



# A SHORT GUIDE to the **EU**





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### **A Short Guide to the EU**

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# A Short Guide to the EU

Ever wondered which EU countries use the euro or what it means to be part of the Schengen area? What the European Green Deal is and how it will make your life better? What exactly the EU does for you and where the money comes from to pay for it all? Read on to find out everything you need to know about the EU.

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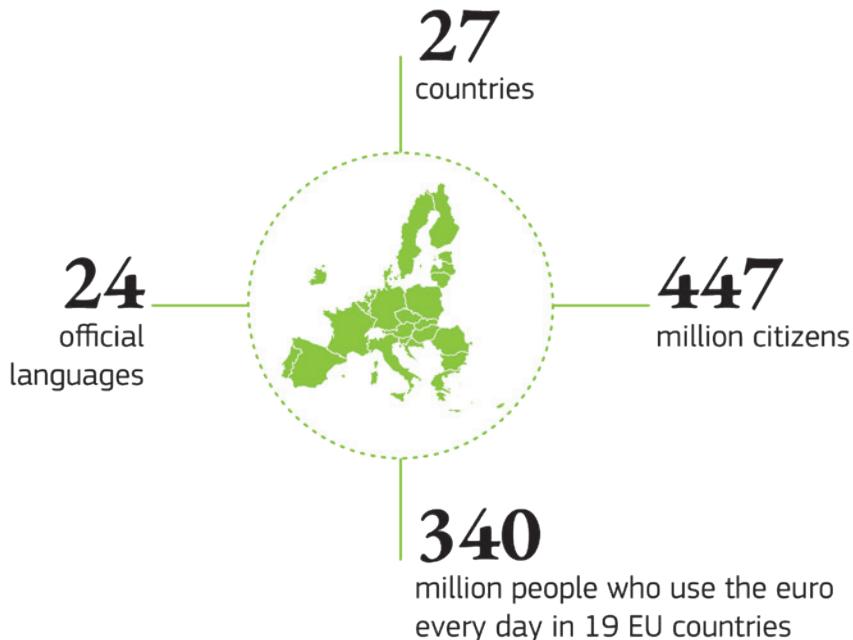
# What is the European Union?

The European Union (EU) is a unique economic and political union between [27 European countries](#). They work together to improve the lives of people in Europe, and even further afield.

The EU has worked for the peace, prosperity and well-being of its citizens for over 60 years. From six founding countries – or Member States – in the 1950s, it has grown into a Union of 27 countries with a population of almost 450 million people.

What started as an economic project to help raise living standards in post-war Europe has led to the creation of the world's largest single-market area, where people, goods, services and money can move freely. Over the decades, the EU has widened its scope to areas where cooperation between countries brings better results. The countries that belong to the EU believe that by working together they are stronger and better able to tackle today's big challenges, such as COVID-19, climate change and the digital transformation of our society.

This guide contains lots of useful information about the EU and what it does, and tips on where to get more information.

**The EU has:****THE EU FLAG****THE EU'S MOTTO**

UNITED  
IN  
DIVERSITY

**EUROPE DAY**

## A Union of values

While Europeans may speak different languages and have different traditions, they share the same set of values, on which the EU was founded. These are respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

These values are set out in the EU treaties and in the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#), which brings together in one place all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people within the EU.

If you are a citizen of one of the 27 countries that make up the EU, you are also a citizen of the EU. This gives you some important extra [rights](#), such as the freedom to move, live, work and study in any EU country and the right [to vote and to stand as a candidate](#) in local and European elections, even when living in another EU country. You also have the right to make a [petition](#) to the European Parliament, to apply to the European Ombudsman and to write to any EU institution in one of the 24 official languages of the EU.

As well as protecting the rights of its citizens and people living in the European Union, the EU also promotes human rights and fair elections worldwide. Every year, the European Parliament awards the [Sakharov Prize](#) to an individual or organisation that fights for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2020,  
**13.5 million**  
**people in the EU**  
**were citizens**  
**of a different**  
**EU country**  
**from the one**  
**they lived in.**



## Living in the EU brings some important rights and benefits, such as these:



I am protected from discrimination on any ground, including sex, race, religion, ethnic or social origin, disability, age or sexual orientation;



I have the right to have my personal data protected;



I can shop online and buy from any EU country with confidence, thanks to strong EU consumer protection;



My health is protected by tough EU environmental standards, such as rules on the quality of air and water.

## The EU at a glance

Thanks to the **Single Market** people, goods, services and money can move around the EU's 27 countries almost as freely as within a single country.

Twenty-two EU Member States and four non-EU countries – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – belong to what is known as the **Schengen area**. This means you don't have to show your passport when crossing the border between these countries. Travel has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find more information about this at [reopen.europa.eu/en](https://reopen.europa.eu/en)



<b>AUSTRIA</b> Joined the EU: 1995   Population: 8.9 M   Currency: €	<b>FRANCE</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 67.3 M   Currency: €	<b>MALTA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 0.5 M   Currency: €
<b>BELGIUM</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 11.5 M   Currency: €	<b>GERMANY</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 83.2 M   Currency: €	<b>NETHERLANDS</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 17.4 M   Currency: €
<b>BULGARIA</b> Joined the EU: 2007   Population: 7 M   Lev (BGN)   Not part of the Schengen area	<b>GREECE</b> Joined the EU: 1981   Population: 10.7 M   Currency: €	<b>POLAND</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 38 M   Złoty (PLN)
<b>CROATIA</b> Joined the EU: 2013   Population: 4.1 M   Kuna (HRK)   Not part of the Schengen area	<b>HUNGARY</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 9.8 M   Forint (HUF)	<b>PORTUGAL</b> Joined the EU: 1986   Population: 10.3 M   €
<b>CYPRUS</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 0.9 M   €   Not part of the Schengen area	<b>IRELAND</b> Joined the EU: 1973   Population: 5 M   €   Not part of the Schengen area	<b>ROMANIA</b> Joined the EU: 2007   Population: 19.3 M   Leu (RON)   Not part of the Schengen area
<b>CZECHIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 10.7 M   Koruna (CZK)	<b>ITALY</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 59.6 M   €	<b>SLOVAKIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 5.5 M   €
<b>DENMARK</b> Joined the EU: 1973   Population: 5.8 M   Krone (DKK)	<b>LATVIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 1.9 M   €	<b>SLOVENIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 2.1 M   €
<b>ESTONIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 1.3 M   €	<b>LITHUANIA</b> Joined the EU: 2004   Population: 2.8 M   €	<b>SPAIN</b> Joined the EU: 1986   Population: 47.3 M   €
<b>FINLAND</b> Joined the EU: 1995   Population: 5.5 M   €	<b>LUXEMBOURG</b> Joined the EU: 1958   Population: 0.6 M   €	<b>SWEDEN</b> Joined the EU: 1995   Population: 10.3 M   Krona (SEK)

Joined the EU

Currency

Population in millions in 2020

Not part of the Schengen area



# What is the EU doing to tackle the big issues we face today?

Here you can find information on some of the big issues that the EU is working on to improve people's lives. To see how the priority issues on the EU's agenda are put into action, please refer to the section 'Who does what?' (page 27). You can find more information about all of the EU's activities on the EU's website: [europa.eu](http://europa.eu).

## COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has led to human tragedy, lockdowns and economic slowdown, testing the EU and the rest of the world like never before. The EU's priority since the beginning of the crisis has been to save lives and protect jobs. As well as taking action to contain the spread of the virus, it has been working to support national health systems and help get Europe back on its feet.

By summer 2021, four COVID-19 [vaccines](#) were authorised for use in the EU.



A delivery  
of medical  
equipment from  
the rescEU  
reserve in  
Prague, Czechia,  
24 October 2020.

While EU countries are responsible for their own health policies and immunising their own citizens, the EU provides support and helps with coordination, for example by securing vaccine supplies so no country is left empty-handed.

Vaccination programmes started across the EU in December 2020. A common system of [EU digital certificates](#) is helping to make it easier for people in the EU to start travelling again.

The EU is committed to ensuring that safe vaccines reach all corners of the world, and has exported hundreds of millions of doses to other countries. It is also one of the leading contributors to COVAX, the global initiative for fair access to COVID-19 vaccines. To make sure it is prepared for future epidemics, the EU is working with its international partners, including through initiatives such as the G20 [Global Health Summit](#) in May 2021.

The EU and its Member States have shown true solidarity during the pandemic. For example, hospitals across Europe have treated patients from other countries, and the EU has coordinated the delivery of protective equipment to where it is needed most. The [rescEU medical reserve](#) (the common European stockpile of emergency medical equipment) has helped Member States facing shortages of equipment.



A drive-through  
vaccination centre,  
Milan, Italy,  
23 March 2021.

The EU is also taking action to ensure a rapid economic recovery from the pandemic. From 2021 to 2027, funding of €2 018 billion (in current prices) will support people, companies and regions across the EU. This total includes a special recovery fund of €807 billion, known as [NextGenerationEU](#). The EU aims to ensure Europe's healthy recovery from COVID-19 by investing in projects and initiatives to make it greener, more digital and better able to deal with future challenges.

### EU spending 2021-2027



In addition, the [SURE initiative](#) is helping to preserve jobs and support families in 19 Member States.



Find out more about [EU action on COVID-19](#).

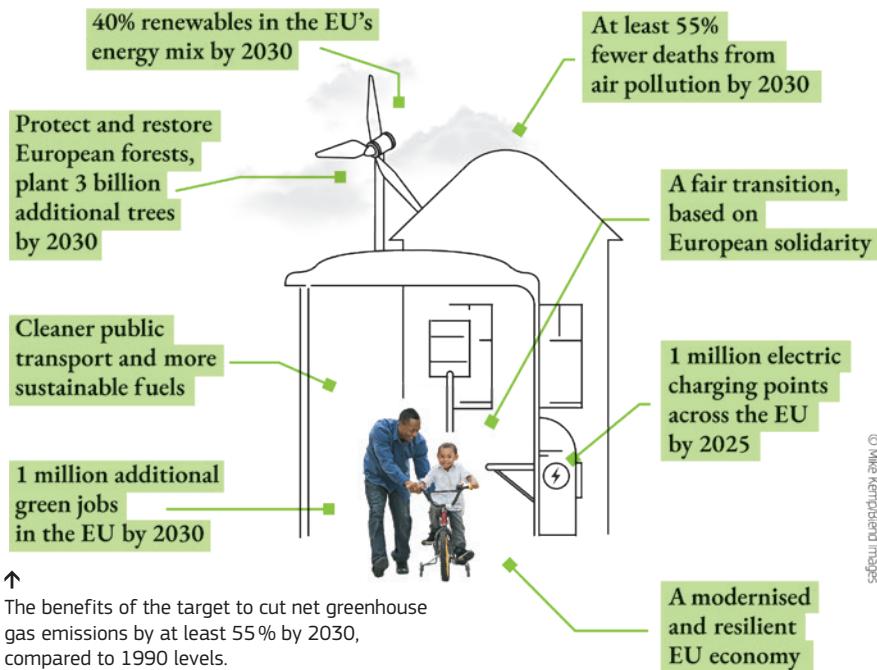
## Climate change

Climate change and damage to the environment threaten Europe and the world.

The [European Green Deal](#) is the EU's strategy to create a modern and competitive European economy. It aims to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050, at which point we will produce no more greenhouse gases than our ecosystems can naturally absorb.

As a first milestone on this ambitious path, the EU has set a new target of cutting its net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. All sections of society and the economy will have to play their part – from industry, energy and transport to food production, agriculture and construction. There will be financial support for those regions, industries and workers that face the greatest challenges. In July 2021 the European Commission proposed a package of [measures](#) to make sure that the EU achieves its objectives under the European Green Deal.

## What's in it for you?



We can all do our bit – from reducing food waste and recycling more to taking the bike instead of the car, or even planting a tree. If you want to get involved why not check out the [European Climate Pact](#), which brings people and organisations together to share information on climate action. Help us build a greener Europe!

## Natura 2000

**is the world's largest network of protected areas, safeguarding thousands of havens for Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.**



© LIFE06 NAT/E/000209/Aixa SOPEÑA.

The EU has funded the conversion of two passenger and goods ferries from heavy oil to more environmentally friendly electric batteries. They operate on the busy route between Helsingør (Denmark) and Helsingborg (Sweden). The converted ferries help to improve air quality in these densely populated areas.

The Iberian lynx is back from the verge of extinction in Portugal and Spain thanks to the efforts of many, including the work of projects funded by the EU's [LIFE](#) programme. The return of the species is one of Europe's greatest animal conservation success stories.

**At least 30 % of the EU's spending between 2021 and 2027 will be on tackling climate change and its effects.**

## Getting the most out of the digital transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how important [digital technology](#) is for keeping people and businesses connected in times of crisis.

We all need to be digitally savvy in today's society, whether it's for online banking and shopping at home or using technology in our jobs. To get everyone up to speed, and ensure Europe's position as a world leader in technology, the EU is investing in everything from digital skills and supercomputing to high-speed connectivity and better cybersecurity.



A librarian reading a book to elderly people by videoconference, an initiative set up by the Soto del Real municipal library in Madrid, Spain, 16 November 2020.

The EU is working to ensure that the online world is safe and fair for people and businesses alike. Thanks to EU rules, today we have more control over our personal data and how it is used by others.

## The EU in the world

The EU works closely with its neighbours and with countries around the world. It is building new partnerships, in particular with [Africa](#), and working with other countries and international organisations, such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, to tackle common challenges like climate change and COVID-19. The EU also makes trade deals with other countries, most recently with Canada, Japan and Mexico. These deals expand the trade that supports the EU economy and creates jobs.

**Together, the EU and its member countries are the biggest donor of international aid in the world. In 2020 they provided €66.8 billion to help fight COVID-19, overcome poverty and advance global development.**

## Helping people find work

The [European Social Fund](#) helps people to get a job (or a better job), including those who face disadvantages. Each year the fund helps some 10 million people find a job or improve their skills.

The EU is helping young people to enter the job market. For example, the [Youth Guarantee scheme](#) aims to ensure that anyone under 30 receives an offer of good-quality employment, education, apprenticeship or training within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. The ['Your first EURES job' programme](#) also helps young people to find work in another EU country.

Volunteering is a great way of contributing to local communities at home or abroad, while developing new skills and making friends. The [European Solidarity Corps](#) gives young people the chance to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad. [EU Aid Volunteers](#) offers over-18s the opportunity to participate in humanitarian projects worldwide.

## Stepping up the fight against cancer

The EU is determined to turn the tide against cancer. With €4 billion of funding, [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#) maps out a new EU approach to cancer prevention, treatment and care. EU funding has already led to [groundbreaking research](#) – from 3D modelling of tumours to detecting cancer through a person's breath.



A nurse setting up the machine for a patient's MRI scan, Liège University Hospital, Belgium, 24 January 2020.

## A Union of equality

The EU is building a Europe of equality. This means that women and men should get equal pay for equal work, people with disabilities are able to participate equally in all areas of life, and racism is not tolerated. It means that people should not be excluded or marginalised, and people should be free to love who they want.

Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background play a key role in European society, including as essential workers. The EU is working to ensure everyone can participate fully in society by focusing on things such as better access to education, jobs, healthcare and housing.

## Protecting people

The safety and security of people in Europe, in both the physical and the digital worlds, is a top priority for the EU. It works daily to tackle threats such as terrorism, organised crime, the drugs trade and human trafficking.

Lies about COVID-19, dangerous hoaxes, conspiracy theories and consumer fraud all pose a threat, including to public health. The EU is working with social media companies and online platforms to limit the spread of misleading information and fake news in Europe. The European Digital Media Observatory supports the work of independent fact checkers and aims to become the European hub to fight online disinformation.



Find out more about the priorities of the European Commission.

## Europe means culture

What do the Oscar-winning films *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Son of Saul*, *The Father* and *Another Round* have in common? They all received support from the EU's Creative Europe MEDIA programme.

Is your city the next European Capital of Culture? The much-prized title has been awarded to more than 50 cities across the EU. It puts the spotlight on local artists and each city's unique cultural wealth.

Explore Europe's art and culture from your armchair! The Europeana digital platform gives access to over 58 million items from the collections of more than 3 600 cultural institutions.



# What are some of the things that the EU does for me?



You can live and work in another EU country. Check the [EURES portal](#) for job vacancies and practical advice.



You can retire to any EU country (plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland) and receive your [state pension](#) there.



You can study or do a training course in another EU country. More than 10 million people have taken part in the [Erasmus programme](#) since it began in 1987.



The EU scrapped roaming charges in 2017 to make it cheaper to keep in touch with friends and family as you travel across the EU. Your digital subscriptions travel with you too!



If you fall ill while visiting another EU country the [European Health Insurance Card](#) ensures you can get state-provided healthcare. You will be treated under the same conditions and at the same cost as the people insured in that country.



[WiFi4EU](#) hot spots in public areas in around 8 000 local communities around the EU mean you can connect to the internet for free. Look out for this symbol:



You can use one single currency – the euro – in 19 EU countries.



You can rest easy when travelling in the EU. You are protected by a full set of [passenger rights](#) whether you go by air, rail, ship, bus or coach.



Toys have to meet [strict safety rules](#) before they can be sold in the EU.



[EU rules](#) mean you can cancel or return online purchases within 14 days with no reason required.



People in the EU benefit from some of the world's strictest standards for safe and healthy food.



Bank savings of up to €100 000 are always protected.



Find out more about [what the EU does for you](#).



# What is the EU doing to improve things where I live?

The EU invests locally in towns and regions to boost jobs and the economy and improve quality of life. It aims to make a difference in five key areas:

- helping people to get into employment and education, or helping to include them in society;
- small and medium-sized businesses;
- research and innovation;
- protecting and improving the environment;
- modernising transport and energy to fight climate change.

**Between 2014  
and 2020  
the EU  
invested over  
€460 billion  
in its regions.**

© Image by HebiB from Pixabay

## Investing in people and places

Take a look around your area and you will soon find a school, a bridge, a hospital or another project that has benefited from EU funding. Thousands of projects have received support from EU regional programmes over the years. Below are just a few examples of projects that are, or soon will be, making a difference to people's lives across the EU.



### Saving lives with a new emergency hospital in Romania

€47 million in EU funding is being invested to build a [hospital](#) in Cluj, Romania, equipped with advanced technology to treat critically ill patients. It will form part of a network of regional emergency hospitals and will contribute to Romania's efforts to increase access to healthcare.

### Better road connections in Greece

Residents, tourists and businesses in Greece will all benefit from an important [new section](#) of motorway. EU funding worth €255 million is supporting the construction of the missing link between Lamia and Xyniada. This will connect the regions of Central Greece and Western Thessaly to the main motorway network.

### Sustainable swimming in Belgium

A swimming pool [renovation](#) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Free University of Brussels) is making a splash for sustainability. The new facility uses 60 % less energy and emits 500 tonnes less CO<sub>2</sub> annually than the old pool, and is open to swimmers from outside the university. The project received just over €2 million in EU funding.



© iStock.com/FatCamera

## Greener cities and regions

A more reliable and efficient energy supply in Czechia, 21 new electric trains to improve Croatia's rail network and measures to increase flood safety in Hungary are among [14 green projects](#) that will benefit EU citizens. More than €1.4 billion of EU funds is being invested in seven EU countries in areas such as environment, health, transport and energy.

## Faster internet connections in Sicily

More than 2.3 million people in Sicily, Italy, are benefiting from high-speed internet access thanks to a [project](#) supported by €55 million in EU funding. More than 1.2 million households have been connected to ultra-fast broadband throughout Sicily's nine provinces.

## Green playgrounds in Paris

Concrete schoolyards across Paris are being turned into cool, green islands capable of storing water and reducing heat. Supported by almost €5 million in EU funding, the [OASIS project](#) is helping to protect Parisians from the effects of climate change, while creating spaces where children can have fun.



Find out about projects in your country that have received EU funding:

- [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/projects/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/)
- <https://www.what-europe-does-for-me.eu/en/portal/1/>



@EUinmyregion



#EUinmyRegion

## How can I get help with funding?

Researcher, farmer, entrepreneur or artist? Find out about who's eligible for funding:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-apply/eligibility-who-can-get-funding\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-apply/eligibility-who-can-get-funding_en)

Find out how to access funding for regions:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/funding/accessing-funds/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/accessing-funds/)

## EU Pioneers

From resistance fighters and political leaders, to a world famous actor, find out more about the [women and men](#) who inspired the creation of the Europe we live in today. They include:



Konrad ADENAUER



Ursula HIRSCHMANN



Anna LINDH



Melina MERCOURI



Jean MONNET



Robert SCHUMAN



Altiero SPINELLI



Simone VEIL



Louise WEISS

© Associated Press, Konrad Adenauer

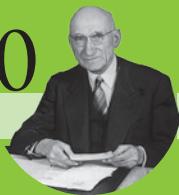
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© Nationaal Archief COO, Melina Mercouri

## EU milestones

# 1950

9 May



### The Schuman Declaration.

France's

Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposes to pool coal and steel production so that no single country can make weapons to turn against another.

# 1952

23 July



### The European Coal and Steel Community is established.

# 1957

25 March

The **Treaties of Rome** are signed by six countries – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. They create a common market, the **European Economic Community**, from 1 January 1958.

# 1987

15 June



The **Erasmus** student exchange programme is launched.

# 1989

The collapse of communism triggers a wave of democratic change across central and eastern Europe.

# 1993

1 January



The launch of the **single market**, where people, goods, services and money can circulate freely.

# 2012

1 April

The **European citizens' initiative** is launched.



# 2012

10 December

The EU is awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize**.

# 2015

12 December

A total of 195 countries, including all the EU Member States, adopt the **Paris Agreement** on climate change.



# 1962

30 July

The **common agricultural policy** is launched, helping to safeguard food supplies and supporting farmers and rural areas.

# 1968

1 July

**Customs duties** between the six Member States are abolished.



# 1979

7 to 10 June

For the first time, **European citizens can vote** for who represents them in the European Parliament.



# 1993

1 November

The **European Union** is created.



# 1995

26 March

The **Schengen Agreement** removes border controls between certain Member States. Twenty-two of them now enjoy this advantage.



# 2002

1 January

**Euro** notes and coins first appear, and are now used in 19 EU countries.



# 2017

15 June

**Roaming charges** end.



# 2020

January

COVID-19 reaches Europe, sparking the **biggest-ever response to a public health emergency** in the history of the EU.



# 2021

9 May

The **Conference on the Future of Europe** is launched.





# How does the EU work?



Plenary Session of the European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, 26 April 2021.

Everything that the EU does is based on treaties that contain the rules for how the EU works. These have been agreed voluntarily and democratically by all EU countries.

The EU [takes action](#) in those areas where its Member States have authorised it to do so and where it makes sense to act together, such as on climate change or trading across the world.

The EU treaties specify who can pass laws in what areas: the EU, national governments or both. EU countries are [responsible](#) for making their own decisions and laws in certain areas of national policy, such as industry, health and education, and the EU provides support. In areas where either the EU or national governments can act, the EU may only do so if it can act more effectively.

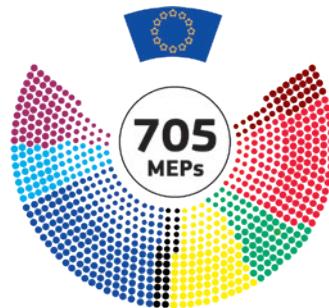
To help achieve their goals, the EU countries have created a number of institutions to take decisions at the EU level and to then carry them out.

## Who does what?



The [European Parliament](#), which sits in Strasbourg and Brussels, represents the interests of the citizens of the EU. Together with the Council, it is the main decision-making body of the EU.

The 705 Members of the European Parliament, also known as MEPs, are directly elected by EU voters every 5 years. The most recent election was in 2019. Each EU country elects a number of members, in proportion to its population. MEPs don't sit in groups based on their nationality, but in political groups that cover several countries, or as independents. David Sassoli is the current President of the European Parliament.



- Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
- Renew Europe Group
- Identity and Democracy
- Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
- Non-attached Members

The [Council of the European Union](#), also known as the Council, is made up of the government ministers of all the EU countries. Together with the European Parliament, it is the main decision-making body of the EU. Every 6 months a different

EU country holds the [presidency](#) of the Council. To ensure continuity, the presidencies work together closely in groups of three on a common agenda over an 18-month period.



This is not to be confused with the [European Council](#), which is made up of the leaders of all the EU countries. It sets the EU's political direction and priorities. Charles Michel is the current President of the European Council.



The [European Commission](#) is the EU's civil service. It has the right to propose new actions and new laws, which are then decided on by the Parliament and the Council. It is also responsible for ensuring that EU rules are correctly applied. The Commission is led by President Ursula von der Leyen and her team of Commissioners – one from each EU country.

All countries in the European Union have to follow EU rules and meet the targets they sign up to, otherwise the Commission can take [action](#) against them.



The [Court of Justice of the European Union](#) ensures that EU law is enforced and applied in the same way in every EU country.

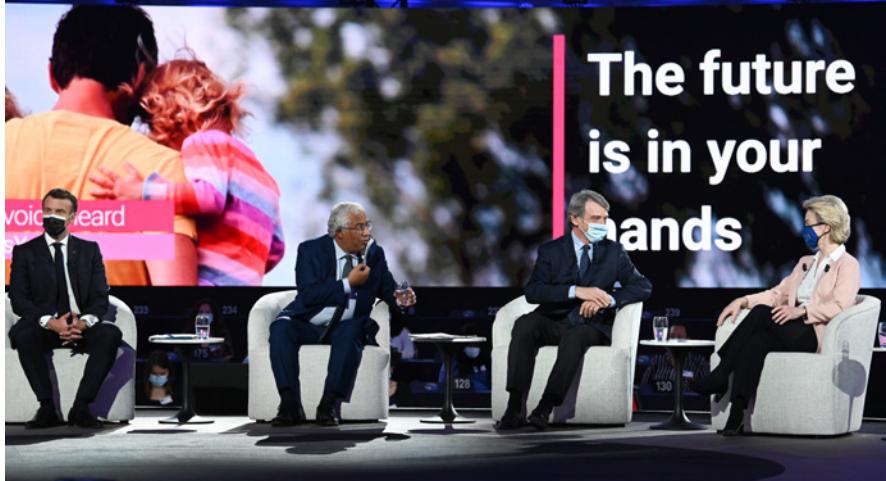


The [European Central Bank](#) manages the euro. Its main aim is to keep prices stable in the euro area.

## Who pays for the EU?

The money spent by the EU (the [EU budget](#)) comes from several [sources](#): customs duties; contributions based on the value added tax (VAT) collected by EU countries; and direct contributions by EU countries. A new source of revenue – a levy on non-recycled plastic packaging waste – was introduced in January 2021.

From contributing to new and better roads, railways and airports to developing rural areas and enabling studying opportunities abroad, the EU budget helps to deliver on the things that matter to people in the EU. As well as leading the digital transformation and the fight against climate change, it also helps to reduce disparities within and between EU countries.



# How can I get involved?

Do you have ideas about the kind of EU you want to live in? Well, it's time to speak up. Whoever you are and wherever you are, the EU wants to hear your suggestions.

The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission have launched a major pan-European debate – the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) – to enable everyone across the EU to share their views and their hopes for the European Union in the years ahead. There are events in all countries, with debates online and, where COVID-19 rules permit, in person. You can find out what's happening on the conference's multilingual [website](#). You can even organise your own events and upload them. So make sure you get involved – the future of Europe is in your hands!

As an EU citizen, there are already several ways you can contribute to the decision-making process. For a start, you can make your voice heard by voting in the [European elections](#) every 5 years. Find out which MEPs [represent your country](#).



The launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 9 May 2021.

Left to right: President of France Emmanuel Macron, President-in-office of the Council of the European Union António Costa, President of the European Parliament David Sassoli and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

Have you ever thought an EU law could be improved? Well, you can help make EU rules fit for the future by making [suggestions](#) on how to simplify and modernise existing laws. You can also share your views on new policies. Make sure you [have your say](#) on the issues that matter to you. You can contribute in any of the 24 official EU languages.

If you enjoy public debates, why not take part in one of the many [citizens' dialogues](#) that take place across the EU every year. This is your chance to ask EU politicians questions and tell them how EU policies affect you. You can also share your ideas on the future of Europe there. [Check out the dates](#) and cities for upcoming dialogues.

Under the [European citizens' initiative](#) you can ask the Commission to propose a new law. First you'll need to gather support for your cause. Once an initiative has gathered 1 million signatures, the Commission will decide on what action to take. So far, six citizens' initiatives have reached the required number of signatures.

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The first-ever successful European citizens' initiative, Right2Water, led to [new rules](#) to ensure the safety and quality of drinking water, and easier access to it for vulnerable groups.

An audience member joins the debate at a citizens' dialogue, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, 20 January 2020.  
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## Where can I get more information?

There are hundreds of **Europe Direct information centres** all over the European Union. You can find the address of the one nearest you at:

[https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us_en)

You can contact Europe Direct:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or
- by email via: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the **Europa website** at: <https://europa.eu>. Check out also the [General Report](#) on all of the EU's activities in 2020.

You can download or order free and priced **EU publications** from: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publications>

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The **European Parliament** in your country:  
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