

## **European Union**

- The European Union was officially formed on November 1, 1993
- It follows former European cooperative organizations such as European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was formed in 1951 and became the European Community (EC) in 1967.
- There were 12 members of European Community such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.
- The EC members signed the Maastricht Treaty and in 1992 and this Treaty transformed the EC into EU since January 1, 1993.
- In 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the European Union.
- In 2004 10 more countries joined the EU and the number of member states became 25. These new joining states were: Cyprus, the Czech republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- In 2007 Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, so the total number of the member states was 27.
- A referendum on Brexit was held on June 23, 2016 and people of the UK decided to leave the EU. The results were narrow: for „Leave“ 51.9%, for „Remain“ 48.1%
- The UK left the EU on January 31, 2020

## **Aims of the EU**

- The main aim of the EU is cooperation among member states in economics, trade, social issues, foreign policy, security and defense and law matters.
- Border controls were abolished. Customs and immigration rules were made simpler so that European citizen could get more freedom in travelling, studying and working in any of the member states.

## **Euro**

- After 10 years of preparation, a single currency called euro was introduced for EU members in 1999. The first three years it worked only virtually for accounting purposes and electronical payment.
- On January 1, 2002 euro became the only currency in 12 of the member states: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.
- Nowadays euro is the national currency for 19 states (the original 12 plus Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia)
- The European Central Bank issues euro coins and banknotes.
- The euro is divided into 100 cents. Euro banknotes are of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 euros. Coins are of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents and 1 and 2 euros.
- Banknotes are the same for all member countries, but each country issues its own coins with unified design on one side and a national design on the other
- Benefits of the euro are: people can travel more easily without exchanging money and as the euro is an international currency, it is widely accepted in many countries outside the euro area

**Schengen area** – an area consisting of 26 European countries that abolished the duty of passport and other controls at their mutual borders. It's not necessary to have a passport, it's ok just to have an identity card

- Schengen countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland

## Parts of the EU

- The main parts of the European Union are:
  - \* European Commission (Evropská komise)
  - \* the Council of the European Union (Rada Evropské unie)
  - \* the European Parliament (Evropský parlament)
  - \* the European Court of Justice (Evropský soudní dvůr)
  - \* Court of Audition (Evropský účetní dvůr)
  - \* European Central bank (Evropská centrální banka)
  - \* European Court of Human Rights (Evropský soud pro lidská práva)
- European Commission
  - \* it's an executive part of the EU, it defends the multinational interests and demands
  - \* it initiates legislative and supports integration
  - \* its members are chosen by the member states governments and serve for 5 years
  - \* there are 27 commissioners (one from each member state. Věra Jourová is the commissioner for the Czech Republic)
  - \* its seat is in Brussels
  - \* the chairwoman is Ursula von den Leyen
- Council of the EU
  - \* it has a legislative function
  - \* represents the national governments
  - \* the most powerful and important body of the EU structure
  - \* each member country has a seat on the Council, usually a country is represented by its Minister of foreign affairs
  - \* voting power is based on population of each country (for example Germany, France and Italy have 29 votes, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Greece, Hungary and Portugal have 12 votes)
  - \* EU member states take turns in chairmanship of the Council every 6 months.
- European Parliament
  - \* is made up of 705 members who are elected for 5 years
  - \* the Czech Republic has 12 members of Parliament there
  - \* the seat of the European Parliament is in Strasbourg in France, but it also works in Brussels and Luxembourg
  - \* the function of the European Parliament is to discuss laws, money issues and it supervises all EU activities
  - \* the last election was in 2019 (Czech members of the EP are for example Jan Zahradil, Tomáš Zdechovský, Jiří Pospíšil)
  - \* the chairwoman is Roberta Metsolao
- The European Court of Justice

- \* the juridical part of the EU
- \* each country appoints one judge into the Court
- \* it is responsible for explaining laws valid in the EU
- \* it pays attention if every member state follows the rules and laws
- \* its seat is in Luxembourg
- Court of Auditors
  - \* made up of 27 members, one from each member state (the Czech representative is Jan Gregor)
  - \* it oversees the financial issues of the EU and all the transactions and if these are carried out according to the EU budget, rules and laws
  - \* its seat is in Luxembourg
- European Central Bank
  - \* it started in 1998
  - \* its main aim is to keep price stability in countries that use the euro as their currency and to keep control of monetary politics of the whole EU
  - \* the Czech National Bank has been the member of the European Central Bank since 2004 when the CR joined the EU
  - \* its seat is in Frankfurt in Germany
- European Court of Human Rights
  - \* its seat is in Strasbourg
  - \* formed in 1959
  - \* its main aim is to secure human rights
  - \* any state, company, any group of people, non-governmental organization can appeal to this court
  - \* judgements related to the Czech Republic: in 2017 a family of a murdered Czech man appealed to this court as the murderer was made free in the UK – unsuccessful. In 2017 Mrs Michaláková appealed to this court because her kids were taken away from her by Norwegian social institution – in 2020 this Court announced that her rights were not violated

### **Symbols of the EU**

- \* European anthem
- \* European flag
- \* European motto
- \* Europe Day
- \* the Euro
- Flag of the EU
  - \* it consists of a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background
  - \* it represents the union of all the people of Europe

- The European anthem is the Ode to Joy by Beethoven
- European motto: „United in diversity“ – it became the official motto in 2000.
- Europe day
  - \* It is held on May 9 every year to celebrate peace and unity in Europe
  - \* traditional activities on this day are for example visiting some of the institutions which are normally closed for public

### **The Czech Republic and the EU**

- \* all citizens of the Czech Republic have the right to travel, stay, study or work in any of the member states, but the period for which we still need a permit can't exceed 7 years
- \* students can spend all their studies not only some terms at European universities, they have the same rights as other students from member states, the only conditions are perfect knowledge of the local language and good results at secondary school in the CR
- \* Czech became the official language of the EU. It means that every single document must be translated into Czech
- \* when we get into trouble, we can ask for help at any diplomatic or consular place of any EU member state
- \* we don't need any international driving licence
- \* the Czech Republic had the chairmanship at the Council of the EU in 2009 and since July 2022 it had the chairmanship for the second time. Its role is organizational, mediatory, political and representative
- \* the chairmanship changes every 6 months and the countries take turns in the chairmanship
- \* when travelling to EU countries, inhabitants of the Czech republic have an European pass of health insurance (evropský průkaz zdravotního pojištění) that enables them to get the same health care and for the same price as the citizens of the given country

### **EU and educational programmes**

- \* EU supports cooperation between EU member states in education
- \* the most famous programme is Erasmus+
- Erasmus +
  - \* if a student wants to study at university abroad, there is a possibility to study in any EU member state plus in Norway, Iceland and Turkey. The length of the stay may vary from 3 months to 12 months. It is possible to study abroad more than once
  - \* this programme enables students to get to a university and to get a scholarship which covers the journey there and the stay
  - \* students who want to study abroad must have really good knowledge of the language. Universities abroad usually require language certificates – ELTS (English language test for study, migration and work) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign language)
  - \* Czech students most often choose the UK, Germany, France or Spain as their destination for studying

- \* if you are a basic school pupil or a secondary school student, you can't go on an educational stay alone, it must be via a school project and your school must be involved in Erasmus + programme
- \* these students can go to a partner school abroad. They can choose from a short-term individual educational stay (usually from 10 to 29 days), a group educational stay (from 2 days to 30 days) or a long-term educational stay (from 30 days to 365 days). They can enter this program via their school
- \* it's possible to study in any EU member state, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and countries of candidacy in EU such as Northern Makedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

#### **EU and cooperation with our school**

- \* To improve educational conditions of students, our school tries to draw financial means from the EU funds
- \* The school uses these financial means to improve and reconstruct classrooms for IT, to employ school special teacher who helps students with their problems and special learning needs, to employ school career consultant and to provide extra lessons for those who need them to improve their school results