

## EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

President of the European Commission:	Jacques Delors
Commissioner for External Economic Relations:	Sir Leon Brittan
Commissioner for External Political Relations:	Hans van den Broek

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### BACKGROUND

The 12 members of the European Community (EC) are the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Greece and Italy. The EC 12 could increase in membership over the next two years: Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway are now negotiating their accession. The EC has extensive preferential trade arrangements with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and with former European colonies through the Lomé Convention.

The European Community operates at two levels: the level of supranational institutions such as the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, and the European Parliament; and the intergovernmental level, where member states take collective decisions either by consensus or by qualified majority vote. Although, ultimately, national leaders must sanction the specific actions of the supranational authorities, in practice the latter have considerable flexibility, particularly the Commission. The Commission works within delegated spheres of activity, or "competencies."

The Maastricht Treaty, negotiated at the end of 1991, represents a major step toward greater European union. It provides a schedule for economic and monetary union, and much greater intergovernmental co-operation among member states on foreign and defence policies as well as security and intelligence questions. The Gulf War and the crisis in the Former Yugoslavia revealed deep differences of view and approach between member states, undermining confidence that a genuinely unified European foreign policy is feasible. The exchange rate crises that have affected Europe over the last year have given rise to serious doubts about the feasibility of the timetable for economic and monetary union. Germany is the only member state that has not ratified the Treaty, but is expected to do so this fall.