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Europe

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1945 - the present

Europe

The Dutch and Europeans

The Netherlands does not exist in isolation. It is closely tied to its neighbouring countries and together they form Europe.

After World War II, the heads of state of a number of western European countries realised that the future of Europe lay in cooperation, to prevent another war breaking out. It started with cooperation in the area of strategic resources. Around 1950, these resources were coal and steel. At the time, coal was the major energy source, and steel was needed in large amounts to reconstruct the infrastructure of western Europe. Six European countries signed the Treaty of Paris in 1951, and by doing so established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). This treaty allowed for, among other things, free trade in these resources between the six participating nations: the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany and Italy.

In 1957, the six nations took the next step by signing the Treaty of Rome. This made the European Economic Community

(EEC) a reality: a customs union of the six member countries that guaranteed free trade in all products. The EEC quickly launched a common agricultural policy aimed at safeguarding the provision of food and improving the incomes of farmers. The Treaty also established the European Atomic Energy Community (better known as Euratom), a third European community, focused on the exploration and development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Later, the three Communities were merged into a single European Community; today, it is referred to as the European Union (EU).

This European cooperation was a success in many ways. Numerous other European nations wished to join. The first new members were the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland (1973), followed later by southern European enlargement with the addition of Greece (1981) and Spain and Portugal (1986). In 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined, bringing the number of member states

to fifteen. The biggest enlargement took place in 2004 when eight countries from the former Eastern Bloc acceded to the European Union along with Malta and Cyprus. In 2007, the EU member states number twenty-five and further enlargement is around the corner.

A European Union comprising ever more countries is also an EU of more and more votes, interests and cultures. This makes it increasingly difficult to agree on the future aims of the EU and on the

priorities for European cooperation as shown by the Dutch rejection of the proposals for a European Constitution. For the Netherlands, a future without Europe is virtually unimaginable. The vast majority of the nation's trade takes place within Europe. The various economies of the EU are strongly interwoven and the freedom of movement of workers regularly reminds the Dutch (and others) that we are all part of Europe and we are all Europeans.



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Sub-topics

Primary education sector

The euro and agriculture in Europe
Getting to know other European countries, languages and cultures
The fall of the Berlin Wall: Europe opens up to the Eastern Bloc

Secondary education sector

Economics: free trade zone, internal markets, market integration
Turkey and Europe
The geography of Europe and of European cooperation
The history of European unification (for example, the position of the United Kingdom)
A European Constitution?

Past and Present

The Europe of Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon and today

In the Treasure Chest

The old Dutch guilder

References

Places to Go

Take a holiday in Europe

Books for young people

Amanda Aizpuriete, *Op bezoek in Letland* (9+)
Jan Willem Bultje, *Op bezoek in België* (9+)
Jan Willem Bultje, *Op bezoek in Litouwen* (9+)
Jan Willem Bultje, *Op bezoek in Nederland* (9+)
Jan Willem Bultje, *Op bezoek in Tsjechië* (9+)
E. Hiiepuu, *Op bezoek in Estland* (9+)
J. Kadziolka, *Op bezoek in Polen* (9+)
D. Kollar, *Op bezoek in Slowakije* (9+)
S. Lang, *Op bezoek in Hongarije* (9+)
Danica Veceric, *Op bezoek in Slovenië* (9+)

Background literature

Wim van den Doel, "Maastricht: Plein 1992. Het Verdrag van Maastricht" in: *Plaatsen van herinnering: Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, Amsterdam, 2006

Websites

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www.go-europe.nl
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