

The European Union

1 Read the text.

The Second World War devastated Europe. To prevent its countries from fighting again in the future, Europe needed to organise some form of integration. The first idea was the European Coal and Steel Community, that was created in 1951. It had its six founding members: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. Later, in 1957, these countries signed the Treaties of Rome, creating the European Economic Community with a customs union.

In the following years more countries were added to the community: Denmark, Ireland, the UK, Greece, Spain, Portugal and East Germany. The organisation developed into the European Union in 1993 and two years later Austria, Finland and Sweden joined it. Even more countries became part of the Union in the following years.

Today the EU is an economic and political union of 28 countries that has developed a single economic market with a standardised system of laws. Thanks to these laws, people, capital, goods and services can move freely. The EU also has common rules regarding trade, agriculture and regional development and it is the largest exporter and importer of goods and services in the world.

To join the EU a country must meet some standards, such as a stable democracy, a functioning market economy and the acceptance of the obligations of membership (for example the abolition of the death penalty). The activities of the Union are controlled by some institutions and bodies, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Council.

In 2002 a common currency, the euro, was introduced, replacing national currencies. Today the euro is adopted in sixteen member countries. The euro was created to help build a single market and it is controlled by the European Central Bank. However not all countries have the euro and there are another eleven currencies used in the EU including the British pound.

There are great economical differences between member countries and for this reason some funds are used to help the poorer regions (especially the new member states of East-Central Europe).

Glossary

currency *moneta, valuta*

2 Read the text again and decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The European Economic Community was created in 1951 by six founding members.
- 2 Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1993.
- 3 The EU is the second largest exporter and importer of goods and services in the world.
- 4 There are no rules about entering the EU.
- 5 Countries must have democracy.
- 6 Today the euro is adopted in all member countries.
- 7 The EU tries to reduce economic differences between nations.
- 8 The United Kingdom is not member of the EU and does not have the euro.

T	F
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