

# THE PILLARS OF EUROPE

**THE LEGACY OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY  
AFTER 25 YEARS**



Council of the  
European Union

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'The Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen.'

## THE PILLARS OF EUROPE

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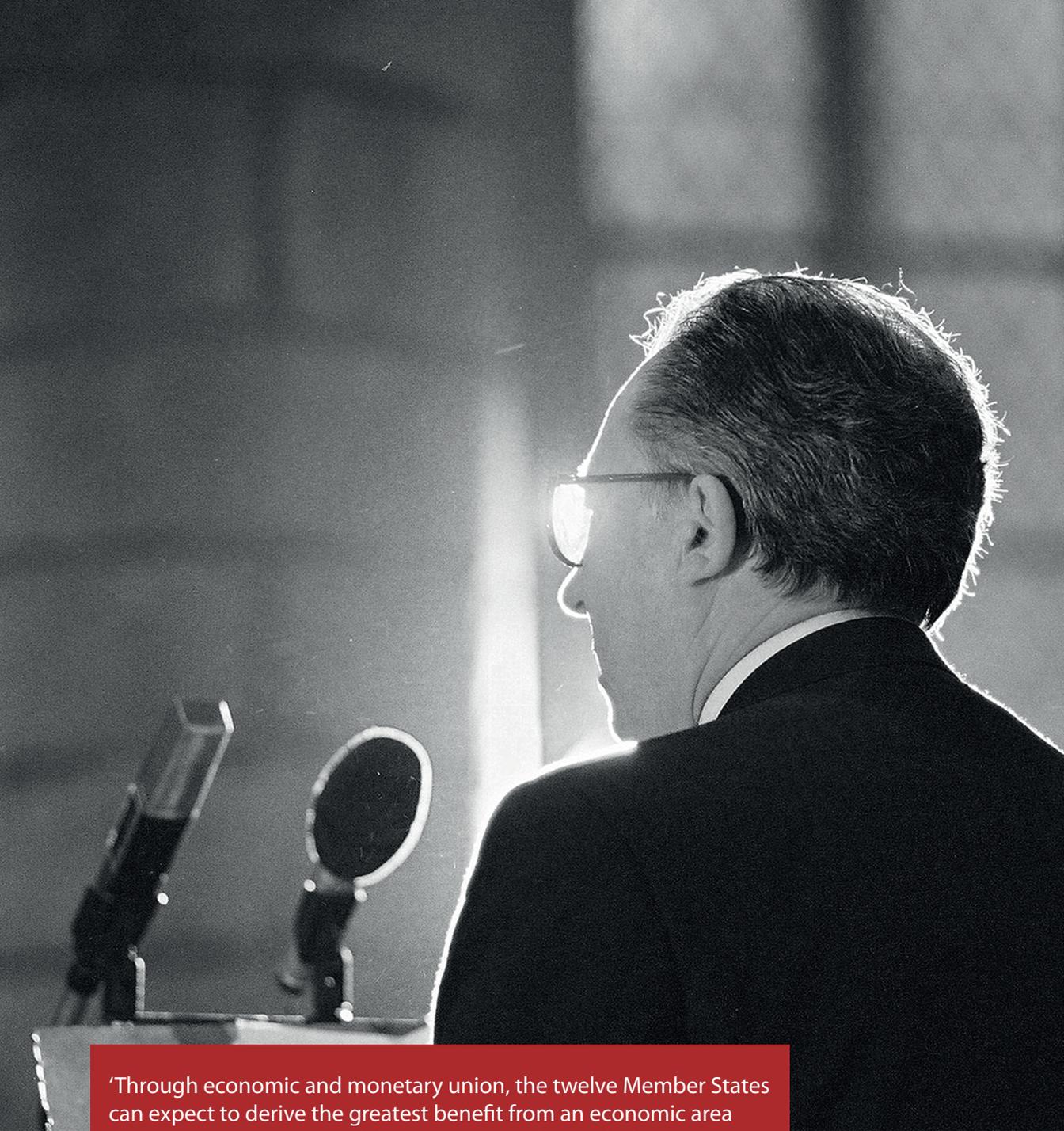
### THE LEGACY OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY AFTER 25 YEARS

The Treaty on European Union, signed at Maastricht on 7 February 1992, entered into force on 1 November 1993. In November 2018, we therefore celebrate 25 years of both the European Union which it established, and the Council of the European Union, as it was then renamed.

The Maastricht Treaty was a turning point in the process of European integration. For the first time, the ambition of political union was formalised, moving on from the initial objective of economic integration as an instrument for political reconciliation.

Treaty on European Union, common provisions

Signature of the Maastricht Treaty on 7 February 1992



‘Through economic and monetary union, the twelve Member States can expect to derive the greatest benefit from an economic area that incorporates its social dimension. Together with the common foreign and security policy, this without doubt presents the most significant challenge for our countries, namely to speak with one voice and act together in areas we consider to be of common and vital interest. Lastly, for our institutions and their democratic structures, the trick will be to combine the decision-making capability at central level with the complexity of the consultation rules – not an easy thing to do.’

Speech by Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission, at the ceremony of the signature of the Treaty of Maastricht, 7 February 1992

# THE PATH TO MAASTRICHT

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## THE BIRTH OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Maastricht Treaty was the result of the gradual, laborious process of European integration. It was made possible by changes in the world order that had been in place during the previous 50 years, which opened up new possibilities for Europe.

Early attempts to create a political union among European countries had been made during the 1950s but the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the collapse of the Soviet Union's control over eastern Europe, injected a real sense of urgency into discussions on the future of Europe. In that rapidly changing situation, the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, saw an opportunity to call for a 'leap forward' in the integration process, which was reflected in the focus of the Dublin Council meetings of 1990 on three issues: economic and monetary union (EMU), increasing democratic legitimacy and coherence in political action, and the establishment of a common foreign and security policy.

The Strasbourg European Council of December 1989 set the launch of an intergovernmental conference (IGC) on Economic and Monetary Union for December 1990. The Dublin special meeting of the European Council in April 1990 launched the preparations for a separate IGC on political union.

Pierre de Boissieu,  
interview of  
12 July 2016  
(Secretary-General  
of the Council of the  
European Union,  
2009-2011)

'The background is well known. The Berlin Wall had fallen at the end of 1989. Above all, the Soviet bloc had to some degree collapsed; that was perhaps more important than the fall of the Berlin Wall, as it was a harbinger of the forthcoming 'liberation' of what we used to call the Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic states, and including Yugoslavia, which was under a different regime. There were long discussions about the first intervention in Iraq, (...) that first intervention in Iraq revealed just how disunited the 12 themselves were at that time, how incapable not just of responding, but even of showing unity in those circumstances.'

# TIMELINE



## 1952

Proposal for a European Political Community and a European Defence Community (EDC)



## 1961

Bonn summit. First concrete proposals for political unity



## 1969

Werner Plan for an economic and monetary union within the EEC



## 1975

First European Council in Dublin (summit of the EC Heads of State or Government)



## 1986

Signing of the Single European Act establishing the creation of a single market through an Economic and Monetary Union

The Treaties of Rome establish the European Economic Community and EURATOM

## 1957



Étienne Davignon drafted the European Political Cooperation (EPC) report which sets out the way towards the Common Foreign and Security Policy

## 1970



Milan European Council on the extension of Community powers to new areas and the establishment of a full internal market

## 1985





# 1989

Fall of the Berlin Wall



# 1990

April and June: Dublin Councils on EMU and increased democratic legitimacy



# 1991

June: Luxembourg European Council is presented with the draft treaty on European Union



# 1992

Signing of the Maastricht Treaty

Strasbourg European Council launches IGC on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

# 1989



October: Rome Summit, extension of Community powers and citizenship. IGCs begin in the margins

# 1990



December: Maastricht European Council reaches an agreement on the new Treaty

# 1991



Entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty

# 1993



The Rome Summit in October 1990 developed Delors' idea into a proposal for a Treaty covering EMU and Political Union, which foresaw the extension of the Community's powers in the areas of the environment, health, social policy, energy, research and technology, consumer protection, immigration, visa policy, the right of asylum, and international crime. It also proposed the creation of 'European citizenship' and mentioned the possibility of a common defence framework.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of the French Republic, 1974-1981, interview of 29 September 2016

'The Treaty of Maastricht [...] was a very good Treaty. It makes comfortable reading and you can understand what we wanted to do, which all made sense and provided the right framework for taking Europe forward!'

In April 1991, the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council presented a draft Treaty on European Union, which introduced a structure divided into three key areas of activity: the European Communities, the common foreign and security policy and justice and home affairs.

The Maastricht European Council in December 1991 reached agreement on the new treaty, the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which covered these fields in a single text.

The Treaty on European Union was signed in Maastricht, located on the river Maas (Meuse) at the symbolic crossroads between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, on 7 February 1992. The European Union was born, and the Treaty became commonly known as the "Maastricht Treaty".



The Maastricht Treaty entered into force on 1 November 1993, following its ratification by the then 12 Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and United Kingdom).

## THE ESSENCE OF THE MAASTRICHT TREATY

The Treaty formally established the European Union. However, it is not a blueprint for a constitution, but rather a very large legal text comprising over 230 articles and including very precise rules governing the decision-making of the EU institutions, together with specific policy objectives and practices.

The Maastricht Treaty also pushed forward two key elements for European integration: monetary union (meaning ultimately a single currency), and a common foreign and security policy. It also conveyed EU citizenship, thereby supplementing national citizenship.

The Treaty widened the scope of European Community policymaking to include some new areas, including education, culture, public health, consumer protection, trans-European networks, industrial policy, and development cooperation. It also expanded cooperation between the EU and Member States on social policy, a common commercial policy, economic and social cohesion, research and technological development, and the environment.

The Maastricht Treaty marked an important change in the institutional balance within the Community by giving more powers to the European Parliament. For instance, it not only gave the European Parliament the right of initiative, the right of petition and the role of appointing the Ombudsman, but also introduced the codecision procedure, which meant that the European Parliament and the Council had to adopt legislation jointly. These innovations aimed to widen democratic accountability in the European decision-making process. A new body was also created, the Committee of the Regions, to represent regional and local interests in the context of EU legislative activity. The Committee had its roots in, and reflects the subsidiarity principle enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty.

**'The principle of subsidiarity represents an important innovation [...] as it is well known, it establishes that in those sectors that do not belong to its exclusive competence, the Community intervenes only if and to the extent that the objectives of the action envisaged cannot be sufficiently achieved at the level of Member States and may therefore, due to the size and effects of the action considered, be better achieved at the level of the Community.'**

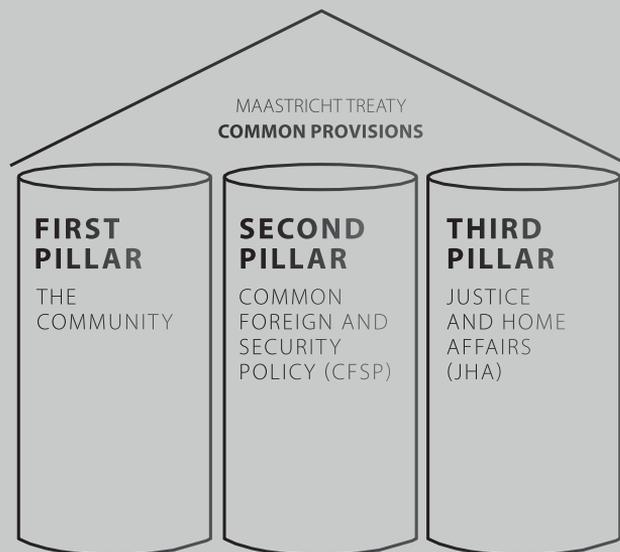
Filippo Maria Pandolfi, Member of the Delors Commission, with the Research and Development portfolio, interview of 24 June 1998

# THE THREE PILLARS OF MAASTRICHT

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One of the most noteworthy and fundamental characteristics of the Maastricht Treaty was the reorganisation of the European Union's competencies into three areas, commonly known as pillars. These were:

1. The European Communities (EC) pillar
2. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) pillar
3. The Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) pillar



This structure was the result of a compromise between those Member States which were pushing for the expansion of the competencies of the European Communities to include fields such as foreign policy, military matters, criminal justice, and judicial cooperation, and other Member States which had misgivings about including such sensitive areas under supranational mechanisms.

The pillar structure brought with it different decision-making procedures. The first, 'European Communities', pillar provided a framework enabling the Community institutions to exercise the powers conferred on them by the Member States in areas governed by the Treaty. The number of decisions to be taken through qualified majority voting in the Council of the European Union were increased.

The second and third pillars operated on an intergovernmental cooperation basis, usually through consensus between the Member States, and with less involvement from the Commission.

The pillar structure also clarified where, and to what extent, the Union has exclusive legislative competence, where it shares its competence with the Member States, and where it may carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement action by the Member States. There are three categories of EU competence: exclusive competence (only the EU can act), shared competence (the Member States can act only if the EU has chosen not to), and actions to support, coordinate or supplement action by the Member States, but without harmonising their national rules.

The pillar structure, introduced 25 years ago by the Maastricht Treaty, was subsumed into the overall European Union structure in 2009 as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon. This improved institutional efficiency and strengthened the democratic nature of the Union. Since Lisbon, the Union has been based on two key treaties: the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

*EU co-finances the development of energy-efficient cities, projects on clean energy, and environmental protection programmes*



*Refugee registration with electronic fingerprints, an important element in the fight against human trafficking*



*An officer from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) on a patrol mission in the Mediterranean sea*



## FIRST PILLAR: THE COMMUNITY

This pillar resulted from the merger of the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). The first pillar, the European Communities, provided a framework within which those powers for which sovereignty had been transferred by the Member States in the areas governed by the Treaty would be exercised by the Community institutions. Economic and monetary union (EMU) was launched under the first pillar. This culminated in the issuing of a single currency, the euro, on 1 January 2002. Community powers were extended in the areas of the environment, research, industry and cohesion policy. As regards law-making, the creation of the codecision procedure gave the European Parliament the power to adopt legal acts jointly with the Council. The assent and cooperation procedures were extended to new areas, as was qualified majority voting in the Council. The Court of Auditors, established in 1975, became the fifth European institution, and the Committee of the Regions was set up.



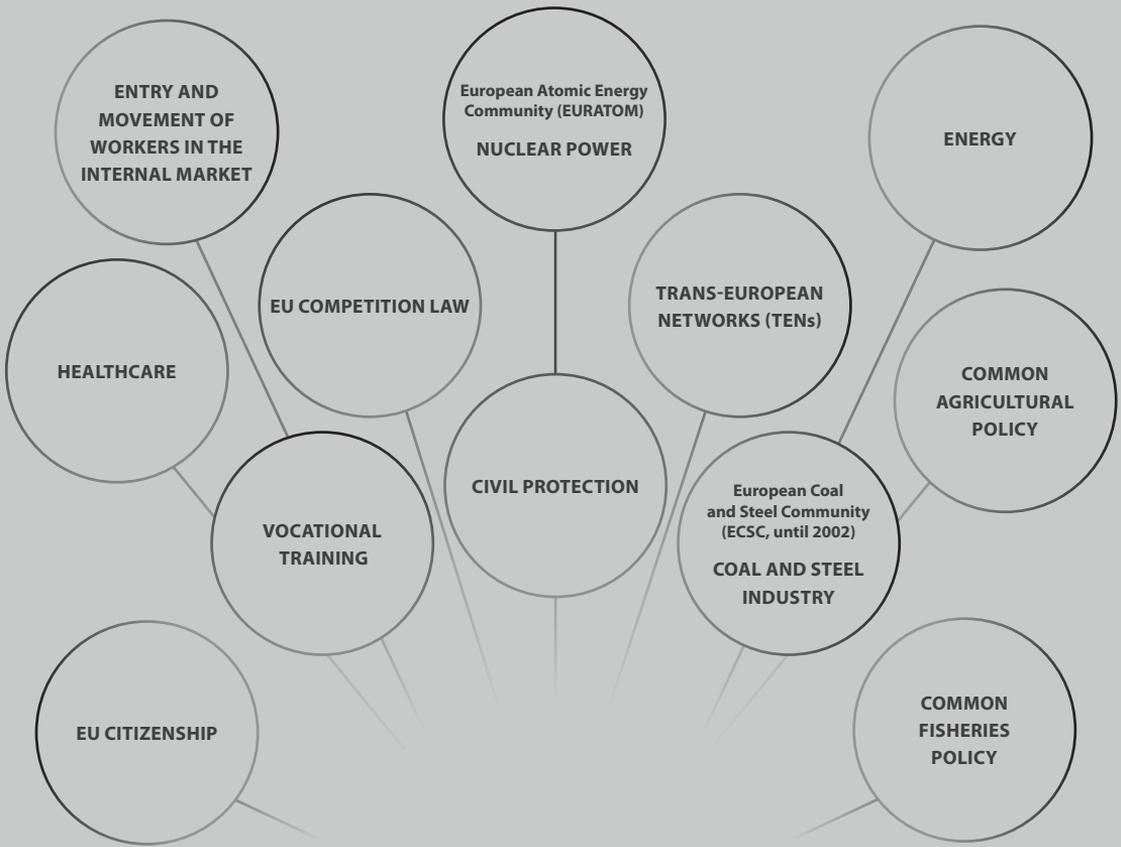
*Dutch Minister for Finance, Gerrit Zalm, presenting the euro coins during the European Council meeting in Amsterdam, June 1997*



*European farmers protest during the European Council, Brussels, March 1984*



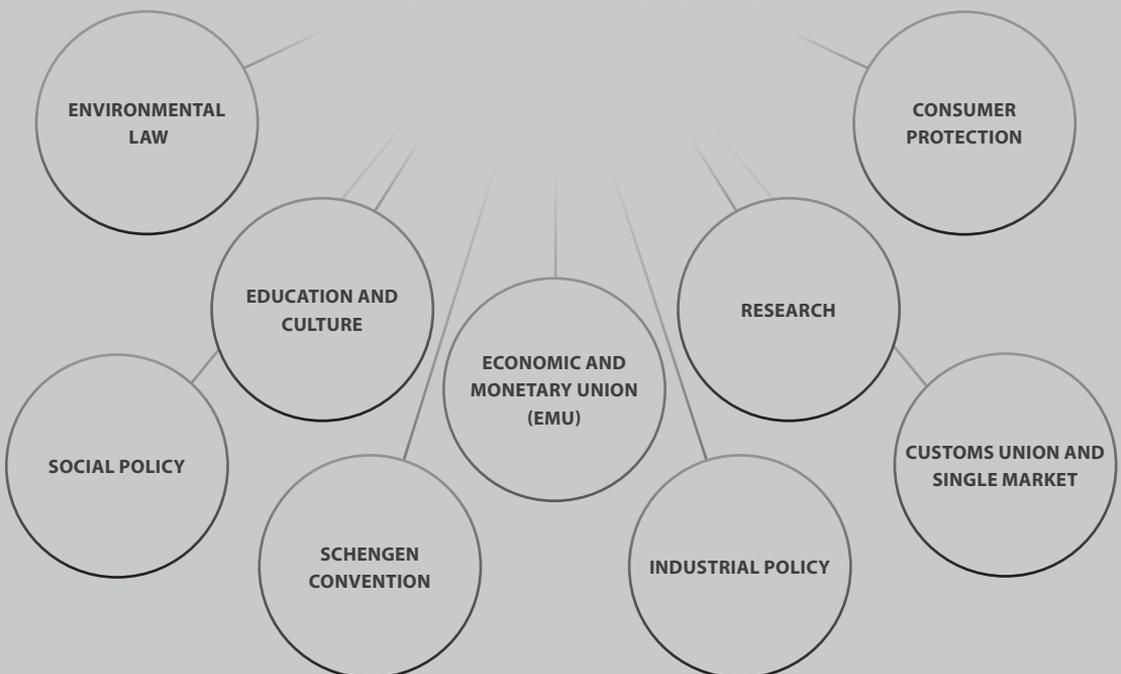
*Celebrations in Zittau, Germany, where the borders of the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany meet*



# FIRST PILLAR

## THE COMMUNITY

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE



## SECOND PILLAR: COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY (CFSP)

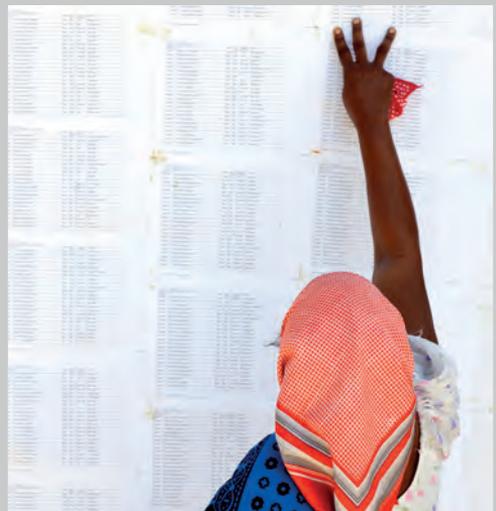
The CFSP objectives were 'to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union [...] to strengthen the security of the Union and its Member States in all ways [...] to preserve peace and strengthen international security [...] to promote international cooperation [...] to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.'

In order to achieve those objectives, the Treaty provided for 'systematic cooperation between Member States' on foreign and security policy issues. The CFSP enabled the EU to conduct coordinated diplomatic activity on a global level: this has had important consequences in terms of preparing accession to the EU for applicant countries and developing political dialogue with specific geographical areas of strategic relevance (e.g. Asia, Africa and Latin America). The CFSP brought together and built on the mechanisms and achievements of European Political Cooperation (EPC), originally set up in 1970, and sketched the outlines of a common security and defence policy.

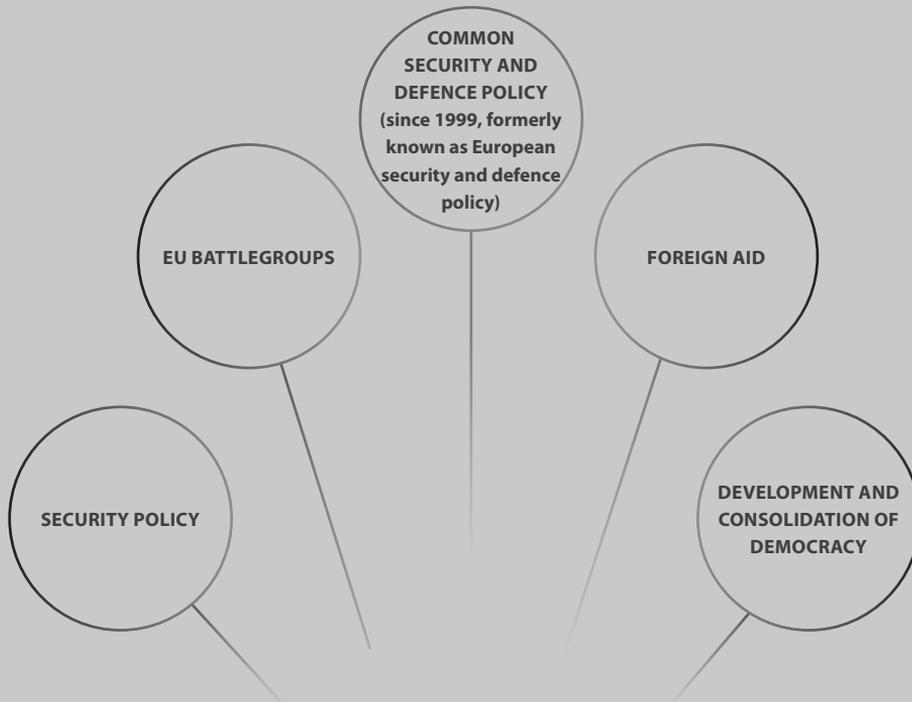
*EU observed the presidential elections in Tanzania, where over 50% of voters were women*



*The European flag is raised in Strasbourg*



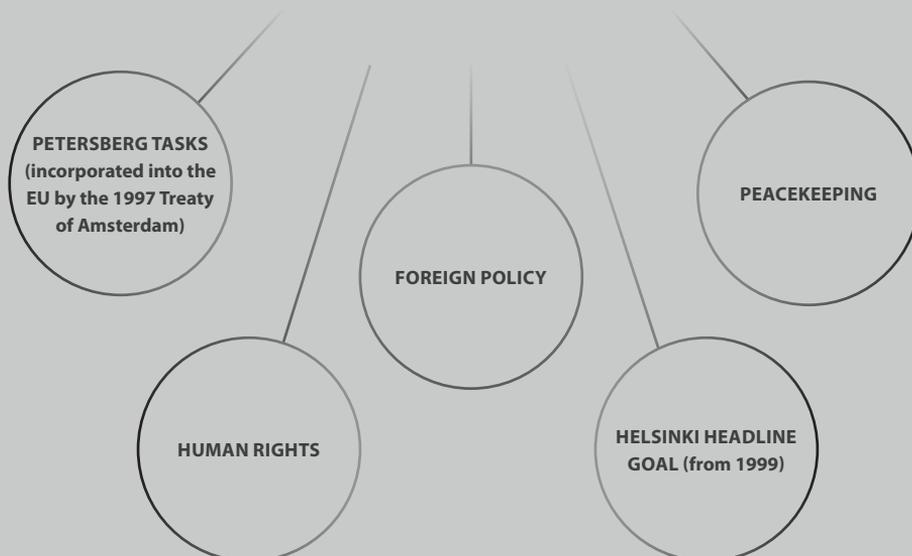
*Humanitarian aid provided by the European Union*



# SECOND PILLAR

## COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY (CFSP)

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE



### THIRD PILLAR: JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (JHA)

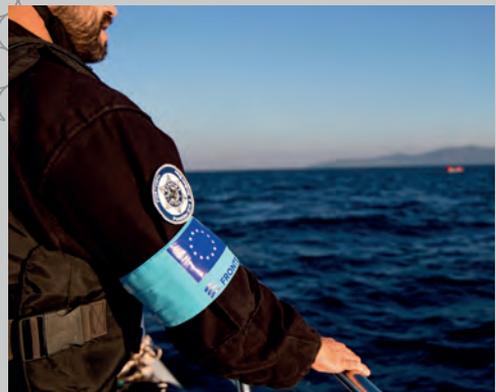
The Union's objective was to develop common action through intergovernmental methods to provide citizens with a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security and justice. Under the third pillar, the Maastricht Treaty contained provisions relating to controls at the Union's external borders, combating terrorism, the creation of Europol, the establishment of a common asylum policy, combating illegal immigration, and judicial cooperation in criminal and civil cases. The abolition of internal borders and the free movement of persons made it necessary to coordinate the national legislative and regulatory provisions, which were often very different, in a number of legislative areas. Some of those areas had already been subject to intergovernmental cooperation under the Schengen Implementation Convention of 1990, but the level of cooperation was inadequate and needed to be extended, though competence for preservation of law and order and for safeguarding internal security remained with the Member States.



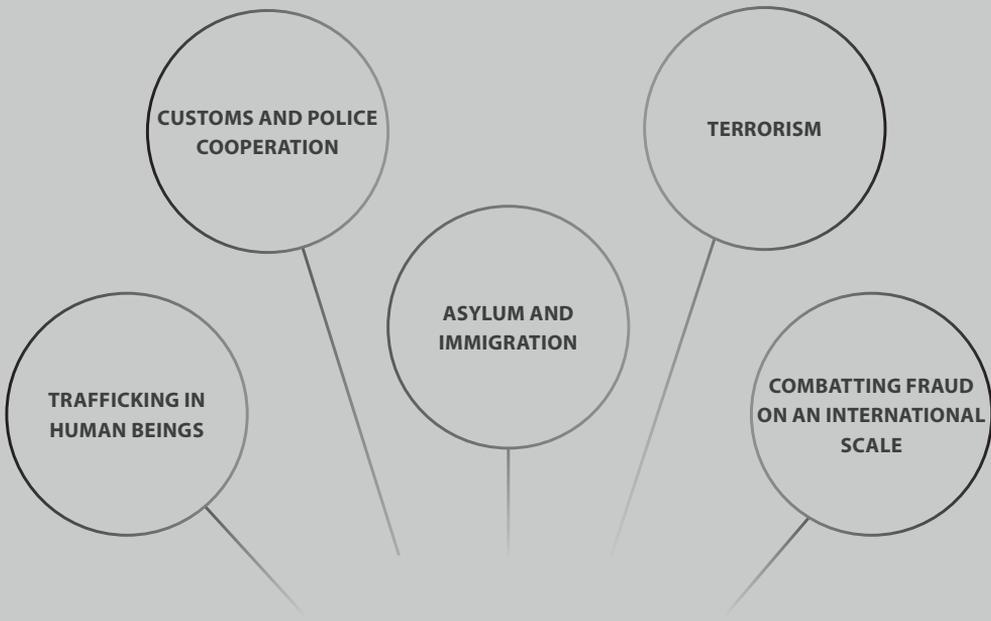
*Judges at the opening of a hearing at a court*



*European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) staff supervising the inspection of a suspect vehicle*



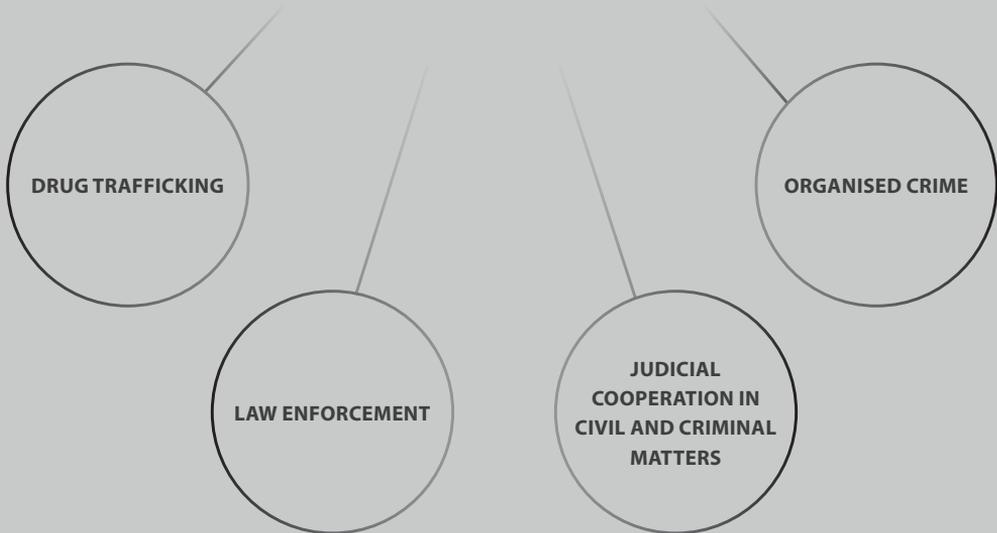
*An officer from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) on a patrol mission in the Mediterranean sea*



# THIRD PILLAR

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (JHA)

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE



# THE LEGACY OF MAASTRICHT

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The Maastricht Treaty has had a positive impact on European citizens, as they study, work and travel, and in other aspects of their daily lives.

## **A Europe of freedom: travelling, residing and working freely in every EU country**

Freedom of movement and residence for persons in the EU is the cornerstone right of Union citizenship, which the Maastricht Treaty attributes automatically to every national of a Member State (*‘Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States [...]’*).

EU citizens can move to and remain in another EU country for up to three months, or for longer if they prove that they have financial resources to support themselves, while EU students may remain for the duration of their studies. All EU citizens enjoy equal treatment with nationals of another Member State with regard to access to employment, working conditions and all other social and tax advantages.

By 2017, some 14 million European citizens had chosen to work or live in another Member State and benefit from social protection and civic rights.

## **A Europe with an identity: EU citizenship**

The Maastricht Treaty bestowed citizenship of the EU on the citizens of the Member States. The rights associated with EU citizenship entailed: the right to move and reside within the territory of the EU; the right to vote in, and stand for election in, local and European elections in any Member State; the right of protection by the diplomatic authorities of any Member State when travelling outside the EU; the right to petition the European Parliament; and the right for citizens to bring cases directly to the European Court of Justice.

The most important point was that European citizenship was not intended to supplant other identities (*‘Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship’*).

## **A social Europe: social policy**

Under the Maastricht Treaty, the promotion of a high level of employment and social protection became one of the tasks conferred on the European Union. A fundamental objective of the ongoing Europe 2020 strategy is fostering a high-employment economy that leads to social and territorial cohesion.

*Affordable health services for citizens of the European Union*



The EU social policy makes it easier for workers to move freely within the EU (e.g. through the coordination of social security schemes across the Union so that workers receive their pensions and social security benefits when moving within the EU). It also limits working hours, tackles workplace discrimination and makes working conditions safer.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017, at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, Sweden, continues the policy direction introduced by the Maastricht Treaty and provides new and more effective rights for citizens. It has 3 main categories:

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

Fair working conditions

Social protection and inclusion

### **A safer Europe: security**

The Maastricht Treaty established Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) as one of the EU's 'three pillars', and formally introduced collaboration between the Member States on policies such as immigration and police cooperation. Under this pillar, the EU created Europol in 1995, then in 1998 the European Judicial Network in criminal matters (EJN) was established, to help in the fight against serious crimes such as corruption, drug trafficking and distribution, and terrorism.

The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997, introduced the concept of the 'area of freedom, security and justice, in which the free movement of persons is assured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.' In 2004, the EU established the European arrest warrant, which requires a Member State to arrest and transfer a suspect or a criminal to the Member State issuing the warrant.

Prime Minister of Estonia,  
Jüri Ratas, signing the  
proclamation on behalf of  
the Council

'The Social Pillar captures what Europe believes in. We want a Europe that tackles unemployment, poverty, and discrimination, a Europe that gives equal opportunities to the young and vulnerable. The Social Pillar builds on our common values and will guide our future work for a fairer Europe.'

*First response teams during an exercise in the Justus Lipsius building of the Council of the European Union*





Erasmus students

### **A more knowledgeable Europe: education and training, research**

The Maastricht Treaty established education as an area under EU competence. Education and training are key elements of the EU's strategy to overcome socio-economic crises affecting European countries, to boost growth and jobs, and to foster social equity and inclusion.

EU educational exchange programmes such as the incredibly successful Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes have created a genuine 'Erasmus generation'. Studies show that graduates with international experience fare much better on the job market: they are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with those who have not studied or trained abroad. By 2017, the Erasmus programme had enabled 3.5 million students to enjoy a period of higher education in another State to their own.

### **A more connected Europe: physical and digital networks**

The Maastricht Treaty gave the EU the competence to develop trans-European networks (TENs) in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy. This has helped to develop the internal market, reinforce economic and social cohesion, link hard-to-access or peripheral regions with the core of the Union, and connect the EU with its neighbouring states.

Since 1993, the EU transport infrastructure policy has contributed to an increasingly coherent, integrated network for all means of transportation.

Back in the mid-1990s the EU started to support digital networks, with a view to developing Europe-wide broadband communications. The ongoing Connecting Europe Facility has provided more than EUR 9 billion to support investment in broadband networks and pan-European digital services. The WiFi4EU component aims to provide free public Wi-Fi in up to 8 000 communities by 2020.

### **A greener Europe: environment**

The Maastricht Treaty made *'sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment'* one of its objectives and paved the way for further advances. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) integrated environmental protection into all EU sectoral policies and 'combating climate change' was a specific goal in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007).

The EU plays a key role in international environmental negotiations; for instance on biological diversity, protection of the ozone layer, climate change and sustainable development. In 2018, the European Commission proposed new rules to ban single-use plastic products, such as plastic cotton buds, cutlery, plates, straws and drink-stirrers, which will have to be made instead exclusively from more sustainable materials; today, these products constitute 70 % of all marine litter items.

### **A consumer-oriented Europe: consumer protection**

The Maastricht Treaty gave a proper legal basis to the EU's consumer policy, situating it within the framework of the internal market and tasking it with protecting the health, safety and economic interests of consumers.

Today, the EU consumer policy safeguards consumer rights through legislation, guarantees the safety of products within the single market, and ensures that full and consistent information is available to the consumer when buying goods or services. For instance, EU rules protect against misleading advertisements, price indicators, labelling and contract terms, and require allergen information to be provided on food products, whilst origin information is mandatory for fresh meat.

### **An economically stable Europe: the economic and monetary union and common currency - the euro**

The Maastricht Treaty established the completion of the economic and monetary union (EMU) as a formal objective (*'achieve the strengthening and the convergence of their economies and to establish an economic and monetary union including, in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, a single and stable currency'*). The Treaty set convergence criteria, known as the Maastricht criteria, which Member States are required to meet to enter the third stage of EMU and adopt the euro as their currency. The purpose of setting the criteria was to achieve price stability within the eurozone and maintain it even in the event of the accession of new Member States.

*The day the euro was introduced on to the financial markets*



The completion of EMU, in the form of monetary integration, was achieved by 12 Member States in 2002, with the launch of the euro. The introduction of the euro reinforced competition between the Member States adopting the new currency, and increased price convergence. The euro also became an international currency, used extensively outside the eurozone and as a major reserve currency. Thanks to the EMU and the euro, EU citizens can travel in most EU countries without exchanging currencies, and easily transfer funds to other countries; they can borrow money with lower interest rates and they enjoy a higher purchasing power through lower inflation.

### **A Europe with international standing: a common European policy for external affairs**

The Maastricht Treaty expressed the will of the Union to assert its identity on the international scene. Its aims were to preserve peace, reinforce international security and promote international cooperation, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The EU foreign and security policy enables the EU to speak and act as one in world affairs. With the inception of the legal personality of the EU (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007), the EU has been able to conclude and negotiate international agreements, become a member of international organisations, and sign up to international conventions, such as the European Convention on Human Rights.

Acting together gives the EU's 28 Member States far greater international weight than they would have if they each pursued their own policies. The EU is the world's biggest trader, with the world's second largest currency, the euro, and it is the world's largest donor of development finance. In recent years, EU foreign policy has had a positive impact in reducing piracy in Somalian waters, re-establishing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and securing a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015.

*Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, walks to a meeting on defence; December 2017*

