

The predecessor of the EU was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: the idea being that countries that trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict.

The result was the European Economic Community (EEC), created in 1958, and initially increasing economic cooperation between six countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The EU has delivered more than half a century of peace, stability and prosperity, helped raise living standards and launched a single European currency: the euro. More than 340 million EU citizens in 19 countries now use it as their currency and enjoy its benefits.

Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, people can travel freely throughout most of the continent. And it has become much easier to live, work and travel abroad in Europe. All EU citizens have the right and freedom to choose in which EU country they want to study, work or retire. Every EU country must treat EU citizens in exactly the same way as its own citizens for employment, social security and tax purposes.