

The European Union

The European Union (EU) is an intergovernmental and supranational union of 25 democratic countries known as member states. Some of those are Germany, Great Britain, France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, and Poland to name a few. The European Union was established under that name in 1992 by the Treaty on European Union.

The Union has today a common single market, consisting of a customs union, a single currency (the euro) managed by the European Central Bank (adopted by 12 of the 25 member states), a Common Agricultural Policy, a common trade policy, a Common Fisheries Policy, and a Common Foreign and Security Policy. Passport and customs checks were abolished at most of the EU's internal borders, creating a single space of mobility for EU citizens to live, travel, work and invest.

The most important EU institutions are the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Parliament. The European Parliament (EP) is elected by the citizens of the European Union to represent their interests. Its origins go back to the 1950s and the founding treaties, and since 1979 its members have been directly elected by the people they represent. Elections are held every five years, and every EU citizen who is registered as a voter is entitled to vote. The Parliament thus expresses the democratic will of the Union's citizens, which is more than 455 million people, and it represents their interests in discussions with the other EU institutions. The European Union's activities cover all areas of public policy, from health and economic policy to foreign affairs and defense.

1. What is the European Union?
2. What is the purpose?
3. What is the European Parliament?
4. Why is it so important?