

THE EU EVOLUTION THROUGHOUT THE YEARS & TREATIES

The journey of the European Union (EU) treaties unfolds its legacy and historical narrative, a timeline etched with diplomatic negotiations, institutional expansions, and policy amendments. Embedded within this timeline is a nuanced evolution that transcends mere legal frameworks; it encapsulates the ideological undercurrents shaping the very essence of the EU.

As we trace the trajectory of these treaties, a particular subject is highlighted — one that reflects the intricate dance between supranational governance and economic ideology. At its core, the evolution of EU treaties, often celebrated for fostering unity and cooperation, also reveals a distinct neoliberalist character. This character positions the EU as a tool not only of integration but, crucially, as a mechanism for the maintenance of capitalist power.

In examining the historical development of the EU treaties, it becomes apparent that economic considerations have played a pivotal role in shaping the union's trajectory. From the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, each iteration reflects an evolving understanding of economic interdependence. However, the neoliberal turn, marked by a commitment to free-market principles and deregulation, takes centre stage in the latter part of this timeline. This shift, while often couched in the language of economic growth and competitiveness, prompts a focal point for examination of the EU's role in perpetuating and sustaining capitalist structures.

From the Single European Act to the Maastricht Treaty and beyond, each treaty reflects not only the aspirations of a united Europe but also the prioritization of market-driven policies. This timeline serves as a chronicle of the EU's evolution, offering a lens through which to scrutinize the intersection of political ambitions and economic goals.

(1958) Birth of the European Parliament European, its first Assembly, a forerunner of today's European Parliament, is held in Strasbourg, France, with Robert Schuman elected President. It replaces the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community and changes its name to the European Parliament on 30 March 1962.

1950s

Treaty of Paris (1951): Established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), a precursor to the EU, aiming to integrate the coal and steel industries of its member countries.

Treaties of Rome (1957): Created the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). These treaties laid the foundation for the Single Market and cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Merger Treaty (1965): Merged the executives of the three European Communities created by the Treaties of Rome.

1960s

1970s

1973 additions: Denmark, Ireland & United Kingdom

1980s

The Schengen Area Agreement (1985): Signed by five of the ten member states, lays the foundation for the removal of internal border controls.

1981 additions: Greece

1986 additions: Portugal & Spain

1990s

Treaty of Maastricht (1992): Formally established the European Union, introducing the concept of European citizenship, and laying the groundwork for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and creation of the euro currency.

Officially known as the Treaty on European Union (TEU) introduced new policy areas for EU cooperation, including a common foreign and security policy.

Amsterdam Treaty (1997): Modified several aspects of the Maastricht Treaty, including provisions on employment, social policy, and justice and home affairs.

(1993) The Copenhagen Criteria are established, outlining the conditions that candidate countries must fulfill to join the EU. These criteria include political stability, a functioning market economy, and the ability to adopt and implement EU laws.

1995 additions: Austria, Finland & Sweden

First post-Cold War enlargement

2000s

Treaty of Nice (2001): Reformed the institutional structure of the EU to prepare for enlargement and enhance decision-making efficiency.

Treaty of Accession (2003): Admitted ten new member states into the EU in the largest single expansion.

Constitutional Treaty (2004): Drafted to establish a constitution for the EU, but it was not ratified by all member states.

2004 additions: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia & Slovenia

2007 additions: Bulgaria & Romania

2010s

Treaty of Accession (2013): Admitted Croatia as the 28th member state of the EU.

EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement (2019): Outlined the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

External trade agreements

EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) (2017)

EU-Australia Trade Agreement (2018) according to an impact assessment, trade in goods and services between the two partners could increase by around a third.

EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (2019) removes tariffs and other trade barriers and creates a platform to cooperate in order to prevent obstacles to trade.

(2014) The EU introduces the Western Balkans Strategy, emphasizing the region's potential for future accession but highlighting the need for reforms to meet the criteria.

In 2020 UK officially leaves the EU.

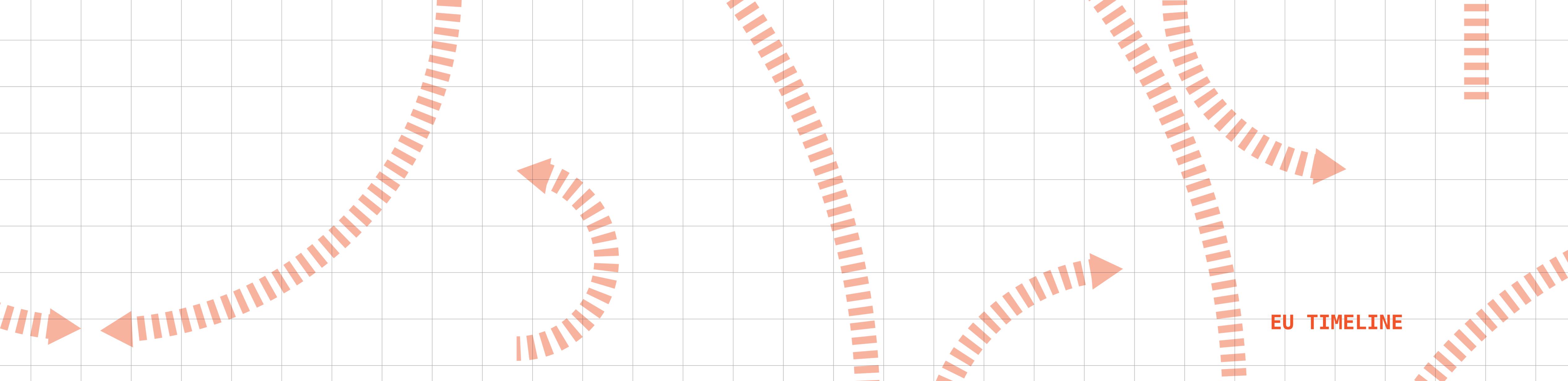
2020s

NextGenerationEU (2020): An EU recovery instrument responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EU-China Comprehensive Agreement (2021) on Investment, enhancing economic ties.

(2020) The European Commission unveils a revised enlargement methodology, aiming to enhance the credibility and predictability of the accession process.

(2021) The EU reaffirms its commitment to the Western Balkans, signaling a continued focus on enlargement and urging candidate countries to meet the accession criteria.



EU TIMELINE