



# europaean community

# NEWS

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## MAASTRICHT EUROPEAN UNION TREATY TO ENTER INTO FORCE

The Maastricht Treaty on European Union will enter into force as planned on November 1 following formal completion today by the German Government of that country's ratification procedures. The German Constitutional Court yesterday ruled in favor of the Treaty, clearing the last hurdle to the Treaty's implementation which will be discussed at a special European Council of all 12 EC Heads of State or Government on October 29.

In a statement released in Brussels yesterday, President Delors welcomed the German Court decision (working translation from the French):

"The European Commission is delighted that Germany - a founder member of the Community - is proceeding with its contribution to the democratic construction of a Europe united in the diversity of national and regional personalities, traditions and cultures.

Henceforth, the European Council of October 29 will be able to devote its work to the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty which the European institutions have been preparing for some months.

This ratification will also permit the Community to get out of a period of waiting and moroseness and give a new and much needed impetus to the fight against economic stagnation and unemployment and to the security of the continent."

The Maastricht Treaty amends the 1957 Rome Treaties (the EC's basic "constitution") to create a European Union, founded on the Communities, and supplemented by new policies and forms of cooperation. The Treaty which is wider in scope than previous EC treaties will enable the Community to play a more coherent, political and economic role in the world, commensurate with its international responsibilities.

For the first time, the Treaty provides for a **common foreign and security policy** whose broad direction will be decided by Heads of State or Government meeting in the European Council. The policy will be implemented through intergovernmental procedures in the EC Council of Ministers - in association with the Commission and in consultation with the European Parliament - in areas of common essential interest (for example, human rights, disarmament policy and arms control in Europe, and nuclear non-proliferation.) The primary aims of the policy are the maintenance of peace, the strengthening of security in the world, and the promotion of international cooperation.

The new Treaty also provides for a European Central Bank and the introduction of a **single currency** (the ECU), during the last of three stages of **economic and monetary union**. This will begin on January 1, 1999 at the latest, once exchange rates are irrevocably fixed among EC member states. In the meantime, national currencies will remain in circulation alongside the ECU, which will gradually take on a larger role.

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The new Treaty will make EC institutions more democratic and accountable. The European Parliament, the only directly elected EC institution, will be more involved in EC policy- and decision-making and will have the final say in the appointment of the next and subsequent Commissions and its President. From 1995, Commission terms will be brought into line with those of the Parliament (five years). Decisions affecting the lives of European citizens will be taken as close to them as possible, i.e. only at EC level where it is more effective than at national or local level. EC institutions will also follow a more open policy of public information.

In addition to national citizenship, EC citizens will enjoy European citizenship which will give them the right not only to move and work throughout the Community, but also to reside, vote and stand as candidates in local and European elections.

The Treaty also provides that the member states should act together on questions relating to asylum, conditions of entry, movement and residence of citizens of non-member countries, and to fight illegal immigration and unauthorized employment in compliance with international conventions.

The Treaty on European Union was negotiated in 1991 and signed by EC Foreign and Finance Ministers in Maastricht, the Netherlands, in February 1992. To take effect, it required ratification by all EC member states. This was done through parliamentary debate in most countries except Denmark, Ireland and France. Denmark narrowly rejected "Maastricht" in May 1992 and then accepted it, with some exemptions, in a second referendum in September 1992. Germany is the last member state to complete ratification.

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