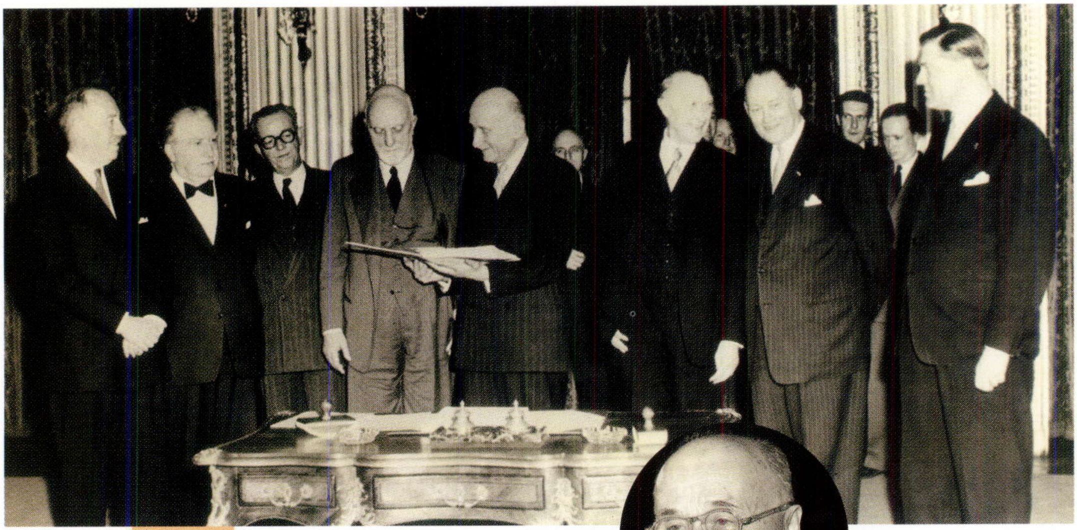
SEVEN KEY DAYS IN THE MAKING OF EUROPE

Europe on the move

The building of a united Europe is undoubtedly one of the greatest historical undertakings of the 20th century. It is a process grounded in the positive values with which our civilization identifies — the preservation of peace, economic and social progress, respect for the person and the predominance of right over might — and, over the nearly 50 years for which the process has been under way, there have been some moments of crisis but also major successes. Six countries originally rallied to the concept of a united Europe; now there are 15, while more than 10 others feel drawn towards that ideal and have applied to join the European Union.

The 20th century bears tragic scars left by the rise and then the collapse of the totalitarian ideologies. As the third millennium dawns, the movement towards a voluntary union among Europe's peoples is still the only great collective venture inspired by an ideal which looks beyond the conflicts of the past to a way of working together to shape the future. Today it is clearly the only credible answer to the hazards and opportunities posed by the increasing globalization of the world economy.

Like all other histories, that of the European Union has had its high points, its symbolic dates. Seven of them are worth remembering, as they made the Europe we live in today — and they are the keys to the continent which will be ours tomorrow.



The signing of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community on 18 April 1951. Six countries embarked on an entirely new form of international cooperation, designed to bring peace and prosperity to the Member States of the first Community.

Left to right:
Paul van Zeeland (B), Joseph Bech (L), Joseph Meurice (B), Carlo Sforza (I), Robert Schuman (F), Konrad Adenauer (D), Dirk Stikker and Johannes van den Brink (NL).

Jean Monnet, 'the father of Europe'.

9 MAY 1950 EUROPE IS BORN

In spring 1950, Europe was on the edge of the abyss. With the onset of the Cold War, the threat of conflict between its eastern and western halves loomed over the continent. Five years after the end of the Second World War, the old enemies were still a long way from reconciliation.

What could be done to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to create the right conditions for a lasting peace between such recent enemies? The nub of the problem was the relationship between France and Germany. A link had to be forged between the two and all the free countries in Europe had to be united around them so that they could work together on building a community with a shared destiny. It was Jean Monnet, with his unique wealth of experience as a negotiator and man of peace, who suggested to the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, and the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, that a community of interest be established between their countries, in the shape of a jointly managed market in coal and steel under the control of an independent authority. The proposal was officially tabled by France on 9 May 1950, and was warmly received by Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The treaty establishing the first European Community, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was eventually signed in April 1951, opening up the door to a Europe of practical achievements. Further achievements were to follow until we finally reached the European Union as it is today, a Union now opening up to the eastern half of the continent from which it has too long been separated.

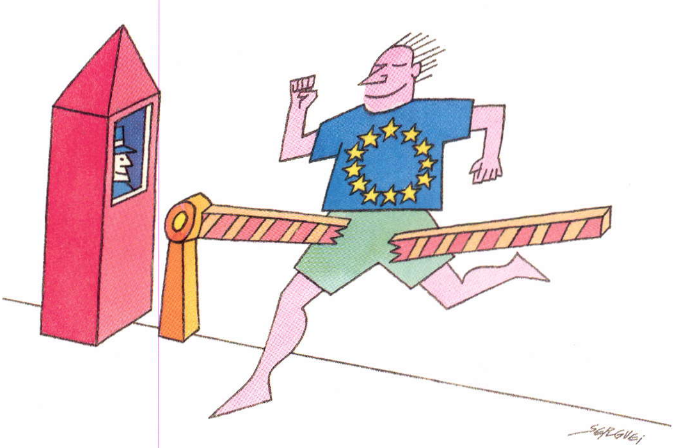
25 MARCH 1957

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

The offspring of the Schuman plan was a Community specializing in two important but limited fields, coal and steel. It was time to convert the try and press forward on the road to integration. Under pressure from the Cold War, initiatives were put forward in the areas of defence and political union, but public opinion was not yet ready to accept them. The six ECSC Member States decided to break fresh ground and go for an economic revival, by setting up a common market.

The Treaty of Rome of 25 March 1957, which established the EEC, set up institutions and decision-making mechanisms through which both national interests and a Community view could find their expression. From that time onwards, the European Community was the major axis round which the movement for a united Europe turned.

Between 1958 and 1970, the abolition of customs duties had spectacular effects: trade within the Community increased sixfold while EEC trade with the rest of the world went up by a factor of three. Average gross national product in the EEC over the same period went up by 70%. Following the pattern set by the major markets operating on a continental scale, such as that of the United States, economic interests in Europe took advantage of the invigorating effects of opening up Europe's frontiers. Consumers became used to seeing an ever-increasing variety of imported goods in the shops. The European dimension had become a reality. The signing of the Single Act in 1986 meant that Europe was able to sweep away the other regulatory and fiscal restrictions which were still delaying the establishment of a genuine, completely unified internal market.



20 JULY 1963 YAOUNDÉ, THE BEGINNINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL ROLE

As early as 1963, as they linked together their destinies in Europe, the founding countries of the European Union signed a convention with their former African colonies guaranteeing them certain trading advantages and financial aid. The Lomé Convention, which followed on from the Yaoundé agreement, now covers 70 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and makes the European Union the largest supplier of official development aid. Cooperation has also extended, in other forms, to most countries in Asia and Latin America.

On 28 November 1995, the 15 European Union countries and 12 countries with seaboards on the southern Mediterranean established a partnership which should eventually lead to the setting up of a free-trade area, flanked by agreements for cooperation in the social, cultural and human spheres.

The 21st century will see Europe assert itself as a force for peace, provided the Union fosters stability and development within the major regional groupings which surround it. Thanks to its position in world trade and its economic weight, the Union is already a respected partner in the great international forums such as the World Trade Organization or the UN.

Step by step, the Union is using its economic power as a means of developing its political influence and speaking with a single voice. The 1992 Treaty on European Union sets the objective and lays down the procedures for a common foreign and security policy (CFSP), stipulating that it will eventually lead to a common defence policy. But the nations of Europe still have a lot of work to do if they are to harmonize their diplomatic efforts and their security policies. This presupposes genuine political will on the part of the Member States, and is the price the Union must pay if it is to defend its interests and help ensure peace and justice in the world.

Relations with the Third World are one of the fields in which the Community has played a pioneering and conspicuous international role. The European Union is now gradually equipping itself with a common foreign and security policy; this has meant, among other things, that it was able to help restore peace to the countries of former Yugoslavia (the photo shows the peace agreement being signed in Paris on 14 December 1995). Once it has pressed further ahead with this common policy, the Union may perhaps have enough influence to prevent such conflicts breaking out.

Gamma

1 JANUARY 1973 THE FIRST ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The European Union is open to any European country which wants to join it and is prepared to take on all the commitments made in the founding treaties and to subscribe to the same fundamental objectives. There are two conditions which determine whether an application for admission is entertained: whether the country is in Europe and whether it applies all the democratic procedures which characterize a State under the rule of law.

Thus Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom became members of the Community on 1 January 1973. Later, in the 1980s, more southern members were admitted as Greece, Spain and Portugal took their places among the concert of democratic nations. The third wave of admissions, in 1995, reflected the eagerness of countries in Scandinavia and Central Europe to join a Union which was consolidating its internal market and clearly emerging as the only focus of stability in the continent after the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

Growing from six to nine to twelve, and then to its current 15 members, the European Community has won increasing influence and prestige. It must keep its decision-making system efficient and capable of managing the common interest for the benefit of all its members, while at the same time preserving the national and regional identities and special characteristics which are its major asset. The greatest challenge Europe's peoples now face is that of welcoming the applicant countries in Central Europe, the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Baltic area over the next few years. Where are we to find the resources needed to help them rise to the economic and structural levels of EU countries in the shortest possible time? How are we to adapt the institutions so that they can continue to perform their tasks in the best interests of a Union with more than 25 members? These are the historic tasks now facing the Union's Member States.

The original Community of Six expanded to take in Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1973, Greece in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1990, it welcomed the new Länder *in eastern Germany, and in 1995 the European Union was joined by Austria, Finland and Sweden. It will soon be opening up to its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe.*

The Union's citizens elect the Members of the European Parliament by universal suffrage every five years. Parliament has important decision-making and supervisory powers. It plays a part in appointing the European Commission, which is responsible for proposing and carrying out common policies.

EKA

7-10 JUNE 1979 THE FIRST DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

In the Community's institutional balance, the European Parliament has a vital part to play: it represents Europe's peoples and embodies the democratic character of the European enterprise. From the outset Parliament was given powers of control over the executive branch, but it also has legislative power in the form of a right to be consulted on the main items of Community legislation, a power which has gradually expanded to become a genuine right of legislative co-decision. Parliament also shares budgetary power with the Council. How are Members of the European Parliament elected? Up until 1979, MEPs were members of the national parliaments delegated to represent the latter at Strasbourg. Since that year, however, they have been elected by direct universal suffrage in each Union country, elections being held every five years. Thus Europe's citizens elect members to sit not in national delegations but in multinational parliamentary groups representing the main trends in political thinking in Europe.

One completely revolutionary departure in the practice of international relations is the attempt to forge a link between the Member States whereby they can manage their interests and settle any differences between them according to the same laws and the same arbitration procedures as unite the citizens of a democratic State. 'We are not building a coalition of States, we are uniting people,' wrote Jean Monnet. This means that the shared institutions, which are involved at all times in expressing the wishes and reconciling the interests of Europe's citizens as such, must be strong and properly balanced. The subtle dialectic which has been going on for nearly 50 years between the Council, the Parliament, the Commission and the Court of Justice represents both a vital achievement in the building of the Community and the key to its success.

17 FEBRUARY 1986 THE SIGNING OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT

The Treaty of Rome laid down the 'equal pay for equal work' rule as early as 1957, prohibiting discrimination between men and women. The Single European Act took account of the social dimension of Europe, which was underlined by the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers in 1989.

The Treaty of Rome's objective of building a common market was partly achieved in the 1960s when customs duties and quantitative limits on trade were abolished. But the authors of the Treaty had underestimated a whole range of other obstacles to trade, a set of complicated obstructions camouflaged as rules and regulations which it was often impossible to get round.

The Commission therefore took a bold initiative which culminated in the signing of the Single European Act. This set 1 January 1993 as the date by which a full internal market was to be established, and, by extending the practice of majority voting, gave the Community institutions the means of adopting the 300 directives required.

The Single Act links the objective of the great internal market closely to another, equally vital target: the achievement of economic and social cohesion. Europe has introduced structural policies to help regions where development is lagging behind or which have been hard-hit by technological or industrial change. It promotes cooperation in research and development. It also takes account of the social dimension of the internal market: in the view of those who govern the Union, the proper functioning of the internal market and healthy competition between businesses are inseparable from the ongoing objective of improving the living and working conditions of Europe's citizens.

Photonews

1 NOVEMBER 1993 THE EUROPEAN UNION

When the Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992, came into force on 1 November 1993, it gave European integration a whole new dimension. The European Community, which was essentially economic in aspiration and content, was transformed into a European Union, which now stands on three pillars.

The Community pillar is run according to the traditional institutional procedures and governs the operations of the Commission, Parliament, the Council and the Court of Justice; basically, it involves managing the internal market and the common policies. The other two pillars involve the Member States in areas hitherto regarded as being matters over which the national governments alone had power: on the one hand, foreign and security policy and, on the other, home affairs, covering matters such as immigration and asylum policy, the police and justice. This is an important step forward in that the Member States regard it as being in their interest to cooperate more closely in these areas, thus affirming Europe's identity in the world and making sure their citizens are better protected against organized crime and drug trafficking.

What ordinary people will remember most about the Maastricht Treaty, however, is likely to be the decision which will have the biggest practical impact on their day-to-day lives, the decision to go for economic and monetary union. On 1 January 1999, EMU will take in all the countries which satisfy a certain number of economic criteria designed to guarantee sound financial management and to ensure that the single currency, the euro, is stable in the years to come.

The final, logical stage in the completion of the internal market, the introduction of the single currency, is a highly political step, given the personal repercussions for each and every citizen and the economic and social consequences it will have. One might even say that the euro will come to be the most tangible symbol of the European Union. A currency like the euro, strong and capable of competing with the great international reserve currencies, will be clear proof of the fact that we all belong to a continent which is uniting and asserting itself.

The single market calls for a single currency in which all the Member States can participate if they meet certain conditions relating to sound management. Once the euro comes in, businesses and individuals will no longer be held hostage to fluctuating exchange rates. Competitiveness and, therefore, employment in Europe can only stand to gain. It will also be a new sign — a major sign — of progress in the building of a united Europe.

EN

This publication appears in all official Community languages — Spanish, Danish, German, Greek, English, French, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Finnish and Swedish.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed trough the Europa server (http://europa.eu.int)

European Commission
Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture and Audiovisual
Publications Unit, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels

Text: **Pascal Fontaine,** professor at the Institut d'études politiques, Paris.
Drawings: Serguei

Printed in Belgium

COMMISSION REPRESENTATIONS

Representation in Ireland	18 Dawson Street, Dublin 2 — Tel. (1) 662 51 13
Representation in England	Jean Monnet House, 8 Storey's Gate, London SWIP 3AT — Tel. (171) 973 1992
Representation in Wales	4 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF1 9SG — Tel. (12 22) 37 16 31
Representation in Scotland	9 Alva Street, Edinburgh EH2 4PH — Tel. (131) 225 20 58
Representation in Northern Ireland	Windsor House, 9/15 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7EG — Tel. (12 32) 24 07 08
Information services in the USA	2300 M Street, NW, Suite 707, Washington DC 20037 — Tel. (202) 862 95 00
	305 East 47th Street, 3 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, NY 10017 — Tel. (212) 371 38 04

Commission representations and offices also exist in the other countries of the European Union and in other parts of the world

ISBN 92-827-9853-4

OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
L-2985 Luxembourg

Catalogue number: CM-03-97-725-EN-C ISSN 1022-8233

9 789282 798539

1