

The EU – One Woman's View by Caroline McCormack

As Brexit rumbles on with no clear resolution in sight, what is the history of the EU and why was it created?

THE origins of a 'United Europe' go back to 1948 following the aftermath of the second world war when the foundations of the EU led to the signing of two treaties in Rome on March 25 1957.

The treaties created the European Economic Community (EEC) which gave its signatories France, West Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Luxembourg the promise to lay foundations which they hoped would lead to a safer, democratic and closer union among European states.

The EEC, referred to as the Common Market was designed to foster closer ties, economic cooperation and an integrated Europe.

States would be interdependent enabling free circulation of goods, services, capital and free movement of people, reducing the likelihood of further conflict following two world wars.

Britain did not seek membership preferring to cultivate its commercial and political bonds with its colonies and the commonwealth.

Nor did it want to be part of a customs union preferring the establishment of a free trade area and rejected any surrender of the sovereignty of national states to a 'Supernational European Institution.'

Britain wanted an alternative to the EEC collectively known as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland.

In August 1961, Harold Macmillan

conservative PM reopened negotiations for full integration into the EEC.

French leader, Charles de Gaulle vetoed Britain's request in 1963 because of Britain's close ties with the US. Membership was vetoed again in 1967, when Harold Wilson, then PM requested membership of the EEC.

De Gaulle was convinced that a unified Europe would be able to withstand US and USSR trade influence. His opposition to Britain was in stark contrast to his own view which, was to maintain the national independence of France.

His resignation in 1969 finally paved the way for Britain to enter Europe.

With negotiations finalised in 1972, Edward Heath, conservative PM signed accession to the EEC in 1973.

In the same year, Ireland and Denmark joined but the Norwegians rejected the EEC in a referendum held later that year.

Britain held its own referendum in 1975, with 67% of the electorate voting in favour of continued membership of the EC.

Jacques Delors became the first president of the European Commission in 1985 and favoured a more unified and politically integrated Europe with a single market that would remove barriers to free trade allowing movement of capital and labour.

The Schengen agreement signed in 1985 by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Germany represented the most ambitious initiative to

guarantee the free movement of persons and gradual removal of frontiers among the community states.

How did the EU come into effect?

The Maastricht Treaty on European Union was formalised in December 1991 and created a monetary union, social policy and European citizenship among its EU members.

Its premise was to foster greater cooperation between the EU members on foreign affairs, security asylum and immigration between the member states.

But it proved to be a controversial voting issue with the Danes rejecting it in June 1992 and only accepting it at a second vote in May 1993 after they negotiated an opt-out on monetary union.

The French narrowly voted for the treaty but the German and British public voiced their discontent.

John Major's conservative government came close to losing the confidence of the house of commons but British constitutional convention meant that ratification of the treaty did not require a referendum.

The treaty was signed in February 1992 and formation of the EU in 1993 by the treaty of the European Union meant that the EEC was incorporated and renamed as the European Community, EC.

During the 1990s the inclusion of European countries continued with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia,

Hungary, Poland and Slovenia and in 1998, the EU opened talks with Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Malta for them to join the EU.

In June 2004, elections to the European Parliament were held in 25 countries resulting in EU leaders signing a new constitution.

France and the Netherlands rejected the constitution after elections in 2005 and as the constitution required all 25 member states to agree, the constitution did not come into effect.

Throughout its existence, the EU has faced allegations of financial impropriety, fraud and mismanagement of public funds.

In 1999 the EU President Jacques Santer and 19 other commissioners resigned due to fraud and mismanagement of the commission's funds and questions surrounding the future existence of the EU were raised.

Where does that leave the future of the EU?

The formation of the EU was intended to integrate Europe following the aftermath of two wars.

Founded on the principle that countries could trade openly and by creating a fairer more integrated society which would be mutually beneficial to its 500 million population.

A great vision maybe?

Can an agreement between 28 member states that are so culturally and eco-

nomically diverse ever hope to succeed?

The lack of agreement regarding the constitution has left the EU in limbo.

Is there a future?

A number of trade treaties exist which are unlikely to change the way the UK and Europe trade regardless of the existence of the EU.

We need each other and whether we stay or leave the EU, trading relationships between the UK and Europe will continue.

Whatever happens after the extension, life will go on and the EU will manage with or without us.

The fear of change and of what lies ahead outweighs our ability to view the facts clearly, the old adage of why change something when it isn't broken rings true.

We are a great nation but fear of what lies beyond the EU scares many and for others, it offers greater opportunities and autonomy to be accountable for our own decisions that affect our country and not Europe.

It rather depends on how you view it.

Caroline McCormack is a freelance creative content writer providing web content writing services for SMEs in Bedfordshire



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Cherry Trees Nursery School has been rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted

FOLLOWING a two day inspection in July 2019 Cherry Trees was upgraded from 'Good', in November 2018, to 'Outstanding'.

Cherry Trees received an 'Outstanding' rating in all five areas of the latest inspection, including how the needs of children are met, contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

The report said: "Children's care and welfare are of the highest priority in the school. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and are one of the many strengths in the school. Key workers at Cherry Trees are pivotal to this. As a result, children thrive and flourish in the safe, secure and stimulating environment."

Executive Head Teacher Isabel Davis said "I am so proud that the high quality teaching and learning

that my staff offer along with the high level of social and emotional support that they give the children has been recognised by Ofsted. We believe that all children deserve the best start to their educational journey and at Bedford nursery schools we strive to offer this."

Cllr James Valentine, Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services said; "Congratulations to all the staff at Cherry Trees. This is a fantastic outcome and is a great endorsement of all the hard work staff put in helping to ensure children are getting the best possible start in life."

Cherry Trees Nursery School, based in Hawkins Road, is part of Bedford nursery schools federation along with Peter Pan Nursery School, and offers education and childcare for children aged 2-5 years.



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semlepgrowthhub.com

growthhub@semlep.com | 01604 212696