
E-MANUAL

GUIDE TO PLANNING EU PROJECTS IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL HEALTH SECTOR
1.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION IN A NUTSHELL



After World War II, the need emerged to end conflicts and begin a political process of construction to ensure peace. Thus, the first steps were taken that would later lead to the establishment of what we know today as the European Union.

Towards the European Union



1949

Establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an intergovernmental security alliance between the United States, Canada and 10 Western European countries. In 2023, NATO brings together 30 members, including 21 EU member states. Establishment of the Council of Europe to promote democracy, protect human rights and the rule of law. It was a pioneering idea of the European Union. European Convention on Human Rights become effective on September 3, 1953.

1950

French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presents a plan for closer cooperation, proposing to integrate Western European coal and steel industries.

1952

Establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), joined by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The European Coal and Steel Community, created following the ratification of the 1951 Treaty of Paris, is the first step toward lasting peace.

1957

Given the success of the Treaty of Paris, the six founding countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) extended cooperation to other economic sectors, signing the two treaties of Rome to establish: European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). These bodies become effective on January 1, 1958.

1958

The first meeting of the European Parliamentary Assembly (forerunner of today's European Parliament) is held in Strasbourg with Robert Schuman as elected president. It replaced the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community and, on March 30, 1962, changed its name to the European Parliament.

1960

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) to promote free trade and economic integration among some non-EEC countries, such as Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. In 2020, EFTA members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

1961

The communist government of East Germany builds a wall across Berlin. The wall becomes a symbol of the separation of Eastern and Western Europe during the Cold War.

1962

The first common agricultural policy allows EEC countries to jointly control food production. There is enough food for everyone and farmers have a good standard of living. The undesirable effect is overproduction, with mountains of surplus produce. Since the 1990s, the priorities become reducing surpluses, improving food quality and promoting sustainability.

1965

The treaty merging the executive bodies of the three communities (European Coal and Steel Community, European Economic Community and Euratom) is signed in Brussels and comes into force on July 1, 1967. Since then, the European Communities will have a single administrative arm (the Commission) and a single executive body (the Council).

1968

The six EEC countries took off customs duties on goods imported from each of them to free cross-border trade for the first time. They also apply the same duties on their imports from outside countries. Trade between these internal countries and the rest of the world increases rapidly. Student and workers' protests in Paris and other European countries were joined by pacifist and anti-nuclear movements. Soviet tanks smother the brief 'Prague Spring' of the fledgling democracy in Czechoslovakia.

1973

Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark join the EEC. As a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict in October, the oil-producing countries of the Middle East increased significantly price, while restricting sales to certain European countries, causing economic problems throughout the EEC.

1974 1975

The overthrow of the Salazar regime in Portugal, the collapse of the military regime in Greece in 1974 and the death of General Franco in Spain in 1975 marked the end of these dictatorships in Europe. These three countries pledged to pursue democratic government, a crucial step towards future membership of the European Communities.

1979

On 10 March, the European Monetary System (EMS) was adopted, while the following June, the 410 members of the European Parliament were elected by universal suffrage for the first time.

1981

Greece joined the European Communities, following the overthrow of the military regime and the restoration of democracy in 1974.

1986

Single Act: the Single European Act, the first reform of the EEC Treaty, is signed in Luxembourg on 17 February. Spain and Portugal join the European Communities: the Europe of twelve is born.

1991

In the Balkans, Yugoslavia begins to dissolve. The resulting conflicts caused thousands of casualties and lasted for much of the next decade.

1992

The Maastricht Treaty is the origin of the monetary union, establishing the arrangements for Political Union (PEU) and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Although a result of tending towards unification is achieved, the division of roles and tasks of pre-existing institutions remains. We are in the presence of a construction governed by the so-called 'three pillars': the European Communities (CEE, European Economic Community; CZ, European Coal and Steel Community; CEEC, European Atomic Energy Community), the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs (JAI).

1993

The European Union was officially born on 1 November. The single market and its four freedoms are established: the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. Hundreds of pieces of legislation have passed since 1986 in various areas ranging from tax policy to economic activities regulation, professional qualifications and other barriers to open borders. The free movement of certain services, however, is postponed.

1994

The agreement establishing the European Economic Area (EEA), which extends the single market to the EFTA countries, entered into force. Today, people, goods, services and capital can move freely in the 30 EEA countries (EU-27 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). Switzerland is not part of the EEA but has access to the single market.

1995

The EU-15: Austria, Sweden and Finland join on 1 January. Schengen Convention: enters into force on 26 March. It establishes the free movement of persons implemented by seven EU countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. Italy joined on 26 October 1997

1997

The Treaty of Amsterdam was signed in June at the European summit. It introduces the principle of 'enhanced cooperation' and the fight against discrimination. Issues such as the free movement of persons and the coordination of defence and security policies are also redefined. The Treaty entered into force on 1 May 1999.

2000

Treaty of Nice. At the European Council in Nice on 7 December, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights is proclaimed. On 11 December, the new Treaty was approved, and given the enlargement of the Union, it changed the structure of the European institutions.

2001

The Convention for the Reform of Institutions and the Establishment of a Constitution of the Union is approved in Laeken, Belgium.
Airliners are hijacked into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, killing almost 3,000 people. EU countries firmly stand by the US in the fight against international terrorism.

2002

The euro, the new currency, began to circulate as of 1 January in 12 countries (all EU countries except Great Britain, Sweden and Denmark) although it had already been introduced as a 'scriptural currency', as the currency of account in financial transactions, as of 1 January 1999. At the summit in Copenhagen on 12/13 December 2002, the EU invited ten states (Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia) to join the EU from 1 May 2004, bringing the total to 25 EU countries. Bulgaria and Romania are scheduled to join in 2007, while a possible date has yet to be specified for Turkey. On the 28th of February, the work of the Convention for the drafting of a Union Constitution begins.

2003

On 10 July, the work of the Convention concludes with the presentation of a draft constitution for the EU. Within the framework of its foreign and security policy, the EU undertakes peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, primarily in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In both cases, EU-led forces replace NATO units.

2004

Enlargement of the Union from 15 to 25 Member States. The European Parliament is renewed in June. On 29 October, the Constitutional Treaty is signed in Rome.

2005

In February, the Kyoto Protocol came into force to reduce the impact of climate change.

2007

On 1 January Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU. There is now talk of a Europe of 27.

2008

A severe financial crisis hits the world economy. The problems begin with mortgages in the United States. Several European banks also encounter difficulties. The crisis leads to closer economic cooperation between EU countries.

2009

The Copenhagen climate agreement was signed. Although considered a step towards a future global pact, it has no binding force. The EU has proposed to further cut its CO2 emissions if other countries commit to doing the same.

2011

The European Council decides to conclude accession negotiations with Croatia by the end of June 2011: this country will become the 28th Member State in 2013.

2012

The European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity begins: the aim is to raise awareness of how Europeans today are living and staying healthy for longer and the opportunities this brings.

2015

UN conference in Paris, where the EU played a key role, 195 countries signed a new climate change agreement. The agreement includes an action plan to limit global warming to 'well below 2°C' compared to pre-industrial levels. Over one million asylum seekers arrived in Europe, many fleeing the civil war in Syria and the need for international protection. EU leaders are working to intensify external border controls and reduce the number of asylum seekers by cooperating with neighbouring countries such as Turkey.

2016

In a June 2016 referendum, 52% of UK voters voted in favour of the UK leaving the EU after more than 40 years. The UK leaves the EU on 31 January 2020.

2019

A growing and active international youth movement activate public opinion. A new Commission takes office, firmly committed to making Europe climate neutral by 2050 with a new growth strategy, the European Green Deal.

2020

The COVID-19 pandemic creates a public health emergency and an unprecedented economic slowdown. The EU and its member countries work together to support health systems, contain the spread of the virus and provide vaccines for people in the EU and the rest of the world.

To help support the recovery, leaders agree on the largest stimulus package ever funded by the EU budget: the focus is on a green and digital recovery, as the EU strives to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

The UK leaves the EU after 47 years of membership, opening a new chapter in its relationship with the EU.

2022

In response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, the EU demonstrated unity and strength and provided Ukraine with humanitarian, political, financial and material support in a coordinated manner.
