THE FIRST SIX
Six countries founded the European Coal and Steel Community and later, in 1957, the European Economic Community and Euratom:

- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Belgium
- the Netherlands
- Luxembourg

1973
ACCESSION OF DENMARK, IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM
The success of the European Economic Community attracted other European countries. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973. There were also ongoing negotiations with Norway at the time, but the Norwegian people voted against membership in a referendum.

1981
ACCESSION OF GREECE
Greece had recently shaken off a military dictatorship. With the accession of Greece, the then-member states wanted to support the newly-installed democracy.

Economic arguments were in play as well: Greece was an interesting new market.

2004
ACCESSION OF CYPRUS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, HUNGARY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, MALTA, POLAND, SLOVAKIA, AND SLOVENIA
On 1 May 2004, 10 new countries joined the EU. This brought the total number of member countries up to 25.

2007
ACCESSION OF ROMANIA AND BULGARIA
Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007. Their accession increased the number of member states to 27.

2020
THE UNITED KINGDOM LEAVES THE EU
The UK officially left the European Union on 31 January 2020, after three years of negotiations. It is the first country to withdraw from the EU. Since then, the EU has 27 Member States.

2013
ACCESSION OF CROATIA
On 1 July 2013 Croatia entered the EU. Croatia joined as the 28th Member State of the European Union.

CANDIDATE AND POTENTIAL MEMBER STATES
There are currently five official Candidate Member States to the EU. These countries are Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

A candidate member is a country that has successfully submitted a membership application. The candidates are supported financially, administratively and technically during their preparations for future membership.

In addition to the Candidate Member States, there are also two Potential Member States: These countries have given official notice that they want to enter the EU, but negotiations have not begun. These countries are Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*.

* This name does not affect the positions on the status of Kosovo, and is in accordance with Resolution 1244/1999 of the UN Security Council and the advice of the International Court about the independence declaration of Kosovo.