

European Union

The European Union (EU) is a unique political and economic partnership that are located primarily in Europe . It was formed after World War II to promote peace and economic recovery in Europe. Its founders hoped that by creating specified areas in which member states agreed to share sovereignty—initially in coal and steel production, trade, and nuclear energy—it would promote interdependence and make another war in Europe unthinkable. The EU was created in 1993 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty which is also known as the Treaty on European Union and introduced European citizenship. It is generally considered a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity.

Origin of European Union:

The EU traces its origins to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) formed by the Treaty of Paris, 18th April, 1951 and the European Economic Community (EEC) Treaty of Rome, 1st January 1958. The original member states of what came to be known as the European Communities were the Inner Six: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. The communities and their successors have grown in size by the accession of 21 new member states. Croatia became the 28th member country on 1st July 2013, but at present there are 27 member countries of EU. On 31st January, 2020, the United Kingdom became the only member state to leave the EU by Article 50 and this withdrawal came to be known as Brexit. There are several other countries that are negotiating to join the European Union. Out of 27 member states, only 19 use the EURO currency and these states form the Eurozone officially EURO AREA formed on 1st January, 1999. The latest major amendment to the constitutional basis of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon, came into force in 2009.

Originally this supranational union was formed in western Europe but now gradually its influence is in central as well as eastern Europe. It has developed an internal single market through a standardised system of laws that apply in all member states.

Containing some 5.8 percent of the world population in 2020, the EU had generated a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of around US\$17.1 trillion in 2021, constituting approximately 18 percent of global nominal GDP. Additionally, all EU countries have a very high Human Development Index according to the United Nations Development Programme. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Through the Common Foreign and

Security Policy, the union has developed a role in external relations and defence. It maintains permanent diplomatic missions throughout the world and represents itself at the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G7 and the G20. Due to its global influence, the European Union has been described by some scholars as an emerging superpower.

Objectives:

- To increase political cooperation.
- To enhance economic integration by creating a single currency the EURO.
- A unified security and foreign policy.
- Common citizenship rights.
- Enhanced cooperation in the areas of judiciary, immigration and asylum.

GOALS:

- Promote peace, values and the well-being of all citizens of EU.
- Offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders, as internal borders have been removed within the EU.
- Sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, and environmental protection.
- Combat social exclusion and discrimination.
- Promote scientific and technological progress.
- Enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries.
- Respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is euro.

Functions of EU:

- EU's law and regulation is meant to create a cohesive economic entity of its countries, so that **goods can flow freely across the borders** of its member nations, without tariffs, with the ease of one currency, and the creation of one enlarged labour pool, which creates a **more efficient distribution and use of labour**.

- There is a pooling of financial resources, so that member nations can be "bailed out" or lent money for investment.
- Union's expectations in areas such as **human rights and the environment** have **political implications** for member countries. Union can exact a heavy political cost such as severe cutbacks and an austerity budget on its members as a condition of giving aid.
- This is a **great experiment**, really, in cooperation amongst nations, who wish to be **economically unified, giving as little political** and national power as possible.
- Trade
 - Free trade among its members was one of the EU's founding principles. This is possible due to the single market. Beyond its borders, the **EU is also committed to liberalising world trade**.
 - The European Union is the largest trade block in the world. It is the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods and services, and the biggest import market for over 100 countries.
- Humanitarian aid
 - The EU is committed to helping victims of man-made and natural disasters worldwide and supports over 120 million people each year.
 - EU and its constituent countries is the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid.
- Diplomacy and security
 - The EU plays an important role in diplomacy and works to foster stability, security and prosperity, democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law at international level.

Working of EU:

The seven important decision making bodies of European Union are as follows:

- **The European Council** acts as the strategic guide for EU policy. It was established as an informal summit in 1975, the European Council was formalised as an institution in 2009 when the Treaty of Lisbon came into force.

It is composed of the Heads of State or Government of the EU's member states and the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council. It meets several times a year in what are often termed "EU summits." It is headed by a President, who organizes the Council's work and facilitates consensus.

- **The European Commission** upholds the common interest of the EU as a whole and serves as the EU's executive. It is responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU. Its headquarter is at Brussels. It consists of a President, 27 Commissioners, one from each EU country. Commissioners serve five-year terms; one Commissioner serves as Commission President, while the others hold distinct portfolios (e.g., agriculture, energy, trade). On many issues, the commission handles negotiations with outside countries.

- **The Council of the European Union** (also called the Council of Ministers) represents the national governments. The Council enacts legislation, usually based on proposals put forward by the commission, and agreed to (in most cases) by the European Parliament. Different ministers from each country participate in Council meetings depending on the subject under consideration .

- **The European Parliament** represents the citizens of the EU. It currently has 705 members who are directly elected for five-year terms (the most recent elections were in May 2019). Each EU country has a number of seats roughly proportional to the size of its population. Although the Parliament cannot initiate legislation, it shares legislative power with the Council of Ministers in many policy areas, giving it the right to accept, amend, or reject the majority of proposed EU legislation in a process known as the "ordinary legislative procedure" or "codecision."

- The Court of Justice: It interprets EU law to make sure it is applied in the same way in all member states. It also settles disputes between national governments and EU institutions.
- European Central Bank: It is the central bank for the euro and administers monetary policy within the Euro zone, which comprises 19 member states of the EU.
- European Court of Auditors: It investigates the proper management of finances within both the EU entities and funds are also provided to the member states.

Thus the European Union has played an important role in improving economic conditions and raising living standard of people in weaker members of group. Despite many challenges facing the EU today,there is no doubt that Europeans have a bright future because of the steps they have taken towards integration. EU citizens reap the benefits of human rights,democracy and a healthy environment. It is a major economic,political and diplomatic force in the world today, with the ability to have a great impact on global affairs.