



The European Union (EU)



The European flag with a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background stands for the identity of Europe. The stars refer to the ideals of unity, solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe. The number of the stars has nothing to do with the number of member countries, though the circle is a symbol of unity.

Today, 27 countries are part of the European Union. Cyprus and some overseas territories belong to the EU. About 450 million inhabitants live on a total surface of 4'132'796 km².

Along with the USA and China, the EU internal market is one of the biggest economic areas in the world. The EU is the biggest producer of goods and the world's leading trading power.

The EU has observer status in the G7, is a member of the G20 and represents his Member States in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The EU has legal personality and is therefore entitled to speak and conduct examinations in the United Nations (UN).

The organs of the European Union are

Brussels
EU Council, EU Commission

Strasbourg
EU Parliament

Frankfurt am Main
European Central Bank

Luxembourg
EU Court of Justice
EU Court of Auditors

- Founder States
- New member countries 1973
- New member countries 1981
- New member countries 1986
- New member countries 1995
- New member countries 2004
- New member countries 2007
- New member countries 2013
- ▨ Member countries leaving 2020

from 1950 France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands found the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

1967 Merging of the 3 Communities to the "European Community" (EC)

1968 Customs Union in the commercial sector

1973 The UK, Ireland and Denmark join the European Community

1981 Greece joins the European Community

1985 Opening of the common borders (Schengen Agreement)

1986 Single European Act (SEA) to create a single market Portugal and Spain join the European Community

1993 The Maastricht Treaty enters into force and the European Union is officially created (TEU)

1995 Sweden, Austria and Finland join the EU

2002 Introduction of the euro as a single currency 19 member states constitute a monetary union

2004 Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Hungary join the EU

2007 Treaty of Lisbon Romania and Bulgaria join the EU

2013 Croatia joins the EU

2020 For the first time with the UK, a member state leaves the Community.



Brexit – UK's exit from the European Union



In 1973, the United Kingdom joins the European Economic Community (EEC). From the beginning, the British are afraid to be disadvantaged through the Community. In 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron declares he is in favour of an in-out referendum.

On 23 June 2016, 51,9% of the British voters choose to leave the EU. Prime Minister Theresa May sends a letter to notify Brussels of the UK's intention to leave the EU. This is the beginning of a two-years' period of negotiations about the exit. On 15 January 2019, the UK Parliament rejects the negotiated Brexit deal.

On 12 March 2019, the House of Commons rejects again the withdrawal agreement. But a no-deal Brexit is also rejected. During the negotiations, the date of the Brexit has been delayed on several occasions. On 20 December 2019, after the UK general election, Prime Minister Boris Johnson decides to ratify the withdrawal agreement negotiated with the EU. On 22 January 2020, after the House of Commons, the House of Lords also votes in favour of the agreement. On 29 January 2020, the European Parliament approves the withdrawal agreement.

On 31 January 2020 at midnight (CET), the United Kingdom officially leaves the EU after 47 years.

1973 The United Kingdom joins the European Economic Community (EEC).

1975 First referendum on membership of the EEC. 67% of the British vote to stay in the EEC. UK obtains a particular status and does not seek to adopt the euro. Foundation of the Eurosceptic UK Independence Party (Ukip).

2013 Prime Minister David Cameron promises an in-out referendum but stands in favour of staying in the EU. **2016** On 23 June 2016, 51,9% vote to leave the EU. Cameron resigns and Theresa May becomes the new UK Prime Minister.

2017 On 29 mars 2017, Theresa May sends a formal letter to notify Brussels of the UK's intention to leave the EU. This is the beginning of a two-years' period of negotiations about the exit. The negotiations to achieve an agreement between the United Kingdom and the EU on the UK exit from the EU appear to be very difficult from the beginning.

2018 During a special meeting of the European Council on 25 November 2018, the draft Brexit withdrawal agreement is endorsed.

01/2019 On 15 January 2019, the UK Parliament votes for the first time on the Brexit deal. It is rejected by a large majority. The issue remains in the "backstop", which guarantees that in case of a "no-deal Brexit" the open border between Ireland and Northern Ireland will be maintained.

03/2019 On 12 March 2019, the House of Commons rejects again the Brexit agreement. A "no-deal Brexit" is also rejected. The date of the Brexit has been delayed on several occasions.

05/2019 On 23 May 2019, the UK participates in the European Parliament election.

07/2019 A new proposal of the Prime Minister for a withdrawal agreement is rejected. Theresa May resigns on 7 June 2019. Her successor Boris Johnson intends to impose a "no-deal Brexit" until 31 October 2019 if the withdrawal agreement is not approved. But the decision of the House of Commons is opposed to that. This is followed by discussions within the UK parliament and a Brexit date is set on 31 January 2020.

12/2019 On 12 December 2019, the UK's general election is won by Boris Johnson. He decides by the absolute majority of his party to approve the withdrawal agreement recently negotiated with the EU.

2020 On 22 January 2020, after the House of Commons, the House of Lords also votes in favour of the agreement. On 29 January 2020, the European Parliament approves the withdrawal agreement with the UK. 31 January 2020 is a historical date for both the United Kingdom and the European Union. The United Kingdom leaves the EU after 47 years. During the transition period until 31 December 2020, the EU rules still apply and the details of the future relationships are negotiated. An exit without rules remains.

How is the geographical midpoint of the EU calculated?



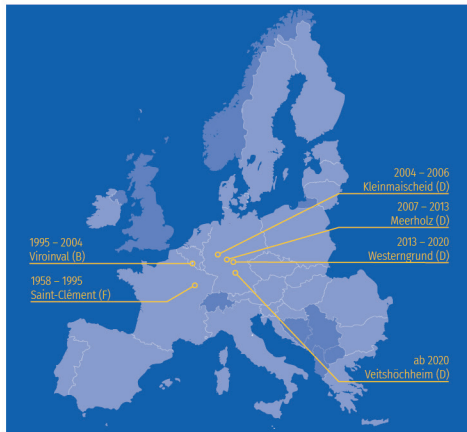
Surveyors of the French National Institute of Geographic and Forest Information (IGN) determine the midpoint by calculating the centre of gravity of the total area from the contour of the EU countries.

For this purpose, we imagine this whole area like a plate, which is hanging on a rope at its centre. The midpoint is located where the area is in perfect balance.

The official midpoint of the EU has shifted from France to Belgium, and then to Germany when new countries joined the EU.

After the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, the geographical midpoint of the EU has now been located in Gadheim, a district of the municipality of Veitshöchheim, in the Lower Franconian county of Würzburg.

Coordinates: 9°54'07" E, 49°50'35" N



The official midpoint of the EU shifted from France to Belgium (1995-2004), and then to Germany when new countries joined the EU. From 2004 to 2006, the midpoint of the EU was located in Kleinmaischeld, a municipality of Neuwied. From 2007 to 2013, it was situated in Meerholz, today a district of Gelnhausen. From mid 2013, it was located in the municipality of Westerngrund, in the county of Aschaffenburg. In 2014, the midpoint shifted 500 metres, but stayed in the area of Westerngrund, when a French Indian Ocean island group joined the EU. On 31 January 2020 at midnight, for the first time with the withdrawal of a Member State, the geographical midpoint of the EU moved here to Gadheim, municipality of Veitshöchheim.