



097

What is the European Union?

The European Union is an economic and political partnership between **27 European countries**. The United Kingdom, which had been a member of the EU since 1973, left the organisation in 2020. The EU, which was created after the Second World War to foster economic cooperation, gradually evolved into an organisation dealing with different policy areas, from environment to development aid, from economic growth to human rights. The **single market** is the EU's main economic engine, enabling goods, services, money and people to move freely throughout most of the continent thanks to the abolition of border controls. So far, the EU has delivered half a century of peace and stability, has helped raise living standards and has launched a single European currency, **the euro**.



The EU Symbols

THE EURO (€) is the official currency of the EU. Most EU members have already adopted it. The banknotes are the same in each country but the coins have different national designs. It came into force on 1 January 2002.

THE EUROPEAN ANTHEM The melody is based on 'Ode to Joy' which comes from the 'Ninth Symphony' by Beethoven. It was composed in 1823 and is played in all EU countries on official occasions. There are no words to the anthem; it consists of music only. In the universal language of music, this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity.

THE EUROPEAN FLAG The circle of twelve gold stars on a blue background represents solidarity and harmony between the peoples of Europe and it has been the EU flag since 1986. The number of the stars does not correspond to the number of EU Member States.

