

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The plan of forming a united Europe was not a new one. It was dominated by Emperor Charlemagne in the 9th century. In the 19th century it was nearly controlled by Napoleon Bonaparte and later, Adolph Hitler tried to conquer it in the 20th century. Each of these people had tried to “dominate”, “control”, or “conquer” Europe. Europe had been left in shambles at the end of World War 2 and it became clear that one person or country could not rule the entire continent, but if all the countries played a role together there would be more joy and fewer wars. “People were going to have to work together peacefully. The ancient rivalries and prejudices had to be put aside and a new spirit of cooperation had to take their place.”

The countries which started forming the European Union were Belgium and Luxemburg in 1921. They formed the union to carry out their idea of working together economically and make trade agreements to become stronger than larger countries. During the Second World War the Netherlands also joined Belgium and Luxemburg to form the Benelux Customs in 1948. In 1958 the Benelux treaty was signed establishing these countries as a free trade unit. In 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community integrated the trade of coal iron and steel in the Benelux countries and a further three countries France, West Germany and Italy. Thus in 1952 six countries began the path towards a unified Europe. After the Rome treaty, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, and Portugal created the European free trade association. In 1973 three countries from the EFTA joined the “EC”- United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark. In the 1980’s Greece, Spain and Portugal joined the “EC”. In 1993 the “Maastricht European Council adopted the Treaty on European Union” which is the EU we know today. Joining together with other countries makes the economy of every single country stronger.

From a historical perspective, the European Countries made a good decision to join. There are many benefits for the entire country and the people in the countries present in the EU. It was set up with an aim of stopping the frequent wars that took place between the countries in Europe, to gain more land or to take revenge. Now all the countries would have to put aside their enmity and work together side by side. The EU started with a different name and aim. It was called the European Coal and Steel Community and a small aim was to see that the fast recovering economy of West Germany would not use the steel and coal to build another strong army and try to reign over Europe again. The European Union had in mind that it would help all the countries in Europe and would not let its members suffer in poverty or in a money crisis. Also because the entire members act as one country in allowing

trade, there would be less smuggling and the economy would neither lose out much nor gain much.

The European Union was created after the Second World War. The initial six countries started the union mainly for trade and to stop war between them. But, a few years after it was set up, several more European countries joined it and today it has 27 countries. Slowly the EU developed minor goals to help the member states. The citizens are allowed to travel across borders without having to stop at them or have their passports and visa checked. Another goal the EU thinks will be helpful is to make the currency of Europe one. This means that all the countries in the EU have one currency which makes travelling to and fro, from one country to another, easier, and people do not have to keep changing the currency or lose on exchange. The market prices of goods and commodities won't fluctuate much if there is only one currency. EU also wants to go green and help protect the environment. So they have set expectations the countries must meet and have a certain amount of green land if the countries are in the EU or if it wants to join the EU. The EU leaders want to make the European Union the world's best knowledge based society with a competitive economy and a skilled workforce. That is why EU ensures that people have high speed internet in most of the places. It urges businesses and governments to make better use of the internet. Another goal is to stimulate the economy, with one third of the EU's yearly budget to be used in disadvantaged areas like, Ireland and Spain. It is also helping the newly integrated countries of eastern Europe to meet the exacting EU standards. The EU has also achieved in making equal opportunities, stability and justice for all.

There are 27 members of the EU. They are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Slovenia. Although the countries on their own have very little common except for the fact that they all are in Europe, the EU brings a lot of similarity in them. 12 countries out of the 27 currently use one currency called the Euro. These countries are Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Slovenia. More countries are in a queue to join the Euro. Other common factors which the EU brings to the countries are the strict laws and the stage that the countries must meet, or be in, in order to join the EU. Some countries which would like to join the EU are countries like Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia. These candidate countries could not join the EU because they have not met the stringent standards of the EU.

The EU has also joined the East and West of Europe together. This will help a lot of people as now they don't have to show their passport at every border or get their money changed. Using the same currency in different European countries will help when people or companies use money, like with trading, investing, and travelling, also it will make the

value of the currency stronger as it is wanted in more countries. There are also negative results which occur from the joining of the countries. Suppose, when robbers rob a bank they can get to another country much more easily than if there had been passport checks at borders. But then also the police of all the countries help each other and have become quite powerful and resourceful, and hence it has become easier to find where the thieves are. For the benefit of the people the EU has tried to help the people by making cheaper phone calls when travelling, trying to make the countries adopt the Euro, trying to reduce risks from chemicals, acting in crisis regions, giving more services and jobs to people, improving space tests, tracking illegal immigration etc. The EU is a long-lasting organisation and should serve as an example for the other continent. In years to come other countries might get ideas from the EU and join to make more powerful organizations and have all their needs met themselves. Then problems might arise, with the EU not being able to trade with other countries around the world and get the materials it lacks like vegetation that grows in the equatorial region because other countries would rather have their own rather than from another countries. The EU might have internal problems of its own. Like for example a country may think that the EU has the best Policies and Treaties but then it changes, so that country may try to foil the plans of the EU or leave it and join another organisation and give it internal ideas about the EU.

The formation of EU was a good idea to begin “~~developing~~” a ~~developed~~ continent. It had a good structure and plan that brought it this far and because of that it has grown from a trade treaty between two countries to a union between most of the countries in a continent.

http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

handout on the EU

book- the European Union- the past, present and the future