





Forum: European Parliament

Issue: Evaluating the Prospects and Challenges of Further Federalization within the

European Union

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Introduction

- Explanation of federalization in the context of the EU
- Importance of federalization for European Unity, Peace and Governance
- Overview of key questions: Why consider further federalization? What could it achieve? What are the benefits and difficulties?

Definition of key terms

Federalization:

the act of including something in a federal system (= one that consists of a group of regions that are controlled by a central government)¹

Supranationalism:

Refers to the formal transfer of legal authority and decision-making power from member states to an institution or international body.²

Intergovernmentalism:

¹ https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/federalization#google_vignette

https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199670840.001.0001/acref-9780199670840-e-1355





In contrast to supranational bodies in which authority is formally delegated, in intergovernmental organizations states do not share the power with other actors, and take decisions by unanimity.³

Sovereignty:

The term sovereignty ,means that there is supreme authority of a state within its territory. Shared Sovereignty:

Shared sovereignty is when a state voluntarily gives some authority to external actors or institutions for collective governance.

Maastricht treaty:

It is an international treaty that was signed in 1992 that established the European Union, introduced European citizenship, laid the path to the euro and created cooperation among member states economically, socially, and fostering security policies.

Lisbon treaty:

It is a treaty that came into force in 2009 that amended EU treaties to enhance institutional efficiency, since all previous ones had failed the Constitutional Treaty.

Treaty of Paris (1957):

It refers to the treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, an early step toward European integration.

Treaties of Rome (1957):

Two treaties signed in 1957 establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), creating a common market and cooperation framework among six founding countries.

Treaty of Nice (2001):

A treaty that reformed EU institutions and decision making processes, in order to prepare the EU for eastward expansion and improve efficiency.

Eurozone:

The group of European Union countries that use the euro as their official currency and are part of the Economic and Monetary Union

Economic and Monetary union (EMU):

The integration of EU member states' economies through coordination of economic policies, a common monetary policy, a central banking system, and adoption of the euro currency.

Timeline of events

Date	Description of event

3



1943	Formation of the european federalist movement
1946	Union of the european federalists founded
1950	Schuman declaration proposes coal and steel integration
1951	Treaty of Paris establishing European coal and steel community (ECSC)
1957	Treaties of Rome founding the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom
1979	First direct elections to the European Parliament
1992	Maastricht treaty creates the EU and sets path to euro
1997 - 2009	Treaties of Amsterdam, Nice, Lisbon progressively strengthening EU institutions
2004-2013	Significant EU enlargements
2010s - 2020s	Ongoing debates on EU federalization amid crises (financial, migration, geopolitical)

Background information

Historical Events Leading to EU Federalization





After the end of World War II, Europe was found in a difficult position. It was devastated not only economically but also socially. Thus, there was a strong need for peace, stability and reconstruction to prevent another war, and give both citizens and countries time to recover economically. The horrors that came along with such a great war, motivated the political leaders of European Countries to seek cooperation and unity in this continent.

The initial cooperation frameworks that were established were the Western Union, a defense pact between some western countries and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). OEEC was established in 1948 to help coordinate the Marshall Plan aid and promote economic recovery through cooperation and free trade among European countries. OEEC also played a key role in restoring economies and fostering a regional approach to trade and payments.

The cold war also played an important role, as there were growing tensions between Western Powers (US, UK, France) and the Soviet Union, which made the need for political and economic stability even greater in Western Europe to resist the communist expansion. Many events such as the communist takeover of Eastern Europe, the Berlin blockade (1948-1949) and the Prague Coup pushed Western Europe to form stronger political and military alliances. Those alliances contributed greatly to integration efforts. Moreover, the Brussels Treaty of 1948 created a Western defensive alliance, which later evolved into NATO, reflecting the security priorities intertwined with European cooperation.

From the early 1940 there was a new movement to be found. This movement was called the federalists groups, which were advocating for a united Europe with common political institutions. They also proposed a European government, army and judiciary. In 1945 there was a conference in Paris for European federalists. It was a milestone for the federalist movement as intellectuals. Resistance leaders and politicians who sought a European federation were brought together. This conference is viewed as a step toward peace and broader world federation. In 1946 the Union of European Federalists (UEF) promoted a federal constitution for Europe and influenced post-war European unity efforts. These movements laid an ideological foundation that influenced later formal integration steps such as the Council of Europe (1949) and ultimately the European Coal and Steel Community.

Key Treaties and Documents

This treaty of Paris 1951 established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Its member states were Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. Through this community a common market for coal and steel were created with supranational institutions such as the High Authority, Council of Ministers, Common Assembly, and Court of Justice. The aim of this community was to ensure free movement of coal and steel resources to ensure economic recovery and peace by integrating key industries vital for war production.

The treaties of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC). This new community established a market that went beyond coal and steel. It included customs union and coordinated economic policies. It also founded the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) to coordinate nuclear energy development among member states. These treaties laid the foundations for deeper economic integration and expansion of cooperation into additional sectors.





The treaty of Rome was revised in 1986 by the Single European Act of 1986. The revision enabled the completion of an internal Market within the EU member states by 1992 by removing trade barriers and harmonizing regulations. In order to achieve this new decision making procedures were found to enhance the efficiency and increase the powers of the European Parliament. This Act is a significant step towards greater political cooperation alongside economic integration.

The treaty of Maastricht was the treaty that formally established the European Union as a political and economical union. It created the Economic and Monetary Union with the intention of introducing a single currency, the euro. It also introduced the Concept of EU citizenship and strengthened the powers of EU institutions.

The treaty of Lisbon 2007 reformed the Eau institutions so as to improve efficiency and democratic legitimacy within the European Parliament. Therefore the positions of president of the European Council and a high representative fr foreign affairs were created. Those positions streamlined leadership and external representation. Not only did it extend the qualified majority voting in the Council and reinforce the charter of fundamental rights, but also it aimed to make the EU transparent, coherent and capable of acting globally, in a way a federal state would.

Apart from the above mentioned treaties and documents there are various protocols attached to these treaties to address specific regional and/or institutional issues. Not to mention that the EU policy frameworks are continuously evolving to cover diverse areas such as environment, agriculture, regional development, and justice.Last but not least, resolutions and agreements within EU institutions regularly update cooperation rules and adapt to enlargement and emerging challenges.

Causes and Drivers of Federalization in the EU

Europe after having been through two world wars within a century, understood that there is a strong commitment to avoid any other war and conflict. That is the idea that European states need to share sovereignty and create binding institutions to guarantee peace. That idea became the fundamental driver of federalization. The first federalization movements also proposed the creation of the United States of Europe to replace the competitive nationalism with cooperation and solidarity, so as to prevent another war.

Another idea that fueled the European Unity is the creation of larger and integrated markets for trade and production. Thus, economic integration was not only considered a step towards world peace but also a way to enhance prosperity in a competitive global economy. Furthermore, initiatives like the European Coal and Steel Community and the subsequent EEC were pivotal in binding the economies of member states and encouraging.

Global challenges such as climate change, energy security, migration, and external security threats have driven the need to federalize the EU. The reason for that is that those challenges cannot be effectively addressed by individual nations alone. That's why joint policies and coordinated action became essential drivers for deeper political integration beyond just economics.





The growing complexity of European integration created pressures to reform EU institutions for greater efficiency, accountability, and democratic legitimacy. Many treaties such as Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty, and Treaty of Lisbon are aiming to balance the power between supranational institution and member states, enhancing the European Parliament's role, and enabling more effective decision-making mechanisms and procedures,

Effects of federalization on the European Union and Member Countries

Federalization has led to the establishment of key supranational bodies such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Court of Justice. These institutions possess powers that go beyond that of the member states, such as legislative and executive functions, judicial oversight, and policy enforcement. Those supranational institutes enable the EU to act as a political community with authority in various policy areas, while member states retain significant powers.

The federalization process that is mentioned above, not only enabled the EU to act as a political community but also allowed it to create the Economic and Monetary Union and the euro, a currency used in more than 20 European Countries. This creation also allows a major transfer of sovereignty over financial matters to the European Central Bank, which coordinates interest rates and currency stability across the eurozone, enhancing economic integration and stability.

Over the years the EU has experienced significant enlargements, considering from the original six member states, now there are 27 member states. This means that a wide range of political cultures, economies and languages.has been incorporated in the EU. However it is exactly that that enables the EU to balance unity and respect for national identities, affecting decision-making and requiring flexible governance structures.

The greater integration and shared sovereignty have generated political tensions in some countries. Those facts are the ones that are causing Euroscepticism and debates over loss of national control. Issues such as migration, economic policy, and judicial decisions sometimes provoke controversy about the balance between EU authority and member state autonomy. Last but not least federalization remains a contentious process with ongoing discussions about thenEU's future structure and powers.

Opposition to the federalization of the EU

Critics argue that by increasing the powers the EU institutions hold weaken the ability of the member states' countries to govern themselves, reducing their control over key policy areas and making democratic accountability more opaque.

There is also the inherent fear that further federalization would create a large centralized bureaucracy in Brussels that is detached from the citizens interests, fostering inefficiency, which goes against the goals of the EU.

It should also be considered that the economies and social systems are diverse, and there cannot be a one-size-fits-all. Thus, having a centralized economy will be challenging. The single currency and centralized monetary policy highlight difficulties in addressing country-specific needs, fueling tensions, especially during crises.





We need to keep in mind that Europe has more than 27 member countries. Thus there is a rich variety of languages, cultures, and political traditions. That fact heavily complicates the creation of a unified federal identity. Not to mention that national identities remain strong, and many citizens feel disconnected from a pan-European project

Eurosceptic and nationalist movements question the legitimacy and desirability of deeper integration. They project the fear of loss of control and perceived democratic deficits, challenging the EU's cohesion.

Furthermore, significant federal reforms require unanimous treaty changes. This as a result will pose difficulties on a political level and open to tension and rejection by member states, as seen in past treaty negotiations.

Stakeholders

Member countries of the EU

In the EU there are 27 member states. Among these 20 belong to the Eurozone, using the euro as their currency, while 7 are non-Eurozone members maintaining their own national currencies (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden). This distinction influences national preferences for deeper integration or federalization due to monetary policy sovereignty concerns. Thus, it is understood that the support for the EU federalization varies among each nation. Countries like Germany, Austria. Belgium, Denmark. Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Spain have formed a group called the "group of the future". This group advocates for a federal evolution, that includes electing a European president and devolving powers like border management and defense to a federal level. On the other hand France, which is also a founding member of the EU, is known for being against the federalization of the EU, and is widely considered the main obstacle against the EU federalization. What's interesting is that there are some countries who have yet to take an official stance in the matter of the EU federalization and/or still remain skeptical about federalism, as the EU remains a hybrid system between confederation and federation.

European citizens and civil society groups

The European federalist movements have been around since World War II. There are some key documents such as the Ventotene Manifesto and organizations such as the UEF that advocate not only for the federalization of the European Union but also for political unity, peace and overcoming nationalism. These movements are open for people from all political directions and emphasize the values of democracy and cooperation while rejecting rigid national sovereignty. They also strive to influence the European Parliament and governments of all member states towards federalists ideas.

International organizations influencing or connected to the EU

The EU is notably known for cooperating with major international organizations that affect peace, Security and governance frameworks such as the United Nations (UN), NATO and the Council of Europe. The European Union partners with the UN bodies regarding migration, human rights and security aligns with EU integration and peacekeeping goals. NATO while it remains largely





intergovernmental it still complements EU security policies and initiatives. The Council of Europe Provides a human rights framework intersecting with EU law and integration processes. It is important to note that The EU is an active participant in normative international fora including OECD, G7, and G20, which also shape policies impacting integration.

Political parties and movements within member states

All political parties do not show a united stance on the topic of EU federalization and integration. The parties for a federal European Union are the Greens and Liberal parties such as Renew Europe that promote a stronger more democratic EU with reformed treaties and an EU enlargement. The Conservative and far-right groups often oppose deepening political integration, favoring national sovereignty and opposing treaty reforms or expansions of EU powers. Lastly, so,e c eter-right parties advocate for enlargement but resist increasing EU powers beyond certain limits. Concluding the stances of the political parties of the European Parliament influence both national governments' policies and EU-wide debates on integration and federalization.

Relevant UN resolutions, treaties, and events (Previous attempts)

There are several EU treaties that have played a key role in the federalization of the EU. The first one was the Treaty of Paris in 1951 that started the European Coal and Steel Community. Countries like France, Germany, and Italy worked together to share coal and steel, which helped rebuild Europe after World War II and kept peace by making war less likely. Later, the Treaties of Rome created the European Economic Community in 1957. This expanded trade beyond coal and steel and helped countries work together on things like customs and energy. In 1986, the Single European Act updated the Treaty of Rome. It helped remove trade barriers and made it easier for countries to do business with each other. It also gave more power to the European Parliament. The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 officially formed the European Union. It introduced the euro and gave people EU citizenship, making Europe more united both economically and politically. Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 made the EU more organized and democratic. It created new leadership roles and made decision-making faster and clearer, helping the EU act more like one big team.

The European Union over the past years has passed numerous resolutions that advocate deeper EU integration and federalization. One such resolution was with the one on February 29, 2024, which emphasized the need to deepen EU integration in view of future enlargement. This resolution referred to foundational EU treaties and criteria such as the Copenhagen criteria, human rights frameworks like the ECHR, and called for enhanced powers and cohesion among member states. The European Parliament has also been discussing with experts in this issue, aiming to ensure effective decision-making, and democratic oversight in a federal Europe.

The United Nations supports peace, security, and cooperation efforts in Europe that align with European integration goals. For example the Security Council of the United Nations has advertised missions that are led by the EU regarding

Upkeeping regional peace and stability, such as Arms embargo enforcement in Libya, and cooperation on counterterrorism. Last but not least UN resolutions emphasize collaboration with the EU on peacebuilding and security provisions, especially in conflict contexts like Ukraine and the broader European region. This all further supports EU's role as a regional peace guarantor that aligns with the UN principles,





Several major EU summits have focused on further integrating the Union, particularly through treaty reforms and policy harmonization. The most important of those was the Maastricht treaty of 1992, which formally established the European Union as we know it today. Summits that happened after that also reinforced the integration of the Eau through enlargements. Deepening common policies and strengthening EU's institutions. Not to mention that The EU has also held summits to address challenges like security, economic disparities, and enlargement strategies, pushing toward a more federal and cohesive EU framework.

Establishment and evolution of the ECSC and EEC as first steps

The European Coal and Steel Community founded in 1951 by six countries, namely France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxemburg, integrated the coal and steel industries to secure peace, as they were key industries in producing weaponry, and the economic cooperation after WWII. The European Economic Community (EEC), created by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, broadened integration to a common market and customs union, building strong supranational institutions and gradually deepening union.

Failed attempts such as the European Constitution Treaty (2005 referendums rejection)

The 2005 European Constitution Treaty was rejected by referendums in France and the Netherlands. The reason behind this rejection was public skepticism and concerns over sovereignty loss, and a lack of clear communication on its implications. People were concerned over this referendum, as they were afraid that they would no longer be intergovernmentalism, but supranationalism. This means that some decisions will be made by the EU, which may lack concern and general understanding of the problem each region and country may be facing.

<u>Successes like the Maastricht Treaty and Lisbon Treaty giving greater powers to EU</u> institutions

Even though there were some failures, there were also some bright successes. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) formally established the European Union, introducing the Economic and Monetary Union and expanding cooperation. The Lisbon Treaty (2007) improved institutional efficiency and democratic legitimacy, reflecting incremental and consensus-based integration.

Lessons learned

Through those failures and successes the EU has learned some important lessons. Those are the following: They understood the need for clear communication as a means to increase democratic legitimacy, how to balance national sovereignty with deeper unity, transparency in all EU actions, citizen engagement and how to manage complex treaty ratification processes. They also understood how essential gradual integration, trust-building and strong institutions are. However public skepticism and uneven economic benefits remain challenges that need to be overcome in the near future.

Possible solutions





<u>Proposals for a more federal EU including a eurozone budget, common foreign policy, fiscal</u> union

In order to speed up the federalization of the EU, the following proposal could be made. The proposal will be covering a eurozone budget, common foreign policy, and a fiscal union. The eurozone budget is a budget that would be set for each country in the eurozone, which will be used in economic crises, to fund projects that require a big budget and to help regions that are in need of extra help. The budget will be raised by raising the taxes each taxpayer in the eurozone pays. The EU would have a unified stance regarding matters of international politics, rather than having each country take their own stance. All decisions regarding international affairs will be made together and carried out by a central EU authority. This will also give the EU a stronger global presence than it already has. Last but not least, the EU should become a fiscal union. This means that some financial powers, e.g., collection taxes will be centralized at an EU level.

Strengthening EU democratic institutions (e.g., directly elected EU government)

This will be achieved by having direct elections for key positions such as the president of the European Commission. At the time being the president is being elected by the European Parliament, which is elected by the people. However in a democratic state the president or prime minister is being appointed by the people themselves, so in a federalized system the same ought to happen, in order to make the EU as democratic as possible. Another action would be to expand the parliament's power. It could be given the power to propose laws instead of just approving the laws that have been proposed by the European Commission. Also having referendums and enhancing rights to vote on all European matters would be a great step to enhance citizen engagement. As far as enhanced rights to vote for citizens they should be able to vote for parties of all European countries, so as to make the votes more focused on the European level. In order for this system to work, each citizen will have two votes, one to elect their country's representative and one to vote for candidates on the transnational EU-wide list.

Balancing centralization with respect for national identities and regional autonomy

In order for the federalization to work we need to balance centralization with respect for national identities and regional authorities. We need to legally recognize and protect the national constitutional identities alongside the EU Integration. We also should allow regional autonomy and flexibility in non-core policy areas. Not to mention that courts should mediate conflicts in order to maintain equilibrium between EU vs National sovereignty. Last but not least we should promote a European identity built on shared values without erasing national cultures.

Enhanced communication and education about benefits and challenges of federalization

Communication and education are vital for people to gain a deeper understanding about federalization. This will be achieved by having transparent, balanced communication about benefits and challenges for federalization. Moreover we need to Integrate EU governance and citizenship in school curricula to raise informed citizens. Not to mention that using cross-border cultural and civic programs to build personal ties among Europeans will lead to explaining to the EU citizens about the federalization of the European Union. Last but not least we should Encourage citizen participation through platforms like European Citizens' Dialogues.





Further reading

European Policy Centre (EPC)

A leading independent think tank that provides research and analysis on EU integration, including federalization prospects.

Link: https://www.epc.eu/

Union of European Federalists (UEF)

The main transnational organization promoting European federalism, with research, events, and educational resources.

Link: https://federalists.eu/

• Verfassungsblog – EU Federalisation debates

A platform with articles and discussions on constitutional and treaty reforms for EU federalism

Link: https://verfassungsblog.de/a-leap-towards-federalisation/

Academic Journals:

Journals like "Journal of European Public Policy," "European Union Politics," and "West European Politics" are key for scholarly articles on this topic. Access usually through academic libraries.

 EUR-Lex (for legislative documents and ongoing policy developments) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/

New York University Law LibGuides: EU Treaties

Guide to primary EU law sources and treaties.

Link: https://nyulaw.libguides.com/european union updated/treaties

Union of European Federalists (UEF) - Federalist Library and Manifestos
Essays and political analysis arguing for deeper EU federalization, also featuring proposals to overcome current treaty limitations.

Link: https://federalists.eu/federalist-library/for-a-federal-europe-the-urgency-of-overcoming-the-current-treaties/

PDF version of the Consolidated Treaty on European Union (TEU)
A full official text of the TEU in English for direct reference.

Link: https://eur-

lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX%3A12012E%2FTXT%3Aen%3APDF

• EUR-Lex: Treaties currently in force

The official consolidated versions of key EU treaties such as the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty of Rome), which set out the EU's constitutional basis and operational framework.

Link: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/collection/eu-law/treaties/treaties-force.html

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