EUROPE DAY 2020
The EU and the citizen:
A timeline of key EU legislation and initiatives

1950s
1957: The Treaty of Rome, envisaging a Customs Union and common market for its Member States, is signed. As amended, it now forms part of the Lisbon Treaty as the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

1960s
1962: Aimed at ensuring food security for Europeans, the Common Agricultural Policy enters into effect.

1964: The first legislation on free movement is adopted by the Council of Ministers.

1965: The EEC adopts the first legislation on the regulation and approval of medicinal products.

1967: The first European environmental protection legislation, on standards for classifying, labelling and packaging dangerous substances, is adopted.

1968: The Customs Union among the six original Member States enters into force.

1970s
1973: Ireland, along with Denmark and the United Kingdom, joins the European Community (EC).

1975: The European Regional Development Fund is established.

1975-1976: Directives on equal treatment of men and women on pay (1975) and equal working conditions and access to employment (1976) are adopted.

1977: The first legislation on the mutual recognition of qualifications is adopted.

1979: Citizens of the Member States directly elect the European Parliament for the first time.

1979: The Member States agree to enhanced cooperation on monetary policy and establish the European Monetary System (EMS).

1980s
1980: The first Directive on nutritional labelling of food is adopted.

1982: The Maastricht Treaty renames the European Community as the European Union and introduces the concept of EU citizenship. The European Monetary Union is also established. As amended, it now forms part of the Lisbon Treaty as the Treaty on European Union.


1985: The Schengen Agreement is signed, providing the basis for border-free travel between its signatories. Ireland does not participate in the agreement.


1987: The Erasmus Programme is established, allowing EU university students to spend some of their studies abroad.

1990s
1990: The first Directive on working time is adopted.

1993: The European Single Aviation Market comes into effect.

1995: The first PEACE Programme is established.

1996: The first legislation on posted workers is adopted.

1999: The Euro is introduced as a digital currency and the Eurozone is formally established.

2000s
2000: The e-Commerce Directive is adopted, setting common EU rules for the buying and selling of goods and services online.

2001: The Information Society Directive is adopted, setting common copyright rules across the EU.

2002: The European Food Safety Regulation enters into force. The European Food Safety Authority is established the following year.

2002: Euro coins and banknotes enter into circulation, replacing 12 national currencies.

2002: The e-Privacy Directive is adopted, with the objective of adapting existing rules on data protection to electronic communications.

2004: The European Health Insurance Card is introduced, replacing the previous E111 form.


2010s
2012: The EU is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its role in preserving peace in Europe.

2017: Roaming charges are abolished for EU residents when travelling throughout the Member States, subject to fair use provisions.


2020

This infographic sets out key EC/EU legislation and initiatives that have had an impact on EU citizens throughout its 63-year history. It is intended as an outline only, highlighting key points where there has been particular impact. It is not intended as a complete or exhaustive overview of EU legislation and initiatives.

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Citizens’ Rights: The first EU legislation providing for rights of residence was adopted in 1964 and was expanded up to 1993. These rules were consolidated in 2004 with the adoption of the Citizens’ Rights Directive. This Directive sets out the main conditions for EU nationals to move to and reside in another Member State.

Working Time and Leave: The first EU legislation on rights relating to working time and leave was adopted in 1993. This was updated as the Working Time Directive in 2003 and includes minimum standards for paid holidays and a maximum for average daily hours that may be worked.

Equality: Legislation guaranteeing equal treatment of men and women the workplace was adopted in the 1970s. In 2006, this legislation was recast with the 2006 Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. The legislation guarantees equal pay, working conditions and access to employment opportunities and training for men and women across the EU.

Postured Workers: Legislation on protecting the working conditions of posted workers who temporarily work in another Member State was first adopted in 1986 and revised in 2018, with further legislation on enforcement adopted in 2014. However, these rules do not apply to workers where the working conditions are more favourable in the sending Member State.

Food Production: The Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy are pursued with the objective of ensuring food security but have also had a significant impact in sustaining rural communities.

EU Funding: Established in 1975, the European Regional Development Fund is aimed at correcting economic and social cohesion within the EU by investing in its underdeveloped regions. Member States with a Gross National Income (GNI) of less than 90% of the EU average may also access supports under the European Cohesion Fund. Ireland entered the Cohesion Fund on its creation in 1993 and ceased to be eligible to receive these funds at the end of 2000-2006 programme. Further funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund and Interreg, also support Irish communities.

PEACE Programme: Aimed at supporting reconciliation and a stable economy, communities in Northern Ireland and the border regions can avail of funding under the EU-supported STAGE programme.

Environmental Law: Since the adoption of first legislation in 1967, the EU has developed a leading role in environmental protection, introducing legislation on protecting birds and habitats, water quality, environmental impact assessments and introducing an Emissions Trading System.

Recognition of Qualifications: The first legislation on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications was enacted in 1977 for qualifications in nursing. Subsequent legislation for other fields was consolidated into the 2005 Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Studying Abroad: Since its launch, over nine million people have participated in the Erasmus Programme. In more recent times it has been extended beyond supporting university students to supporting vocational training, youth and sport under Erasmus+

Research Funding: The Framework Programmes provide important funding for the research and scientific sector. The current Framework Programme, Horizon 2020, is due to finish at the end of this year with the replacement programme, Horizon Europe, coming into effect in 2021.

Customs Union: Member States have operated a Customs Union within the EC / EU since 1968. This means that suppliers are not required to pay tariffs on goods obtained from another Member State, significantly reducing the cost and enhancing the availability of such goods.

European Monetary Policy: Since the 1970s, the EEC/EU has held an important role in the coordination of monetary policy across the Member States. The establishment of the European Monetary Union in the Treaty of Maastricht led to the formation of the single currency, the Euro.

Single Currency: The Euro is now the common currency of 19 Member States that make up what is known as the Eurozone. For the citizen, the main advantages of the Euro are the elimination of exchange rates and transaction costs in other members of the Eurozone.

Consumer Protection: In 1985, the EC adopted the Product Liability Directive, which represented the first piece of common legislation on consumer law between the Member States. The Consumer Rights Directive, which entered into force in 2011, is the current legislation on which consumer protections are based. However, these protections do not apply to every sector and there are exceptions under the current rules.

Payments: In 2007, the Payment Services Directive (PSD) was adopted. The PSD provided for common rules governing cashless payments, such as direct debit and card payments, throughout the EEA. It also provided for the creation of a Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), which applies to cashless payments in the Eurozone. The Payment Services Directive 2 (PSD2) adopted in 2015 further enhanced consumer protections and rights.

European Health Insurance Card: The EHIC allows its holder to access emergency or necessary state-provided healthcare when temporarily in another Member State. It replaced the previous document, the E111 form, in 2004.

Medicines: Although health services remain a national competence, the EU holds an important role in the regulation of medicines. In 1965, the then EEC introduced the first legislation on the prior approval of medicinal products before they are marketed. This and subsequent legislation was consolidated in the European Medicines Agency (EMA), which regulates the manufacture and distribution of medicines. In 2004, this was followed by the reform of the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products, founded in 1995, into the European Medicines Agency.

Food Safety: The European Food Safety Regulation is the current basis for European Food Law, requiring foodstuffs to be produced to high quality standards. It also established an agency, the European Food Safety Authority, to oversee common standards on food safety.

Food Labelling: In 1990, the first Directive on nutritional labelling of food was adopted. This was followed by an additional Directive on the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs in 2000. Both Directives were consolidated into a Regulation on food information to consumers in 2011.

Electronic Commerce: Adopted in 2000, the e-Commerce Directive represented the first common EU rules of services available to consumers over the internet. More recently, the European Commission has indicated it will propose a Digital Services Act to upgrade EU rules to the present environment.

Copyright: The Information Society Directive outlined the first common EU rules on copyright protection. In particular, it included exceptions for reproducing copyrighted work in certain circumstances, such as for scientific or non-commercial research or assisting people with disabilities.

Electronic Privacy: The Electronic Privacy Directive set out the common rules for the EU on the retention of data, the use of unsolicited email and the use of cookies. It also supported the previous Data Protection Directive by introducing obligations to ensure the security and confidentiality of information on the internet, as well as adapting previous EU legislation on the protection of privacy in telecommunications to the electronic communications sector.

Roaming Charges: Following the adoption of a Regulation the previous month, roaming charges were abolished throughout the EU on 15 June 2017. However, mobile service operators retain the right to apply fair use provisions to excessive users.

Data Protection: In 1995 the EU adopted its first legislation on data protection, the Data Protection Directive. In 2016, the previous Directive was replaced with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which entered into force in 2018 and now governs the protection of personal data in the EU.

The Schengen Agreement: As Ireland is not a participant, Irish nationals must undergo border checks when entering and leaving the Schengen area. Although a passport is required for such checks, Irish citizens may also use a Passport Card to travel to other EU Member States and can also avail of border free travel between EU states that are part of the Schengen area.

Aviation: The EU introduced a European Single Aviation Market in 1993, which set as a basic principle that any Community air carrier can set fares for both passengers and cargo. It also opened up European aviation to greater competition and growth.

Passenger Rights: EU legislation ensures protections for passengers travelling within the EU, and for air and maritime travel from the EU, or to the EU with an EU carrier. These protections include circumstances where a refund must be provided. Different Regulations exist for air, rail and maritime travel.

The European Consular Protection Directive provides that if an EU citizen requires assistance in a country where their own Member State is not represented, they may approach an embassy or consulate of another Member State.