

Briefing: EU Membership



Summary: This briefing relates to membership in the European Union as well as the current criteria for joining the EU

1. The EU Today

The EU today comprises of **27 Member States** and represents **half a billion** European citizens.

EU citizens today enjoy the advantages of a community with collective security, unrestrained travel and collective economic influence in the world.

In its earliest form, the EU was established half a century ago and had 6 members.

The EU has always offered the benefits of membership in the community to those European countries outside of the Union.

- The six original members of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 were Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
 - 1973 First enlargement with Denmark, Ireland and United Kingdom all joining
 - 1981 Greece becomes a member
 - 1986 Spain and Portugal join

- 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden become members

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ultimate symbol of division in Europe, former Communist bloc countries began to prepare to join the European Union.

- 2004 Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join the EU.
- 2007 Romania and Bulgaria become the latest members to join the EU

Iceland, Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are all now '**candidate countries**' to join the EU.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 are '**potential candidates**' to join the EU.

Fiscal issues surrounding Iceland's bid to join the EU, and political issues surrounding Turkey's, are controversial. The Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament are committed to a fair, rational and inclusive approach to all membership negotiations.

2. **Joining the EU**

Liberty, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law are at the heart of the EU.

Before applying to become a member of the EU, certain conditions for entry must therefore be met. These conditions are defined in the Treaty on European Union ([article 6](#), [article 49](#)).

A country must also meet the "Copenhagen criteria" of 1993 which necessitates the following:

- stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities
- a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with the pressure of competition and the market forces at work inside the Union;
- the ability to assume the obligations of membership, in particular adherence to the objectives of political, economic and monetary union.

The conditions for entry into the EU were further [clarified](#) by the Madrid European Council in 1995.

The Madrid European Council sought to stress the importance of the integration process.

You can read more about EU Membership as well as the conditions of joining the EU [here](#)