

THE EUROPEAN UNION – AN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UNION IN WHICH ALSO THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA IS A MEMBER¹

On 9 May 1950 the French statesman Robert Schuman (29 June 1886 – 4 September 1963) laid the foundation to the European Union, putting forward the idea of creating a union based on solidarity in Europe, which meant joining together the post World War II Europe. The Schuman Declaration proposed the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which became a reality with the Paris Treaty signed on 18 April 1951. Thus, the European integration process can be deemed to have started in 1951² when the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was signed (the Treaty came into effect in 1952). Six European countries joined in the name of peace: Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, France and Germany.

Cooperation in different areas became broader when the treaties on establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were signed in Rome on 25 March 1957. EEC meant a more extensive common market, covering a large number of goods and services. Customs duties were completely lifted on 1 July 1968 and joint policies were developed during the same decade, above all the trade policy and agricultural policy.

The global economic recession of the beginning of 1980s brought along a wave of europessimism. New hopes arose when the European Commission led by the French politician and economist Jacques Delors³ (born in Paris on 20 July 1925) published its White Paper in 1985, setting the time schedule for the formation of the common market by 1 January 1993.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 radically changed the European political development. It led to the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990 and liberation of Central and Eastern European countries from under control of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991.

At the same time, Member States held negotiations over the new Treaty of the European Union which was adopted by the European Council (consisting of presidents and/or prime ministers of Member States) in Maastricht in December 1991. The Treaty came into effect on 1 November 1993. New forms of intergovernmental cooperation were

¹ Note from the Chief Editor: the overview has been prepared by the Editorial Staff of the journal on the basis of different web sources on the European Union in March 2019 (Google search word “European Union”) (the texts have been simplified, adjusted and corrected at some places).

² Thus it will be the 70th anniversary of establishing the European Union in two years, in April 2021.

³ Jacques Delors was the 8th President of the European Commission. He was the first person who stayed at this post for two terms of office (from January 1985 to December 1994). In 1979–1981, Delors was a member of the European Parliament. Delors was a member of the governments of the President of France François Mitterrand, being the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance in 1981–1983 and the Minister of Economic Affairs, Finance and Budget in 1983–1984. Mitterrand repeatedly considered nomination of Delors as the Prime Minister of France.

introduced to the existing system with the Treaty and the European Union (EU) was created.

The European Union consisting of three columns was created then with the Maastricht Treaty:

- The *first column* consists of the European Communities. This includes the common market, requirements for the economic and monetary union, also additional competences of the EU in certain areas, such as EU citizenship, environment, scientific research, education and training activities.
- The *second column* of the EU enables cooperation in the area of common foreign and security policy;
- The *third column* consists of EU policy in the issues of justice and home affairs which include asylum and immigration issues, legal cooperation in civil and criminal cases, and customs and police cooperation in combating terrorism, drug trafficking and fraud.

The **European Union** is the economic and political union of mainly European countries, which has 28 Member States (as at 01.01.2019). The European Union has elements of both an intergovernmental and supranational organisation. These countries joined to make people's lives better, simpler and more secure. It was agreed to have cooperation and help each other. The harmonised legislation of EU Member States has to ensure the free movement of citizens, goods, services and capital within the European Union.

Establishment of the European Union

It was decided to establish the European Union after the two big wars which took place in Europe. European countries realised that it is better to have cooperation than to fight against each other. At first only six countries decided to have cooperation and to sign the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (see above). Later more and more countries joined them and the European Union was established. The current European Union has 28 Member States with the total population of 512.4 million⁴ at the beginning of 2018 and total area of more than 4.46 million km².⁵

The Republic of Estonia is an EU Member State since 1 May 2004, euro was introduced on 1 January 2011.

In order to become an *EU Member State*, a country has to agree to all EU laws and values and make efforts to ensure respecting of these laws and values by all people.

Goals and values of the EU

All EU Member States have cooperation to ensure:

⁴ Eurostat. Population on 1 January.

[<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tps00001&tableSelection=1&footnotes=yes&labeling=labels&plugin=1>] 23.03.2019

⁵ EU portal. [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/living_et] 23.03.2019

1) peace in Europe; 2) well-being of citizens; 3) justice for and involvement of everybody; 4) respecting of the language and culture of all people; 5) strong European economy and use of a common currency by countries to be able to have cooperation. EU Member States have common values: for instance, they want to ensure equality of all people and respect of their rights.

The most important keywords related to the EU are:

Peace in Europe

Free movement of people

EU and the rest of the world (mutual purchase and sale of goods and services)

Schengen area

EU languages (people speak their own languages in each EU Member State)

There are 24 official languages since 2013. The internal working languages and main procedural languages are English, French and German.

EU currency (the common currency – **euro** – has been introduced in 19 EU Member States)

EU flag (the EU flag is blue, with 12 golden stars arranged in a circle)

EU anthem (it was decided in 1985 to adopt the melody composed by Ludwig van Beethoven as the EU anthem)

United in diversity (this demonstrates the EU values, i.e. even if the culture and languages of EU citizens may be different, they support each other and have cooperation in peace.

Functioning of the EU. The EU has three important institutions:

- **The European Commission;**
- **The European Parliament;**
- **The Council of the European Union.**

The EU has other important institutions:

- **The European Court of Justice;**
- **The European Court of Auditors.**

The EU has more institutions which also perform important functions. All these institutions have cooperation for the lawful functioning of the EU and making it beneficial for people.

In March 2000 the EU adopted the Lisbon Strategy which has to ensure modernisation of European economy and successful competition of the EU in the global market with such important actors as the USA and new industrial countries. Lisbon Strategy has now been replaced by the new EU strategy, Europe 2020, which has the following goals:

- smart economic growth (through education, knowledge and innovation);
- sustainable economic growth (more resource efficient, more sustainable and more competitive economy);
- inclusive growth (high employment rate and economic, social and territorial cohesion).

On 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom had a referendum to decide about leaving the EU. According to the final result, 52% of the voters supported the leaving of the United Kingdom and 48% supported staying in the EU, as a result of which the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU. It may take two years before actual leaving but the President of the European Council Donald Tusk has warned that the whole process with the negotiation of all trade and immigration agreements may take up to seven years.

Editorial Team of the journal