

# European Union Member States



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# When did it first start?

The EU was not always as big as it is today. When European countries started to cooperate economically in 1951, only Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands participated. Over time, more and more countries decided to join.

The Union currently counts 27 EU countries.

The United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union on 31 January 2020.



# Members of the Schengen border-free area

The Schengen Area is one of the greatest achievements of the EU. It is an area without internal borders, an area within which citizens, many non-EU nationals, business people and tourists can freely circulate without being subjected to border checks. Since 1985, it has gradually grown and encompasses today almost all EU countries and a few associated non-EU countries.



# Members of the Schengen border-free area

- While having abolished their internal borders, Schengen States have also tightened controls at their common external border on the basis of Schengen rules to ensure the security of those living or travelling in the Schengen Area.



# Joining the European Union

Becoming a member of the EU is a complex procedure which does not happen overnight. Once an applicant country meets the conditions for membership, it must implement EU rules and regulations in all areas.

Any country that satisfies the conditions for membership can apply. These conditions are known as the 'Copenhagen criteria' and include a free-market economy, a stable democracy and the rule of law, and the acceptance of all EU legislation, including of the euro.



# Candidate countries

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These countries are in the process of 'transposing' (or integrating) EU legislation into national law:

1. Albania
2. Montenegro
3. North Macedonia
4. Serbia
5. Turkey

Montenegro



Albania



# The 27 member countries of the European Union and year of entry



## Year of entry

## Countries

01/01/1958

Belgium/ France/ Germany/ Italy/ Luxembourg/  
Netherlands

01/01/1973

Denmark/ Ireland/ United Kingdom (left on 31  
January 2020)

01/01/1981

Greece

01/01/1986

Portugal /Spain

01/01/1995

Austria/Finland/ Sweden

01/05/2004

Cyprus/ Czechia/ Estonia/ Hungary/ Latvia/  
Lithuania/ Malta/ Poland/ Slovakia/Slovenia

01/01/2007

Bulgaria/ Romania

01/07/2013

Croatia



**Thank you for your  
attention!**