

The European Union

In 1946, soon after the Second World War, Winston Churchill called for a ‘United States of Europe’. The first move towards the integration of Europe was made on 9 May 1950. In Paris on that day, the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schumann, presented his proposal for the creation of a supranational organisation in charge of the management of the coal and steel industries. A year later, six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) signed a Treaty establishing the European Coal Community (ECSC), the predecessor of the European Union. Today, the 9th of May is regarded as the “birthday” of the EU and is celebrated as “Europe Day”.

In 1992, the Treaty on the European Union was ratified in Maastricht. In the early years, co – operation between EU countries was mainly about trade and the economy. Nowadays, the Union also deals with such issues as human rights, ensuring freedom and justice, safeguarding peace and democracy, promoting social progress, building prosperity, job creation and environmental protection. For over half a century, the Union has raised its citizens’ standards of living and has created a single market with a single currency, the ‘euro’. The achievements of the EU are sometimes called informally “the four freedoms” including people, goods, services and money which can all move around freely within the frontier – free area of the “European home”.

Union membership has grown from six nations in the 1950’s to twenty – five in 2004 with the following member states: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The process of the enlargement of the EU is by no means over. However, before any candidate can join the Union, it must have a stable democratic government, a competitive market economy and institutions that ensure the rule of the law.

The EU is managed by five important institutions: a democratically elected Parliament, elected by the peoples of the member states, a Council representing the governments of the member states, a Commission acting as guardian of the Treaties and implementing legislation, a Court of Justice ensuring observance of the law and a Court of Auditors, monitoring the EU budget. Most of the EU institutions are located in Brussels and many thousand of EU citizens who work for them are called, informally, “eurocrats”.

The symbols of the European Union are the blue flag with its 12 stars and the anthem which is the theme to the “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

SPEAKING

1. What do you know of the history of European integration?
2. What are the achievements of the European Union?
3. What criteria must be met before joining the Union?
4. How is the European Union managed?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a member of the European Union?

VOCABULARY A

the European Union – Unia Europejska
united states of Europe – zjednoczone kraje Europy
the first move – pierwszy krok
integration of Europe – integracja Europy
Foreign Minister – minister spraw zagranicznych
supranational – ponadnarodowy
coal and steel industries – przemysł węglowy i stalowy
to sign a treaty – podpisać traktat (układ)
predecessor – poprzednik
to ratify – ratyfikować
co-operation – współpraca
trade – handel
economy – gospodarka
human rights – prawa człowieka
freedom and justice – wolność i sprawiedliwość
to safeguard peace and democracy – strzec pokoju i demokracji
to promote social progress – wspierać rozwój społeczny
to build prosperity – budować dobrobyt
job creation – tworzenie miejsc pracy
environmental protection – ochrona środowiska
to raise standards of living – podnieść standardy życia
citizen – obywatel
to create a single market – stworzyć jeden rynek
currency – waluta
achievement – osiągnięcie
goods – towary
services – usługi
frontier – free area – obszar bez granic
Union membership – członkostwo w Unii
nation – naród
member states – kraje członkowskie
enlargement of the EU – rozszerzenie Unii Europejskiej
by no means – w żadnym wypadku
candidate – kandydat
to join the Union – wstąpić do Unii
stable democratic government – stabilny demokratyczny rząd
competitive market economy – konkurencyjna gospodarka rynkowa
to ensure the rule of the law – zapewniać rządy prawa
democratically elected – demokratycznie wybrany
Commission – Komisja Europejska
guardian – strażnik
to implement legislation – wprowadzać ustawodawstwo
Court of Justice – Trybunał Sprawiedliwości
observance of the law – przestrzeganie prawa
auditor – auditor, rewident księgowy
to monitor the budget – kontrolować budżet
eurocrat – eurokrata
anthem – hymn
theme – temat (muzyczny)
„Ode to Joy” – „Oda do radości”

VOCABULARY B

European Council – Rada Europy
European Parliament – Parlament Europejski
Security Council – Rada Bezpieczeństwa
secretary general – sekretarz generalny
economic union – unia gospodarcza
currency union – unia walutowa
monetary integration – integracja monetarna
European Currency Union – Europejska Unia Walutowa
Union citizenship – obywatelstwo unijne
annulment of borders- zniesienie granic
ease of travel – łatwość podróżowania
free movement of labour – wolny przepływ siły roboczej
financial aid – pomoc finansowa
to intervene in international conflicts – interweniować w międzynarodowych konfliktach
accession – przystąpienie
relations with other countries – stosunki z innymi krajami
summit (meeting) – spotkanie na szczycie
international policy – polityka międzynarodowa
mutual relations – wzajemne stosunki
diplomatic relations- stosunki dyplomatyczne
tense relations – napięte stosunki
to violate a treaty – naruszyć umowę
pact – pakt
to lead talks with Turkey – prowadzić rozmowy z Turcją