EUROsimA 2024

Futuristic European Council

The Revision of the Treaties of the European Union

Study Guide

Futuristic European Council Study Guide

European Union Simulation in Ankara (EUROsimA) 2024

Organized by
Foreign Policy and International Relations Society
Middle East Technical University
Üniversiteler Mah. Dumlupınar Bulvarı No: 1
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LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Esteemed participants,

I would like to welcome you all to EUROsimA 2024. My name is Alkım Özkazanç, and I am a third-year Political Science and Public Administration student at the Middle East Technical University. This year, I will be serving as the Secretary-General of this esteemed conference during its 20th annual session. EUROsimA has always held a special place for me since my first participation in the conference back in 2019; thus, being able to contribute to such a valuable session simply fills me with pride and excitement. An incredible amount of hard work has been dedicated to this conference, so I am confident that EUROsimA 2024 will not break the tradition and satisfy its participants as perhaps the most academically qualified Model European Union (MEU) simulation in Türkiye.

Our academic team, consisting of competent students who come from different departments and universities yet are definitely united by a strong team spirit, is the reason why I have been able to make the claim that stands just a few lines above. The Under-Secretaries-General and the Academic Assistants have been working hard for the last few months to produce a conference that is rich in content and educatory. I would like to thank every member of the academic team for their commitment.

Moreover, I would like to especially thank our Director-General, Miss Deren Ertan, whose support and company I can never disregard. I am quite grateful for her motivation, diligence, and solidarity, all of which she has exercised to an excellent degree. Seeing her and her team's efforts assures me that EUROsimA 2024 is going to be an unforgettable experience for all participants. Thus, I would like to thank every member of the organisation team for their commitment as well.

This year, EUROsimA will have a Futuristic European Council committee for the first time since 2018. The participants of this committee will breath the atmosphere at the top of the EU hierarchy for four days straight as they will try to answer challenging all-Union problems across different fields while always having to uphold the solidarity between EU members. This committee has been prepared by two gentlemen who are quite competent about the EU: Under-Secretary-General Mr. Emre Türker (who is actually a Master's student of European Studies!) and Academic Assistant Burak Yağız Güllü. I am grateful for their enthusiastic approach to this committee, the study guide of which they have furnished in a quite educational manner.

I strongly advise the participants to read the study guides in detail in order to get a firm understanding of the agenda item and to fully immerse themselves in their committees. Only through that immersion could one get a full taste of the committee and accumulate good memories. After this short piece of advice, I would like to once again welcome you all to EUROsimA 2024, hoping that it will be a remarkable experience for you.

Kind Regards,

Alkım Özkazanç

Secretary-General of EUROsimA 2024

LETTER FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

Distinguished participants,

My name is Emre Türker and I am currently a master's student at Middle East Technical University, studying European Studies, after graduating from the same university with a degree in International Relations. It is an utmost honour to serve as the Under Secretary General responsible for the Futuristic European Council in the 20th edition of the European Union Simulation in Ankara.

In this conference, we will have a European Council meeting taking place in 2033. As usual, the European Union is facing many problems from discussions regarding further enlargement and integration to the ongoing disputes and crises in the continent. EU is trying to find its purpose not only in the continent but also in the global arena. Furthermore, leaders of member states are divided not only by ideologies but also by their stance on the EU. Many leaders refuse to find a consensus that can affect the EU positively. More and more parties that are critical of the EU are involved in national government. The leaders of the member states will try to discuss the ongoing problems and will work to find a middle ground to these issues. Their efforts and solutions will describe the future status of the EU.

I want to start by thanking Mr. Alkım Özkazanç, the Secretary-General of this conference, who worked with me in this long process of preparing this committee since day one. His contribution of understanding and correction during both the agenda settling and guide writing processes cannot be denied. I would also like to thank Mr. Burak Yağız Güllü, the academic assistant of this committee who made an important contribution and assistance throughout the making of this study guide. It has been such an honour to work with a dedicated and hardworking team who will deliver a great conference for everyone who will take part.

If you have any questions regarding the guide or the committee, you can always contact me at turker@eurosima.org.

Sincerely,

Emre TÜRKER

Under-Secretary-General of EUROsimA 2024

1) Introduction to the European Union

a) History of the European Union

i) Pre-Union Era

The desire for **European integration** sprang from the political, economic, and security challenges that Western European countries faced following World War II. The desire was especially vocalized following the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949. Although Germany and Italy regarded a unified Europe as an opportunity to reestablish their credibility and international position, others, including the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway, were more opposed. (Phinmore 2022, 10)

In 1950, the **Schuman Declaration**, penned by the Foreign Minister of France, proposed the idea of pooling the coal and steel resources of Germany and France under a high authority to prevent future Franco-German wars. The establishment of such an authority for the control of these vital resources for industry was

Figure 1: The Foreign Affairs Ministers of the six countries participating in the Schuman Plan negotiating the Treaty of Paris (Cvce.eu n.d.)

supported by the Benelux countries, Germany, and Italy, who, along with France, became known as **"the Six"**. Together, they established the **European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)** in 1952 (Phinmore 2022, 12).

The ECSC was established as a **supranational body**[1] to manage shared coal and steel resources. Its purpose was to reconcile the individual interests of the six participating nations and create a single market for coal and steel by merging their respective national markets. In addition to creating a common single market, the ECSC also protected the interests of each member state (Phinmore 2022, 12).

The ESCS was designed to handle resources and mitigate any complications stemming from such rearmament so soon after WWII, and the idea of the **European Defence Community (EDC)** was also proposed after ECSC is established. The proposed European Defence Community (EDC), envisioned within another body called the **European Political Community (EPC)**, endeavoured to create a unified military force. However, the French parliament's refusal to ratify the EDC treaty dashed hopes for both the EDC and EPC. Despite the setback caused by the failure of the EDC/EPC, the integration process was soon revitalised through discussions to establish the **European Economic Community (EEC)** and the **European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom)**, both of which were supranational in nature. The EEC was intended as an organization that would allow for the freedom of movement of labour and capital, foster specific social policy initiatives, and establish an investment bank, while Euratom was created to rapidly develop and promote nuclear industries (Phinmore 2022, 12-13).

Following the ratification of the **Treaties of Rome**, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom created the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** as another European an intergovernmental organisation in 1960. Some of these countries quickly regretted not joining the EEC and Euratom, which led Ireland to become the first to apply for membership to the EEC in 1961, followed by the UK, Denmark

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[1] A **supranational body** is a multinational union or association in which member countries cede authority and sovereignty on at least some internal matters to the body, whose decisions are binding on its members.

and Norway. However, French President Charles de Gaulle rejected the UK's application because he saw British participation as a method for the US to gain more influence in Europe (something the France and Germany did not want). Some claim that de Gaulle was simply afraid that another member would usurp his authority.

A few years later, the **Empty Chair Crisis** emerged when de Gaulle decided to withdraw French ministers from the Council of Ministers in protest at a proposed change from unanimity to **qualified majority voting**; when the latter is used, a specific majority threshold, typically higher than a simple majority, is sufficient for a motion or proposal to be approved (Phinmore 2022, 14-15). The crisis was resolved through the **Luxembourg Compromise** of 1966. This compromise established that a member state can invoke the negotiations if it feels that its vital interests are at risk and that all negations must continue until a unanimous agreement is reached. This effectively delayed the move towards qualified majority voting, giving EEC members a "veto power" and signalling an adherence to **intergovernmentalism**[2] in decision-making.

Figure 2: Signing ceremony of the Treaty of Rome (Cvce.eu n.d.)

Although the European Economic Community (EEC) was a significant economic power, the community lacked political influence. However, due to the economic instability of the time, European economic integration was put on hold. The EEC was also facing challenges due to

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[2] **Intergovernmentalism** refers to arrangements "whereby **goverments**, in situations and conditions they can control, cooperate with one another on matters of common interest" (Nugent 2003, 475).

its enlarged membership and disagreements over political integration approaches. Despite these challenges, some progress toward integration was made. For example, the **European Council** was founded in 1974, a system of direct elections was introduced to the European Parliament, and the European Monetary System was created to stabilise currency exchange rates across Europe. It is worth noting that these are just a few examples of the progress made. However, challenges were encountered in the implementation of such projects. This was reflected in the reluctance of member states to collaborate on common measures and the creation of non-tariff barriers, such as differing trade standards between members (Phinmore 2022, 16).

During the 1980s, the reform plans of the **Delors Commission**, coupled with the economic liberalisation attitudes of the Thatcher government in the UK, converged with the change in French national economic policy, bringing the EU policies more in line with the neoliberal currents proliferating across Europe. The White Paper of the Commission, which consolidated the measures to be taken and the timetable to be followed for the completion of the **Single Market** by 1992, was passed unanimously by the Council in 1985 (Phinmore 2022, 16-17).

ii) History of the EU since 1986

The Single European Act (SEA) was signed in 1986 and significantly furthered the European integration process in two ways. Firstly, it reinforced the basis of integration policies on treaties, facilitating the European integration process. Second, it augmented the institutional framework and structure of the **European Community**. The internal market's completion was established as an explicit goal of the Community, new policy areas and competencies for the Community were generated, a new decision-making procedure (the cooperation procedure) was put into place, the powers of the Parliament were increased, and a legal basis for cooperation on foreign policy among Community members was established.

The cooperation procedure was designed to address the problems caused by the Luxembourg Compromise's provisions on qualified majority voting and thereby improving the efficiency of decision-making in the Council; it also helped augment the power of the **European Parliament**. In addition, the **assent mechanism** empowered the Parliament also by requiring an absolute majority[3] for the admission of new members to the Community and for the negotiation of association agreements with third countries (Phinmore 2022, 18).

The Single European Act (SEA) was succeeded by the **Maastricht Treaty**, which came into force in 1993, establishing the European Union as a new institution that overarched the EEC. The European Union (EU) was established as a three-pillared structure. The first pillar was known as the **European Communities**; it included the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and Euratom, and worked on economic, social, and environmental issues. The second pillar was the **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**, which dealt with foreign policy and military issues. The third pillar was **Cooperation in the Fields of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)**, which worked on crime-fighting collaboration. The EEC Treaty was amended to rename the 'European Economic Community' as the **'European Community'**. Also, the **Maastricht Treat**y introduced two new major principles. The first was the formalisation of the principle of **subsidiarity**, which limits the actions of the EC to issues that cannot be adequately addressed by solely through the efforts of individual Member States. The second was **union citizenship**, which grants EU citizens the right to reside and work in any member state (with some limitations), as well as the right to vote and stand for election in local and European Parliament elections (again with some limitations) (Phinmore 2022, 20-21).

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[3] Normally, a simple majority equals half of the total amount, but an absolute majority requires more than half of all votes, including abstentions.

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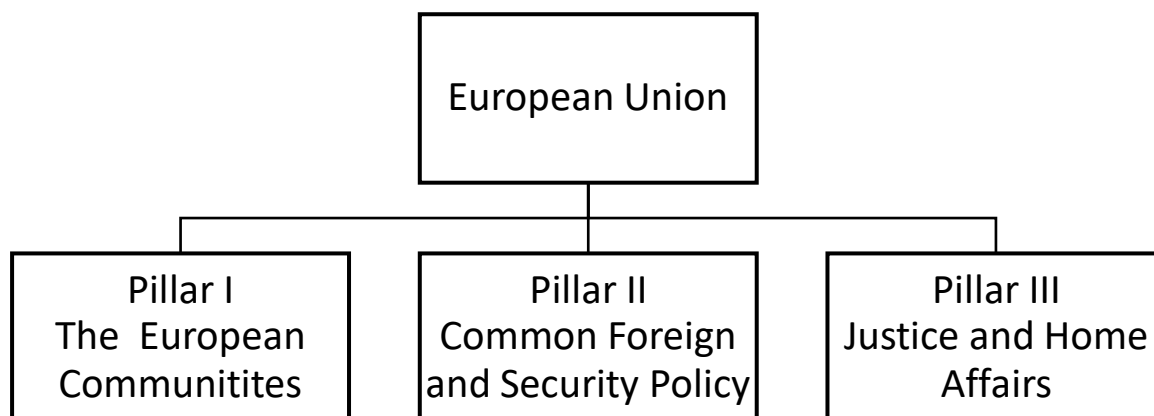
Figure 3: The Pillar structure on the Maastricht Treaty

The **Schengen Protocol** was added to the EU framework, which allowed for the free movement of persons. However, the UK, Ireland, and Denmark opted out of this protocol (although Denmark later joined in 2001). Another significant provision pertained to the legal guaranteeing of the Parliament's right to confirm the nominee for the **President of the Commission**. This was particularly consequential for the Commission, as it strengthens Parliament's power over the executive of the EU (Phinmore 2022, 21).

The **Treaty of Amsterdam** aimed to enable member states to do more without being restricted by those who did not want further cooperation. For example, the Union was weakened by the Denmark and the United Kingdom opting out of the **European Monetary Union (EMU)[4]** while the UK also rejected closer integration in the field of social policy by opting out of the newly created Social Chapter (Phinmore 2022, 22-23). The Treaty of Amsterdam enabled member states to engage in **enhanced cooperation** schemes that do not necessarily need the participation of all EU members to succeed, thereby preventing the negative consequences of opt-outs.

The **Treaty of Nice** (2001) can be viewed as preparation for the planned enlargement of the EU to include Central and Eastern European countries. Its main purpose was to establish the

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[4] **European Monetary Union** includes the concept of the single currency (Euro) and coordination in economic policies.

necessary institutional basis for this expansion, resulting in predominantly institutional changes within the EU. Regarding the **European Commission**, the Treaty stipulated that each member state would nominate one Commissioner, whereas previously, the five largest members had two Commissioners each. The Treaty also introduced Qualified Majority Voting instead of unanimity for the votes held at the **European Council** and the **Council of the European Union** for selecting the candidate for President of the Commission, as well as for the nomination and approval of the College of Commissioners. It is important to note that the Treaty of Nice, built on the enhanced cooperation mechanism; the Treaty reduced the minimum number of members required for enhanced cooperation schemes and enabled its application in non-military and non-defence related areas under the second pillar of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Phinmore 2022, 25).

Similarly, the Treaty has been seen by some as not doing enough to achieve the goal of a "closer union'" as it focuses on technical arrangements to accommodate the enlargement of the EU to include new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, rather than advancing the goal of a wider European Union. However, for others, particularly the Commission, it presented an opportunity to progress towards a more integrated Union with reduced fragmentation since it laid the groundwork for further integration by streamlining decision-making processes and enhancing the EU's ability to function with a larger and more diverse membership (Phinmore 2022, 26).

In the early twenty-first century, the European Union expanded significantly and worked to promote unity among its member nations. In 2004, the EU welcomed ten new member states, the majority of which came from Central and Eastern Europe, in its greatest enlargement to date. This enlargement brought the total number of member countries to 25, demonstrating the EU's commitment to advancing stability, democracy, and prosperity across the continent. (Nugent 2003, 57-58).

The global financial crisis, unethical bank lending practices and unsustainable government spending in several eurozone countries contributed to the economic instability that hit many European countries in 2007-2008. This crisis exposed flaws in the **eurozone** design, such as the lack of fiscal integration in the absence of a single fiscal policy and a common monetary policy, forcing the **European Central Bank** to take measures to stimulate economic activity and stabilise financial markets. Similarly, many eurozone countries, including Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain, have received financial assistance packages from international organisations such as the **International Monetary Fund (IMF),** the European Central Bank and the European Commission to reduce public debt and improve their balance sheets (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2017).

In 2009, **The Lisbon Treaty** came into force, representing a significant step in the development of the European Council and the EU's institutional structure. The treaty introduced several measures to enhance the function of the European Council, increase the efficiency of EU decision-making, and improve democratic accountability. The position of a **permanent President of the European Council** was established, responsible for chairing meetings and representing the EU externally (Scicluna 2012, 442).

The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (EU) in a national referendum in 2016. This referendum, and the entire exit process (often referred to as **Brexit**), was fuelled by the UK's concerns about immigration, sovereignty, and frustration with the EU's regulatory and governance systems. After months of debate, the UK and the EU agreed an exit deal in November 2018, setting out the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. However, the deal faced significant opposition in the UK parliament, leading to repeated delays and deadlocks. Following the general election in December 2019, the UK parliament finally approved the withdrawal agreement, paving the way for the UK to leave the EU in January 2020. However, this was only the beginning of the Brexit process, as the UK entered a transition period during

which it would continue to abide by EU rules while discussing its future relationship with the bloc. The transition period ended on 31 December 2020, when the UK legally withdrew from the EU's single market and customs union (Sandford 2019; BBC News 2020).

iii) Main Concepts and Projects Associated with European Union Politics

1) Integration

Integration is the process of bringing different parts together to form a coherent whole. Within a political context, integration refers to the process by which countries come together to form larger entities, often sharing governance structures, laws and institutions. This can range from economic integration practices (such as the creation of a common market or monetary union) to political integration, where member states cede part of their sovereignty to a centralised authority.

In the context of Europe, integration is a comprehensive process that has evolved over decades with the aim of promoting cooperation and togetherness among European states in a variety of areas, including economic, political, and social. In essence, **European integration** seeks to overcome historical animosities while promoting peace and stability through closer cooperation and sharing of resources. Starting with the ECSC in the name of economic interests, integration has gradually expanded to include political cooperation through the EU institution and widescale social integration through legislation such as the **Single Market Act** (European Parliament 2018).

Integration process start when candidate member state applies for EU membership. If the application is approved through reports prepared by the **European Commission**, then the integration and accession to the EU for the candidate country can began. The candidate member state is required to harmonise its laws, policies, and institutions with EU standards. This usually involves extensive legal reforms aimed at harmonising national legislation with

the **acquis** [5](European Commission n.d.a). During this process, the candidate state enters negotiations with the EU on various chapters covering different policy areas such as internal market, competition, agriculture, justice, and human rights. These negotiations are conducted bilaterally between the applicant and the EU member states (European Commission n.d.a). Once all negotiation chapters have been successfully concluded and the European Commission confirms that the candidate member state fulfils the **Copenhagen Criteria**, the European Council and the European Parliament must ratify the accession treaty. Once ratified by all EU member states, the candidate member state officially becomes a full member of the European Union (European Commission n.d.a).

However, the integration process does not end with accession. The new member states continue to adapt their policies and institutions to comply with EU rules and participate fully in EU decision-making. They also benefit from access to EU funding programmes and institutions, as well as opportunities for economic growth and development through increased trade and investment in the EU single market. In short, the integration process represents a journey towards closer political, economic, and social ties with the European Union for the candidate countries (European Commission n.d.a).

2) Supranationalism

Supranationalism is a form of international cooperation in which sovereign states voluntarily transfer a portion of their authority to a higher authority, often acting above the level of individual nations. In the context of the European Union, supranationalism has been introduced as a fundamental idea underpinning the Union's structure and functioning. In particular, it has enabled the EU to have a number of supranational institutions, such as the

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[5] Acquis: The body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all the EU member states, or simply EU legislation.

European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice, with powers beyond the of the member states (Smith 2020).

3) Euroscepticism

Euroscepticism is an attitude characterised by scepticism or criticism of EU policies. It can be summarised as "the idea of a contingent, or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration and European policies". A common cause of Euroscepticism is the perceived loss of national sovereignty through EU membership, which many supporters of this view believe infringes on the autonomy of member states (Taggart 1998, 366).

4) CFSP

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), one of the pillars of the European Union's external action, was established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 to coordinate the foreign and security policies of the EU Member States in pursuit of promoting peace, security and stability in Europe and the world. The CFSP has enabled the EU to play a more active role in international relations, including diplomatic initiatives, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian efforts, and has evolved over time to improve coordination, increase coherence and strengthen the EU's role as a global actor promoting peace and security (Dinan 1999, 508-510).

5) Schengen Zone

One of the most important achievements of European integration is the **Schengen Area**, which (as of 2033) consists of 28 European countries that have abolished passport controls at their mutual borders. This zone not only abolishes passport controls but also enables every EU citizen to travel, work and live in an EU country without special formalities (Schengen Area, n.d.).
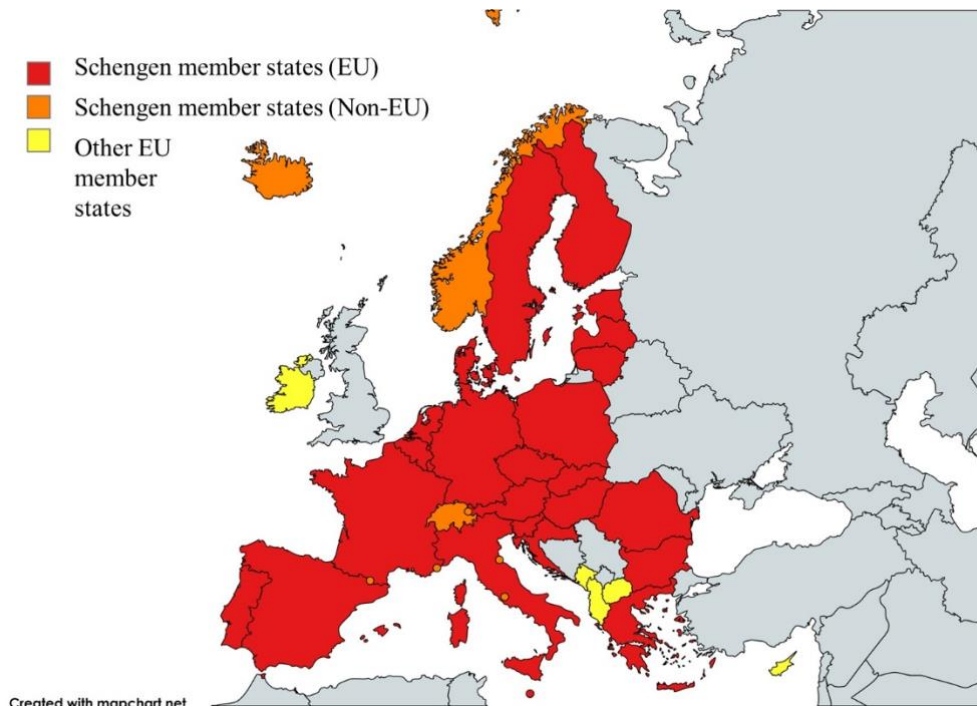
Figure 3: A Map of Schengen Zone in Europe as of 2033

6) Justice and Home Affairs Policy

The European Union's **Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Policy** covers a wide range of areas, including legal and judicial cooperation, as well as internal security and managing migration. Its main aim is to ensure that member states work together effectively to protect the rights of EU citizens. Also, JHA has the goal to promote judicial cooperation between member states, facilitate mutual recognition of judicial decisions and ensure effective law enforcement across borders. (European Council, 2024)

7) Single Market Policy

The Single Market Policy, also known as the **Single Market**, was established with the signing of the **Single European Act** in 1986 and is one of the cornerstones of the European Union's integration process. It aims to create a single and unrestricted economic space within the EU in which goods and services can move freely without any barriers or restrictions and

to promote economic growth, competitiveness, and prosperity by removing internal barriers to trade and promoting deeper integration between member states (Dinan 1999, 360-64).

8) Eurozone Policy

The Eurozone Policy, more commonly known as the **Eurozone**, is a set of economic and monetary policies involving countries that have chosen the euro as their single currency (23 of the 30 member states of the European Union as of 2033). These countries use the **euro** as their official currency and follow a common monetary policy set by the **European Central Bank (ECB)**. This policy is primarily concerned with maintaining price stability and the viability of the euro as a currency, but also includes the coordination of fiscal policies between member states to ensure the stability of the euro (European Commission n.d.b).
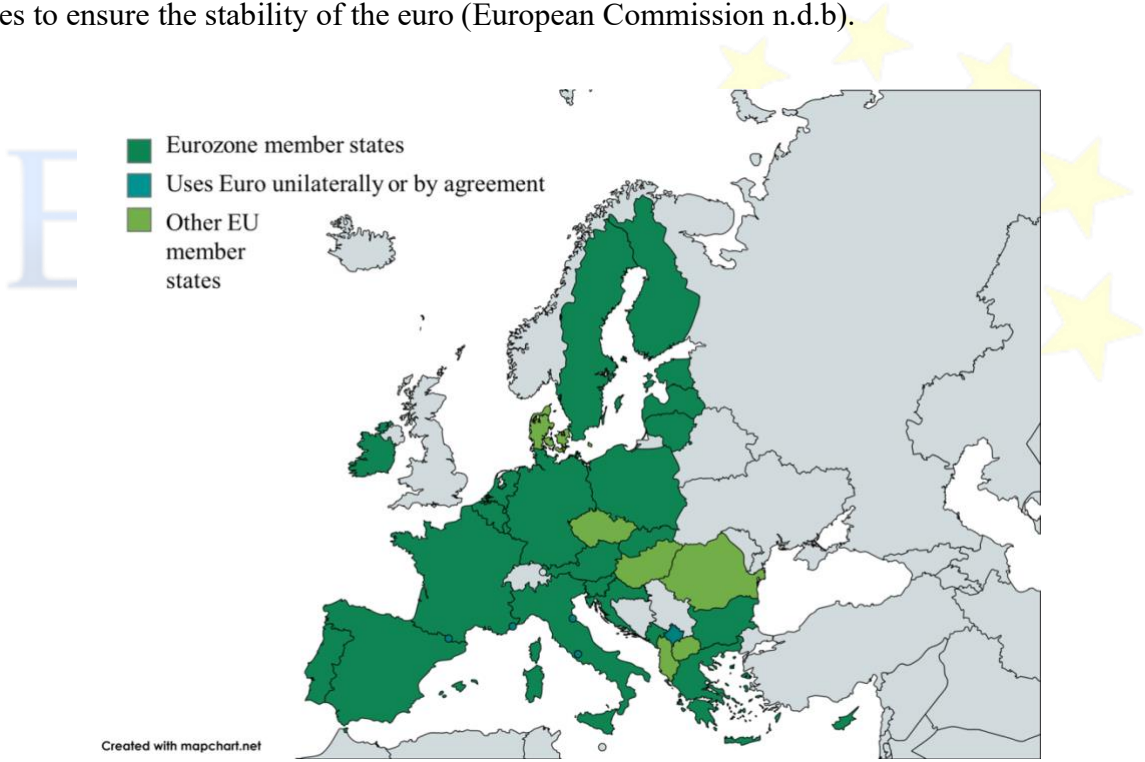

Figure 4: A map of Eurozone in 2033

a. Functions of the European Union

For many years, the European Union has operated within a complicated institutional framework of legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, each with different roles and

responsibilities. These three primary bodies, which have changed over time with new or updated treaties, regulations, and procedures, work through a rather complex manner yet serve the European Union well in terms of rapid decision-making, implementation, and protection. Together, the institutions of these bodies have created a harmonised framework designed to promote democratic governance, strengthen cooperation between Member States and respect the European Union's principles of fairness and accountability.

i. Legislative

The legislative branch of the European Union (EU) consists of two main institutions: the **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union**. Together, these institutions form the EU's legislative branch and are responsible for making **EU legislation**, composed of the **directives, regulations, and decisions**.

European Parliament is the only organisation in the EU made up of representatives, who are directly elected by the people and directly represent the interests of EU citizens; each member state is allocated a number of **members of European Parliament (MEPs)** proportional to its population, with larger countries having more representatives. However, the MEPs do not represent the governments the countries from which they were elected, but the European political parties of which they are members. Economic governance, environmental protection, consumer rights and social policy are some policy areas in which the Parliament engages in the legislative work. MEPs work in parliamentary committees on these issues to examine legislative proposals, hold hearings with experts and stakeholders, and produce reports summarising their recommendations. Parliament's plenary sessions, which bring together all MEPs, also provide a forum for debating and voting on proposed legislation. Parliament also has the power to approve or reject the EU budget, oversee the work of other EU institutions, and hold the **European Commission** to account through hearings and inquiries (Dinan 1999, 267-277).

Although **Parliament** does most of the work on legislation, the **Council of the European Union,** or simply **the Council**, which represents the governments of the EU's member states, also has the power to scrutinise proposed legislation and make suggestions. The Council is made up of ministers from the national governments, and member states are represented by their ministers that are responsible for the policy area under discussion. The composition of the Council varies according to the policy area under discussion (e.g. foreign affairs, agriculture, finance) and meetings take place at different levels (Dinan 1999, 254-261).

Overall, the Council and the Parliament work together in the legislative process to adopt EU laws, using a method known as the **'ordinary legislative procedure'** (**OLP**) or **'co-decision'**. Under this method, the European Commission, the EU's executive, proposes legislation, which is then simultaneously examined and revised by both the Parliament and the Council. If the two institutions cannot agree, a conciliation committee can be set up to find a solution. If the Parliament and the Council agree on the final text, it becomes a part of the EU legislation (European Council 2017).

ii. Executive

As the main executive body of the European Union, the **European Commission** is generally recognised as the main design and management institution for the formulation and implementation of EU policies. Its main tasks include proposing new laws, managing EU policies, overseeing the implementation of EU legislation, representing the EU on the international stage and safeguarding the general interests of the Union (Dinan 1999, 205-206).

The first of the **European Commission's** primary responsibilities is to propose legislation to address the numerous difficulties confronting the EU and its member states. These proposals are normally generated by Commission units that do research, collect data, and communicate with stakeholders in order to develop policy initiatives. After a proposal is produced, it is

reviewed by other EU institutions, specifically **the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union**, before being adopted. (Dinan 1999, 224-26).

In addition to legislative initiatives, the European Commission is responsible for overseeing EU policies in a wide range of areas, such as trade, agriculture, the environment, and the digital economy. The Commission manages the EU's financial resources and initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and in accordance with the EU's members needs and demands. It also monitors the implementation of EU law by member states and, where necessary, takes action to correct shortcomings or infringements through infringement procedures (Dinan 1999, 227, 230).

The European Commission also represents the EU in external relations, negotiating trade agreements, participating in global forums, and promoting the EU's values and interests around the world. It is the EU's main diplomatic actor, working to advance the EU's foreign policy objectives and strengthen cooperation with other countries and international organisations. Through its extensive global network of delegations, the Commission promotes cooperation and dialogue on a wide range of issues, from climate change and human rights to security and development (Dinan 1999, 231-33).

iii. Judiciary

The judicial branch of the European Union is represented primarily by the **European Court of Justice (ECJ)**. The ECJ, established in 1952 and made up of one judge from each member state, is the EU's highest court and plays a vital role in interpreting EU law and ensuring that it is applied uniformly (Dinan 1999, 301).

The main role of the ECJ is to provide authoritative interpretations of EU law by giving **preliminary rulings**[6] on legal questions referred to it by national courts. The preliminary ruling procedure allows the **European Court of Justice** to explain the meaning and implementation of EU law, ensuring a consistent and harmonised interpretation in all member states (Dinan 1999, 303-5).

The ECJ also has jurisdiction to hear direct actions brought by individuals, companies, or member states against the EU institutions, ensuring that these bodies act within the limits of their competence. It is also empowered to review the legality of acts adopted by the EU institutions, safeguarding the rule of law within the **European Union**. (Dinan 1999, 305).

iv. Elections and political groups of the EU

The European Parliament is composed of 705 members who are directly elected by EU voters every five years. The number of MEPs allocated to each member state is proportional to its population, with larger states receiving more representatives. MEPs are divided into political parties that represent the various philosophies and affiliations that influence EU law and policies since they do not represent their country's governments, but their political parties. (Dinan 1999, 273) These parties can be all included under one of the eight political groups.

Figure 5: European Parliament Strasbourg Hemicycle (Cvce.eu n.d.)

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[6] **Preliminary Rulings** are the decisions of the European Court of Justice on the interpretation of European Union law, given in response to a request from a court or tribunal of a member state.

1) European People's Party (EPP)

The European People's Party (EPP) is the largest political party in the European Parliament, representing **centre-right** and **Christian democratic** parties from across Europe. The EPP advocates for policies based on **economic liberalism**, market-oriented reforms, and **social conservatism**. Its member parties include Germany's **Christian Democratic Union** and Spain's **People's Party**, among others from the EU. The European People's Party (EPP) has historically wielded significant power in shaping EU legislation and decision-making processes, often prioritising economic growth, European integration, and transatlantic connections (EPP - European People's Party n.d.).

2) Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) is also another significant political group in the European Parliament that represents **centre-left** and **social democratic** parties from across the European Union. The S&D is committed to promoting progressive policies and social justice, including activities that advance equality, labour rights, and environmental sustainability. The S&D often collaborates with trade unions, civil society organizations, and other groups with left-leaning ideologies to advocate for policies that tackle economic inequality, climate change, and social welfare. As a significant player in the European Parliament, the S&D has a considerable influence on shaping EU legislation and policies, impacting decisions on various topics such as economic governance, social inclusion, and environmental protection. (Socialists & Democrats n.d.)

I. Renew Europe (RE)

Renew Europe (RE) is the centrist political group in the European Parliament that represents **liberal** and **centrist** parties from throughout the EU. It was created in 2019 to promote pro-European policies based on the ideals of liberal democracy, economic innovation, and social

advancement. The group's goals are to foster collaboration and solidarity among member states, safeguard individual liberties and opportunities for all EU citizens, and create a more integrated and responsive European Union (Renew Europe n.d.)

II. Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)

The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) is the political group in the European Parliament that combines **green parties** advocating for environmental sustainability with **regionalist** and **separatist** parties representing Europe's diverse linguistic and cultural communities. The coalition advocates for progressive policies that focus on environmental protection, social fairness, and grassroots democracy. They also call for urgent action on climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development (Greens/EFA n.d.).

III. Identity and Democracy (ID)

Identity and Democracy (ID) is a **right-wing** political group and party in the European Parliament. It is composed of **Eurosceptic** and **nationalist** parties from across Europe and was formed to oppose the European Union's goal of integration. The group advocates for **national sovereignty**, stricter immigration limits, and the preservation of cultural identity. With populist tendencies, anti-immigrant positions, and cynicism toward supranational institutions, the party frequently criticizes EU policies on migration, globalization, and economic integration, and attempts to advocate policies that prioritize the interests of individual member states. This group is also notable for being more radical and committed to right-wing ideology than other right-wing groups like the ECR. Although the ID party has faced criticism for its nationalist language and contentious stances, it has gained support from individuals who are dissatisfied with mainstream parties and concerned about the loss of national sovereignty within the EU (Identity and Democracy Group n.d.).

IV.   European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) is a major political group in the European Parliament that represents **conservative** and **Eurosceptic** parties advocating for **national sovereignty**, free market principles, and limited EU integration. Founded in 2009, the ECR aims to reform the EU from within by prioritising the principles of **subsidiarity**, **decentralisation**, and **fiscal responsibility**. The party emphasises the importance of respecting national identities, reducing bureaucracy, and promoting economic competitiveness through deregulation and market-oriented reforms. However, the ECR has faced criticism for its scepticism towards further European integration and its potential to undermine EU cohesion, particularly in the context of addressing common challenges such as migration and climate change (ECR Group n.d.).

V.   The Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)

GUE/NGL is a political group in the European Parliament that group represents **socialist**, **communist**, and left-**wing** ideologies from across Europe. It addresses a range of ideas and priorities, including environmental sustainability and opposition to capitalism. It is often associated with grassroots movements and civil society organizations that oppose austerity measures and neoliberal economic policies, while also advocating for social justice, workers' rights, and public ownership of key industries (The Left n.d.).

VI.   Non-Inscrits (NI)

Non-Inscrits (NI) are members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who do not belong to any of the established political organisations of the European Parliament. These MEPs may be independent candidates or representatives of small or marginalised parties that do not meet the criteria for forming a political group. They participate in parliamentary events, debates, and votes, even though they lack the organisational backing and resources of larger organisations.

They may form alliances with other groups or coalitions on specific issues but maintain political autonomy and provide a forum for opposing views in the European Parliament (European Parliament 2019).

v) Decision-making Procedure (OLP)

Almost 85 EU policy areas, ranging from anti-discrimination to defence programmes, are decided by the **ordinary legislative procedure (OLP)**, commonly known as "**co-decision**". It was first introduced in 1992 and its scope was extended in 1999. With the **Lisbon Treaty**, it became the main method for adapting EU legislation (European Council 2017).

The OLP uses three separate reading procedures. These procedures start when the European Commission makes a proposal to the European Parliament. During the first reading, the European Parliament examines the Commission's proposal and can either adopt it outright or propose amendments. After Parliament's examination, the proposal is sent to the Council (Council of the European Union), which examines it. At this point, the Council can decide to accept the Parliament's position on the proposal, which means that the act is adopted, or to propose amendments to the Parliament's additions. In the latter case, the measure is sent back to Parliament, which starts the second reading procedure. There is no time limit for the first reading procedure (European Council 2017).

During the second reading, Parliament examines the Council's proposal. It can then approve, reject or propose further amendments to the text. If Parliament approves, the act is adopted. If it rejects, the act does not come into force and the whole process fails. If it makes amendments, the proposal is sent back to the Council for a second reading. In the latter case, the Council examines the Parliament's second reading of the proposal and has the option of either accepting or rejecting any amendments proposed by the Parliament. In the first case, the act is adopted. If the Council rejects the proposal, a **Conciliation Committee** is formed, and

the third reading procedure begins. The time limit for the 2nd reading is three months which can be extended by one month (European Council 2017).

The Conciliation Committee is made up of an equal number of members from the Parliament and the Council. The task of the Conciliation Committee is to find common ground between Parliament and the Council and to agree on a joint text acceptable to both institutions. If the Conciliation Committee is unable to reach a common text, the act is not adopted. If not, the text is sent to Parliament and the Council for further examination. If one of the institutions rejects the joint text, the whole procedure fails and the act cannot be adopted (European Council 2017).
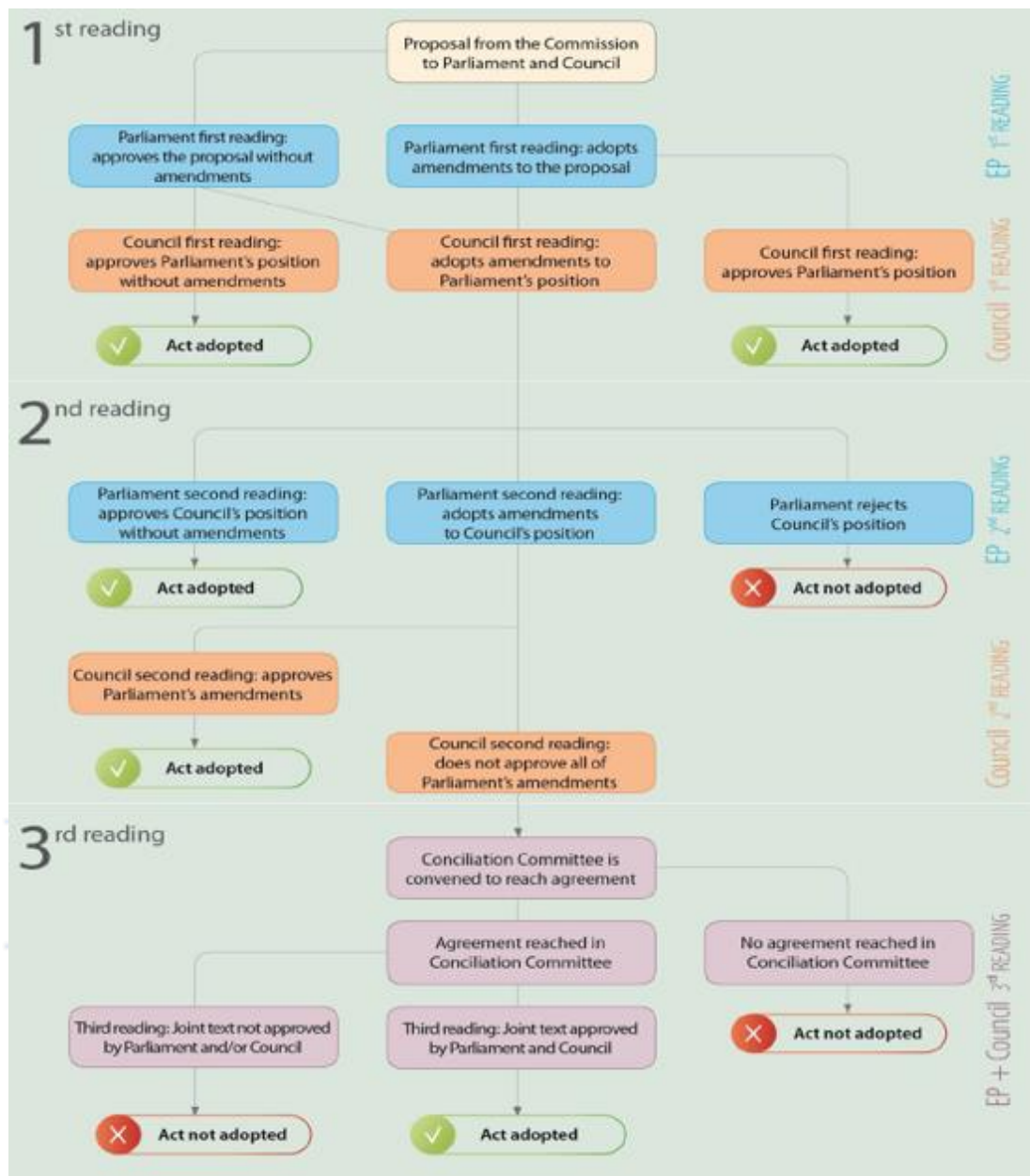
Figure 6: The flow of the OLP (European Parliament n.d.)

### vi)   Accession to the European Union

To become a member of the European Union, every country must meet the **Copenhagen Criteria**, a set of requirements established during the 1993 European Council session in Copenhagen.

The criteria include three main components:

- *Political Criteria*. This criterion requires a candidate country to possess stable institutions that uphold democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and minority protection. The country must have operational democratic mechanisms, including free and fair elections, as well as legislative frameworks that ensure all citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms (European Council 1993).

- *The Economic Criteria*. To be considered as a candidate, a country is required to have a functional market economy and the ability to withstand competitive pressures and market forces within the EU. This criterion encompasses stable macroeconomic conditions, such as low inflation and sustainable public finances, as well as the capacity to comply with the EU's single market laws and regulations. (European Council 1993)

- *The Legal Criteria*. This criterion requires the candidate country to incorporate and apply the complete corpus of EU legislation, known as the acquis Communautaire, into its national legislation. The acquis consists of thousands of legal acts, regulations, directives, and standards that address a wide range of policy issues, including the environment, competition, agriculture, and consumer protection. (European Council 1993)

The Copenhagen Criteria are used as a standard to determine the eligibility of nations wishing to join the EU. They ensure that the nations are politically stable, economically sustainable, and capable of adhering to the EU's legal and regulatory framework. Additionally, the EU assesses the administrative capacity of the applicant country to effectively implement and execute EU rules and regulations (European Council 1993).

Similarly, a country that fullfils these criteria and wishes to become a member of the **European Union** will enter into negotiations in which a wide range of issues are discussed, both for the country itself and for the existing EU institutions. During this
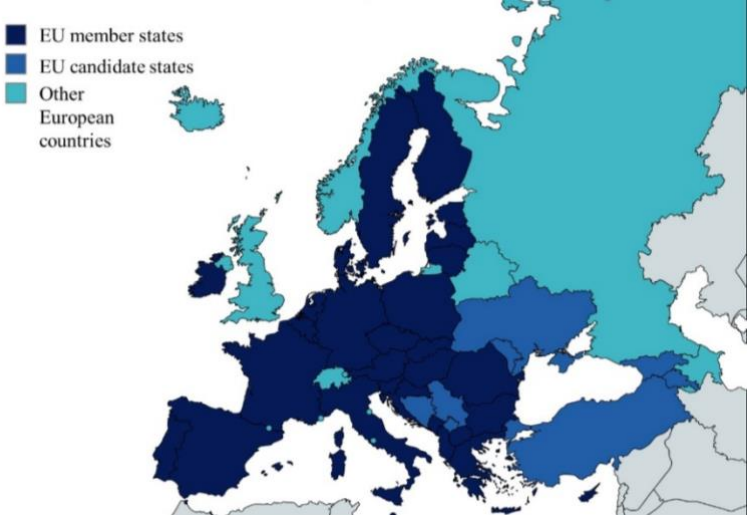
Figure 8: A map of EU and its Candidate States in 2033

process, intergovernmental conferences are held between the member states and the candidate country. These negotiations concern the conditions under which the country will be admitted to the EU and focus on the adoption and implementation of the EU's body of law and are divided into a number of chapters, each covering a specific policy area. In order to conclude negotiations on a chapter, the candidate country must meet the necessary requirements of the Member States and the EU legislation relating to that chapter. Although sometimes more than one chapter can be discussed at the same time, as in the case of Turkey, each chapter may not be fully closed or negotiations may be suspended indefinitely (European Council 1993).

Country	Date of EU Accession
Belgium	(01-01-1958) Founder
France	(01-01-1958) Founder
Germany	(01-01-1958) Founder
Italy	(01-01-1958) Founder
Luxembourg	(01-01-1958) Founder
Netherlands	(01-01-1958) Founder

Denmark	01-01-1973
Ireland	01-01-1973
United Kingdom	01-01-1973
Greece	01-01-1981
Spain	01-01-1986
Portugal	01-01-1986
Austria	01-01-1995
Finland	01-01-1995
Sweden	01-01-1995
Czech Republic	01-05-2004
Estonia	01-05-2004
Cyprus	01-05-2004
Latvia	01-05-2004
Lithuania	01-05-2004
Hungary	01-05-2004
Malta	01-05-2004
Poland	01-05-2004
Slovakia	01-05-2004
Slovenia	01-05-2004
Romania	01-01-2007
Bulgaria	01-01-2007
Croatia	01-07-2013
Montenegro	01-01-2030

| Czechia | 01-01-2030 |
| Albania | 01-01-2030 |

Figure 9: The dates of accession of EU member states

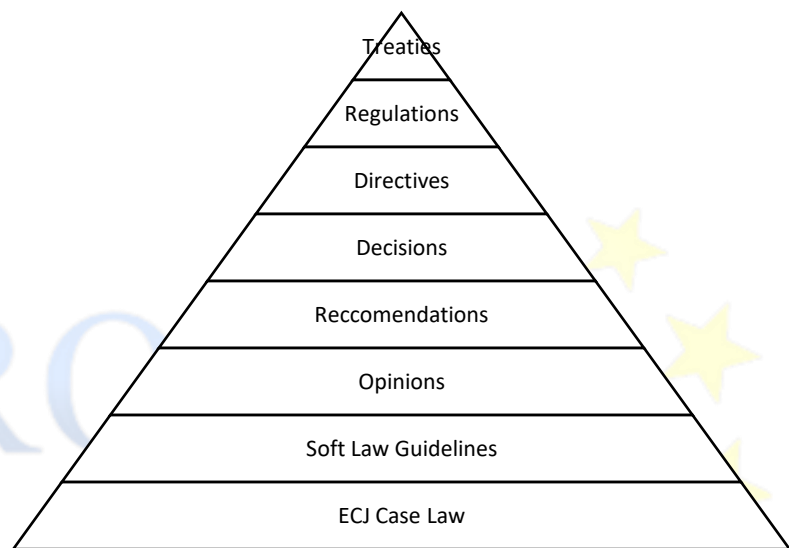## 2) Key Documents for Decision-Making Process in the European Union

The European Union's legal framework is defined by a complex hierarchy of legal instruments designed to govern the interaction of member states and ensure the overall coherence of the Union. The main fulcrum of the legal framework are the **treaties**. Treaties are supplemented by **regulations, directives and decisions/recommendations**, each of which has a unique

Figure 10: The Pyramid of the EU hierarchy of the legal norms. (That is, the EU legal documents' order of importance)

function in defining EU law and policy**.** Understanding the nature and hierarchy of these legal documents is crucial to understanding how the EU works. Therefore, an understanding of the role of treaties, regulations, directives, and decisions/recommendations in the EU legal system would be useful and empowering for the any member of the Council (Kale 2014).

a. Treaties

Basically, a **treaty** is a formal agreement that sets out the basic concepts, objectives and rules that govern the functioning of something. Similarly, the EU treaties contain clauses describing the Union's objectives, values and institutional structure. They express the Union's overall

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objectives, such as promoting peace, stability and prosperity, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The EU Treaties also contain provisions that define the powers of the various EU institutions, including the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Court of Justice. Moreover, the treaties define the mechanisms for decision-making, cooperation and dispute settlement between member states. For example, the treaties' rules on qualified majority voting and unanimity reflect the different decision-making methods used in different policy areas, balancing the interests of Member States while promoting common objectives (Szudoczky 2014, 15-20).

It is therefore useful to distinguish between **primary** and **secondary** EU legislation in EU legal parlance. Member states, as the EU's "constituent body", create primary EU law. This refers to the EU's founding treaties, the **Treaty on European Union (TEU)** and the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)**[7]. Furthermore, the treaties revising and supplementing the founding treaties (Lisbon, Nice, etc.) and the accession treaties of the member states are considered as primary EU legislation. Apart from these, the protocols annexed to the treaties by common agreement of the member states are also included in the primary legislation. In addition to being fundamental law in the EU, their primacy over all other legal instruments requires ratification by the European Council to make sure every member state is on the same page and will adapt the treaty to their own national legislation if needed. This helps maintain consistency and fairness in how the EU operates (Szudoczky 2014, 15-20).

The treaty-making process within the European Union usually begins with the identification of a specific issue or policy area that requires a coordinated response from the member states. This can include economic cooperation and trade agreements, as well as environmental and

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[7] As well as the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, which is not a treaty, but rather a charter that declares the fundamental rights possessed by the citizens of the European Union.

human rights activities. Once the need for a treaty is recognised, the Commission start working on preparing a formal document. Treaties that require significant institutional and legal changes, such as revisions to the EU Treaties themselves, usually go through a formal ratification process by each member state in accordance with its constitutional requirements. (Hartley 2014, 187-91).

b. Regulations

Regulations are the second most important element of the European Union's legislative process, as they are **legally binding and directly applicable** in all member states. They are powerful tools that allow the EU to ensure that rules are applied and enforced uniformly in all member states. These regulations, like other legal acts, are adopted through the OLP procedure and are binding on all Member states. This means that member states must comply with the regulation and apply its provisions in their national legal systems. Unlike **directives**, which require member states to adjust its provisions through national legislation, regulations are directly applicable and do not require transposition into national law (Hartley 2014, 215-218).

c. Directives

Directives are the third most important component of the legislative process in the European Union and serve as the mechanism by which the EU sets objectives for Member States to achieve within a given timeframe. Unlike regulations, directives **must be transposed into national law by each Member State** before they can take effect. This transposition process allows Member States to adapt the requirements of the directive to their own legal systems and administrative structures. (Kale 2014).

OLP is also used operated to adopt directives. Once a directive has been formally adopted and published, member states are legally obliged to incorporate its content into national law within a specified period, usually between one and three years. During the transposition process, member states may use their discretion on how they would transpose the directives to their legal systems, administrative procedures, and policy objectives, as long as the core objectives and principles of the directive are respected (Kale 2014).

d. Decisions and Recommendations

Decisions and **Recommendations** are key legal mechanisms used by the EU institutions to address specific concerns or provide guidance in particular areas. While **decisions** are legally binding instruments, recommendations are not so they have different legal effects and applications (Hartley 2014, 239).

Decisions adopted through the EU legislative process are legally binding acts that apply directly to their intended recipients i.e., their addressees. They are typically used in areas where the EU has exclusive competence or where member states have delegated certain powers to the EU. Decisions can be addressed to Member States, EU bodies or even individuals and groups. Once adopted, decisions are binding on their addressees and do not require implementation procedures (Hartley 2014, 239).

Recommendations, on the other hand, are non-binding rules that provide Member States or other organisations with guidance or ideas on how to proceed. Unlike decisions, recommendations do not impose legal obligations but act as persuasive instruments to encourage voluntary harmonisation or coordination between Member States. Recommendations are often used in areas where the EU does not have exclusive competence or where agreement among Member States is difficult (Kale 2014).

3) Introduction to the European Council

a. History of the European Council

The European Council[8] was established in 1974 during a time of significant geopolitical change and a strong desire for European unity. Its first meeting was held in Paris in December 1974 and was attended by the leaders of the nine member states of the European Communities. In its early years, the European Council focused primarily on economic issues, specifically improving the internal market and addressing the challenges of stagflation and energy crises. During the 1980s and 1990s, the European Council evolved from a loosely organized assembly of national leaders to a more structured and prominent entity within the EU framework. The signing of the Single European Act in 1986 was an important milestone as it established regular European Council meetings and created a legal foundation for closer collaboration in areas such as the internal market, environmental protection, and social policy (Dinan 1999, 237-38).

The Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009, representing a significant step in the development of the European Council and the EU's institutional structure. The position of a permanent **President of the European Council** was established. The President is responsible for chairing meetings and representing the EU externally (European Union 2007).

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[8] The **European Council**, the **Council of the European Union**, and the **Council of Europe** are three different institutions on their own and should not be confused.

Figure 11: European Council Meeting held on 13-14 December 2019 (EEAS n.d.)

b. Functions of the European Council

i. Qualified Majority Voting

Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) is a decision-making method used by several international organisations and treaties, most notably the European Union. It is intended to facilitate decision-making by allowing member states to reach agreements without requiring unanimity, while still ensuring that important decisions have broad support among member states (European Union 2016). However, as our agenda focuses on the legislative process and treaties, to understand the European Council's functions in these areas, we must first examine QMV in the European Union, specifically the EU Council (Council of Ministers), to understand how regulations are prepared and adopted.

First of all, when the Council votes on a proposal from the European Commission or the **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security**, the proposal is adopted if a qualified majority is obtained. A qualified majority is reached if two conditions simultaneously met (also known as the **double majority rule**):

- **55% of member states vote in favour** - in practice this means 15 out of 27 members must vote in favour.

- the proposal is given in favour votes by member states **representing at least 65% of the total EU population.**

However, some special rules apply on that too. The **blocking minority** (which is the minority opposing the decision) must consist of at least four members of the Council. For example, if all but three Member States vote in favour, the qualified majority is considered to have been reached, even if the 24 member states voting in favour represent less than 65% of the total population. In other words, if fewer than four Council members vote against, the percentage of the population represented by the member states voting in favour is irrelevant for the definition of the qualified majority (European Union 2016).

ii. Unanimity Voting

Although the **QVM** is commonly used in the Council of the European Union, unanimity voting is another voting practices used in the EU institutions, in particular in the European Council. The unanimity rule is a decision-making principle that requires all members of a group or organisation to agree on a proposal or conclusion before it is approved or implemented. This means that each member has a **veto**, which allows them to prevent any decision they disagree with (European Union n.d.) As the European Council is responsible for and advises on critical issues such as amendments to international/intergovernmental treaties and amendments to founding documents, it normally votes by unanimity (European Union n.d.). Still, it should be noted that the European Council uses qualified majority voting on less critical issues.

iii. Summits

European Council Summits, often referred to as **EU Summits**, are meetings of the **heads of state/government** of the member states of the European Union that convene at least once every six months to discuss and decide on urgent issues affecting the EU. These summits often serve as a forum for leaders to engage in strategic discussions, exchange ideas and negotiate solutions to complex policy challenges. The agenda usually covers a wide range of topics, such as economic governance, international relations, security, migration, climate change, treaty review and amendment, or the proposal of a new treaty. They also serve as an important platform for member states to work in solidarity, especially on common challenges. The outcomes of the European Council meetings are set out in official documents such as conclusions, agreements, declarations, and action plans, which serve as blueprints for future action and co-operation between EU member states. (Dinan 1999, 250)

iv. Presidency

The Presidency of the European Council is the official EU institution dealing with the representation of the European Council on the world stage and the management of Council meetings. From its establishment in 1975 until 2009, the Presidency is an informal position held by the **President** of the member state holding the six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union at any given time. However, the Lisbon Treaty stipulated that the European Council would appoint a full-time president for a period of two and a half years, and Herman Van Rompuy, the former Belgian prime minister, was appointed for the first time in 2009. (European Union, 2007)

The role of the President is largely a political one. It prepares the work of the European Council, chairs its meetings, tries to achieve consensus among its members and reports to the European Parliament after each meeting. It also ensures the external representation of the EU in matters concerning the common foreign and security policy. As Andriy Veselovsky, former

Ukrainian Ambassador to the EU said: The **President of the European Commission** speaks as the EU's head of "**government**" while the new president of the European Council is a "**strategist**" (European Council n.d.).

President	Political Party	Years of Service
Herman Van Rompuy	European People's Party	1 December 2009 – 30 November 2014
Donald Tusk	European People's Party	1 December 2014 – 30 November 2019
Charles Michel	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	1 December 2019 – 30 November 2024
Mario Draghi	Independent	1 December 2024 – 30 November 2029
Angela Merkel	European People's Party	1 December 2029 – Current

Figure 12: A List of the Presidents of the European Council

4) Events That Took Place Between 2025 and 2032

Figure 13: Euro designs from different member states

a. Economic developments in Europe and in the world

Before the year of 2025, **Eurozone** had 20 member states with Croatia being the last country to join the currency union. 6 countries were using Euro as well; microstates of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City had a formal agreement with the EU over the usage of Euro, while Montenegro and Kosovo were unilaterally and informally using it. **Montenegro** later managed to become an official member state of Eurozone when it joined the EU in 2030 and later the Eurozone two years later with an official agreement. **Kosovo** signed a similar agreement as with the microstates to use Euro a month later.

Bulgaria, being one of the two countries (other one is Denmark) that participates in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, also joined Eurozone in 2026. Even though it did not go perfect at start when adopting Euro, Bulgaria managed to integrate without a major crisis.

However, things did not go smoothly in the case of **Poland**. Under a more pro-EU government, Poland fulfilled the four main criteria to join the Eurozone and became an official member state in the currency union by the year 2028. However, markets and sectors in Polish economy did not respond positively and because it turned into an economic recession that lasted for months, a new government which was less keen on adopting Euro came to power. Nevertheless, since there is no exit mechanism for Euro, Poland cannot leave and return to its previous currency, Zloty. Like the European debt crisis from early 2010s, the European Central Bank managed to find a solution to keep Poland in the currency union while improving Polish economy a little bit better.

Sweden's case is different than the other three. Since Sweden did not have an opt-out over this matter (which is not being obliged to join) and fulfilled all the necessary criterias to join, the European politicians pushed Swedish government to organize at least a referendum over this matter. 27 years after rejecting it in another referendum, Swedish people narrowly accepted to join Euro in 2030 and Sweden joined the Eurozone 2 years later.

Still, the reluctance or the inefficiency of other EU member states to join the Euro continues. **Denmark** is still the only country with an opt-out, meaning that other countries are required to join. Despite public support for joining the Euro is high in **Romania, Albania, and North Macedonia**, none of these countries meet the criteria to join. Meanwhile, both **Czechia** and **Hungary** oppose to join due to what happened in Poland. Public support in these two countries over Euro is not high either, therefore a new enlargement for Eurozone is not expected, for now.

Outside of the EU, China continues to grow economically and even though the GDP (gross domestic product) gap between USA and China is slowly decreasing, China is projected to finish first by the year 2035. While American economy is somehow stable, economy of Russia started to worsen in late 2020s. However, after the emergence of new president (which is explained more under the next section), Russian economy slowly improved in early 2030s. Gulf countries (especially Saudi Arabia) also have better economic relations with the EU, although some politicians warn that having too close relations may cause the EU not seeing possible political problems in the region, such as human rights concerns.

b. Political developments in European countries

The war between **Ukraine** and **Russia** started in 2022 and continued for seven years. However, there was no major change in the map and neither side was winning. Despite annexing Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions as well as keeping Crimea; Russia could not move forward. And even though it escaped from the possible full invasion, Ukraine could not manage to recapture the invaded areas. Political support for Ukraine dropped in European countries and the United States as well after the election of more sceptic leaders. Therefore, under a new Republican president, the United States announced that a ceasefire between both sides should happen to end the stand-off. A new deal was signed

where the war got evolved into a "cold conflict", meaning that there will be a ceasefire, however the dispute in annexed parts would remain. Even though an agreement was reached over prisoner exchange and an UN peacekeeping force was stationed in the border between Ukraine and the annexed regions, both sides "agreed to disagree" over how the dispute regarding the Russian annexation should be resolved.

Russia still opposes Ukrainian accession to NATO, but is less vocal over the accession to the EU. Ukraine started development programs to recover from the war with the assistance from European countries and the United States, however it has a very long road to join the EU. Volodymyr Zelenskyy's presidential term ended after the ceasefire and a new technocrat government was formed to regulate the development programs until new presidential and parliamentary elections happen.

Meanwhile after serving for another six-year term, Russian President Vladimir Putin introduced his successor, who was also his Prime Minister between 2025 and 2030, in 2030. Coming to the power as a calm and non-partisan figure, this new president announced his intention to create better political and economic relations with European countries and to lift the ongoing economic embargo over Russia. He was also rumoured to be one of the brains behind the ceasefire agreement with Ukraine. However, he supports the ongoing annexation of five regions that are still internationally recognized as part of Ukraine, as well as the independence of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (separatist parts of Moldova and Georgia).

After a two-year crisis in North Kosovo happened between **Serbia** and **Kosovo**, a new deal was about the furthering of the mutual recognition of official documents was signed in 2025. Serbia did not object to Kosovo's acceptance as a candidate country to the EU in exchange for Kosovo not pursuing further international recognition for the next three years. Serbian dinar

was also re-recognized as a currency in Serb municipalities in Kosovo, and a Community for Serb Municipalities was formed. Relations were going well for both sides without any official recognition. However, it all changed in 2028.

While making an election speech, a prominent Kosovo Serb politician was assassinated by an extremist Albanian nationalist. This resulted with counter action from extremist Serbian nationalists who attacked the Albanian minority living in Serbia. Both countries cut their (unofficial) ties and withdrew their signatures from previous agreements; Serbia announced that any recognition to Kosovo from any international organization will result with Serbia's exit from that organization. Serb officials in Kosovo withdrew from state posts, while Kosovo announced that it will no longer recognize any document, currency, plate or signature from Serbia. Both countries imposed visas on each other, with Serbia exempting those from Kosovo with Serbian passports.

There were calls from American and European politicians for the leaders of both countries to meet; both sides refused it. European Union does not want to lose either side, so their aim is having both countries to join at the same time to prevent one side vetoing the other side's accession. Yet, Kosovo could not start accession talks due to Serbia's threat that it will withdraw its application if that happens. Both countries lobby heavily in the EU to gain support, however the EU does not want to support one side only. The real fear is whether the ongoing tensions could evolve into a war. There have been few incidents in last 5 years that ended with deaths; however, even the smallest development (especially in North Kosovo where mostly Serb minority lives) can ignite action capable of harming both sides. Therefore, while leaders from both sides are usually invited into European Council meetings, European leaders are cautious and expect them to join in new peace talks. Serbian politicians fully reject a possible recognition for Kosovo; therefore, the main aim of the European Union is preventing a possible conflict between both sides and returning to pre-2028 status.

When we look at European countries not on the enlargement agenda, United Kingdom deserves attention. After the government change in 2024 from Conservative Party to Labour Party, a possible return of the **United Kingdom** to the EU was expected. However, the new British government rejected this claim and said they are working for closer relations between two sides instead. While the United Kingdom applied to join the European Economic Area [between EU states and European Free Trade Area (EFTA) states], its reluctance to join Schengen Area prevents further development in its application.

Meanwhile, **Switzerland** joined the European Economic Area in 2030, being the final EFTA country to join. Switzerland also joined the EU's **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)[9]** policy after it was approved by a national referendum. However, neither Switzerland nor any other EFTA country (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) aim to join the EU even though there is a popular demand in both Norway and Iceland to join.

c. Political developments in the world

The Trans-Atlantic relations between the **United States** and Europe have been changing from decade to decade. From European politicians' disapproval over George W. Bush's actions in Iraq and the discussions over the possible end of NATO under Donald Trump era to warmer relations between both sides under both Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations, it is not possible to say that they have great relationship. However, they still have close relationship no matter who rules in either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

In the 2028 U.S. presidential election, a new Republican candidate, who is more sceptical over NATO's future and argued that America cannot protect Europe militarily, politically and economically, won the elections. The President successfully got re-elected in 2032. Therefore,

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[9] A part of the EU's Common Defense and Security Policy which was established in 2017 to increase the cooperation in defense between the member states. All member states except Malta are part of it.

relations with the EU and the USA were once again strained. Ironically, the American President's remarks over NATO were actually supported by federalist European politicians who argue that the EU should create its own army and should stop being militarily dependent over Americans.

Although Western leaders are continuing to criticize the ongoing dispute with Taiwan as well as the current conditions in Hong Kong, **China** continues to have better economic and political relations with the EU compared to the USA. European politicians, while recognizing the competition between both sides on economic sector and the current disputes China has, avoid breaking any diplomatic or economic relations with China.

d. New member states and candidate countries in the EU

To understand better over the countries in the enlargement agenda, we need to discuss these countries separately based on their status or relationship with the EU.

i. Albania, North Macedonia & Montenegro

These three countries joined the EU on the 1st of January, 2030, increasing the number of member states from 27 to 30. Despite this was seen as a success by many European politicians, the EU's aim of having all Western Balkan states by the year of 2030 was not achieved due to ongoing tensions between Serbia and Kosovo as well as the ongoing process of Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession.

Montenegro was the first country to close all of negotiating chapters and to be approved by all other member states. However, this process went rough for both Albania and North Macedonia. Even though both countries closed their negotiating chapters a bit later than Montenegro, having approval from all other member states took time. Due to having insufficient scores in corruption surveys published by independent European organizations,

Albania, despite closing the chapter regarding the issue, did not get the approval from Dutch and German governments.

North Macedonia on the other hand had problems with its eastern neighbour, Bulgaria. Just like vetoing Macedonia's path to the accession talks in 2022, Bulgarian government claimed that Macedonian culture is the subculture of Bulgarian culture and North Macedonia has irredentist claims over Bulgaria. However, a new agreement signed by both sides in 2029 said that North Macedonia has no claims while emphasized that both cultures have their similarities and differences. Bulgaria lifted its veto and with Albania taking better steps to fight corruption, both countries and Montenegro became new countries.

ii. Serbia & Kosovo

As explained well under the "political developments in European countries" section, both countries are constantly involved in border disputes. However, this part will focus more on both countries' possible accession to the EU.

Serbia failed to catch Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia in their 2030 accession to the EU due to recent dispute with Kosovo. Even though half of the chapters are closed, Serbian politicians' disagreement with the EU over the relations with Russia as well as some concerns over domestic matters (such as economy and rule of law) stop a faster accession.

Meanwhile Kosovo applied to join in 2022, but Serbia's threat that it will withdraw its application if Kosovo's candidacy is accepted has prevented Kosovo from achieving further progress in EU accession. Therefore, the EU created special relations such as permitting the usage of Euro in a unilateral monetary agreement (similar with microstates of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City) and allowing Kosovo into Erasmus program.

However, pro-EU Kosovar politicians see those development as being insufficient and want more.

Both countries want to join first to have a European influence on their side over the dispute. Yet, the EU's aim is the opposite of that: pushing them to join at the same time. Therefore, the first main goal of the EU is an agreement between Serbia and Kosovo to prevent any future conflict while speeding up the accession process of both countries.

iii. Bosnia and Herzegovina

With the recommendation of the Commission and the approval of the European leaders in 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina finally started accession talks. however only half of the accession chapters have been opened and none of the opened chapters have been closed. Therefore, the country is not expected to join in the near future.

The key problem Bosnia and Herzegovina faces is the ongoing division between three main communities: Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats. Bosnian Croats demand autonomy and more rights; EU member state Croatia supports it and says that it will veto Bosnian application if the demands are not met. Meanwhile, the Serb entity, known as **Republika Srpska** may leave the country due to inefficiency of national politics. Despite Serbia's avoidance of giving direct support, some key Serbian politicians nevertheless supports the possible secession. Can Bosnia and Herzegovina manage to join the EU without breaking up? Too early to call.

iv. Ukraine

Ukraine was granted candidate status by the EU just three months after the war with Russia started, and started the accession talks a year later.

In 2029, a ceasefire deal was signed between Ukraine and Russia, which ended the ongoing war. However, the dispute on the annexed regions continues. Ukraine made an argument that the ongoing situation in eastern parts of Ukraine that are annexed by Russia should not be an obstacle to join the EU. Its claim is that if Republic of Cyprus can join the EU in 2004 while still having a territorial dispute, Ukraine should not be treated differently. Even though Russia does not oppose Ukraine's possible EU membership now, as it opposes possible NATO membership, a possible Ukrainian accession can put the EU and Russia over a border dispute.

After Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that he will not run for re-election in 2029, a new technocrat government was formed to start development and reconstruction programs due to Ukraine being heavily damaged due to war. A new president and government were elected, and a pro-EU agenda was established. Three main priorities were set for the year 2040: Recapturing occupied areas, reconstructing Ukraine, and joining the EU.

Ukraine's EU accession divide EU member states. France, Germany and Italy support its accession; however, they believe that Ukraine is not ready enough to join. Ukraine's large population, slow recovery from the war and ongoing territorial dispute are the main obstacles of its accession. Visegrad Group is also divided; Poland and Czechia support it and Hungary and Slovakia oppose. Hungary threatens Ukraine's accession if greater rights to Hungarian minority living in Ukraine are not granted. Poland, meanwhile, is the strongest supporter of Ukraine alongside with Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. European politicians promise that Ukraine will eventually join the EU, but when will it happen is unknown for everyone, even though Ukraine targets the year 2040.

v. Moldova and Georgia

Although it has been almost a decade since both Moldova and Georgia became candidate countries, they are still negotiating candidate countries waiting to fulfil the criteria to join.

Both countries have domestic problems regarding political institutions and corruption. However, the biggest problem concerning both countries are the ongoing territorial disputes with separatist entities such as Transnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia.

Similar to Ukraine, both countries hope that they can join the EU before solving their territorial issues. However, the problems do not end there. Corruption and lack of improvement also have a huge part in the stagnation of these countries' negotiation processes. Although mainstream Georgian parties are pro-EU, Moldovan politics is divided between pro-EU and anti-EU parties. Right now, incumbent Moldovan President supports EU accession; however, no improvement can turn the country into the opposite direction.

vi. Türkiye

After a very stagnant period between Türkiye and the EU, accession talks were restarted in 2030 and even some frozen chapters were reopened. However, despite the positive atmosphere, Türkiye is not expected to join in the near future.

Nordic, Mediterranean and Eastern European countries support Türkiye's accession. However, Germany (under a new right-wing government) opposes such move, claiming that it will prompt even more Turkish immigration to Germany. Italy and Austria also oppose Türkiye's accession even though they are in favour of closer relations between the EU and Türkiye. Meanwhile, France does not object it, but admits that Türkiye has a long road to join. Cyprus is the main opponent of Turkish accession, saying that it should not be accepted until Cyprus dispute is resolved. Greece, however, believes that Türkiye being on the road for the EU membership can be better to solve recent disputes such as Cyprus and Aegean disputes. Whether Türkiye may join the EU or not depends not only on Turkish politicians, but also on European ones.

vii. Armenia

After losing the final Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh region in 2023, relations became strained between Armenia and Russia due to Russia not helping Armenia in the latest conflicts. 5 years after building stronger relations with France, Armenia was recommended to apply to the EU and followed a path similar to Georgia's. To counter Azerbaijani influence and possible Turkish membership in the EU, Armenia wants to join the EU so that it does not have to rely on a reluctant Russia for help. Despite being granted candidate status in 2030, Armenia still has a long way to join the EU.

e. Timeline of events

2024 January-Bulgaria and Romania partially joined the Schengen Area (full access by sea and air travel, but not by land travel).

2024 March-EU leaders approved starting accession talks with Bosnia & Herzegovina.

2024 June-European Parliament elections happened. New Presidents of the European institutions were decided.

2024 October-A new government is elected in the United Kingdom, which has been keener on improving relations with the EU.

2026 January-Bulgaria joined the Eurozone.

2026 August-After two consecutive elections, a grand coalition between centre-right and centre-left parties in Germany was formed.

2027 May-French far-right politician Marine Le Pen managed to win the presidential election.

2028 January-Bulgaria and Romania joined the Schengen Area by land travel after Austria removes its veto.

2028 March-A prominent Kosovar Serb politician got assassinated, starting a huge crisis between Kosovo and Serbia.

2028 July-Poland joined the Eurozone but later gets shaken by new economic crisis.

2028 November-In the United States, a Republican candidate who is sceptic over NATO and critical of the EU, won the presidential election.

2029 February-A ceasefire agreement between Russia and Ukraine was signed, transforming the 7-year-old war into an ongoing dispute.

2029 June-European Parliament elections happened. EPP and S&D groups failed to cooperate, thereby affecting the dynamics of inter-party cooperation in EU member states as well.

2029 July-Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's term ends, a new president and cabinet were elected three months later.

2029 December-Compromise between EPP and S&D. EPP got Council presidency for Angela Merkel; S&D got Commission presidency for Frans Timmermans.

2030 January-Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia joined the EU. Armenia became a candidate country. Accession talks with Türkiye were restarted.

2030 April-Viktor Orban returned to power in Hungary.

2030 July-Switzerland joined both the European Economic Area and PESCO

2030 September-A new government between centre-right CDU/CSU and far-right AfD was formed in Germany, ending years of political isolation for AfD.

2030 October-Conservative PiS returned to power in Poland.

2031 January-Montenegro officially joined the Eurozone

2031 February-EU approved Kosovo's usage of Euro without having a say over Euro policies.

2031 April-A new left-wing government was formed in Spain

2031 June-Left-wing Syriza came to power in Greece

2032 April-A government between conservative FdI and centre-right Forza Italia was formed in Italy**.**

2032 May-French President Le Pen lost the presidential election against Socialist candidate Olivier Faure

2032 July-Portugal assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

2032 October-Sweden joined the Eurozone.

2032 November-US President was re-elected.

2033 January-Germany is the current President of the European Council, which will be handed over France six months later.

5) Member States of the European Union

Despite the rise of Euroscepticism continuing in member states, no state has left the EU as of 2033. The EU finally gained three new member states: Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Meanwhile talks with other candidate countries continue; especially Türkiye, Serbia and Ukraine are eager to join. While this situation can show us that the EU is far from its end, its problems continue to grow, let alone exist. But to understand these problems better, we first have to understand what the member states and the EU itself are facing for the next nine years.

Name	Accession	Area (km²)	Currency	Languages	Ruling Party	Support
Albania	1 January 2030	28,748	Lek	Albanian	PS (centre-left)	Independents (liberal)
Austria	1 January 1995	83,855	Euro	German	ÖVP (centre-right)	FPÖ (right-wing)
Belgium	Founder	30,528	Euro	Dutch French German	Open Vld/MR (liberal)	PS/Vooruit (centre-left)
Bulgaria	1 January 2007	110,994	Euro	Bulgarian	GERB (centre-right)	DPS (liberal)

Name	Accession	Area (km²)	Currency	Languages	Ruling Party	Support
Croatia	1 July 2013	56,594	Kuna	Croatian	HDZ (centre-right)	HNS (liberal)
Cyprus	1 May 2004	9,251	Euro	Greek Turkish	AKEL (left-wing)	None
Czech Republic	1 May 2004	78,866	Koruna	Czech	ODS (conservative)	None
Denmark	1 January 1973	43,075	Krone	Danish	SF (green)	A (centre-left)
Estonia	1 May 2004	45,227	Euro	Estonian	RE (liberal)	Isamaa (centre-right)
Finland	1 January 1995	338,424	Euro	Finnish Swedish	SDP (centre-left)	VIHR (green)
France	Founder	632,833	Euro	French	PS (centre-left)	LFI (left-wing)
Germany	Founder	357,386	Euro	German	CDU/CSU (centre-right)	AfD (right-wing)
Greece	1 January	131,990	Euro	Greek	SYRIZA	None

Name	Accession	Area (km²)	Currency	Languages	Ruling Party	Support
	1981				**(left-wing)**	
Hungary	1 May 2004	93,030	Forint	Hungarian	Fidesz **(conservative)**	None
Ireland	1 January 1973	70,273	Euro	English Irish	Sinn Fein **(left-wing)**	Labour **(centre-left)**
Italy	Founder	301,338	Euro	Italian	FdI **(conservative)**	FI **(centre-right)**
Latvia	1 May 2004	64,589	Euro	Latvian	LA **(liberal)**	JV **(centre-right)**
Lithuania	1 May 2004	65,200	Euro	Lithuanian	LP/LRLS **(liberal)**	TS-LKD **(centre-right)**
Luxembourg	Founder	2,586.4	Euro	French German Luxembourgish	DP **(liberal)**	LSAP **(centre-left)**
Malta	1 May 2004	316	Euro	Maltese English	Labour **(centre-left)**	None

Name	Accession	Area (km²)	Currency	Languages	Ruling Party	Support
Montenegro	1 January 2030	13,812	Euro	Montenegrin	DPS (centre-left)	PES! (liberal)
Netherlands	Founder	41,543	Euro	Dutch Frisian	VVD-D66 (liberal)	PvdA (centre-left)
North Macedonia	1 January 2030	25,713	Macedonian Denar	Macedonian Albanian	SDSM-DUI (centre-left)	LDP (liberal)
Poland	1 May 2004	312,685	Euro	Polish	PiS (conservative)	None
Portugal	1 January 1986	92,212	Euro	Portuguese	PS (centre-left)	BE (left-wing)
Romania	1 January 2007	238,391	Leu	Romanian	PNL (centre-right)	USR (liberal)
Slovakia	1 May 2004	49,035	Euro	Slovak	SMER (unaffiliated)	SNS (conservative)
Slovenia	1 May 2004	20,273	Euro	Slovene	SDS (centre-right)	GS (liberal)

Name	Accession	Area (km²)	Currency	Languages	Ruling Party	Support
🇪🇸 Spain	1 January 1986	504,030	Euro	Spanish Galician Catalan Occitan Basque	PSOE (centre-left)	Sumar (left-wing)
🇸🇪 Sweden	1 January 1995	449,964	Euro	Swedish	S (centre-left)	MP (green)

Figure 14: Information Sheet on EU member states

a. Albania

Even though Albania finally managed to join the EU in 2030, it faces problems in the same areas Bulgaria and Romania did in the 2020s, such as joining the Schengen Area and Eurozone. After Edi Rama's premiership, a new politician emerged as the Prime Minister; but because no majority was found, a group of liberal independents gave outside support to the Prime Minister who is from the Socialist Party (centre-left).

Another problem Albania faces is the ongoing crisis between Serbia and Kosovo which affects Kosovo's EU application and the rights of Kosovar Serbs. Despite bitter relations with Kosovo, Albania feels obliged to support Kosovo against possible Serbian actions towards Kosovo. In European institutions, Albania cooperates closely with Montenegro and North

Macedonia, who joined the EU at the same time, as well as Italy for cultural and economic reasons, despite political differences.

b. Austria

In the 2024 general elections, right-wing FPÖ won the right for premiership with parliamentary support from centre-right ÖVP. However, the actions of the Austrian government(especially in cases of immigration) clashed with other European governments. Some politicians even remarked that a new Austria-Hungary Union may be on the horizon, referring to Hungary under Orban rule doing similar actions.

Despite FPÖ finishing first once again in 2029, the Austrian president asked ÖVP to form a government to prevent further problems. That is why an ÖVP-FPÖ government with ÖVP having Chancellory of Austria was founded. While relations with the EU are better now, Austria cannot participate in policies supporting European integration and still opposing further immigration due to ÖVP not wanting to lose FPÖ support. Austria cooperates with Germany and Italy for similar political reasons. However, we cannot say that Austria is on the verge of leaving the EU, that is ÖVP's red line. So a neutrality between further European integration and Euroscepticism can describe the current nature of Austria's actions in the EU as of 2033.

c. Belgium

As the capital of the European Union, Belgium was on the verge of breaking up. 3 years after the general elections, a government was not formed and, in this desperation, a group of Flemish politicians from right-wing Vlaams Belang formally declared Flemish independence from Belgium. King Phillippe urged mainstream parties to form another coalition of seven parties to continue at least the 2029 general elections.

Possible outcomes of the breakup of Belgium scared many voters to vote for centre-left and liberal parties while Vlaams Belang and left-wing PvdA-PTB finished in the top two, with the

former finishing first in Flanders and the latter finishing first in Wallonia. However, two Flemish parties (Vooruit & Open VLD) and two Francophone parties (PS and MR); with outside support from green parties and a small Francophone regionalist party, managed to find a parliamentary majority.

However, it has been four years and the political discussions surrounding the partition of Belgium are far from over. Furthermore, governing parties are already rivals and they are scared of losing votes to these extreme parties or some closer to the centre; such as green or Christian democratic parties, or New-Flemish Alliance, a much moderate voice of Flemish separation.

At the same time, Belgium advocates for further European integration (and even federalization of the EU) with support from its Benelux neighbours. But the real question whether they can achieve it without losing their own country. Brussels is important also for European politicians, what Belgium will say or act is important for other member states.

d. Bulgaria

Bulgaria managed to join the Eurozone in 2026 and after a shaky period of Euro adoption, a new government was founded after the 2031 election between centre-right GERB and the liberal, Turkish minority party DPS.

While they joined the Schengen Area partially in 2024, they still expect to gain full rights and criticize those countries who claim Bulgaria is insufficient to join further joint EU enterprises. Bulgaria tries to maintain good relations with its neighbours like Greece and Romania (as well as candidate Türkiye), although relations with North Macedonia were strained during the Bulgarian veto in 2022 due to Bulgaria's claim of Macedonian culture being a subgroup of Bulgarian culture. They support European integration but oppose any move that would decrease their power in the European Council (such as lifting national vetoes).

e. Croatia

As of 2033, Croatia is ruled by centre-right HDZ and liberal HNS. Joining the EU 20 years ago and joining both Eurozone and Schengen Area 10 years ago, Croatia wants to make 2033 an important year for itself. They are eager to assume the Presidency of the European Council next year; considering the last time they had the Presidency, coincided with the Coronavirus pandemic in the first half of 2020.

At the same time, being the second ex-Yugoslavian country to join the EU; Croatia wants to increase European integration and enlargement in the Western Balkans while keeping its influence over the Croatian minority in Bosnia & Herzegovina and keeping good relations with Serbia. Slovenia is the closest partner of Croatia in the EU, as well as Italy, Germany and Montenegro.

f. Cyprus

As of 2033, Cyprus continues to be divided between the Greek-controlled Republic of Cyprus in the south, and the Turkish-controlled Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the north. Due to stalled progress in peace talks between Christodoulides and Tatar, the 2028 presidential election in the south was won by a left-wing AKEL candidate who is more open to talks with the Turkish side. Meanwhile Northern Cyprus, still unrecognized by the EU, had presidential elections in 2030 which were won by a pro-reunification candidate. Despite this positive atmosphere, two candidates failed to find a middle ground for a bizonal, bicommunal and federal Cyprus.

There will be a presidential election in 2033 after the European Council meeting, and the current Cypriot President is behind in opinion polls. So the President is looking for any move that can be beneficial for the island as well as better publicity for the next elections, whether that is EU economic assistance, possible accession to Schengen Area or any improvement in Cyprus peace talks.

g. Czechia

Surprisingly conservative ODS managed to gain a parliamentary majority alone in 2033, but it was a joint list with centre-right parties. Plus, ODS is more moderate compared to Fidesz of Hungary and PiS of Poland; therefore, even though they are critical of the EU, they do not demand the Czech withdrawal from the EU.

The biggest question waiting for Czechia is whether the country will join the Euro or not. Despite they fulfill the criteria to join as well as its closest neighbour Slovakia adopted the Euro before, politicians are reluctant over this case. Therefore, when the enlargement of the Eurozone is debated, Czechia needs to be convinced and supported to join the Eurozone, although they are required to join in the future. Aside from the Visegrad group (a grouping of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Czechia works well with Germany, Italy and Baltic countries too.

h. Denmark

A huge surprise happened in the 2030 Danish elections when Social Democrats dropped to third place against Liberal Alliance and Socialist People's Party (SF). However, a left bloc gained the majority in the parliament, which is why Social Democrats and SF formed a cabinet with an SF Prime Minister.

Despite its official name, the Socialist People's Party is a green party that also goes with the Green Left's name. The party is pro-European and even advocated Denmark abolishing its opt-out from EU defense in 2022 after Russia attacked Ukraine. But the key issue Denmark brings to this European Council under Green Left rule is energy and environmental issues. Since green parties are also included in Swedish and Finnish governments, Denmark is interested in discussing issues under Scandinavian unity.

Meanwhile, Denmark continues to hold its opt-outs on Euro and justice policies, so other countries are expecting Denmark to answer whether Denmark wishes to hold at least

referendums over these matters (which were rejected by the public in 2000 and 2015 respectively) or not.

i. Estonia

After centre-right Isamaa ruled for the next term, the liberal Reform Party managed to retake rule by forming a new cabinet with Isamaa as well. Estonia's policies did not change though, as the country continues to participate in all EU policies. Cooperating with its Baltic neighbours (Latvia and Lithuania), Estonia supports the undertaking of EU actions to stop possible Russian aggression towards them as well as supporting accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the Union.

j. Finland

Similar to pre-2023, a left-wing government in Finland was founded in 2031 where centre-left SDP took premiership and green VIHR took foreign ministry. Together with Sweden and Denmark, Finland continues to be one of the EU's progressive voices and raises its concerns over certain areas such as human rights, environmental issues and the future of the EU.

In the environmental sector, the Finnish government (which has green ministers in its government) supports Denmark's efforts on energy and climate policies and works to achieve the EU's 2050 climate target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Politically, ever since it acceded to NATO, Finland has worked closely for the European unity which is supporting the inclusion of all candidate countries into the EU as well as the enlargement of Schengen Area and Eurozone.

k. France

Being one of the two pioneers of the EU, what France says (or does) affects every meeting in European institutions, including the European Council. With the other pioneer, Germany, both countries work together to push European integration and enlargement as well as try to make

the EU an important actor in the global arena. While both countries had differences between each other, it started to become evident in the 2030s.

After the end of Emmanuel Macron's second term, the 2027 presidential elections were once again challenged by far-right RN's Marine Le Pen and a candidate from the left bloc. However, Le Pen managed to win this one against the leftist challenger. Like Meloni's term, Le Pen had to concede from some of her policies including France's departure from the EU to appease support from centre-right in the French parliament. France under Le Pen had better relations with the United States under its Republican president who was elected in 2028, compared to other EU member states. However, relations worsened with Germany when German officials started to hint that France seeks for American interests in the European Council. The race for which country will be the face of the EU did not make it better for bilateral relations. However, the 2032 elections define the current relations.

Against Le Pen, a candidate from centre left Socialist Party won the presidential election. Despite the elected candidate being pro-EU, the candidate cannot act alone because the French government also consists of left-wing LFI and PCF parties whose Euroscepticism depends on matters. Since Germany elected an opposite government which was right-wing, relations changed but were not improved. Still, a centre-left French President depending on socialists' support and a centre-right German Chancellor depending on nationalists' support need to work together; because they are part of the European Council's Presidency Trio. Germany is the current President and France is the future President. Together with Portugal, they need to work together and address the current issues affecting both them and the EU in general.

In the European Council, France works very closely with countries ruled by left-wing governments, particularly those in Mediterranean (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta)

and Northern European (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Ireland) regions; while relations with the East, especially with Poland and Hungary, got worsen with the reelections of PiS and Fidesz.

l. Germany

A hard nationalist party entering the national government has always been taboo for Germany due to its past. However, it eventually and controversially happened in 2030, shocking other member states.

The "traffic light" coalition of Olaf Scholz lost the 2026 snap elections and a new "grand coalition" government of centre-right CDU/CSU and centre-left SPD was formed. However, unlike previous experiences, both sides could not work efficiently together, and with the 2029 European Parliament election which the main sides failed to work together, the 2030 German election showed a huge surprise: CDU/CSU working with far-right AfD. After the left bloc failed to find a parliamentary majority, the SPD refused to work with CDU and the liberal FDP (usual partner of CDU) failed to enter parliament, CDU said they had no other option but to work with AfD and reminded that they will have the Chancellor role, not AfD.

This move caused huge protests in Germany and other European countries questioned whether this would be the end of the EU. Not surprisingly, AfD called for a referendum to leave the EU. However, the Christian Democrat Chancellor refused this move and said they would oppose it, even if the government ended. Germany is still obliged to support candidate countries and to work to help the member states trying to enter the Eurozone. But no further demands for federalization is expected neither from Germany (which depends on nationalist support) nor France (which depends on socialist support) in their governments, upsetting more federalist views in member states and the EU as a whole. Relations did not go better with France either, especially in the European Council meetings where AfD ministers from Germany and LFI ministers from France clashed with each other, resulting in either side leaving the meeting.

Still, despite both sides getting parliamentary support from extreme sides, a centre-right German Chancellor and a centre-left French President need to work together; because they are part of the European Council's Presidency Trio. Germany is the current President and France is the future President. Together with Portugal, they need to work together and address the current issues affecting both them and the EU in general. Germany has good relations with Italy and Visegrad Group countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), as well as Western Balkan countries (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia Slovenia) in the EU.

m. Greece

The 2023 general elections were a huge disaster for Alexis Tsipras' left-wing Syriza party while Kyriakos Mitsotakis' New Democracy easily won a parliamentary majority. Syriza continued to lose under the next leader, Stefanos Kasselakis as well, and had to elect a new leader who could challenge Mitsotakis. The party election became successful because their new leader won the 2031 general elections by a landslide, ending 12-year centre-right rule in the country.

Even though Greece does not face an economic crisis in 2033 like the 2010s, this new Prime Minister from Syriza is still critical of the EU and questions whether further European integration in politics and economy may hurt ordinary people; but does not oppose the European Union entirely. Greek Prime Minister also asks for possible European assistance in certain issues such as migration flow in the Aegean Islands and the continuing island dispute with Türkiye. Greece tries to improve bilateral relations with Türkiye and believes that Türkiye's accession to the EU can force them to cooperate with Greece on the Aegean Islands and Cyprus disputes.

n. Hungary

Being one of the most criticized member states in the Union, a change finally happened in 2026 when a joint opposition defeated Viktor Orban's Fidesz and created a unity government

consisting of centre-left, liberal and green parties. While this "fresh air" was good for the EU at the start, the new government failed to bring necessary changes and not surprisingly, Orban returned once again in 2030.

Orban expected that his return would improve his role in the European Council and the Visegrad group (a grouping of Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia and Poland). However, there is no consensus over his leadership in the group, so despite these four countries working closely in the European Council, we cannot say that they are closest. Although these countries' Euroscepticism ranges from softest to hardest, Hungary continues to be the most vocal one out of these four. However, a general election in Hungary will happen next year and a possible cut of economic aid could hurt Orban's chance for reelection, so he is avoiding a huge fight with the EU.

o. Ireland

Left-wing Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein won the general elections in 2024 and 2029 and continues to form the Irish cabinet with the support of the Labour Party. The party currently seeks for Irish unification with Northern Ireland of the United Kingdom. Two important factors led to this policy:

1-Brexit, which also resulted in the exit of Northern Ireland from the EU even though the British and European authorities signed a protocol to prevent a "hard border" for both sides of Ireland; and

2-UK faction of Sinn Fein winning the Northern Irish general elections.

Despite the opposition from unionist parties in the UK who are required to form a cabinet in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein says that the 1998 Good Friday Agreement stipulates that if a majority supports holding a referendum on both sides, they should continue with it. What will

rest of the European countries will say about this is important for both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Ireland also has closer relations with Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) when it comes to progressive and environmental policies. Ireland also cooperates with Mediterranean countries (France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta) that have left-wing governments in the European Council. Ireland supports further European integration in the Council, although it does not support joining the Schengen Area due to having a Common Travel Area with the United Kingdom.

p. Italy

Italy is currently ruled by conservative FdI since 2022 despite the main opposition party centre-left PD being close to ending FdI rule in 2032. However, the current Italian Prime Minister is a new person who managed to oust the previous leader Giorgia Meloni inside the party. The party is supported by centre right Forza Italia party which is pro-EU, unlike FdI.

Once seen as a "champion of European integration", Italy does not consider leaving the EU, however, they do not take more integrationist steps, saying the current supranational structure of the EU is already enough and "more is extreme". They also want the EU to become more active in Africa to prevent migration coming to Europe as well as advocating better trans-Atlantic relations as Italy is currently the closest partner of the United States among the EU. Against left-wing France and Spain, Italy works with Germany and the Visegrad Group for the leadership of the European Council, although Germany and France are usually required to work together on several issues. Italy also has good relations with Western Balkan countries (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia) even though the relations are more about economy and culture instead of politics. Finally, Italy supports the enlargement of the EU but is very less keen on European integration.

q. Latvia

Like its neighbours, Latvia formed a new government with liberal (LA) and centre-right (JV) parties in 2030. The country continues to participate in all EU policies. Cooperating with its Baltic neighbours (Estonia and Lithuania), Latvia supports the undertaking of EU actions to stop possible Russian aggression towards them as well as supporting accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the Union.

r. Lithuania

Despite the centre-left LSDP ruling for the next two terms, centre-right TS LKD managed to join the government in 2032 as a junior partner of liberal LP and LRLS parties. Meanwhile, Lithuania continues to participate in all EU policies. Cooperating with its Baltic neighbours (Estonia and Latvia), Lithuania supports the undertaking of EU actions to stop possible Russian aggression towards them as well as supporting accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the Union.

Unlike many countries, Lithuania is represented by its president, a non-partisan figure in the European Council. However, the Lithuanian President does not usually contradict the actions of the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

s. Luxembourg

While three founding countries (Italy, Germany and France) of the EU had to become less Euro-enthusiast due to Eurosceptic coalition partners, founding Benelux countries continue to support European federalism. Compared to Belgium and the Netherlands, Luxembourg does not have a major problem domestically or internationally. That is why Luxembourg is more keen to discuss issues outside of Luxembourg, such as how the EU can integrate more and how the EU can expand in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

t. Malta

Despite the 2027 Maltese election being won by the Nationalist Party under former President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola; the 2032 election was once again won by the Labour Party, which ruled the country between 2013 and 2022. Despite the Labour Party having more Eurosceptic views compared to the Nationalist Party, it currently has more pro-European policies.

As a member of the Schengen Area and Eurozone, Malta continues to take part in many EU policies, while improving relations with Mediterranean countries such as its northern neighbour Italy.

u. Montenegro

Compared to two other new countries, Montenegro does not have a "Eurozone problem" since the country unofficially adopted the Euro as its currency long before the EU membership (which was criticized by European politicians at that time). However, Montenegro finally adopted the currency officially in 2031 and became a new member of the Eurozone. Montenegro also does not have border problems and is expected to join the Schengen Area, however domestic politics continue to make the country busier.

Because of a new government was not formed for months, a "grand coalition" between the Democratic Party of Socialists and the Europe Now Movement was founded. Despite both parties supporting European integration, they are fierce rivals in domestic politics, especially when Jakov Milatović from the latter party defeated veteran politician Milo Đukanović from the former party in the 2023 Montenegrin presidential election. Despite the rivalry, opposing ideas from both sides in this European Council meeting are not expected.

v. Netherlands

Similar to what happened in Austria (a far-right party governing with centre-right support), in 2026 far-right PVV under Geert Wilders finally managed to become Prime Minister of the

Netherlands, gaining parliamentary support and ending years of political isolation. However, despite being in first place in the 2030 general elections, Wilders failed to get a parliamentary majority and a new government of liberal VVD and D66 parties and social democratic PvdA was formed.

This Dutch government is fragile for two reasons. Firstly, there are internal fights inside the government. Due to VVD and PvdA having same number of seats, a "rotating premiership" rule was adopted in government agreement when PvdA had premiership between 2030 and 2032 (with VVD getting Foreign Ministry) and then two parties switching the roles. VVD is less enthusiastic about European integration and more objective about European enlargement compared to PvdA but does not oppose the EU.

Secondly, both VVD and PvdA can lose seats in the 2034 Dutch general elections, making PVV the strongest party again. Therefore, the Dutch government is aiming for political success in this European Council meeting. Also, they work closely with its Benelux neighbours, Belgium and Luxembourg, to act as primary actors trying to push European unity among other member states.

w. North Macedonia

Becoming one of the three new member states after surviving vetoes, such as Greek veto over its name or Bulgarian veto over "Macedonian culture" (Bulgaria claims that it is a subgroup of Bulgarian culture), North Macedonia is not immune to new problems. Like Albania, they also work hard to join both the Schengen Area and Eurozone but currently not fulfilling the criteria required to join.

After the return of centre-right VMRO rule in 2025, centre-left SDSM managed to retake government rule in 2030 with support from Albanian minority parties from centre-left and liberal circles. But there is no guarantee of survival of this government, therefore they need to be careful. North Macedonia continues to cooperate with Albania and Montenegro in the

European Council meetings while trying to avoid possible discussions with Bulgaria and Greece.

x. Poland

With its population and size, Poland is the most important Eastern European member state and one of the five most important member states in the EU.

A broader coalition of centre right to centre left parties took the parliament in 2023 and the presidency in 2025. With this power change, the new Polish government took more progressive steps and improved relations with the EU. However, after adopting the Euro as its official currency in 2028, the Polish economy failed to adapt to the currency quickly and a short-term economic crisis caused the return of conservative PiS in 2030.

Even though Poland cannot leave the Eurozone, they are not interested in new integration moves. However, they support European enlargement, especially Ukraine's accession and they work with Baltic states on that matter. However, they cooperate with Hungary (as well as Czechia and Slovakia) in the European Council as they are part of the Visegrad Group, although there is an unnamed rivalry with Hungary over which country is leading the Group. Relations with countries ruled by left-wing governments are strained, especially with France and Spain; while relations are good with Italy and also with Germany since the governmental change in Germany in 2030.

y. Portugal

Despite right-wing Chega ruling Portugal in 2028, centre-left PS managed to win against both Chega, liberal IL and centre-right PSD in 2032 and get the parliamentary majority with the support of left-wing BE.

Portugal has an important role in the Council because it was the previous President of the European Council, being part of the "Trio" with the current President Germany and the next

President France. They are closer to France due to having executives coming from similar political backgrounds; however, they cannot act partially to not lose Germany in this Trio. Portugal also works well with its Iberian neighbour Spain as well as with the other countries from the Mediterranean (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta) and Northern European (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Ireland) regions in certain matters such as economy, environment, foreign policy and human rights.

z. Romania

Although centre-left PSD finished first place and nationalist AUR increased its vote share; both parties failed to find a parliamentary majority, so a new government was founded between centre-right PNL and liberal USR in 2028 and their term was extended by 2032 elections. Despite the PNL-USR coalition barely having a majority, Romania is currently represented in the European Council by their president who is elected with PNL.

Despite Romania managed to join the Schengen Area after Austria lifted its veto, Romania still did not fulfill the criteria to join the Eurozone despite huge support from politicians and the public. Romania supports the enlargement of the EU, especially the membership of Moldova for cultural and political reasons. There are people in both Romania and Moldova calling for both countries to merge, so Romania is Moldova's voice in the EU.

aa. Slovakia

In the 2031 elections, SMER which was ruled by Robert Fico before, won the elections. Despite it used to sit with centre-left parties in the European Parliament, the party's conservative views and national cooperation with conservative SNS in 2023 ended this cooperation. SMER and SNS managed to find a majority again in 2031. The Slovak government shares similar Eurosceptic views with Hungary and Poland. However, as a member of the Schengen Area and Eurozone, they do not wish to leave the EU or any EU

policies they are part of, while also continuing to have better relations with Germany, Italy and Baltic countries.

Unlike Poland, Slovakia is reluctant over Ukraine and Moldova's accession to the EU and they are in favour of the EU establishing economic and diplomatic relations with Russia which were worsened after the Russia-Ukraine War.

bb. Slovenia

Despite being integrated well into European institutions and policies without a major problem, Slovenia faces a similar problem that Montenegro has: months of unformed governments. That is why two main rivals, Janez Jansa from centre-right SDS and Robert Golob from liberal GS had to form a "grand coalition" after the President of Slovenia urged both sides to form a government when Jansa will be Prime Minister from 2031 to 2033 and handle to Golob for 2033-2035.

This will be Jansa's final visit as Prime Minister, which is why he looks for an important factor even if Golob opposes. Despite being labeled as "centre-right", Jansa's party is anti-immigration and more conservative, so it is not surprising if he aligns with conservative or right-wing politicians in this meeting, although he needs to do it carefully to not break the already fragile coalition.

cc. Spain

Having the fourth largest population in the EU, Spain wants to be one of the strongest member states. Even though a right-wing government under centre right PP and right-wing Vox emerged in 2027, four years later, a left-wing government under centre left PSOE and left-wing Sumar parties was formed, with the support coming from minority parties from Catalonia and Basque Country seeking independence for their autonomous communities.

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While actively supporting candidate countries to join the EU shortly, Spain avoids taking huge steps on the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. On one hand, they do not want to support Kosovo because it can encourage minority parties to their cause. On the other hand, they avoid taking too active role to not lose these parties' support from the parliament. So, Spain needs to take a cautious role in this matter. Against right-wing governments across Europe, Spain works closely with its Mediterranean neighbours, France and Portugal; as well as with Greece, Cyprus, Malta, North European countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Ireland) and Western Balkan countries (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia). Spain supports both enlargement and integrationist policies inside the Union, but avoids creating divisive moves.

dd. Sweden

Ever since the 2022 elections, Swedish politics have been divided between the left bloc (of centre-left, centrists, greens and socialists) and the right bloc (of centre-right, liberals, Christian democrats and nationalists). After the right bloc won in 2022, it was the left bloc's moment to shine in 2026 and it repeated in 2030 as well. However, the 2034 elections may end the left bloc's rule.

By giving key ministries to the Green Party, Sweden supports Denmark's efforts on energy and climate policies and works to achieve the EU's 2050 climate target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Also being a NATO member for 9 years, Sweden supports the inclusion of all candidate countries into the EU. Due to not having an opt-out on the Euro, Sweden was obliged to join the Eurozone and a narrow majority approved it in a referendum which made Sweden a Eurozone country in 2032. This move divided the government at first but both centre-left and green ministers in the government support further European integration.

ee. European Commission & Council

The tradition of the two largest groups (centre-right European People's Party and centre-left Socialists and Democrats) forming the European Commission continued in 2024. However, for the next five years, Commissioners from both parties tried to blame each other for corruption and aligning with extreme parties in national governments (centre right with nationalists, centre left with greens), while liberals operated with both sides. In 2029, both sides refused to cooperate both before and after the European Parliament elections. In the European elections, both parties had a similar number of seats separately with an alliance of conservative ECR and nationalist ID. But to prevent an ECR/ID ruling Commission, a new agreement was signed between EPP and S&D when an EPP politician became President of the European Council and a S&D politician became President of the European Commission. Both Presidents of the European Council and European Commission sit in the European Council alongside heads of governments or states but do not have voting rights.

Both names have to meet with each other for diplomatic courtesy but do not cooperate actively. However, they have to act together in this meeting to solve the problems of the EU that can affect not only the daily lives of European people but also the future of the EU. A success can ignite further cooperation for the 2034 European elections, but a failure can further develop the division in Europe between left and right, with both sides being more and more resisting cooperating with each other at both national and European levels.

6) Problems needed to be addressed by the European Council

a. Enlargement of the European Union

Currently, there are six negotiating candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine) and two official candidates (Armenia and Kosovo). However, each of them has its own obstacles that prevent them from joining the EU at any moment.

While the recent crisis between Serbia and Kosovo urges the EU to take action, it does not improve those states' candidate status. Meanwhile, domestic issues and possible separatist actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a huge issue. Despite it encouraging the country to move the EU closer, so far there has been no major improvement in the accession talks. However, all chapters are open for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The same can be said for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. However, ongoing territorial disputes are a major problem for these three countries. Furthermore, Ukraine is trying to recover economically and socially after the war with Russia, which makes the aim of EU membership for the year 2040 very hard to achieve. Armenia was admitted as a candidate country in 2030, but they are yet to start accession talks. And finally, the accession talks with Türkiye have restarted but possible membership approval is not expected for this decade.

Support for these countries varies from member state to member state. For example, Poland supports Ukraine, but Hungary does not. Finland supports Türkiye but Austria does not. Albania supports Kosovo and North Macedonia supports Serbia. Therefore, each case should be discussed separately not only due to the different nature of these countries' obstacles but also due to the difference of support and opposition between member states. European Union still wants to have more member states by the year 2040; however, it is too early to comment on whether it is a realistic plan or a very ambiguous idea.

b. Crisis between Serbia and Kosovo

As explained well in the section "Events happened between 2025-2032", Serbia and Kosovo have had an ongoing crisis since the assassination of a prominent Kosovar Serb politician in 2028. Leaders of both countries refuse to meet, however, they both actively lobby in the EU to have an advantage in the crisis. Serbia is a negotiating candidate country and Kosovo is a candidate country waiting to start accession talks. Therefore, the EU has a role in this matter.

Despite both countries aiming to join the EU before each other, the EU's main aim is to have both countries accede to the EU simultaneously. However, the most urgent objective is to prevent the emergence of a possible conflict and even a war in North Kosovo. If it happens, not only will it create another bloody war in the continent, but trigger new waves of migration that will burden the Schengen Area.

c. Division between Euro-federalist and Eurosceptic Europe

As more Eurosceptic parties started to be involved in national governments, some member states tend not to support further European integration. For example, both Germany and France, the main actors of the EU, have Eurosceptic parties as junior parties in the coalition, even though their leaders are pro-EU. The same tendency can be seen in Italy, Austria and Poland. However, this is not the case for every member state.

Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) and Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) support a more federalized Europe, taking further steps in many common EU policies. This can be reflected in many voting processes in the Council and Parliament regarding European integration, where more federalist member states and the rest are divided on this matter. It would be too dramatic to think that the EU is permanently divided because a common ground between more and less integration can be found. But the real question is whether these countries could find common ground, especially in matters regarding a more integrated Europe, or not.

d. Single Energy Market

In recent decades, the energy sector in Europe started to evolve from being a more national matter into a more European matter, with the EU taking main steps in many energy areas

ahead of its member states instead of national governments. Even though there are further attempts for more integration in this sector, there are still two issues.

The first one is whether a new deal with Russia over gas and oil should be signed or not. After the end of the Russia-Ukraine War, new Russian government announced that they want to reestablish economic ties with the EU. Some EU politicians are in favour of this, especially German, Austrian and Hungarian leaders. However, it also receives criticism, saying that it can put the EU in a negative situation again as it was put in 2022.

The second one is transforming the energy sector into more eco-friendly, decreasing carbon emissions. This was supported by Denmark, Finland, and Sweden and it is in line with the EU's 2050 climate neutrality plan. However, some member states claim that it cannot be achieved if some sources like coal continue to be vital for many national economies. Can energy sector be transformed for both better ecology and a better economy? It is an important debate surrounding energy in Europe.

e. Political reforms in the European Union

If we witness any possible **treaty change** in the EU, a debate about political reform for the EU will be inevitable. After all, despite hosting democratic member states, the EU itself is considered too technocratic and less democratic by some critics. Ursula Von der Leyen's election in 2019 without being a candidate was heavily criticized. And ever since the "sofagate"[10] incident, there has been a debate over how the head of European institutions (Council, Commission, Parliament, Central Bank, etc.) should be named or established. Furthermore, the discussions surrounding a possible electoral reform such as European-wide

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[10] A diplomatic protocol incident where both Council President Michel and Commission President Von der Leyen visited Turkish President Erdoğan and only Michel was offered to sit in a sofa next to Erdoğan.

party lists for the Parliament elections or a possible direct election for the President of the Commission have been alive for years.

These debates cannot be separated from further integration talks. After all, a directly elected executive or continental-wide candidate can shift the elections from a more national to a more European perspective. Some may argue that this can make the EU more effective, making decisions quickly and making the citizens be heard more clearly under a more democratic model. Meanwhile, others may argue that this can create a super Euro-state, removing national sovereignty and possible democratic barriers.

Should the EU have more politically active positions? Should the EU be more democratized? Should the EU be less national and more European for both legislative and executive? These are some of the questions leaders may discuss when possible political reforms are discussed for the EU.

f. Eurozone debate

The recent economic crisis in Poland after they joined the Eurozone in 2028 shifted public support for the Eurozone. However, with Sweden joining in 2032, there is optimism in European politicians over the expansion of the Eurozone. There are two types of member states who are not part of the currency union.

The first group consists of those who are not in favour of joining it, such as Hungary and Czechia. Even though Denmark is exempt from joining due to its opt-out, this is not the case for Hungary and Czechia. The Czech Prime Minister did not fully rule out joining, saying that they would eventually join "when the time is right". However, Hungary insisted that they would not repeat the mistake the previous Polish government made in the previous decade. The second group is those countries in which both the public and politicians want to join, but

do not fulfil the necessary criteria to join. Not only new member states of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia are part of this group, but also Romania, which wants to join for a long time.

For the next Council meeting, European politicians must continue their enthusiasm for the Eurozone by convincing Hungary and Czech leaders to take the necessary steps to join. At the same time, other countries waiting to join should not be discouraged.

g. Schengen debate

Schengen Area has fewer problems compared to the Eurozone. The biggest problem of the 2020s regarding the Schengen Area was the partial inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania; both later joined fully in 2028. However, there are five countries not part of the Area. Cyprus does not join due to its ongoing dispute, while Ireland has an opt-out and has its own travel area with the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, new member states (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia) are living what Bulgaria and Romania lived: being vetoed by certain member states due to not being "safe" to join the Schengen Area.

There is also the concern of a possible Serbia-Kosovo conflict that can spread to Europe if these new member states are approved into the Schengen Area. However, despite the opposition, the EU did not want to discourage these countries, as both the Commission and the Parliament are ready to approve these countries' inclusion into the Area. Problems regarding irregular migration are not as problematic as in the 2010s and 2020s, however, it does not mean they are over, so this may be another issue the European leaders can address in the next Council meeting.

h. Relevance of the EU in global arena

In a world where the United States and the United Kingdom are in a stagnant position, where China's influence worldwide is increasing, and where Russia is trying to recover, the European Union tries to find its purpose to exist not only in Europe but also in the world. Therefore, being a future superpower is an aim many European politicians think. After all, the European Union has Germany and France, two important political figures in the world, as its unofficial leaders, as well as Italy and Spain. However, as a supranational institution with 30 member states, the EU does not only need to have important countries but also have one voice outside.

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is a very important aspect of this idea, which was described as one of the three pillars of the EU in the Maastricht Treaty. Yet, every decision taken in CFSP requires unanimity, which is impossible to achieve with 30 members. As long as countries are divided on foreign policy matters, how the EU will act is impossible to guess, which results in unclarity. The positive aspect of the EU as a possible global power is that smaller countries that are not represented well in the global arena based on population or territory size can be represented better under the EU. Bigger countries like France or Spain do not need extra representation, however, it is a major gain for Baltic or Balkan countries.

Another aspect the EU may do is to be more in global conflicts as a mediator, whether it is Israel-Palestine or internal conflicts in Sudan or Myanmar. This does not only put the EU in a more ethical position than many European politicians aimed for years but also can increase the influence of the EU worldwide. After all, the US, the UK, Russia and China did not become global powers by involving only in the matters in their nearest region. However, this can also result in importing problems outside of Europe. Therefore, being cautious instead of being too ambitious is still necessary for the EU, especially when it is not supranational enough to act more effectively and united.

i. Opt-outs

Opt-outs give some member states the right to not participate in some EU policies. There have been no changes in the 9 years about the existing opt-outs. Ireland still has an opt-out in the area of freedom, security, and justice (AFSJ) (although it can opt-in in some cases) as well as in the Schengen Area. Meanwhile Poland holds an opt-out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (EUR-Lex). However, the country with the most opt-outs is Denmark.

Denmark gained some opt-outs after a referendum for the approval of the Maastricht Treaty was rejected in 1992. Even though its opt-out of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was abolished in 2022, Denmark still holds opt-outs in the Eurozone (EMU) and in the area of freedom, security and justice (AFSJ) (Folketinget, 2022).

Whether these countries will abolish their opt-outs or not is not something European politicians can directly affect. However, if unity is aimed at European policies, preventing further opt-outs can be the goal. And if a new treaty change is discussed, there can be some member states demanding further opt-outs, which is why the EU must be very cautious.

7) Conclusion

After eight decades, the European Union continues to survive and evolve. Every decade brought its own problems for the EU, and the developments of the late 2020s and early 2030s are no different. Issues regarding enlargement, integration, a global role, disputes are still alive. It continues to solve the main problems but is not exempt from the next ones. It is not broken apart as many assumed, yet it does not improve further than many hoped. Both optimism and pessimism, Eurofederalism and Euroscepticism, peace, and conflict are well alive in Europe.

This European Council meeting will be very important, even though this institution does not have a role in the legislation like the other institutions. Yet, the European Council has 30 elected leaders from 30 countries, plus two most important names of the EU. They are here, not only to point out the current problems the EU is facing but also to find out whether the EU can manage to be united and find a purpose for this continent and in the world arena. Can the EU introduce further treaty changes? Will the EU expand more? What will be the participation in certain EU policies? What will be the EU's response to the latest political developments in Europe? But perhaps the most important one: In a very polarised political situation based on ideologies and EU policies, can the leaders find a consensus in this meeting? The answer lies in these 30 leaders.

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