The European single market celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. On 1 January 1993, the then 12 Member States abolished border controls between each other, launching free movement of people, goods, services and capital. This infographic celebrates the single market’s anniversary, looking at the history of the European Union (EU) in terms of macro-economic indicators as the number of Member States has grown. It shows exports of goods, services and investments; movement of people within the EU to live, study or work; and the digital single market, covering e-commerce sales of enterprises and online purchases by individuals. The final section looks at the EU in the world.

Although we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the single market, the idea of a unified Europe began in the 1950s with the founding of the Communities. But to secure the single market, many steps were required. The timeline below highlights the major milestones needed to achieve the single market.

### From EU-12 to EU-27: Economic indicators

The table shows the change in key economic indicators since the launch of the single market. The map shows how the European Union has evolved, from 12 Member States in 1993, to 27 in 2023. It also shows the countries that use the euro, the EU’s single currency.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (million)</td>
<td>348.4</td>
<td>447.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (€ billion)</td>
<td>5 760.1</td>
<td>14 523.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP (per capita)</td>
<td>17 456.0</td>
<td>21 052.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active population (age 20-64, million)</td>
<td>147.0</td>
<td>203.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment (age 20-64, million)</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (age 20-64)</td>
<td>10.2 %</td>
<td>6.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment (age 20-64, million)</td>
<td>132.0</td>
<td>189.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Trade: Intra-EU exports

The graphs below show exports of goods, services and investments from one Member State to another (intra-EU exports). The line charts show the evolution of the EU aggregate figures (dotted line), from EU-12 to EU-28. The solid line represents the EU-27, without the UK. The bar charts show the share of intra-EU exports for individual Member States and the EU-27 as a whole. Data refer to the most recent available year; 2021 for goods and services, 2020 for investment.

NB Although the UK left the EU as of 1 February 2020, it remained in the single market until the end of 2020.

Exports of goods

In 1993, the then 12 Member States traded goods amounting to €665 billion. Trade between Member States has increased over the years as the Union evolved, reaching €3 586 billion in 2019 for the EU-28. Looking at the trade of the EU-27, after a decline owing to the 2020 COVID crisis, it reached €3 445 billion in 2021, indicating a quick return to the previous trend. The share of intra-EU exports varies between Member States. For some countries — Luxembourg, Slovakia and Czechia — more than 80 % of their trade is with other Member States, whereas for Malta, Ireland and Cyprus, the share is less than 50 %.

Exports of services

Similar to goods, trade in services has increased over the years. Data referring to the evolution of the EU as a whole (dotted line) are not fully comparable and therefore must be treated as indicative only. In 1993, trade in services stood at €167 billion. In 2019, it was €1 374 billion for the EU-28. Looking at the EU-27, from 2010 to 2021, there was an increase of 86.4 %, from €535 billion to €997 billion.

Outward foreign direct investment (FDI)

Outward FDI means investment by an entity from one Member State in another. Historical data for the EU are not fully comparable and must be treated as indicative only. Investment between Member States in 1994 was €463 billion (EU-15). This figure for the EU-28 in 2019 reached €9 430 billion. For the EU-27 of today, 2020 investments within the EU amounted to €7 029 billion.
EU nationals living in another Member State, aged 15-64

In 2021, there were more than 9 million Europeans aged 15-64 living in a Member State different from their country of origin; an increase of 59 % from 2006. Similarly, the active population of such mobile Europeans has increased in terms of number; 65 % more than in 2006 – from 4.3 to 7.2 million. In comparison, looking at the active population as a share of total population of mobile EU citizens aged 15-64, there has been a rather modest change over the same period. The active population increased from 75.4 % to 78.2 % over the past 16 years. The inactive population decreased from 24.6 % in 2006 to 21.8 % in 2021. Employment and unemployment rates for the mobile population have not changed much in that period either. Employment grew from 67.9 % to 71.2 %; unemployment fell from 10.0 % to 8.9 %.

EU citizens living in a Member State other than their country of origin, share of population aged 15-64, 2021

The 9.1 million European living in a Member State other than their own represent 3.2 % of the EU population aged 15-64. The share is very high in Luxembourg, with 43 % of the population being non-nationals. Six Member States have shares between 6 % and 11 %. All others are below 4 % of non-nationals.

Digital single market

Digital technologies and the internet are transforming our world, and the single market needs to embrace this, moving from 27 national digital markets to a single one. The digital single market strategy was adopted on 6 May 2015 and it remains one of the six priorities of the von der Leyen Commission. The digital single market opens new opportunities, as it removes key differences between online and offline worlds, breaking down barriers to cross-border online activity.

e-Commerce sales of enterprises

The map shows the percentage of enterprises employing 10 persons or more, with e-commerce sales of at least 1 % of turnover. From 2009 to 2022, there has been an increase of 6.5 percentage points. Almost one enterprise in five (17 %) made e-sales using websites or apps in 2022.

Internet purchases by individuals, aged 16-74

Some 68 % of people shopped online in 2021, an increase of more than 40 percentage points from 2007. Take-up varies among Member States, however: 4 in 5 individuals from Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden and Luxembourg shopped online. The corresponding figure is about 2 in 5 in Italy, Romania and Bulgaria.
Intra-EU students

There were 18 million students enrolled in tertiary education in the EU in 2022. Of these, 8.1% are non-nationals and almost 440,000 are intra-EU students (an increase from 1.8% in 2015 to 2.4% of the total student population).

There are big differences between Member States: Luxembourg (32.6%) and Austria (12.4%) have the highest share of non-national students. Italy and Poland have the lowest, with 0.5% and 0.4% respectively.

EU in the world

One of the achievements of the single market has been to make the EU a key player globally. As of today, the EU is one of the world’s biggest economies. Today, the EU represents 5.8% of the world population. It is second after the US in share of world gross domestic product (GDP). Intra-EU trade represents 16.8% of global exports; it is first in the ranking, followed by extra-EU trade (12.0%), China’s trade (11.5%) and that of the US (8.0%). Intra-EU trade in services is second in the global ranking; after extra-EU trade and before the US and UK. The EU is also the most important international tourism destination worldwide. In 2017, there were around 1.34 billion international tourist arrivals across the world, among which 485 million were in the EU-27 (36%).

Data sources:
Eurostat and author’s calculations.
Page 1: DEMO_PJAN, NAMA_10_GDP, NAMA_10_PC, LFSI_EMP_A, UNE_RT_A, UNE_RT_A, LFSI_EMP_A.
Page 2: Export of goods: Exports of services (BOP_ITS, DET, BOP_ITS_DET, BOP_ITS6_DET); Outward foreign direct investment (BOP_FDI, POS, BOP_FDI, POS, R2).
Page 3: EU nationals living in another Member State (DEMO_PJAN, LFSAG_PGANWS); Digital single market (ISOC_EC_ESELN2, ISOC_EC_IB20, ISOC_EC_EVALN2).
Page 4: Intra-EU students (EDUC_UOE, MOBS02, EDUC_UOE_MOBS03); EU in the world (Eurostat, IMF).

Country codes:
Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czechia (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Italy (IT), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE).

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