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INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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Introduction to European Integration



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Introduction to European Integration

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction to the European Integration is an integral part of the system of teaching foreign students on a Master's degree program and is one of the compulsory optional subjects. As this is a very complex and comprehensive system, we have decided in a simplified way to define the basic areas of European integration. We have tried to focus mainly on the historical background and development of European integration, the theory of European integration, the common foreign and security policy, the institutional system of the European Union and the legal regulation and the basic principles of the EU internal market.

After a historical excursion and defining the basic sources of European Union law, we focused on the concept of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. We have focused on its historical genesis; legal and institutional anchoring and we are also committed to a common security and defence policy.

The third chapter provides a clear and comprehensive view of the theory of European integration. We tried to analyse essential theoretical bases such as federalism, intergovernmentalism, new institutionalism, functionalism, neo-functionalism and Europeanization. Although students consider this area to be relatively difficult to understand, we think that we have been able to give a clear interpretation of these theoretical origins.

The institutional system is the fourth chapter of our textbook. We are dealing in more detail with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Council, briefly mentioning the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Central Bank and the Court of

Auditors. For the first four nominations, we focus on their organizational structure, competencies and other specifics resulting from their position within the institutional system of the European Union.

The last chapter deals with the internal market and therefore the main reason why the European Union was founded. After a historic excursion and defining the basic stages of European integration, we are dealing with the basic principles of free movement of people, goods, services and capital. We also point to the focal points of this area - primary and secondary EU law and of course the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU. At the end of each chapter there are questions and tasks for discussion as a didactical aid in teaching this subject.

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1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Although European integration had already been attempted in the period before World War II, the first real success of any political and economic unification of Europe was accomplished immediately after the Second World War. This was mainly due to the political and economic situation in Europe. World War II was a great shock to European states, and it was clear that there was a need to find a way to prevent similar developments in the future. A leading example was the United States of America, which, as a federal state, developed into a solid entity with huge economic and political potential. By contrast, Europe was divided into almost forty mostly national states with various interests. Its unification could lead to the creation of a strong political and economic entity which would be equivalent to the United States. These efforts were undoubtedly supported by further developments, particularly when Europe was divided into two antagonistic camps by the end of the second half of the 1940s.

In the 1950s, it was French diplomacy that played the most important role in developing European integration. France seized this opportunity and in 1950 presented an ambitious proposal for the creation of an integration group in Western Europe, which went far beyond the traditional intergovernmental cooperation promoted mainly by Great Britain. This initiative was supported by other continental countries - Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg - as well as the defeated states - Germany and Italy. The leaders of this proposal were the Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman and his assistant Jean Monnet. Their concept consisted in the creation of a

supreme organization where the Member States would surrender part of their sovereignty and competences in certain defined areas, while in others the sovereignty of these states would remain unaffected. In other words, Member States would be subject to a sustained commitment, even against their will in some cases.

The first step towards the integration of Western Europe was the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which brought together the aforementioned six countries: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. The impetus for the emergence of this community was not only economic (accelerating the recovery of the Western European coal and steel industries), but also political - according to Schuman's words "solidarity in production will ensure that the war between France and Germany will not only be unthinkable but also materially impossible." Although the United Kingdom (UK) also participated in the discussion, they refused to accept the proposal because they disagreed with the principle of the supranational institutions on which the proposal was based.

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established by the Treaty of Paris in 1951. Following the creation of the ECSC, the same states attempted to establish a European Defense Community (EDS). The main objective of EDS was to enable the armed forces of West Germany under the so-called European Army in an institutional arrangement based on the ECSC model. The project touched on the very sensitive issues of national sovereignty, relating to the area of defense, this was met with strong resistance in Western European countries. Eventually, the EDS creation plan ended unsuccessfully.

After this failure, states were worried that the integration process might be stalled, and they therefore activated all the possible methods that could be used to further development of European integration. These focused mainly on the economic sphere, where the benefits of integration were indisputable and politically less controversial. The Benelux countries took this initiative. They proposed convening a conference in order to develop a treaty on integration of transport, energy and atomic energy, a treaty on economic integration and a treaty on European institutions. At the Messina conference in 1955, the ECSC Member States expressed their substantial agreement with the proposals of the Benelux countries and agreed to create two organizations - one for the common market and the other for atomic energy. At the 1956 Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels, the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were drawn up. Both treaties were signed on March 25, 1957 in Rome (hence their name of the Treaty of Rome) by the representatives of the above six states. After ratification, they came into force on 1 January 1958.

The Treaties of Rome (in particular the Treaty on the European Economic Community), along with the Paris Treaty, are the essential legal and program documents for European integration. Of course, they have been gradually amended and extended. Initially, the Community functioned as a customs union and a so-called common market that was gradually created during the twelve-year transitional period. Tariffs were reduced and gradually dismantled, quantitative restrictions on trade were abolished and tax discrimination against imported goods was banned in the Community. The free movement of goods has been complemented by freedom of enterprise, the free

movement of labor and services, and the substantial liberalization of capital movements and payments. The treaty envisaged the creation of a customs union in four stages by 1970 at the latest, but the program was in fact completed by mid-1968.

By 1965, there were three communities - the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), each of which had its own institutions. The "merger treaty" on the establishment of joint institutions of three Communities entered into force in July 1967. In 1973, during a difficult economic period, the Community's membership base was first expanded. The UK, Ireland and Denmark were accepted. The UK was very sceptical about the original integration projects and refused to take part in them. They could only join after the departure of French President de Gaulle from the political scene. He was not only against the reinforcement of the transnational elements of the European Communities, but also against the enlargement of the Community by including the UK.

Despite the difficulties that the first enlargement brought, and despite the complex economic developments in the first half of the 1970s, an agreement was reached on the strengthening of the Community institutions. In the early 1960s, a complex common agricultural policy was introduced. Following the introduction of the Common Commercial Policy in the early 1970s, the Community began to act on behalf of the Member States as the most important player in international economic relations. The Community engaged in GATT tariff negotiations and managed to create a dense network of contractual relations with third countries and international organizations on a global scale, together with the USA, playing a key role in international economic relations. The EC's relations with