The EU turns 60: anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

Sixty years ago the leaders of the six founding member states gathered in Rome to put their signatures under the agreements that would create a European common market, but also pave the way for a union of peace and prosperity that has come to encompass most of our continent. Leading MEPs will join the anniversary celebrations in Rome this weekend, while heads of state and government will use the opportunity to deliberate on the next steps for the EU.

The Treaties of Rome were signed on 25 March 1957 by representatives of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In two separate agreements, they agreed to establish a European Economic Community aiming to remove barriers to trade, and to foster cooperation in the use of atomic energy.

Economic integration, based on the removal of customs duties among member states and the promotion of free movement of goods, services, capital and people, proved such a success that more and more countries in Europe expressed their wish to join in the following years. Areas of cooperation broadened over time and this led to the creation of the European Union. The treaty on establishing the European Economic Community went through several updates and is now known as the Treaty on the functioning of the EU.

The EU: past and future

Parliament President Antonio Tajani, leaders of political groups, vice-presidents and quaestors travel to Rome today to hold meetings and take part in the celebrations over the weekend. Tajani will sign a common EU declaration on the anniversary on behalf of Parliament.

In recent weeks MEPs have been actively discussing how the EU should evolve to respond to challenges such as migration, economic imbalances and Brexit. MEPs adopted three reports on the future of Europe during the February plenary. During March’s plenary session MEPs also discussed a European Commission strategy paper setting out five scenarios for the EU. EU heads of state will continue the debate in Rome.

During a ceremony in Brussels earlier this week, Tajani said: “Europe is our freedom, Europe is our future and that is what we should hand on to our children; a future of prosperity, of peace and of freedom.”
Find out more

Photos and videos of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome
Video extracts from the ceremony in Parliament celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome
Press release on the ceremony in Parliament about the anniversary and the debate with citizens on the future of the EU
More information on the first European treaties
Parliament and the European treaties
Briefing on the role of the Common Assembly (predecessor of the European Parliament) in shaping the content of the Treaty of Rome
A photo of the Treaty of Rome, signed in Rome on 25 of March 1957

Video