

European Union & its Contribution to the Development of Society and Nation

Masum Billah

Department of Politics and International Relations

International Islamic University

Pakistan

E-mail: masumiu00@yahoo.com (Author of Correspondence)

Abstract

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe. It has an area of 4,475,757 km² (1,728,099 sq mi) and an estimated population of about 513 million. The EU has developed an internal single market through a standardized system of laws that apply in all member states in those matters, and only those matters, where members have agreed to act as one. EU policies aim to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the internal market, enact legislation in justice and home affairs and maintain common policies on trade, agriculture, fisheries and regional development. For travel within the Schengen Area, passport controls have been abolished. A monetary union was established in 1999 and came into full force in 2002 and is composed of 19 EU member states which use the euro currency.

Keywords: EU; History; Contribution; Impact on Society; Social and Economical Development.

1. Introduction

The EU and European citizenship were established when the Maastricht Treaty came into force in 1993. The EU traces its origins to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), established, respectively, by the 1951 Treaty of Paris and 1957 Treaty of Rome. The original members of what came to be known as the European Communities were the Inner Six: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. The Communities and its successors have grown in size by the accession of new member states and in power by the addition of policy areas to its remit. The latest major amendment to the constitutional basis of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon, came into force in 2009. While no member state has left the EU or its antecedent organizations, the United Kingdom signified the intention to leave after a membership referendum in June 2016 and is negotiating its withdrawal on 29 March 2019.

Covering 7.3% of the world population, the EU in 2017 generated a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of 19.670 trillion US dollars, constituting approximately 24.6% of global nominal GDP. Additionally, all 28 EU countries have a very high Human Development Index, according to the United Nations Development Program. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Through the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU has developed a role in external relations and defence. The union maintains permanent diplomatic missions throughout the world and represents itself at the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G7 and the G20. Because of its global influence, the European Union has been described as an emerging superpower.

2. Population

As of 1 January 2016, the population of the European Union was about 510.1 million people (6.9% of the world population). In 2015, 5.1 million children were born in the EU-28, corresponding to a birth rate of 10 per 1,000, which is 8 births below the world average. For comparison, the EU-28 birth rate had stood at 10.6 in 2000, 12.8 in 1985 and 16.3 in 1970. Its population growth rate was positive at an estimated 0.23% in 2016.

In 2010, 47.3 million people who lived in the EU were born outside their resident country. This corresponds to 9.4% of the total EU population. Of these, 31.4 million (6.3%) were born outside the EU and 16.0 million (3.2%) were born in another EU member state. The largest absolute numbers of people born outside the EU were in Germany (6.4 million), France (5.1 million), the United Kingdom (4.7 million), Spain (4.1 million), Italy (3.2 million), and the Netherlands (1.4 million).

3. Urbanization

The EU contains about 40 urban areas with populations of over one million, including the two megacities (cities with a population of over 10 million) of London and Paris. Also, there are several other metropolises with a population of over 5 million like Madrid, Barcelona, Berlin and includes polycentric urbanized regions like Rhine-Ruhr (Cologne, Dortmund, Düsseldorf et al.), Randstad (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht et al.), Frankfurt Rhine-Main, the Flemish Diamond (Antwerp, Brussels, Leuven, Ghent et al.) and Upper Silesian area (Katowice, Ostrava et al.).

4. Languages

The European Union has 24 official languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish. Important documents, such as legislation, are translated into every official language and the European Parliament provides translation for documents and plenary sessions.

Due to the high number of official idioms, most of the institutions use only a handful of working languages. The European Commission conducts its internal business in three procedural languages: English, French, and German. Similarly, the European Court of Justice uses French as the working language, while the European Central Bank conducts its business primarily in English.

Even though language policy is the responsibility of member states, EU institutions promote multilingualism among its citizens. English is the most widely spoken language in the EU, being understood by 51% of the EU population when counting both native and non-native speakers. German is the most widely spoken mother tongue (spoken by 16% of the EU population.) More than a half (56%) of EU citizens is able to engage in a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue.

Most official languages of the EU belong to the Indo-European language family, represented by the Balto-Slavic,

- 1) The Italic,
- 2) The Germanic,
- 3) The Hellenic,
- 4) And the Celtic,
- 5) Branches

Some EU languages however, namely Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian (all three Uralic), Basque (Vasconic) and Maltese (Semitic) do not belong to Indo-European languages. The three official alphabets of the European Union (Cyrillic, Latin, and Modern Greek), all derive from the Archaic Greek scripts.

Besides the 24 official languages, there are about 150 regional and minority languages, spoken by up to 50 million people. Catalan, Galician, Basque, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh are not recognized official languages of the European Union but have semi-official status: official translations of the treaties are made into them and citizens have the right to correspond with the institutions in these languages. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ratified by most EU states provides general guidelines that states can follow to protect their linguistic heritage. The European Day of Languages is held annually on 26 September and is aimed at encouraging language learning across Europe.

5. Religion

The preamble to the Treaty on European Union mentions the "cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe". Discussion over the draft texts of the European Constitution and later the Treaty of Lisbon included proposals to mention Christianity or God, or both, in the preamble of the text, but the idea faced opposition and was dropped.

Christians in the European Union are divided among members of Catholicism (both Roman and Eastern Rite), numerous Protestant denominations (Anglicans, Lutherans, and Reformed forming the bulk of this category), and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In 2009, the EU had an estimated Muslim population of 13 million, and an estimated Jewish population of over a million. The other world religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism are also represented in the EU population.

According to new polls about religiosity in the European Union in 2015 by Euro barometer, Christianity is the largest religion in the European Union, accounting for 71.6% of the EU population. Catholics are the largest Christian group, accounting for 45.3% of the EU population, while Protestants make up 11.1%, Eastern Orthodox make up 9.6%, and other Christians make up 5.6%.

Eurostat's Euro barometer opinion polls showed in 2005 that 52% of EU citizens believed in a God, 27% in "some sort of spirit or life force", and 18% had no form of belief. Many countries have experienced falling church attendance and membership in recent years. The countries where the fewest people reported a religious belief were Estonia (16%) and the Czech Republic (19%). The most religious countries were Malta (95%, predominantly Roman Catholic) as well as Cyprus and Romania (both predominantly Orthodox) each with about 90% of citizens professing a belief in God. Across the EU, belief was higher among women, older

people, those with religious upbringing, those who left school at 15 or 16, and those "positioning themselves on the right of the political scale".

6. Member States

Through successive enlargements, the European Union has grown from the six founding states (Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) to the current 28. Countries accede to the union by becoming party to the founding treaties, thereby subjecting themselves to the privileges and obligations of EU membership. This entails a partial delegation of sovereignty to the institutions in return for representation within those institutions, a practice often referred to as "pooling of sovereignty".

There are six countries that are recognized as candidates for membership: Albania, Iceland, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey, though Iceland suspended negotiations in 2013. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are officially recognized as potential candidates, with Bosnia and Herzegovina having submitted a membership application.

The four countries forming the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are not EU members, but have partly committed to the EU's economy and regulations: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, which are a part of the single market through the European Economic Area, and Switzerland, which has similar ties through bilateral treaties. The relationships of the European microstates, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and Vatican City include the use of the euro and other areas of co-operation. The following 28 sovereign states (of which the map only shows territories situated in and around Europe) constitute the European Union.

The EU's member states cover an area of 4,423,147 square kilometers (1,707,787 sq. mi). The EU's highest peak is Mont Blanc in the Graian Alps, 4,810.45 meters (15,782 ft) above sea level. The lowest points in the EU are Lammefjorden, Denmark and Zuidplaspolder, Netherlands, at 7 m (23 ft) below sea level. The landscape, climate, and economy of the EU are influenced by its coastline, which is 65,993 kilometers (41,006 mi) long.

Including the overseas territories of France which are located outside the continent of Europe, but which are members of the union, the EU experiences most types of climate from Arctic (North-East Europe) to tropical (French Guiana), rendering meteorological averages for the EU as a whole meaningless. The majority of the population lives in areas with a temperate maritime climate (North-Western Europe and Central Europe), a Mediterranean climate (Southern Europe), or a warm summer continental or hemiboreal climate (Northern Balkans and Central Europe).

The EU's population is highly urbanized, with some 75% of inhabitants living in urban areas as of 2006. Cities are largely spread out across the EU, although with a large grouping in and around the Benelux.

7. Politics

The EU operates through a hybrid system of supranational and intergovernmental decision-making, and according to the principles of conferral (which says that it should act only within the limits of the competences conferred on it by the treaties) and of subsidiarity (which says that it should act only where an objective cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states acting alone). Laws made by the EU institutions are passed in a variety of forms. Generally speaking, they can be classified into two groups: those which come into force without the necessity for national implementation measures (regulations) and those which specifically require national implementation measures (directives).

The European Union has seven principal decision making bodies, its institutions: the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, and the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Central Bank and the European Court of Auditors. Competence in scrutinizing and amending legislation is shared between the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament, while executive tasks are performed by the European Commission and in a limited capacity by the European Council (not to be confused with the aforementioned Council of the European Union). The monetary policy of the Eurozone is determined by the European Central Bank. The interpretation and the application of EU law and the treaties are ensured by the Court of Justice of the European Union. The EU budget is scrutinised by the European Court of Auditors. There are also a number of ancillary bodies which advise the EU or operate in a specific area.

The European Council, which sets the general political directions and priorities of the Union by gathering together its member states' heads of state/government (elected chief executives). The conclusions of its summits (held at least quarterly) are adopted by consensus.

The European Commission, the "Guardian of the Treaties" consists of an executive cabinet of public officials, led by an indirectly elected President. This College of Commissioners manages and directs the Commission's permanent civil service. It turns the consensus objectives of the European Council into legislative proposals.

The Council of the European Union brings together ministers of member states governments' departments. It forms the upper house of the EU's essentially bicameral legislature and its approval is required for any proposal to enter into law. The European Parliament consists of 751 directly elected representatives, forming the EU's lower house of its bicameral legislature. It shares with the Council of the EU equal legislative powers to amend, approve or reject Commission proposals for most areas of EU legislation. Its powers are limited in areas where

member states' view sovereignty to be of primary concern (i.e. defense). It elects the Commission's President, must approve the College of Commissioners, and may vote to remove them collectively from office.

The Court of Justice of the European Union ensures the uniform application of EU law and resolves disputes between EU institutions and member states, and against EU institutions on behalf of individuals.

The European Central Bank is responsible for monetary stability within member states.

The European Court of Auditors investigates the proper management of finances within both the EU entities and EU funding provided to its member states. As well as providing oversight and advice, it can refer unresolved issues to the European Court of Justice to arbitrate on any alleged irregularities.

EU policy is in general promulgated by EU directives, which are then implemented in the domestic legislation of its member states, and EU regulations, which are immediately enforceable in all member states. Lobbying at EU level by special interest groups is regulated to try to balance the aspirations of private initiatives with public interest decision-making process.

8. European Parliament

The European Parliament forms the other half of the EU's legislature. The 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by EU citizens every five years on the basis of proportional representation. Although MEPs are elected on a national basis, they sit according to political groups rather than their nationality. Each country has a set number of seats and is divided into sub-national constituencies where this does not affect the proportional nature of the voting system.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union pass legislation jointly in nearly all areas under the ordinary legislative procedure. This also applies to the EU budget. The European Commission is accountable to Parliament, requiring its approval to take office, having to report back to it and subject to motions of censure from it. The President of the European Parliament (currently Antonio Tajani) carries out the role of speaker in Parliament and represents it externally. The President and Vice-Presidents are elected by MEPs every two and a half years.

9. European Council

The European Council gives political direction to the EU. It convenes at least four times a year and comprises the President of the European Council (currently Donald Tusk), the President of the European Commission and one representative per member state (either its head of state or head of government). The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (currently Federica Mogherini) also takes

part in its meetings. It has been described by some as the Union's "supreme political authority". It is actively involved in the negotiation of treaty changes and defines the EU's policy agenda and strategies.

The European Council uses its leadership role to sort out disputes between member states and the institutions, and to resolve political crises and disagreements over controversial issues and policies. It acts externally as a "collective head of state" and ratifies important documents (for example, international agreements and treaties).

Tasks for the President of the European Council are ensuring the external representation of the EU, driving consensus and resolving divergences among member states, both during meetings of the European Council and over the periods between them.

The European Council should not be mistaken for the Council of Europe, an international organization independent of the EU based in Strasbourg.

10. Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union (also called the "Council" and the "Council of Ministers", forms one half of the EU's legislature. It consists of a government minister from each member state and meets in different compositions depending on the policy area being addressed. Notwithstanding its different configurations, it is considered to be one single body. In addition to its legislative functions, the Council also exercises executive functions in relations to the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

10. European Commission

The European Commission acts as the EU's executive arm and is responsible for initiating legislation and the day-to-day running of the EU. The Commission is also seen as the motor of European integration. It operates as a cabinet government, with 28 Commissioners for different areas of policy, one from each member state, though Commissioners are bound to represent the interests of the EU as a whole rather than their home state.

One of the 28 is the President of the European Commission (currently Jean-Claude Juncker) appointed by the European Council. After the President, the most prominent Commissioner is the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is ex-officio a Vice-President of the Commission and is also chosen by the European Council. The other 26 Commissioners are subsequently appointed by the Council of the European Union in agreement with the nominated President. The 28 Commissioners as a single body are subject to a vote of approval by the European Parliament

12. Budget

The EU had an agreed budget of €120.7 billion for the year 2007 and €864.3 billion for the period 2007–2013, [132] representing 1.10% and 1.05% of the EU-27's GNI forecast for the respective periods. In 1960, the budget of the then European Economic Community was 0.03% of GDP.

In the 2010 budget of €141.5 billion, the largest single expenditure item is "cohesion & competitiveness" with around 45% of the total budget. Next comes "agriculture" with approximately 31% of the total. "Rural development, environment and fisheries" takes up around 11%. "Administration" accounts for around 6%. The "EU as a global partner" and "citizenship, freedom, security and justice" bring up the rear with approximately 6% and 1% respectively.

The Court of Auditors is legally obliged to provide the Parliament and the Council with "a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions". The Court also gives opinions and proposals on financial legislation and anti-fraud actions. The Parliament uses this to decide whether to approve the Commission's handling of the budget.

The European Court of Auditors has signed off the European Union accounts every year since 2007 and, while making it clear that the European Commission has more work to do, has highlighted that most of the errors take place at national level. In their report on 2009 the auditors found that five areas of Union expenditure, agriculture and the cohesion fund, were materially affected by error. The European Commission estimated in 2009 that the financial effect of irregularities was €1,863 million.

13. Competences

EU member states retain all powers not explicitly handed to the European Union. In some areas the EU enjoys exclusive competence. These are areas in which member states have renounced any capacity to enact legislation. In other areas the EU and its member states share the competence to legislate. While both can legislate, member states can only legislate to the extent to which the EU has not. In other policy areas the EU can only co-ordinate, support and supplement member state action but cannot enact legislation with the aim of harmonizing national laws.

That a particular policy area falls into a certain category of competence is not necessarily indicative of what legislative procedure is used for enacting legislation within that policy area. Different legislative procedures are used within the same category of competence, and even with the same policy area.

The distribution of competences in various policy areas between Member States and the Union is divided in the following three categories:

1. As outlined in Title I of Part I of the consolidated Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
2. Exclusive competence
3. Shared competence
4. Supporting competence
5. The Union has exclusive competence to make directives and conclude international agreements when provided for in a Union legislative act as to ...
6. the customs union
7. the establishing of the competition rules necessary for the functioning of the internal market
8. monetary policy for the Member States whose currency is the euro
9. the conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy
10. Common Commercial Policy
11. conclusion of certain international agreements
12. Member States cannot exercise competence in areas where the Union has done so, that is ...
13. the internal market
14. social policy, for the aspects defined in this Treaty
15. economic, social and territorial cohesion
16. agriculture and fisheries, excluding the conservation of marine biological resources
17. environment
18. consumer protection
19. transport
20. trans-European networks
21. energy
22. the area of freedom, security and justice
23. common safety concerns in public health matters, for the aspects defined in this Treaty
24. Union exercise of competence shall not result in Member States being prevented from exercising
25. research, technological development and (outer) space
26. development cooperation, humanitarian aid
27. The Union coordinates Member States policies or implements supplemental to their common policies not covered
28. the coordination of economic, employment and social policies
29. common foreign, security and defense policies
30. The Union can carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement Member States' actions in ...
31. the protection and improvement of human health

32. industry
33. culture
34. tourism
35. education, youth, sport and vocational training
36. civil protection (disaster prevention)
37. administrative cooperation

14. Legal System

The EU is based on a series of treaties. These first established the European Community and the EU, and then made amendments to those founding treaties. These are power-giving treaties which set broad policy goals and establish institutions with the necessary legal powers to implement those goals. These legal powers include the ability to enact legislation which can directly affect all member states and their inhabitants. The EU has legal personality, with the right to sign agreements and international treaties.

Under the principle of supremacy, national courts are required to enforce the treaties that their member states have ratified, and thus the laws enacted under them, even if doing so requires them to ignore conflicting national law, and (within limits) even constitutional provisions.

15. Courts of Justice

The judicial branch of the EU—formally called the Court of Justice of the European Union—consists of two courts: the Court of Justice and the General Court. The Court of Justice primarily deals with cases taken by member states, the institutions, and cases referred to it by the courts of member states. The General Court mainly deals with cases taken by individuals and companies directly before the EU's courts, and the European Union Civil Service Tribunal adjudicates in disputes between the European Union and its civil service. Decisions from the General Court can be appealed to the Court of Justice but only on a point of law.

16. Fundamental rights

The treaties declare that the EU itself is "founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities ... in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty gave legal effect to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The charter is a codified catalogue of fundamental rights against which the EU's legal acts can be judged. It consolidates many rights which were previously recognized by the Court of Justice and derived from the

"constitutional traditions common to the member states." The Court of Justice has long recognized fundamental rights and has, on occasion, invalidated EU legislation based on its failure to adhere to those fundamental rights.

Although signing the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is a condition for EU membership, previously, the EU itself could not accede to the Convention as it is neither a state nor had the competence to accede. The Lisbon Treaty and Protocol 14 to the ECHR have changed this: the former binds the EU to accede to the Convention while the latter formally permits it.

Although, the EU is independent from Council of Europe, they share purpose and ideas especially on rule of law, human rights and democracy. Further European Convention on Human Rights and European Social Charter, the source of law of Charter of Fundamental Rights are created by Council of Europe. The EU also promoted human rights issues in the wider world. The EU opposes the death penalty and has proposed its worldwide abolition. Abolition of the death penalty is a condition for EU membership.

17. Acts

The main legal acts of the EU come in three forms: regulations, directives, and decisions. Regulations become law in all member states the moment they come into force, without the requirement for any implementing measures, and automatically override conflicting domestic provisions. Directives require member states to achieve a certain result while leaving them discretion as to how to achieve the result. The details of how they are to be implemented are left to member states. When the time limit for implementing directives passes, they may, under certain conditions, have direct effect in national law against member states.

Decisions offer an alternative to the two above modes of legislation. They are legal acts which only apply to specified individuals, companies or a particular member state. They are most often used in competition law, or on rulings on State Aid, but are also frequently used for procedural or administrative matters within the institutions. Regulations, directives, and decisions are of equal legal value and apply without any formal hierarchy.

Since the creation of the EU in 1993, it has developed its competencies in the area of justice and home affairs; initially at an intergovernmental level and later by supra-nationalism. Accordingly, the Union has legislated in areas such as extradition, family law, asylum law, and criminal justice. Prohibitions against sexual and nationality discrimination have a long standing in the treaties. In more recent years, these have been supplemented by powers to legislate against discrimination based on race, religion, disability, age, and sexual orientation. By virtue of these powers, the EU has enacted legislation on sexual discrimination in the workplace, age discrimination, and racial discrimination.

The Union has also established agencies to co-ordinate police, prosecutorial and immigration controls across the member states: Europol for co-operation of police forces, Euro just for co-operation between prosecutors, and Front ex for co-operation between border control authorities. The EU also operates the Schengen Information System which provides a common database for police and immigration authorities. This co-operation had to particularly be developed with the advent of open borders through the Schengen Agreement and the associated cross border crime.

18. Foreign Relations

Foreign policy co-operation between member states dates from the establishment of the Community in 1957, when member states negotiated as a bloc in international trade negotiations under the EU's common commercial policy. Steps for a more wide-ranging co-ordination in foreign relations began in 1970 with the establishment of European Political Cooperation which created an informal consultation process between member states with the aim of forming common foreign policies. It was not, however, until 1987 when European Political Cooperation was introduced on a formal basis by the Single European Act. EPC was renamed as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) by the Maastricht Treaty.

The aims of the CFSP are to promote both the EU's own interests and those of the international community as a whole, including the furtherance of international co-operation, respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The CFSP requires unanimity among the member states on the appropriate policy to follow on any particular issue. The unanimity and difficult issues treated under the CFSP sometimes lead to disagreements, such as those which occurred over the war in Iraq.

The coordinator and representative of the CFSP within the EU is the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy who speaks on behalf of the EU in foreign policy and defence matters, and has the task of articulating the positions expressed by the member states on these fields of policy into a common alignment. The High Representative heads up the European External Action Service (EEAS), a unique EU department that has been officially implemented and operational since 1 December 2010 on the occasion of the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. The EEAS will serve as a foreign ministry and diplomatic corps for the European Union.

Besides the emerging international policy of the European Union, the international influence of the EU is also felt through enlargement. The perceived benefits of becoming a member of the EU act as an incentive for both political and economic reform in states wishing to fulfill the EU's accession criteria, and are considered an important factor contributing to the reform of European Formerly Communist countries. This influence on the internal affairs of other countries is generally referred to as "soft power", as opposed to military "hard power".

The European Union has concluded free trade agreements (FTAs) and other agreements with a trade component with many countries worldwide and is negotiating with many others.

19. Defense

The predecessors of the European Union were not devised as a military alliance because NATO was largely seen as appropriate and sufficient for defense purposes. 22 EU members are members of NATO while the remaining member states follow policies of neutrality. The Western European Union, a military alliance with a mutual defense clause, was disbanded in 2010 as its role had been transferred to the EU.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the United Kingdom spent \$61 billion on defense in 2014, placing it fifth in the world, while France spent \$53 billion, the sixth largest. Together, the UK and France account for approximately 40 per cent of European countries' defense budget and 50 per cent of their military capacity. Both are officially recognized nuclear weapon states holding permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council.

Following the Kosovo War in 1999, the European Council agreed that "the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and the readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO". To that end, a number of efforts were made to increase the EU's military capability, notably the Helsinki Headline Goal process. After much discussion, the most concrete result was the EU Battle group's initiative, each of which is planned to be able to deploy quickly about 1500 personnel.

EU forces have been deployed on peacekeeping missions from middle and northern Africa to the western Balkans and western Asia. EU military operations are supported by a number of bodies, including the European Defense Agency, European Union Satellite Centre and the European Union Military Staff. Fronted is an agency of the EU established to manage the cooperation between national border guards securing its external borders. It aims to detect and stop illegal immigration, human trafficking and terrorist infiltration. In 2015 the European Commission presented its proposal for a new European Border and Coast Guard Agency having a stronger role and mandate along with national authorities for border management. In an EU consisting of 28 members, substantial security and defense co-operation is increasingly relying on collaboration among all member states.

20. Humanitarian Aid

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department, or "ECHO", provides humanitarian aid from the EU to developing countries. In 2012, its budget amounted to €874 million, 51% of the budget went to Africa and 20% to Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Pacific, and 20% to the Middle East and Mediterranean.

Humanitarian aid is financed directly by the budget (70%) as part of the financial instruments for external action and also by the European Development Fund (30%). The EU's external action financing is divided into 'geographic' instruments and 'thematic' instruments. The 'geographic' instruments provide aid through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI, €16.9 billion, 2007–2013), which must spend 95% of its budget on official development assistance (ODA), and from the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which contains some relevant programmers. The European Development Fund (EDF, €22.7 billion for the period 2008–2013 and €30.5 billion for the period 2014-2020) is made up of voluntary contributions by member states, but there is pressure to merge the EDF into the budget-financed instruments to encourage increased contributions to match the 0.7% target and allow the European Parliament greater oversight.

In 2016, the average among EU countries was 0.4% and five had met or exceeded the 0.7% target: Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

21. Regional and Global Influence

Because of its ability to shape rules and norms on a global level as well as its attempts to influence neighboring countries, the EU has been called an emerging or potential superpower by scholars and academics like T. R. Reid, Andrew Redding, Andrew Moravcsik, Mark Leonard, Jeremy Rifkin, John McCormick, and some politicians like Romano Prodi and Tony Blair. They believe that the EU is a superpower, or will become one, in the 21st century – while noting that, for them, the concept of "superpower" has changed to one of soft power rather than the hard (military) superpowers of the 20th century.

The EU uses foreign relations instruments like the European Neighborhood Policy which seeks to tie those countries to the east and south of the European territory of the EU to the Union. These countries, primarily developing countries, include some who seek to one day become either a member state of the European Union, or more closely integrated with the European Union. The EU offers financial assistance to countries within the European Neighborhood, so long as they meet the strict conditions of government reform, economic reform and other issues surrounding positive transformation. This process is normally underpinned by an Action Plan, as agreed by both Brussels and the target country.

22. Economy

The European Union has established a single market across the territory of all its members representing 512 million citizens. In 2017, the EU had a combined GDP of \$21 trillion international dollars, a 17% share of global gross domestic product by purchasing power parity (PPP). As a political entity the European Union is represented in the World Trade Organization (WTO). EU member states own the estimated second largest

after the United States (US\$98.2 trillion) net wealth in the world, equal to 25% (US\$78 trillion) of the \$317 trillion (~€280 trillion) global wealth.

19 member states have joined a monetary union known as the euro zone, which uses the Euro as a single currency. The currency union represents 342 million EU citizens. The euro is the second largest reserve currency as well as the second most traded currency in the world after the United States dollar.

Of the top 500 largest corporations in the world measured by revenue in 2010, 161 have their headquarters in the EU. In 2016, unemployment in the EU stood at 8.9% while inflation was at 2.2%, and the current account balance at -0.9% of GDP. The average annual net earnings in the European Union was around €24,000(US\$30,000) in 2015, which was about 70% of that in the United States.

There is a significant variation in Nominal GDP per capita within individual EU states. The difference between the richest and poorest regions (276 NUTS-2 regions of the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) ranged, in 2016, from 14% (Severozapaden, Bulgaria) of the EU28 average (€29,200) to 935% (Inner London – West, UK), or from €4,100 to €207,300.

Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds are supporting the development of underdeveloped regions of the EU. Such regions are primarily located in the states of central and southern Europe. Several funds provide emergency aid, support for candidate members to transform their country to conform to the EU's standard (Phare, ISPA, and SAPARD), and support to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS). TACIS has now become part of the worldwide Europe Aid program. EU research and technological framework programs sponsor research conducted by consortia from all EU members to work towards a single European Research Area.

23. Internal Market

Two of the original core objectives of the European Economic Community were the development of a common market, subsequently becoming a single market, and a customs union between its member states. The single market involves the free circulation of goods, capital, people, and services within the EU, and the customs union involves the application of a common external tariff on all goods entering the market. Once goods have been admitted into the market they cannot be subjected to customs duties, discriminatory taxes or import quotas, as they travel internally. The non-EU member states of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland participate in the single market but not in the customs union. Half the trade in the EU is covered by legislation harmonized by the EU.

Free movement of capital is intended to permit movement of investments such as property purchases and buying of shares between countries. Until the drive towards economic and monetary union the development

of the capital provisions had been slow. Post-Maastricht there has been a rapidly developing corpus of ECJ judgments regarding this initially neglected freedom. The free movement of capital is unique insofar as it is granted equally to non-member states.

The free movement of person's means that EU citizens can move freely between member states to live, work, study or retire in another country. This required the lowering of administrative formalities and recognition of professional qualifications of other states.

The free movement of services and of establishment allows self-employed persons to move between member states to provide services on a temporary or permanent basis. While services account for 60–70% of GDP, legislation in the area is not as developed as in other areas. This lacuna has been addressed by the recently passed Directive on services in the internal market which aims to liberalize the cross border provision of services. According to the Treaty the provision of services is a residual freedom that only applies if no other freedom is being exercised.

24. Monetary Union

The creation of a European single currency became an official objective of the European Economic Community in 1969. In 1992, having negotiated the structure and procedures of a currency union, the member states signed the Maastricht Treaty and were legally bound to fulfil the agreed-on rules including the convergence criteria if they wanted to join the monetary union. The states wanting to participate had first to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

In 1999 the currency union started, first as an accounting currency with eleven member states joining. In 2002, the currency was fully put into place, when euro notes and coins were issued and national currencies began to phase out in the Eurozone, which by then consisted of 12 member states. The Eurozone (constituted by the EU member states which have adopted the euro) has since grown to 19 countries.

The euro, and the monetary policies of those who have adopted it in agreement with the EU, are under the control of the European Central Bank (ECB). The ECB is the central bank for the eurozone, and thus controls monetary policy in that area with an agenda to maintain price stability. It is at the centre of the European System of Central Banks, which comprehends all EU national central banks and is controlled by its General Council, consisting of the President of the ECB, who is appointed by the European Council, the Vice-President of the ECB, and the governors of the national central banks of all 28 EU member states.

The European System of Financial Supervision is an institutional architecture of the EU's framework of financial supervision composed by three authorities: the European Banking Authority, the European Insurance

and Occupational Pensions Authority and the European Securities and Markets Authority. To complement this framework, there is also a European Systemic Risk Board under the responsibility of the ECB. The aim of this financial control system is to ensure the economic stability of the EU.

To prevent the joining states from getting into financial trouble or crisis after entering the monetary union, they were obliged in the Maastricht treaty to fulfill important financial obligations and procedures, especially to show budgetary discipline and a high degree of sustainable economic convergence, as well as to avoid excessive government deficits and limit the government debt to a sustainable level.

25. Energy

In 2006, the EU-27 had a gross inland energy consumption of 1,825 million tons of oil equivalent (toe). Around 46% of the energy consumed was produced within the member states while 54% was imported. In these statistics, nuclear energy is treated as primary energy produced in the EU, regardless of the source of the uranium, of which less than 3% is produced in the EU.

The EU has had legislative power in the area of energy policy for most of its existence; this has its roots in the original European Coal and Steel Community. The introduction of a mandatory and comprehensive European energy policy was approved at the meeting of the European Council in October 2005, and the first draft policy was published in January 2007.

The EU has five key points in its energy policy: increase competition in the internal market, encourage investment and boost interconnections between electricity grids; diversify energy resources with better systems to respond to a crisis; establish a new treaty framework for energy co-operation with Russia while improving relations with energy-rich states in Central Asia and North Africa; use existing energy supplies more efficiently while increasing renewable energy commercialization; and finally increase funding for new energy technologies.

In 2007, EU countries as a whole imported 82% of their oil, 57% of their natural gas and 97.48% of their uranium demands. There is a strong dependence on Russian energy that the EU has been attempting to reduce.

26. Infrastructure

The EU is working to improve cross-border infrastructure within the EU, for example through the Trans-European Networks (TEN). Projects under TEN include the Channel Tunnel, LGV Est, the Fréjus Rail Tunnel, the Oresund Bridge, the Brenner Base Tunnel and the Strait of Messina Bridge. In 2010 the estimated network covers: 75,200 kilometers (46,700 mi) of roads; 78,000 kilometers (48,000 mi) of railways; 330 airports; 270 maritime harbors; and 210 internal harbors.

Rail transport in Europe is being synchronized with the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), an initiative to greatly enhance safety, increase efficiency of trains and enhance cross-border interoperability of rail transport in Europe by replacing signaling equipment with digitized mostly wireless versions and by creating a single Europe-wide standard for train control and command systems.

The developing European transport policies will increase the pressure on the environment in many regions by the increased transport network. In the pre-2004 EU members, the major problem in transport deals with congestion and pollution. After the recent enlargement, the new states that joined since 2004 added the problem of solving accessibility to the transport agenda. The Polish road network was upgraded such as the A4 autostrada.

The Galileo positioning system is another EU infrastructure project. Galileo is a proposed Satellite navigation system, to be built by the EU and launched by the European Space Agency (ESA). The Galileo project was launched partly to reduce the EU's dependency on the US-operated Global Positioning System, but also to give more complete global coverage and allow for greater accuracy, given the aged nature of the GPS system.

27. Agriculture

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the long lasting policies of the European Community. The policy has the objectives of increasing agricultural production, providing certainty in food supplies, ensuring a high quality of life for farmers, stabilizing markets, and ensuring reasonable prices for consumers. It was, until recently, operated by a system of subsidies and market intervention. Until the 1990s, the policy accounted for over 60% of the then European Community's annual budget, and as of 2013 accounts for around 34%.

The policy's price controls and market interventions led to considerable overproduction. These were intervention stores of products bought up by the Community to maintain minimum price levels. To dispose of surplus stores, they were often sold on the world market at prices considerably below Community guaranteed prices, or farmers were offered subsidies (amounting to the difference between the Community and world prices) to export their products outside the Community. This system has been criticized for under-cutting farmers outside Europe, especially those in the developing world. Supporters of CAP argue that the economic support which it gives to farmers provides them with a reasonable standard of living.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the CAP has been subject to a series of reforms. Initially, these reforms included the introduction of set-aside in 1988, where a proportion of farm land was deliberately withdrawn from production, milk quotas and, more recently, the 'de-coupling' (or disassociation) of the money farmers receive from the EU and the amount they produce (by the Fischer reforms in 2004). Agriculture expenditure

will move away from subsidy payments linked to specific produce, toward direct payments based on farm size. This is intended to allow the market to dictate production levels. One of these reforms entailed the modification of the EU's sugar regime, which previously divided the sugar market between member states and certain African-Caribbean nations with a privileged relationship with the EU.

28. Competition

The EU operates a competition policy intended to ensure undistorted competition within the single market. The Commission as the competition regulator for the single market is responsible for antitrust issues, approving mergers, breaking up cartels, working for economic liberalization and preventing state aid.

The Competition Commissioner, currently Margrethe Vestager, is one of the most powerful positions in the Commission, notable for the ability to affect the commercial interests of trans-national corporations. For example, in 2001 the Commission for the first time prevented a merger between two companies based in the United States (GE and Honeywell) which had already been approved by their national authority. Another high-profile case against Microsoft, resulted in the Commission fining Microsoft over €777 million following nine years of legal action.

29. Social Policy

The EU has long sought to mitigate the effects of free markets by protecting workers rights and preventing social and environmental dumping. To this end it has adopted laws establishing minimum employment and environmental standards. These included the Working Time Directive and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. The EU has also sought to coordinate the social security and health systems of member states to facilitate individuals exercising free movement rights and to ensure they maintain their ability to access social security and health services in other member states.

30. Environment

In 1957, when the EEC was founded, it had no environmental policy. Over the past 50 years, an increasingly dense network of legislation has been created, extending to all areas of environmental protection, including air pollution, water quality, waste management, nature conservation, and the control of chemicals, industrial hazards, and biotechnology. According to the Institute for European Environmental Policy, environmental law comprises over 500 Directives, Regulations and Decisions, making environmental policy a core area of European politics.

European policy-makers originally increased the EU's capacity to act on environmental issues by defining it as a trade problem. Trade barriers and competitive distortions in the Common Market could emerge due to the

different environmental standards in each member state. In subsequent years, the environment became a formal policy area, with its own policy actors, principles and procedures. The legal basis for EU environmental policy was established with the introduction of the Single European Act in 1987.

Initially, EU environmental policy focused on Europe. More recently, the EU has demonstrated leadership in global environmental governance, e.g. the role of the EU in securing the ratification and coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol despite opposition from the United States. This international dimension is reflected in the EU's Sixth Environmental Action Programmed, which recognizes that its objectives can only be achieved if key international agreements are actively supported and properly implemented both at EU level and worldwide. The Lisbon Treaty further strengthened the leadership ambitions. EU law has played a significant role in improving habitat and species protection in Europe, as well as contributing to improvements in air and water quality and waste management.

Mitigating climate change is one of the top priorities of EU environmental policy. In 2007, member states agreed that, in the future, 20% of the energy used across the EU must be renewable, and carbon dioxide emissions have to be lower in 2020 by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels. The EU has adopted an emissions trading system to incorporate carbon emissions into the economy. The European Green Capital is an annual award given to cities that focuses on the environment, energy efficiency, and quality of life in urban areas to create smart city.

31. Education and Science

Basic education is an area where the EU's role is limited to supporting national governments. In higher education, the policy was developed in the 1980s in programs supporting exchanges and mobility. The most visible of these has been the Erasmus Program, a university exchange program which began in 1987. In its first 20 years, it supported international exchange opportunities for well over 1.5 million university and college students and became a symbol of European student life.

There are similar programs for school pupils and teachers, for trainees in vocational education and training, and for adult learners in the Lifelong Learning Program 2007–2013. These programs are designed to encourage a wider knowledge of other countries and to spread good practices in the education and training fields across the EU. Through its support of the Bologna Process, the EU is supporting comparable standards and compatible degrees across Europe.

Scientific development is facilitated through the EU's Framework Programs, the first of which started in 1984. The aims of EU policy in this area are to co-ordinate and stimulate research. The independent European

Research Council allocates EU funds to European or national research projects. EU research and technological framework programs deal in a number of areas, for example energy where the aim is to develop a diverse mix of renewable energy to help the environment and to reduce dependence on imported fuels.

Although the EU has no major competences in the field of health care, Article 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union affirms that "A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities". The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers seeks to align national laws on the protection of people's health, on the consumers' rights, on the safety of food and other products.

All EU and many other European countries offer their citizens a free European Health Insurance Card which, on a reciprocal basis, provides insurance for emergency medical treatment insurance when visiting other participating European countries. A directive on cross-border healthcare aims at promoting co-operation on health care between member states and facilitating access to safe and high-quality cross-border healthcare for European patients.

32. Culture

The European Capital of Culture program was launched in the summer of 1985 with Athens being the first title-holder.

Cultural co-operation between member states has been a concern of the EU since its inclusion as a community competency in the Maastricht Treaty. [262] Actions taken in the cultural area by the EU include the Culture 2000 seven-year programmer, [262] the European Cultural Month event, [263] and orchestras such as the European Union Youth Orchestra. [264] The European Capital of Culture programmer selects one or more cities in every year to assist the cultural development of that city. [265]

33. Sport

Football is one of the most popular sports in the European Union. Association football is by far the most popular sport in the European Union by the number of registered players. The other sports with the most participants in clubs are tennis, swimming, athletics, golf, gymnastics, equestrian sports, handball, volleyball and sailing

Sport is mainly the responsibility of the member states or other international organizations, rather than of the EU. However, there are some EU policies that have affected sport, such as the free movement of workers, which was at the core of the Busman ruling that prohibited national football leagues from imposing quotas on foreign players with European citizenship.

The Treaty of Lisbon requires any application of economic rules to take into account the specific nature of sport and its structures based on voluntary activity. This followed lobbying by governing organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and FIFA, due to objections over the application of free market principles to sport, which led to an increasing gap between rich and poor clubs. The EU does fund a program for Israeli, Jordanian, Irish, and British football coaches, as part of the Football 4 Peace project.

34. Symbols

The flag used is the Flag of Europe, which consists of a circle of 12 golden stars on a blue background. The blue represents the West, while the number and position of the stars represent completeness and unity, respectively. Originally designed in 1955 for the Council of Europe, the flag was adopted by the European Communities, the predecessors of the present Union, in 1986.

United in Diversity was adopted as the motto of the Union in the year 2000, having been selected from proposals submitted by school pupils. Since 1985, the flag day of the Union has been Europe Day, on 9 May (the date of the 1950 Schuman declaration). The anthem of the Union is an instrumental version of the prelude to the Ode to Joy, the 4th movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's ninth symphony. The anthem was adopted by European Community leaders in 1985 and has since been played on official occasions.

Besides naming the continent, the Greek mythological figure of Europa has frequently been employed as a personification of Europe. Known from the myth in which Zeus seduces her in the guise of a white bull, Europa has also been referred to in relation to the present Union. Statues of Europe and the bull decorate several of the Union's institutions and a portrait of her is seen on the 2013 series of Euro banknotes. The bull is, for its part, depicted on all residence permit cards.

Charles the Great, also known as Charlemagne (Latin: Carolus Magnus) and later recognized as Pater Europe ("Father of Europe"), has a symbolic relevance to Europe. The Commission has named one of its central buildings in Brussels after Charlemagne and the city of Aachen has since 1949 awarded the Charlemagne Prize to champions of European unification. Since 2008, the organizers of this prize, in conjunction with the European Parliament, have awarded the Charlemagne Youth Prize in recognition of similar efforts by young people.

In 1997, Polish-born Pope John Paul II canonized Poland's 14th-century monarch Jadwiga as Saint Hedwig, the patron saint of queens and of European unification.

35. Media

Media freedom is a fundamental right that applies to all member states of the European Union and its citizens, as defined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as the European Convention on Human Rights. Within the EU enlargement process, guaranteeing media freedom is named a "key indicator of a country's readiness to become part of the EU".

The vast majority of media in the European Union are national-oriented. However, some EU-wide media focusing on European affairs have emerged since the early 1990s, such as Euronews, EUobserver, EURACTIV or Politico Europe. ARTE is a public Franco-German TV network that promotes programming in the areas of culture and the arts. 80% of its programming are provided in equal proportion by the two member companies, while the remainder is being provided by the European Economic Interest Grouping ARTE GEIE and the channel's European partners.

The MEDIA Programmed of the European Union intends to support the European popular film and audiovisual industries since 1991. It provides support for the development, promotion and distribution of European works within Europe and beyond.

36. Conclusion

European Union (EU), international organization comprising 28 European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies. Originally confined to Western Europe, the EU undertook a robust expansion into central and Eastern Europe in the early 21st century. The EU's members are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The EU was created by the Maastricht Treaty, which entered into force on November 1, 1993. The treaty was designed to enhance European political and economic integration by creating a single currency (the euro), a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights and by advancing cooperation in the areas of immigration, asylum, and judicial affairs. The EU was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2012, in recognition of the organization's efforts to promote peace and democracy in Europe.

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Author Details

Md. Masum Billah is a student at Department of Politics and International Relations in International Islamic University, Pakistan. He is very much interested in political thoughts, relations among countries. So, he engaged himself in the study of International policies between countries and organizations.