerns make such restrictions unavoidable.

Purity law
spirits monopoly act
CASSIS
DIJON
L'HERITIER-GUYOT

13 March 1979 European Monetary System

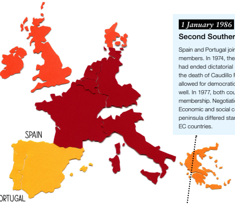
The European Monetary System (EMS) enters into force. Its aim is to ensure stable exchange rates among EC (with the exception of UK). The EMS also introduces the European Currency Unit (ECU) as the unit of account within the European Community.



7–10 June 1979 First European elections

Citizens of the nine EC member states are called on to elect representatives to the European Parliament for the first time. The parliament is the only EU organ elected directly by the people.

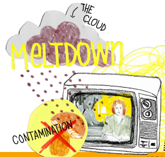
You have the CHOICE



1 January 1986

Second Southern expansion

Spain and Portugal join the EC. It now has twelve members. In 1974, the "carnation revolution" had ended dictatorial rule in Portugal. In 1975, the death of Caudillo Francisco Franco had allowed for democratic development in Spain as well. In 1977, both countries requested EC membership. Negotiations were long and difficult: Economic and social conditions on the Iberian peninsula differed starkly from those in "old" EC countries.



26 April 1986

Chernobyl catastrophe

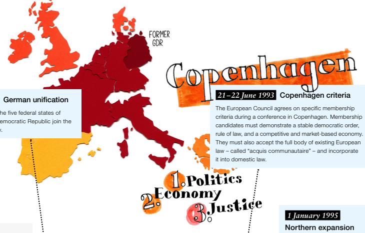
A reactor at the Soviet nuclear plant in Chernobyl explodes. Large parts of Europe are subsequently exposed to higher levels of radiation.

9 November 1989

Fall of the Berlin Wall

The Berlin Wall falls. It was a symbol of the division of Europe.

CHIPPING AT THE WALL
The WALL MUST GO!

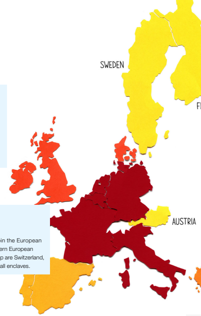


3 October 1990 **German unification**

Germany is unified. The five federal states of the former German Democratic Republic join the European Community.

21–22 June 1993 **Copenhagen criteria**

The European Council agrees on specific membership criteria during a conference in Copenhagen. Membership candidates must demonstrate a stable democratic order, rule of law, and a competitive and market-based economy. They must also accept the full body of existing European law – called "acquis communautaire" – and incorporate it into domestic law.



1 January 1995

Northern expansion

Finland, Sweden and Austria join the European Union. The only remaining Western European countries without EU membership are Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and several small enclaves.

17 July 1995 **Srebrenica massacre**

8,000 men and boys are massacred by the Serbian army near the Bosnian town of Srebrenica. The massacre is widely seen as the most serious war crime in Europe since the end of World War II.

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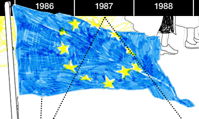
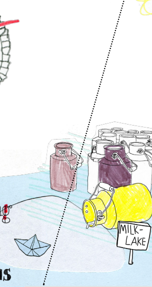
1981–1994 Twelve member states

1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998





1985 **Butter mountains**

Price guarantees under the Common Agricultural Policy induce many farmers to turn their farms into small agricultural factories, which leads to over-production. Supply greatly exceeds market demands, and warehouses in the EG are filled with "mountains" of butter, grain, and meat. In 1985, one million tons of butter, 16 million tons of grain, 870,000 tons of beef and 520,000 tons of dry milk are stored in EC warehouses.

29 May 1986 **European flag**

The EC adopts the flag of the Council of Europe: A circle of twelve stars on a blue background symbolizes solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe.

1987 **Erasmus**

The educational Programme "Erasmus" facilitates the exchange of university teachers and students and the collaboration between European universities.

Salut! Ça va?
¡Hola! ¿Qué tal?

1 July 1987

Single European Act

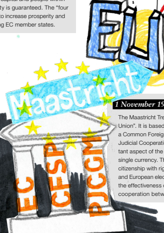
The Single European Act (SEA) – a comprehensive reform agreement – enters into force. It aims to realize a single European market by December 31, 1992, and abolishes the paralyzing process of consensus-based decisions. A qualified majority in the Council of Ministers is now sufficient to make decisions at the European level (the Luxembourg compromise from 1966 remains valid). The European Parliament has joint decision-making power in some policy areas.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE MINORITY?
What is a MAJORITY?

~~GUEST~~ WORKER
Gino's Gelati
Eis

1 January 1993 **Single market**

The European single market is completed. The free flow of goods, services, capital and people within the European Community is guaranteed. The "four freedoms" are intended to increase prosperity and foster competition among EC member states.

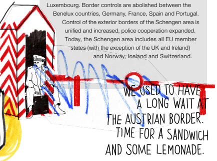


1 November 1993 **Maastricht and the EU**

The Maastricht Treaty enters into force and establishes the "European Union". It is based on three pillars: the European Community (EC), a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters (PJCCM). The most important aspect of the treaty is the decision to institute the Euro as a single currency. The treaty also introduces the idea of European citizenship with rights of residence and the right to vote in municipal and European elections. Additional agreements aim to increase the effectiveness of the EU in foreign policy matters and to intensify cooperation between EU member states.

26 March 1995 **Schengen Agreement**

The Schengen Agreement enters into force almost a decade after negotiations concluded on June 14, 1985, in Schengen, Luxembourg. Border controls are abolished between the Benelux countries, Germany, France, Spain and Portugal. Control of the exterior borders of the Schengen area is unified and increased, police cooperation expanded. Today, the Schengen area includes all EU member states (with the exception of the UK and Ireland) and Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.


WE USED TO HAVE A LONG WAIT AT THE AUSTRIAN BORDER. TIME FOR A SANDWICH AND SOME LEMONADE.

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1 January 1999 **Eur**

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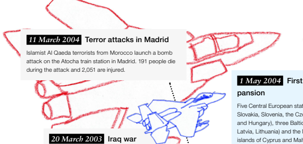
Central Bank (ECB) is estab
goal is to guarantee price st



11 March 2004 **Terror attacks in Madrid**

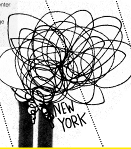
Islamist Al Qaeda terrorists from Morocco launch a bomb attack on the Atocha train station in Madrid. 191 people die during the attack and 2,051 are injured.

20 March 2003 **Iraq war**

The (second) Iraq war under the leadership of the United States and Britain divides European allies. The EU countries do not agree on the question of military support for the Iraq war, and thus cannot find a common voice in matters of foreign and security policy.

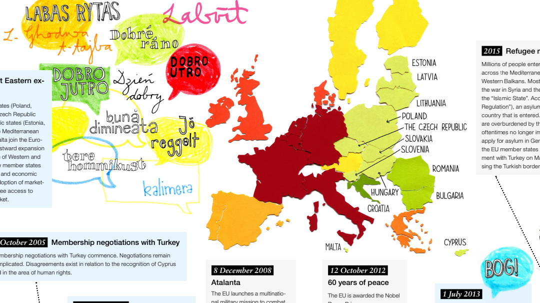
11 September 2001 **9/11**

Terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington spark international outrage and lead to a wave of support for the United States.



March 1999 **War in Kosovo**

O launches air strikes against Serbian troops
rotect the Albanian population of the Kosovo
on. The military campaign is not sanctioned
a UN mandate.



1 May 2004 **First Eastern expansion**

Five Central European states (Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary), three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta join the European Union. The EU's eastward expansion completes the unification of Western and Eastern Europe. The new member states hope for political stability and economic prosperity through the adoption of market-based economies and free access to the European single market.

3 October 2005 **Membership negotiations with Turkey**

Membership negotiations with Turkey commence. Negotiations remain complicated. Disagreements exist in relation to the recognition of Cyprus and in the area of human rights.

1 January 2007 **Second Eastern expansion**

Bulgaria and Romania join the European Union. The EU now encompasses 27 states and 500 million people.

8 December 2008 **Atalanta**

The EU launches a multinational military mission to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia.

20 October 2011 **Galileo**

The first satellites of the European geo-positioning system "Galileo" are launched into space. The system will eventually include 30 orbital satellites and will be operational in 2020.

12 October 2012 **60 years of peace**

The EU is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1 July 2013 **Third Eastern expansion**

Croatia joins the EU on July 1, 2013. Since then the EU comprises 28 member states.

2015 **Refugee migration**

Millions of people enter Europe, travelling across the Mediterranean Sea or the Western Balkans. Most of them are fleeing the war in Syria and the terror spread by the "Islamic State". According to European Law ("Dublin III Regulation"), an asylum seeker has to apply for asylum in the first EU country that is entered. But since a number of member states, e.g. Greece, are overburdened by the number of migrants, Dublin III Regulations are oftentimes no longer implemented. Roughly one million individuals seek refuge and apply for asylum in Germany in 2015. So far, no agreement could be reached between the EU member states on how to coordinate the allocation. The EU signs an agreement with Turkey on March 18, 2016, aimed at reducing the number of refugees crossing the Turkish border into Europe.

13 November 2015 **Terrorist attacks in Paris**

130 individuals are killed and 683 injured during six simultaneous terrorist attacks at several sites in Paris. EU countries assure France of their support in the war on terror in line with CSDP (part of CFSP). Following "Islamic State's" claim of responsibility for the attacks, military operations against the organization are intensified.

25 May 2018 **Common data protection**

The deadline expires for implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) signed in 2016. The Regulation aims to establish common standards of data protection throughout the EU and enhance the privacy rights of internet users. Large corporations, such as those from the US, now have to abide by these regulations when providing services within the EU.

23 June 2016 **The Brexit referendum**

The United Kingdom electorate vote on whether to leave or remain in the EU. This results in a majority of 51.9 % in favour of leaving ("Brexit"), in line with Article 50 of the EU treaty. On June 29, 2017, the UK government applies to leave the EU. Membership is due to end after two years. However, this deadline passes with no agreement reached in the UK concerning future relations with the EU. As a result, Brexit is postponed shortly before the deadline is reached.

REMAIN
VOTE LEAVE

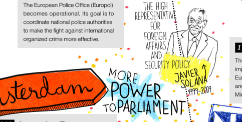
1995–2004 15 member states | *2004–2006 25 member states* | *2007–2013 27 member states* | *since 2013 28 member states*

1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019

Euro crisis and "rescue funds"

1 July 1999 **Europol**

The European Police Office (Europol) becomes operational. Its goal is to coordinate national police authorities to make the fight against international organized crime more effective.


sterdam
MORE POWER TO PARLIAMENT
THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY
JAVIER SOLANA
1999–2009

999 **Amsterdam Treaty**

dam Treaty enters into force. It forms the basis
nal reforms of the European Union and paves
the addition of new EU members.

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stria, Portugal and Spain agree
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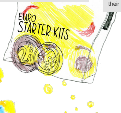
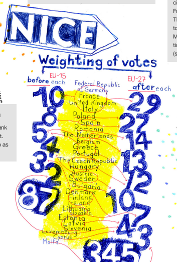


1 January 2002 **Euro cash**

The introduction of Euro coins and bank notes completes the Eurozone project. Twelve EU countries now use the Euro as their sole official currency.

1 February 2003 **Treaty of Nice**

The Treaty of Nice enters into force. Its most important provisions: The composition of the European Commission changes, and votes are weighted differently within the Council of Ministers (starting in 2004).



21–23 June 2007 **The European Constitution fails**

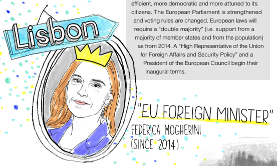
The "Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" was signed in Rome on October 29, 2004, by the heads of state of the EU. The constitution was drafted with the aim of making the enlarged union more effective, more transparent and more attuned to its citizens. However, popular referenda in France and the Netherlands reject the treaty. The European Council reaches a solution to the "ratification crisis" in June 2007: Many provisions of the proposed constitution are included in a new reform treaty (see: December 1, 2009).

15 September 2008 **Lehman Brothers collapses**

The collapse of the US investment bank Lehman Brothers sends shock waves through the global financial system. The bursting of the American "housing bubble" sparks a global financial and economic crisis. EU members negotiate rescue packages to aid banks that are deemed "too big to fail".

1 December 2009 **Treaty of Lisbon**

The Treaty of Lisbon enters into force. After the failure of the European constitutional project, the new treaty is intended to make the European Union more efficient, more democratic and more attuned to its citizens. The European Parliament is strengthened and voting rules are changed. European laws will require a "double majority" (i.e. support from a majority of member states and from the population) as from 2014. A "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy" and a President of the European Council begin their inaugural terms.

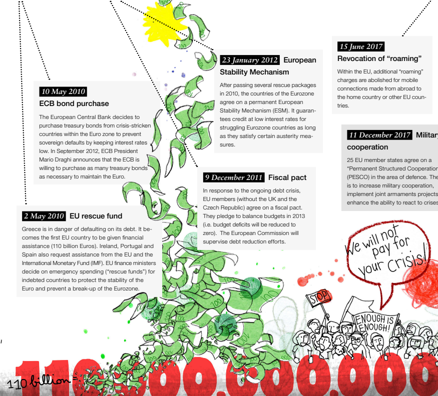


10 May 2010 **ECB bond purchase**

The European Central Bank decides to purchase treasury bonds from crisis-stricken countries within the Euro zone to prevent sovereign defaults by keeping interest rates low. In September 2012, ECB President Mario Draghi announces that the ECB is willing to purchase as many treasury bonds as necessary to maintain the Euro.

2 May 2010 **EU rescue fund**

Greece is in danger of defaulting on its debt. It becomes the first EU country to be given financial assistance (110 billion Euros). Ireland, Portugal and Spain also request assistance from the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). EU finance ministers decide on emergency spending ("rescue funds") for indebted countries to protect the stability of the Euro and prevent a break-up of the Eurozone.



23 January 2012 **European Stability Mechanism**

After passing several rescue packages in 2010, the countries of the Eurozone agree on a permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM). It guarantees credit at low interest rates for struggling Eurozone countries as long as they satisfy certain austerity measures.

9 December 2011 **Fiscal pact**

In response to the ongoing debt crisis, EU members (without the UK and the Czech Republic) agree on a fiscal pact. They pledge to balance budgets in 2013 (i.e. budget deficits will be reduced to zero). The European Commission will supervise debt reduction efforts.

15 June 2017 **Revocation of "roaming"**

Within the EU, additional "roaming" charges are abolished for mobile connections made from abroad to the home country or other EU countries.

11 December 2017 **Military cooperation**

25 EU member states agree on a "Permanent Structured Cooperation" (PESCO) in the area of defence. The aim is to increase military cooperation, implement joint armaments projects and enhance the ability to react to crises.

2017/2018 **Legal proceedings against member states**

On December 22, 2017, the EU Commission initiates legal proceedings against Poland on the basis that the reforms of the judicial system are in breach of the principles of the rule of law and the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary.

On September 12, 2018, the EU Parliament introduces proceedings against Hungary. The curtailment of freedom of expression, restrictions of non-governmental organizations and weakening of the powers of the judiciary by the government of President Orban are considered to be a threat to the rule of law.

Depending on the outcome, these countries could face fines or a suspension of EU voting rights.

— Legend

Colours:

▢	light blue = States joining or leaving the EU
▨	grey = stages of integration of the EC and the EU (common policies, treaties and their content/aims/consequences)
▢	light grey = additional European institutions or important events

Abbreviations:

ACP = African, Caribbean and Pacific states
CAP = Common Agricultural Policy
CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP = Common Security and Defence Policy
CSCE = Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EAEC/Euratom = European Atomic Energy Community
EC = European Community
ECB = European Central Bank
ECJ = European Court of Justice
ECSC = European Coal and Steel Community
EDC = European Defence Community
EEC = European Economic Community
EFTA = European Free Trade Area
EMS = European Monetary System
ESM = European Stability Mechanism
EU = European Union
IMF = International Monetary Fund
NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PESCO = Permanent Structured Cooperation
PJCCM = Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters
SEA = Single European Act
UN = United Nations
WEU = Western European Union

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This timeline does not claim to be comprehensive. It is the result of careful research and represents the most important events related to the European Union.