



Development and evolution of European Union policy

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■ **Abstract.** The European Union (EU) is a key player in global politics and economics, with its strategic decisions impacting international processes. The EU plays an active role in promoting stability, security, and economic development both within its member states and globally. The purpose of this study was to examine the key stages in the evolution of EU policy, tracing its development from inception to the present day, and identifying the main factors that have influenced these changes. The research methodology included historical analysis, comparative evaluation of international agreements, and a review of EU regulatory documents. These approaches provided insights into how EU policy has evolved over time. The findings indicated that the EU has undergone several transformative stages. Initially focused primarily on economic cooperation within the framework of the European Economic Community (EEC), the Union gradually moved towards deeper integration in political, social, and security spheres. In the early years, the emphasis was on fostering economic integration and creating a single market, which played a decisive role in stimulating trade and economic growth among member states. The 1990s marked a turning point: the signing of the Maastricht Treaty officially established the EU and introduced the euro as a common currency. Following this critical moment, EU policy began to shift towards strengthening common external and security strategies and expanding its geopolitical influence through enlargement initiatives that brought in new members. The study highlights that both internal and external challenges have greatly influenced the development of EU policy. These include financial crises, migration issues, and the far-reaching consequences of Brexit. These factors have prompted the EU to adapt to new circumstances and undertake reforms, impacting its political, economic, and security strategies. This study may serve as a foundation for forecasting future changes in EU policy as the Union continues to adapt to new global challenges. It may be of value to policymakers, researchers, and institutions interested in understanding the ongoing transformation of the EU political landscape

■ **Keywords:** European integration; European Parliament; European Community; economic relations; political transformation

■ Introduction

The role of the European Union as a global actor is becoming increasingly important in the face of contemporary geopolitical challenges. The EU faces the need to reform its internal policies in response to crises such as the war in Ukraine, climate change, energy security, and migration issues. Analysis of the evolution of EU policy helped to understand the decision-making mechanisms, integration processes, and the Union's adaptation to new realities.

Furthermore, in light of the enlargement of the EU and its enhanced cooperation with neighbouring states, exploring this subject contributes to the assessment of its capacity to maintain stability and economic growth in an era of globalisation. Such studies are essential for forecasting the future strategic areas of the EU. The analysis of various aspects of EU policy remains an area of interest for many researchers.

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In particular, Y.J. Kim & S. Kim (2023) analysed the impact of the post-war crises on the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), identifying the historical conditions that led to its formation. They emphasised that the ECSC laid the foundation for European integration and played a crucial role in rebuilding trust among European countries after World War II. The evolution of the legal system of the EU was covered by I. Dir (2024), who examined the key treaties that shaped the Union's legal framework, including the Maastricht, Lisbon, Rome Treaties, and other important documents. Dir's research focused on how the evolution of the member states' treaty obligations facilitated integration and strengthened cooperation. He highlighted the importance of ensuring the stability of the legal system of the EU for its continued growth. D. Lawton (2024) dedicated his study to the role of lawyers in the review of the Maastricht Treaty. He analysed court cases related to this treaty and demonstrated how lawyers utilised legal tools to protect national interests from excessive centralisation within the EU. D. Lawton noted that this review led to substantial changes in the legal framework of the EU.

The evolution of the EU security and defence strategy was explored by D. Berchev (2024). He analysed the achievements of the EU in shaping a common defence policy and examined its prospects in the face of new geopolitical challenges, such as the increasing influence of external threats. D. Berchev emphasised that the EU needs to consolidate efforts in the field of security to ensure strategic autonomy. Similarly, I. Parol (2024) explored the development of the shared responsibility principle in managing EU borders. He highlighted the changes in approaches to integrated border management and concluded that there is a need to improve mechanisms of shared responsibility to better respond to migration crises.

M. Popescu *et al.* (2024) analysed the challenges facing the cohesion policy of the EU. The authors proposed tools for simplifying procedures and enhancing the effectiveness of cohesion policy implementation, particularly in areas related to financial programmes aimed at reducing developmental disparities between different regions and addressing economic difficulties. R. Pfister (2024) examined the role of religious movements, particularly Pentecostalism, in the political processes of the EU. He noted that the rise of nationalism in EU countries is often accompanied by the growing influence of religious movements, which contribute to societal polarisation and complicate integration processes. R. Sándor (2024) explored issues surrounding democratic legitimacy within the EU. He analysed various aspects of the democratic process in the Union and suggested ways to improve its functioning to achieve greater legitimacy from citizens. In particular, he argued that expanding the powers of the European Parliament and enhancing the interaction between national and European authorities by increasing the participation of national parliaments in pan-European affairs would help improve democratic legitimacy.

Despite a substantial body of research, several aspects remain understudied, especially the impact of socio-economic factors on the transformation of EU policy. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to conduct a detailed analysis of the evolutionary processes underlying the formation and development of European Union policies that influence integration. The study aimed to examine the institutional changes that have taken place within the EU throughout its existence and analyse the factors that have shaped policy priorities at different stages. To achieve this, the study sets the following tasks: analysing the historical preconditions for the establishment of the European Union and their influence on the formation of the Union's key policy principles, examining the major institutional changes that have occurred in the EU since its foundation, with a focus on their role in ensuring stability and economic development, and investigating how these challenges have influenced the further evolution of EU policies.

■ Materials and Methods

This study employed a comprehensive approach, incorporating documentary analysis, historical review, chronological analysis, and comparative and thematic analysis, to examine the evolution and development of European Union policy.

The first phase of the study reviewed historical literature covering the post-World War II period. Particular attention was paid to the post-war conditions that influenced the decision of European states to cooperate and form the first European associations, such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC). A chronological review of key events shaping EU policy was conducted, spanning from the establishment of the ECSC in 1951 to the present day.

The second phase analysed key legislative documents that laid the groundwork for EU policy development. These included the Treaty of Paris (Treaty establishing..., 1951), the Treaty of Rome (1957) and Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (1957), the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), the Treaty of Nice (2001), and the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). Each of these documents was examined in terms of their role in shaping the institutional, economic, and social policies of the EU. The principles and objectives of each treaty were explored, along with the institutional changes they brought about and their impact on the member states.

The evolution of the European Community's institutional bodies was also separately examined. Through a comparative method, changes in EU policy, the role of member states, and the evolution of the EU's functions were analysed, from the initial stages of economic cooperation to contemporary challenges and development areas. A comparison was made between EU policy during its early formation (the ECSC and EEC) and the modern-day European Union. A thematic analysis was conducted on key policy areas such as economic integration, foreign policy, social issues, and human rights to gain a deeper understanding of EU policy development. Each of these areas

was investigated in terms of its impact on the development and integration of the EU.

This comprehensive approach illuminated the evolution of EU policy at various levels and provided insights into the changes that have occurred since the founding of the European Union up to the present day.

■ Results

Prerequisites for the creation of the European Union

The establishment of the European Union was based on several factors, which can be categorised as historical, economic, political, and social. Historically, the Second World War played a key role, leaving the continent in ruins and highlighting the need for European unity to prevent future conflicts. This led to the rise of the idea of a united Europe, where countries collaborate for the common good – an idea strongly advocated by political figures such as Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer. The post-war period saw a strong push for international unity to maintain peace, resulting in the creation of the United Nations. On the European continent, this movement for unity led to the establishment of the Council of Europe in 1949, whose mission was to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Thus, the Second World War provided the impetus for the creation of European integration mechanisms, which eventually evolved into the European Union – an organisation that has ensured lasting peace, economic development, and political stability across the continent (Balland *et al.*, 2018).

Post-war economic recovery in Europe required close cooperation between states, particularly in establishing a single market and promoting free trade. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded by six countries – France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The primary objective of its creation was to eliminate any possibility of war between France and Germany by bringing together key industries that were, at the time, crucial for military production. The joint management of these industries under a supranational body held strategic importance. The main goals of the ECSC were political stability and economic integration. It became the first supranational organisation in history with real executive powers that were independent of individual national governments. This initiative reduced national control over the production and distribution of coal and steel, thereby lowering the risk of their use for military purposes. The pooling of resources fostered economic interdependence among participating countries, compelling them to collaborate in the joint management of these resources (Busemeyer *et al.*, 2019). Along with the implementation of the Marshall Plan, which was designed to rebuild Europe's economy after the war, the overall economic impact of this cooperation was significant. It resulted in increased production, price stabilisation, investment growth, and the creation of a common market. These developments had positive economic consequences: the coal and steel industries grew by 125%, creating new jobs, improving the efficiency of heavy metallurgy, removing nearly all trade

restrictions on coal and steel, and introducing unified pricing for metallurgical products. The establishment of common standards and rules dismantled tariff barriers, which boosted trade efficiency among the member countries. This early form of economic integration strengthened relations between member states and laid the foundation for broader cooperation (Baltazar, 2021; Sánchez *et al.*, 2021).

However, achieving economic cooperation was not without its challenges. The creation of a common market required the harmonisation of national laws and policies, which demanded substantial effort from each member state. In addition, decision-making by consensus often slowed progress, making it difficult to reach key agreements swiftly. Despite these challenges, the ECSC demonstrated that regional cooperation and integration could be highly effective tools for securing peace and prosperity in Europe. The success of this organisation ultimately led to further efforts towards integration and deepening relationships among European nations (Berchev, 2024).

The evolution of European integration, although initially rooted in economic cooperation, gradually progressed towards political convergence. Initially, economic interdependence served as the primary driver of the unification of European nations. As countries became increasingly interconnected through trade and shared markets, it became clear that sustainable, long-term development also required political cooperation. A key step in this process was the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and laid the foundation for the creation of a single market. This treaty introduced fundamental principles and institutional structures that later facilitated the political unification of Europe (Lanzetta & Ponsiglione, 2024).

The post-World War II situation marked by the drive for European recovery and the growing threat of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, particularly in East Germany, stimulated the pursuit of not only economic cooperation but also social unity. The desire to improve the general welfare of citizens and protect their social rights became central to the policies of Western European states. The focus on social development played a substantial role in shaping common European policies that emphasised social protection, healthcare, education, and the overall improvement of living conditions. These joint initiatives aimed to create a unified European social structure in which all citizens had equal opportunities and social justice was a priority. Efforts were also made to reduce social inequality, ensure fair working conditions, and expand access to essential services.

Beyond the social aspects of integration, fostering a sense of European identity among citizens became a crucial element for the overall cohesion of European nations. This was supported by the introduction of various cultural programmes, such as ERASMUS (Ciappi, 2023). These initiatives promoted cross-border cultural exchanges, allowing people from different European countries to better understand one another, develop a sense of community, and feel a shared belonging to the European space. This helped to

overcome national barriers and foster mutual understanding between peoples, which is fundamental to stability and peace in the region.

Overview of key EU legal documents and treaties

The formation of the European Union resulted from the gradual development of integration processes based on key legal documents and treaties. These documents reflect the legal pathway Europe followed towards the creation of the modern EU, outlining the stages of its evolution.

The Schuman Declaration (1950) marked the first step towards European integration when French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed pooling the coal and steel production of France and Germany under joint management to eliminate economic conflicts between them and prevent future wars. The idea was that economic cooperation would strengthen political ties and create conditions for lasting peace in Europe. This laid the groundwork for the creation of the ECSC, which was established in 1951 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris and became the first supranational institution to manage strategic resources (Valli & Weerts, 2022).

In 1957, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg signed **the Treaty of Rome** (1957). This laid the foundation for the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), with the aim of creating a common market. These treaties established mechanisms for economic integration, regulation of key industries, and introduced fundamental principles and structures that later became the basis for Europe's political unification. Therefore, the Treaty of Rome can be seen as a pivotal step in the evolution of European integration, which initially focused on economic cooperation and gradually expanded towards political integration and unification.

The Merger Treaty of 1965, also known as the Brussels Treaty, was another substantial step in European integration. It unified the institutions of the three main European communities – the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). The primary goal of the treaty was to create common executive bodies, notably a single Commission and a single Council of Ministers, which allowed for more streamlined management and decision-making within these communities. This increased the efficiency of European organisations by eliminating the duplication of functions and simplifying administrative processes. The merger also facilitated the consolidation of resources and strengthened political cooperation among member states, aiming to promote the further development of common policies.

The Single European Act (1986) represented the first major revision of the Treaty of Rome. Its primary objective was to complete the establishment of a single market by 1992. This was supposed to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour within the EEC. To achieve this goal, approximately 300 legislative measures

were adopted aimed at removing trade barriers and harmonising standards (Parol, 2024). The Single European Act also introduced significant institutional changes. Notably, it enhanced the role of the European Parliament through the introduction of a political cooperation procedure, which increased its influence over the legislative process. The expanded powers also extended to the European Commission, enabling it to perform its functions more effectively. In addition, a qualified majority voting was implemented in the Council of Ministers for certain decisions, helping to avoid vetoes by individual member states and facilitating faster decision-making. Cooperation covered areas such as foreign policy, security, and defence, thereby improving the coordination of policies among member states. The scope of common policy was also broadened to include new areas such as social policy, environmental protection, and research and technological development. These innovations laid the foundation for the further development and strengthening of the European Union as a political and economic bloc (Chovet, 2023). The Single European Act was a significant step towards creating a more integrated and effective Europe, contributing to increased competitiveness and stability on the continent.

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) marked the establishment of the EU and introduced a common currency (the euro), expanding political and economic integration, including cooperation in justice and foreign policy (Lawton, 2024). One of the key elements of the treaty was the introduction of the “three pillars” concept, which structurally expanded the powers and scope of cooperation among member states. The first pillar encompassed the European Communities and economic integration, including the establishment of the single currency – the euro, which was introduced in 1999. This ensured financial stability and facilitated the development of a common internal market. The second pillar focused on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Within this framework, EU member states began to cooperate in diplomacy and international security, forming a common position on the global stage. This included participation in peacekeeping missions, cooperation with international organisations, and the development of strategic interactions concerning crisis situations. The third pillar was dedicated to cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs. The Maastricht Treaty laid the foundation for a collective effort against organised crime, illegal migration, and terrorism, and for the development of legal mechanisms for cooperation in criminal justice. This enabled the unification of the legal systems of member states and strengthened law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the treaty introduced the concept of European citizenship, granting EU citizens new rights, including the right to reside, work, access social security, and participate in local elections in any member state.

The Amsterdam Treaty (1997), signed on 2 October 1997, aimed to reform the institutional structures of the European Union (EU) in the context of its further expansion. The primary purpose of this treaty was to enhance the

efficiency of decision-making within the EU institutions, necessitating the adaptation of voting procedures in the Council of the European Union to new conditions. The treaty emphasised the protection of human rights by incorporating the Charter of Fundamental Rights into its text. This marked a significant step in ensuring compliance with fundamental freedoms and human rights across all EU member states. Furthermore, the Amsterdam Treaty expanded areas of cooperation in home affairs and justice, which included combating terrorism, organised crime, and illegal immigration. The treaty also underscored the importance of social policy, highlighting employment, social security, and the integration of social values into EU policy. Overall, the Amsterdam Treaty established the groundwork for further political integration and the development of EU social policy, emphasising the importance of sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of human rights.

The Nice Treaty (2001), signed on 26 February 2001, represented a significant milestone in preparing the European Union for expansion to include Central and Eastern European countries. The primary objective of the treaty was to enhance institutional mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of the EU under new conditions. The treaty reformed the EU institutions to improve their functionality in light of the enlargement to new member states. Specifically, it introduced a new voting system in the Council of the EU based on qualified majority voting. This reduced the number of countries that could block decisions, thereby increasing the efficiency of decision-making and providing greater flexibility in the EU's foreign policy actions. In addition, the Nice Treaty expanded cooperation on security and defence issues, marking an important step towards a common foreign policy for the EU. The treaty also emphasised the principles of democracy and the rule of law, enshrining these values as fundamental to the functioning of the EU.

The Lisbon Treaty (2007), which came into effect on 1 December 2009, marked a key phase in the development of the European Union, completing the establishment of its modern institutional structure. This treaty included a number of important changes that impacted the functioning of the EU, notably increasing the role of the European Parliament in the legislative process. The treaty established a co-decision procedure, allowing the European Parliament to jointly adopt legislative acts with the Council of the European Union in several important areas, including the internal market, environmental protection, and consumer rights. This bolstered the democratic legitimacy of the EU and provided greater opportunities for influence over Union policy through its representatives. The position of President of the European Council was created, which provided greater stability and representational capacity for this body on the international stage. The president is elected for a term of two and a half years and is responsible for coordinating the work of the Council, organising its summits, and representing the EU at international forums. The Lisbon Treaty simplified the decision-making process within the Union by introducing a system of "double majority," which stipulated that decisions in the Council of the EU must be

supported not only by a majority of member states but also by a majority of the EU population. In accordance with the treaty, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was established to implement the EU foreign policy. The Lisbon Treaty also promoted deeper cooperation in justice and home affairs, granting the EU greater powers in combating terrorism, organised crime, and other security threats. This allowed for the creation of a more integrated security system for all member states.

The formation of the European Union underwent several substantial legal milestones, gradually deepening integration and strengthening cooperation among European countries. This process led to the establishment of a powerful political and economic union that plays a key role on the international stage. Between 2004 and 2013, the EU experienced its most extensive enlargement in history, admitting 13 new countries, including many former communist states from Central and Eastern Europe. The deep integration also continued, with the EU agreeing on common policies in shared currency, security, migration, and climate change.

The evolution of the institutions of united Europe at different stages

EU policy has been shaped through the creation of institutions that ensure the functioning and development of the Union, while also implementing joint policies across various sectors (Zilioli, 2022; Meunier & Mcnamara, 2023). Figure 1 illustrates the functioning of the initial EU institutions responsible for drafting policy proposals and overseeing their implementation during the Union's formative years. The diagram highlights the key role each institution plays in ensuring the execution of common policies across different fields, which forms the foundation for the EU's stable development. A crucial aspect is that this institutional activity has provided coherence and effectiveness in policy at the EU-wide level, enabling the Union to act as a unified entity on the global stage. This figure visually complements the explanation of how the EU institutions, responsible for the Union's functioning and development, were created and evolved and how these institutions implemented common policies across various sectors, such as the economy, social policy, foreign relations, etc. The transformation of EU institutions reflects a complex governance and decision-making evolution within this intergovernmental organisation. The institutional structure of the EU has continually evolved and developed over the decades following its establishment. This evolution has been driven by an increase in Member States, the expansion of the EU's areas of responsibility, and the pressing need to improve the efficiency of decision-making processes. In the early years of the EU's existence, its institutional structure was relatively simple, consisting of a limited number of institutions, primarily focused on ensuring economic cooperation between Member States. However, as integration deepened and the number of participants grew, the need to expand and modernise this structure became increasingly apparent to better address the challenges of a more complex and interconnected Europe (Jarrín & Riordan, 2023).

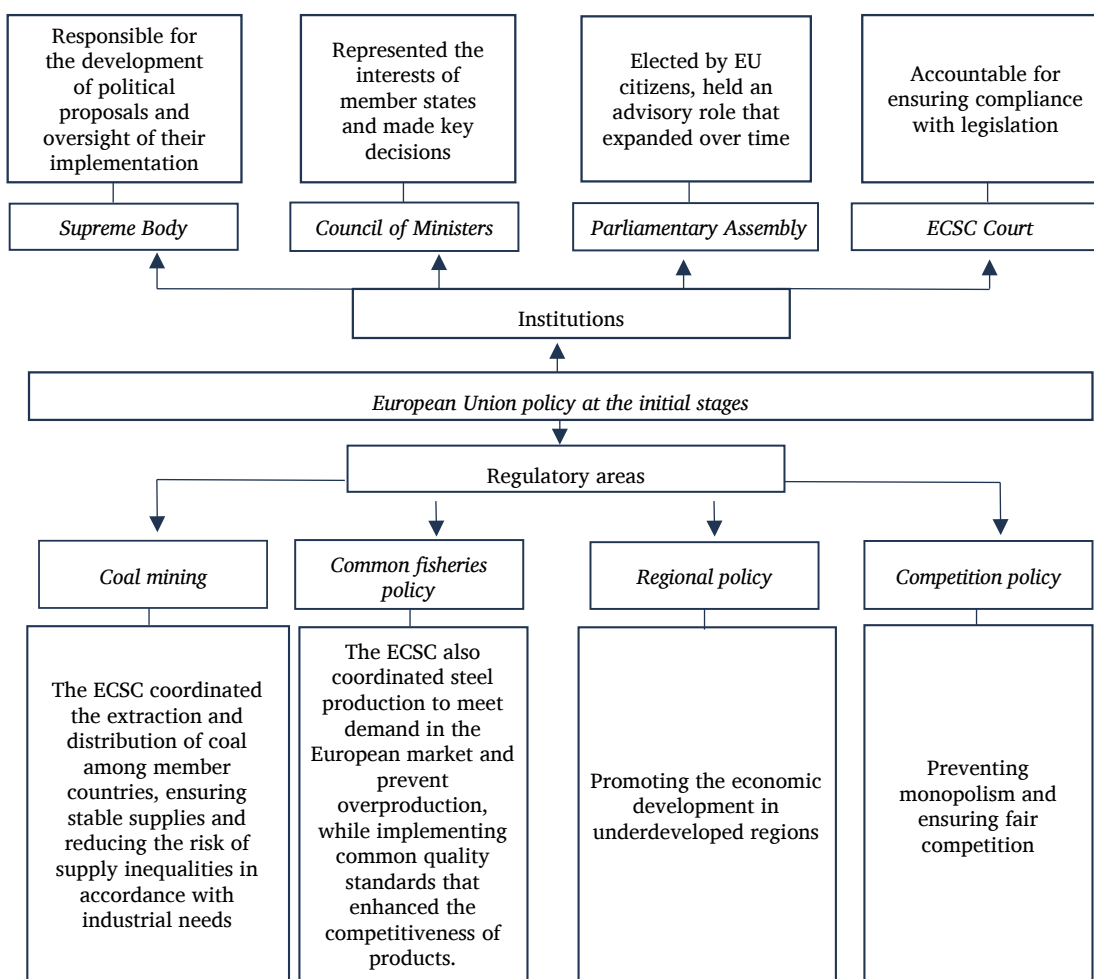


Figure 1. Key institutions and areas of policy development at the establishment stage of the ECSC

Source: developed by the author based on Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (1951)

As of 2024, the EU has a remarkably larger number of institutions, each performing strictly regulated functions. The transition to a more complex and differentiated institutional structure was a necessary step to ensure effective governance in the face of the increasing complexity of the tasks confronting the EU. The current structure includes key institutions such as the European Council, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Court of Justice of the EU, and the European Central Bank, all of which work together to ensure the stability, effective governance, and development of the Union. In addition, there are advisory bodies – the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) – which represent the interests of regions and various social and economic groups, offering recommendations on legislative initiatives. Thus, the evolution of EU institutions reflects the need to adapt to the new conditions and challenges that arise in the enlargement and deepening of European integration (Gowland, 2022). Each institution has clearly defined powers and responsibilities.

1. *The European Council* – sets the overall political direction and priorities of the EU. It makes strategic decisions but does not pass legislation.

2. *The Council of the EU (Council of Ministers)* – adopts EU legislation, addresses foreign and security policy matters, and coordinates the policies of Member States.

3. *The European Parliament* – jointly with the Council of the EU, adopts legislative acts, approves the EU budget, and oversees the activities of other EU institutions, particularly the European Commission.

4. *The European Commission* – drafts and proposes legislation to be reviewed by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, oversees the implementation of EU laws, manages the EU budget and programmes, and represents the EU in international matters.

5. *The Court of Justice of the EU* – ensures the interpretation and application of EU law, adjudicates on violations of EU law by Member States or EU institutions, and hears appeals from the General Court.

6. *The European Central Bank* – responsible for the monetary policy of the Eurozone, controls the issuance of the euro, maintains price stability, and coordinates the activities of the national central banks of Member States.

7. *The European Court of Auditors* – monitors the use of EU financial resources, audits accounts, and assesses the effectiveness of budgetary expenditures. In addition to the

core institutions mentioned above, the EU encompasses numerous other bodies and agencies that focus on specialised areas, such as environmental protection, food safety, human rights, and more. These institutions collaborate to ensure the effective functioning of the EU and the implementation of its policies (Popescu *et al.*, 2024).

The range of sectors in which the EU conducts joint policies has expanded significantly. These sectors include the economic and monetary (single market, competition policy), social (employment, social protection, equal opportunities, occupational safety), agricultural (CAP),

regional (cohesion policy and regional funding), transport (infrastructure, safety, green transport), energy (security, renewable energy, energy efficiency), digital (digital single market, defence), external (common foreign and security policy, trade), health (harmonisation of standards, pharmaceuticals, epidemiological control), and environmental (conservation, climate change, waste management), among others (Griffiths, 2013). EU policies have evolved significantly from its founding to the present day. The main differences between the initial and current EU policies can be classified across several key areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Key differences in EU policy under the Paris (1951) and Lisbon (2007) Treaties

Areas	1951	2007
1	2	3
Scope and degree of integration	<p><i>Economic integration</i> Focus was primarily on establishing a common market and economic cooperation by removing trade barriers.</p> <p><i>Sectoral policies:</i> Integration covered specific sectors, such as coal, steel, atomic energy, and agriculture.</p>	<p><i>Deep integration</i> The EU expanded to cover new areas, including strengthened cooperation in foreign and security policy, human rights, and increased coordination in areas such as social policy, healthcare, environmental protection, technology, and migration.</p> <p><i>Single currency</i> The European Central Bank (ECB) was granted extended powers, including oversight of the banking system within the Eurozone, regulation of financial markets, and ensuring price stability.</p>
Political integration and institutional changes	<p><i>Limited political integration</i> Mainly economic integration with limited political cooperation.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced political integration</i> The EU gained powers in foreign policy, security, and justice, including conducting joint actions during international crises, concluding international agreements, and cooperating in justice matters. Information sharing between member states' law enforcement was also introduced to combat crime. The Lisbon Treaty (2007) strengthened the EU's role as a political actor on the international stage.</p> <p><i>Expansion of the European Parliament's powers:</i> The European Parliament participates in the legislative process alongside the Council of the EU, co-approving the budget and increasing oversight over the executive, including the right to express no-confidence in the European Commission.</p>
Social and environmental policy	<p><i>Minimal social policy</i> <i>Absence of environmental policy</i></p>	<p><i>Developed social policy</i> The EU actively works on ensuring social rights, equality, worker protection, and poverty alleviation.</p> <p><i>Environmental policy</i> The modern EU is a global leader in environmental policy, focusing on climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable development.</p>
Foreign policy and security	<p><i>Limited foreign policy</i> Foreign policy and security were not major areas of focus in the EU's early decades.</p>	<p><i>Common foreign policy</i> The EU has a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), enabling member states to coordinate diplomatic actions and collaborate on security.</p> <p><i>Missions and operations</i> The EU participates in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, promoting stability and security in various global regions.</p> <p>The European External Action Service (EEAS) coordinates the EU's foreign policy actions.</p>
Migration policy	<p><i>Absence of a unified migration policy</i> Migration and asylum matters largely remained within national competence.</p>	<p><i>Common migration policy</i> The EU developed a shared migration and asylum policy aimed at managing migration flows and providing refugee protection.</p>
Civil society	<p>Limited influence on EU decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Increased participation of civil society, including non-governmental organisations, trade unions, business associations, and other stakeholders in EU policy-making. Mechanisms for consultations and public discussions were introduced, allowing citizens to influence decision-making.</p>

Table 1. Continued

Areas	1951	2007
1	2	3
Legal system and judicial oversight	The legal system was focused on ensuring the functioning of the common economic market and the enforcement of commercial agreements.	The EU legal system developed to encompass a wide range of legal matters, including human rights, competition law, consumer rights, etc. The European Court of Justice ensures the uniform interpretation and application of EU law across all member states.
Institutional structure	<p>The High Authority acted as the executive body and supervised the activities of the union.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Assembly was composed of representatives from member states and was responsible for discussing political issues and making decisions.</p> <p>The Council of Ministers made decisions on behalf of member state governments.</p> <p>The ECSC Court ensured the observance of legal norms and regulations established by the union. This structure laid the foundation for coordinating coal and steel industry policies in Europe.</p>	<p>The European Council is the highest political body, defining the general political directions and priorities of the EU and composed of the heads of state or government of the member states.</p> <p>The Council of the EU (Council of Ministers) adopts legislative acts and coordinates member states' policies.</p> <p>The European Parliament is a representative body elected by EU citizens and, together with the Council of the EU, adopts legislation, approves the budget, and oversees the activities of other institutions.</p> <p>The European Commission acts as the executive body responsible for proposing new laws, implementing EU policies, managing the budget, and representing EU interests internationally.</p> <p>The European Court of Justice ensures compliance with EU law, interprets legislation, and resolves disputes between institutions, member states, and individuals.</p> <p>The European Central Bank is responsible for monetary policy in the euro area, ensuring the stability of the euro and overseeing the EU's financial system.</p> <p>The European Court of Auditors monitors the use of EU financial resources, verifying accounting and the effectiveness of budget expenditure.</p>

Source: developed by the author based on M. Šuplata (2023)

These differences reflect the substantial development and evolution of European Union (EU) policies from its inception to the present day, illustrating its ability to adapt to new challenges and evolve in response to the needs of its member states and citizens. Furthermore, these distinctions highlight both quantitative and qualitative shifts in EU policy over three decades. They demonstrate the growth, complexity, and influence of the EU, both within Europe and on the global stage.

Priorities of EU policy in different periods

Based on the analysis of the evolution of legislative frameworks, several key priorities of EU policy can be identified:

1. Ensuring peace and stability

Historical origins (1950s). The primary impetus for the creation of the European Community was the desire to prevent military conflicts that had twice ravaged Europe in the 20th century. France and Germany, central participants in both World Wars, became the core of this project. The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 aimed to place coal and steel production – strategic resources used in warfare – under shared control, thereby making military conflict between Western European countries practically impossible.

Subsequent development (1960s-1980s). Peace and stability remained key priorities for the European Economic Community (EEC) and later the EU, following the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The concept of a common market, which involved the removal of internal trade barriers, also promoted economic integration, which in turn reinforced political stability.

Modern context. In the 21st century, the EU not only maintains peace within its borders but also promotes stability beyond them through participation in international peacekeeping missions (e.g., in Africa, the Balkans) and the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). An important aspect of modern EU policy is also the fight against terrorism and cyber threats, demonstrating the Union's adaptation to new global security challenges.

2. Economic recovery and integration

Post-World War II Recovery (1950s-1960s). Post-war Europe required economic stabilisation. The Marshall Plan, implemented partly through the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), was an initial step in this area. The Treaty of Rome (1957) established the EEC, laying the groundwork for a common market. This facilitated the removal of barriers to the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour, which stimulated industrial growth and modernised the economies of the member states.

Deepening integration (1980s). The Single European Act (1986) was a considerable milestone in completing the formation of the single market. It furthered economic integration by removing barriers and harmonising national regulations and standards. The EU also made important strides in adopting common agricultural and regional policies, contributing to greater cohesion within the Union.

In the 21st century, priorities in the European Union have shifted towards innovation, the digital economy, and climate neutrality. The European Green Deal has become a central strategic direction for the coming decades, aiming to transform the economy into more sustainable and

eco-friendly models. Emphasis is also placed on digital transformation, the development of new technologies, and maintaining global competitiveness.

3. Political integration

Early stages (1960s). Following the establishment of the ECSC and the EEC, a gradual political integration began, marked by the formation of shared institutions. Key supranational bodies, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, began expanding their authority. Initially a consultative body, the Parliament gained a progressively more influential role in decision-making over subsequent decades. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) laid the foundations for the creation of the European Union, introducing new common policies on foreign affairs, security, and justice. These reforms allowed the EU to act as a cohesive entity in international relations.

In the second decade of the 21st century, political integration in the EU reached a stage where decisions on critical areas, such as trade, migration, and climate policy, are made at a supranational level. Institutional reforms have strengthened the roles of the European Parliament and the European Council in law-making, and enhanced coordination mechanisms between member states have promoted more efficient decision-making.

4. Social cohesion and unity

Development of social policy (1970s-1980s). During the 1970s and 1980s, the EU turned its attention to the social dimensions of integration. Policies aimed at ensuring equal conditions for all EU citizens were implemented. Established in 1958, the European Social Fund supported initiatives to improve employment levels and social integration.

Rising social standards (1990s). The Maastricht Treaty introduced social rights for EU citizens, including workers' rights, gender equality, access to healthcare, and measures to combat poverty and social exclusion. Social policy became an integral component of EU integration and a means of fostering unity.

Current state. Social cohesion within the EU now encompasses high standards in labour, healthcare, education, gender equality, and minority rights protection. At present, the EU is addressing new challenges, including demographic shifts, migration crises, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market and social domains.

5. International cooperation

Initial stages (1950s-1960s). Early international cooperation by the EU primarily focused on economic matters. The EU gradually began establishing trade agreements with other global regions and developed its foreign policy through collaborative projects.

Development of foreign policy (1990s). The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 laid the foundation for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), aimed at coordinating member states' actions on international issues, particularly in trade and diplomacy.

The EU has played a significant role in global issues, including climate change, human rights protection, poverty

alleviation, and promoting democracy. On the international stage, the Union operates as a unified actor in trade, customs policy, and monetary policy.

In the early 21st century, the EU encountered various challenges, including a series of economic and financial crises, rising issues of migration and refugees, climate change, growing nationalist sentiments in certain countries, and Brexit – the departure of the United Kingdom from the community. These crises not only destabilised the EU but also contributed to its politicisation. However, the EU continues to work on agreements and policies that foster economic growth, protect citizens' rights, and support collaboration among nations. Despite ongoing crises, the EU has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in response to these challenges (Zeitlin *et al.*, 2019).

Therefore, the main priorities of EU policy are aimed at building a more sustainable, competitive and inclusive Europe that responds to global challenges and supports the well-being of its citizens. These priorities are regularly reviewed in view of new challenges, in particular those arising from military conflicts and economic changes in the world, such as the war in Ukraine, which also has a significant impact on the EU's security policy and external relations.

■ Discussion

Research has shown that the evolution of EU policies has been a complex process shaped by a range of political, economic, and social changes both within and outside the EU. Key milestones in EU history, such as treaty reforms, membership expansion, and crisis response, illustrate how these policies have adapted to new challenges and opportunities.

M. Segers (2023) provides a detailed examination of the precursors to European integration between 1937 and 1951, with a focus on the political, social, and economic conditions that laid the foundation for the modern European Union. The author highlights how this period witnessed crucial changes catalysing subsequent European integration. Segers argues that rising inter-state conflicts and the desire to prevent further wars prompted initiatives such as the Schuman Plan, ultimately leading to the establishment of the European Communities. A strong aspect of this study is its rich historical context, offering insights into the factors that continue to influence the EU today. However, a noted limitation is the narrow focus of the study on the role of non-governmental organisations and civil society within the integration process, which could have enriched the understanding of EU policy evolution. Overall, the paper is a valuable resource for exploring the history of European integration.

E. Ciappi (2023) offers a fresh perspective on the early stages of European integration, focusing specifically on the post-World War II period and the development of the Schuman Plan. The study emphasised how military strategies played a central role in shaping post-war integration and how economic cooperation became vital in securing lasting peace in Europe.

P. Liargovas & P. Christos (2024) analyse the progression from the Schuman Declaration to the formation of the

European Communities between 1950 and 1958. The authors provide an in-depth exploration of the key political decisions and economic strategies that contributed to European integration. The paper also addresses the institutional transformations that enabled a shift from individual national interests to common, supranational resolutions. The study examines the challenges these nations faced in adapting to new governance structures and collective decision-making.

S. Meunier & K. Mcnamara (2023) review the state of the EU fifty years after its formation, with a focus on historical moments of integration and institutional adaptation. The authors emphasise the importance of political institutions adjusting to new challenges facing the EU, such as economic crises and changes in the global landscape. In examining the evolution of EU policy, the paper underscores how institutional changes were responses to the needs of Union members and their interactions. A primary limitation is the limited attention to informal aspects of the integration process, which could have enriched the understanding of decision-making mechanisms.

I. Baltazar (2021) provides a comprehensive analysis of the integration within the historical context and contemporary challenges. The study thoroughly examined the socio-economic disparities among member states, a crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of integration. A central theme of the paper is the concept of a “Europe of different speeds”, which suggests that individual member states may progress in various areas of integration at differing rates. The author concludes that the future stability of the EU depends on how the integration process can accommodate the differing development paces of its member states.

B.C. Valli & S. Weerts (2022) highlight the imbalance between economic interests and citizens’ rights. The authors note that policy concerning access to public information is often more focused on economic benefits, which could threaten individual rights and transparency in decision-making. They underscore the importance of establishing a balanced system that considers both economic and social aspects to ensure sustainable EU development. The strengths of the study include the relevance of its subject in light of current challenges, although it lacks a deeper analysis of the specific impact of certain policies on different citizen groups.

M. Chovet (2023) explores the concept of “regional Europe” and its impact on EU borders and regions. The study examines how this slogan, initially used to promote regionalism within the EU, has materialised in real-world policy and influenced EU borders. The analysis demonstrates the growing role of regions in EU policymaking, particularly in cross-border cooperation and regional autonomy. The strength of the study lies in its thorough analysis of regional governance models within the EU. However, it predominantly focuses on successful examples, which limits its coverage of regions facing integration challenges, presenting an incomplete picture of the broader effects of regionalisation across all EU borders.

M. Jarrín & S. Riordan (2023) focus on the history of interregional relations between the EU and regions such

as Latin America and the Caribbean. Their work provides a detailed analysis of cooperation in trade, politics, and culture. A notable strength of this study is its interregional approach, which deepens the understanding of the dynamics within the EU foreign policy. However, the authors pay limited attention to the internal challenges within the EU and their impact on these interregional relations. Addressing these internal factors could offer a more comprehensive analysis of the difficulties faced by the EU in shaping its foreign policy.

The evolution of EU institutions and policy changes highlights the Union’s adaptability to the new challenges faced by its member states. The ongoing expansion of its institutional structure and its adaptation to current needs reflect the EU’s commitment to ensuring stability and effective governance. In addition, the focus on common policies across various sectors, such as economy and security, demonstrates the Union’s growing influence within Europe and on the global stage. This progression illustrates the readiness of the EU for further development and support for integration processes within the region.

■ Conclusions

The foundations underlying the establishment of the EU involve a complex interplay of historical, economic, political, and social factors that necessitated the unification of European nations. Deepening cooperation among countries not only facilitated the economic recovery of Europe after the war but also laid the groundwork for long-term peace on the continent. These factors influenced the formation and helped shape the European Union, which has gradually expanded to become one of the largest and most influential political-economic organisations in the world.

The primary differences between EU policies at its inception and those in place today lie in the expansion of integration areas, strengthened political cooperation, the development of social and environmental policies, and the adoption of unified approaches to foreign policy, security, and migration. These changes reflect the evolution of the EU from an economic union to a comprehensive political and economic entity capable of responding to contemporary challenges.

The European Union has undergone a complex and lengthy evolutionary path, progressing from an economic community to a formidable international organisation with a broad range of policies and spheres of influence. Its successful development has been rooted in a gradual deepening of integration processes, beginning with the Paris Agreement of 1951 through to the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, which established the modern framework for its operation.

EU policy, focused on achieving peace, stability, economic growth, and social cohesion, is the outcome of multilateral agreements among member states and EU institutions. It encompasses not only economic but also political, social, environmental, and security dimensions, enabling the EU to engage effectively at both domestic and international levels.

An emphasis in EU policy is placed on supporting social rights and standards, environmental protection, the development of a unified digital policy, and the assurance of security and external cooperation. This has positioned the EU as one of the most influential and stable integration structures in the modern world, continuing to play a pivotal role in global processes. The study indicated that the increasing role of the EU on the global stage largely depends on its capacity to adapt to new challenges and expand its areas of influence.

Future research may focus on evaluating the impact of EU enlargement on the political and economic stability of member states. Key areas of investigation may include

the effectiveness of EU common policies in fostering social cohesion and economic development, and analysis of changes in decision-making mechanisms in light of increasing member numbers. The effects of European integration on the security and trade relationships with neighbouring countries also remain a relevant subject.

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■ Conflict of interest

None.

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Розвиток та еволюція політики Європейського Союзу

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■ **Анотація.** Європейський Союз (ЄС) є ключовим гравцем у світовій політиці та економіці, а його стратегічні рішення впливають на міжнародні процеси. ЄС відіграє активну роль у сприянні стабільності, безпеці та економічному розвитку як у межах своїх держав-членів, так і в глобальному масштабі. Метою цього дослідження було вивчення основних етапів еволюції політики ЄС, простеження її розвитку від моменту створення до сьогодення, а також виявлення основних чинників, які вплинули на ці зміни. Методологія дослідження охоплювала історичний аналіз, порівняльну оцінку міжнародних угод та огляд нормативних документів ЄС. Ці підходи надали уявлення про те, як політика ЄС змінювалася з часом. Результати дослідження показують, що ЄС пройшов кілька трансформаційних етапів. Спочатку зосереджувались переважно на економічній співпраці в рамках Європейського економічного співтовариства (ЄЕС), Союз поступово перейшов до глибшої інтеграції у політичній, соціальній та безпековій сферах. У перші роки акцент був на зміцненні економічної інтеграції та створенні єдиного ринку, що відіграло вирішальну роль у стимулюванні торгівлі та економічного зростання серед держав-членів. 1990-ті роки стали поворотним моментом: підписання Маастрихтського договору офіційно заснувало ЄС і запровадило євро як спільну валюту. Після цього важливого кроку політика ЄС почала орієнтуватися на зміцнення спільних зовнішніх та безпекових стратегій, а також на розширення свого геополітичного впливу через ініціативи розширення, які привели нових членів. Дослідження підкреслює, що як внутрішні, так і зовнішні виклики значно вплинули на розвиток політики ЄС. Серед них – фінансові кризи, питання міграції та далекосяжні наслідки Brexit. Ці фактори змусили ЄС адаптуватися до нових обставин та здійснити реформи, що вплинули на його політичні, економічні та безпекові стратегії. Це дослідження може стати основою для прогнозування майбутніх змін у політиці ЄС, оскільки Союз продовжує адаптуватися до нових глобальних викликів. Воно може бути корисним для політиків, дослідників та установ, зацікавлених у розумінні постійної трансформації політичного ландшафту ЄС.

■ **Ключові слова:** європейська інтеграція; Європейський парламент; Європейське співтовариство; економічні відносини; політична трансформація