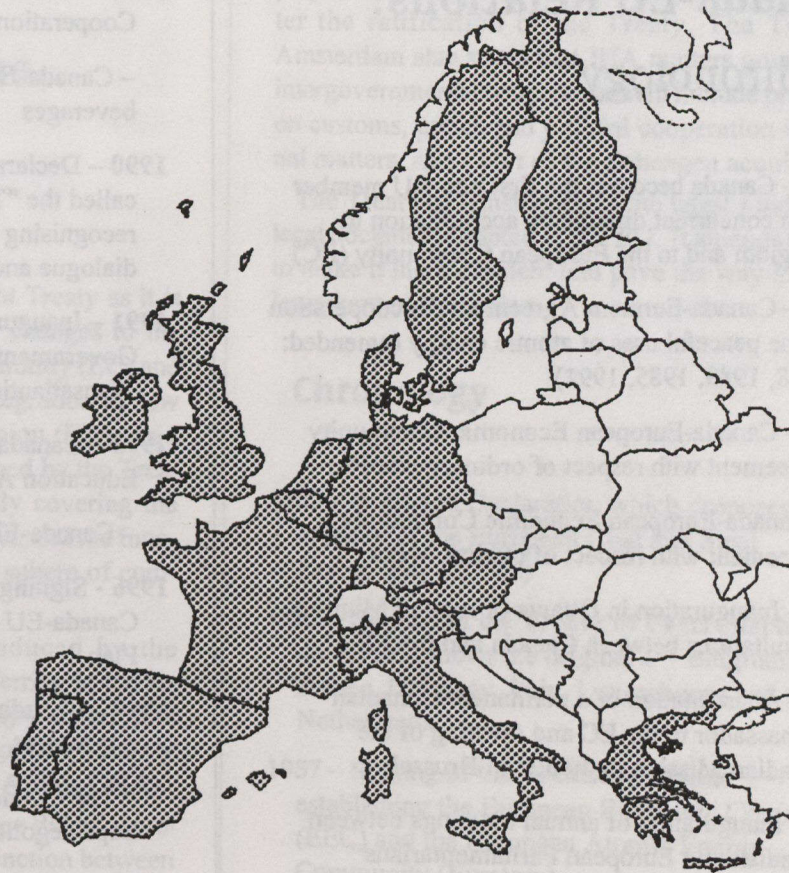


# The European Union

Belgium (joined in 1952)  
France (1952)  
Germany (1952)  
Italy (1952)  
Luxembourg (1952)  
The Netherlands (1952)  
Denmark (1973)  
Ireland (1973)  
United Kingdom (1973)  
Greece (1981)  
Spain (1986)  
Portugal (1986)  
Austria (1995)  
Finland (1995)  
Sweden (1995)



## FOREWORD

This handbook to the structure, operations and institutions of the European Union (EU) is intended to offer a practical and, we hope, useful basic guide specifically relevant to Canadian interaction with the EU. It covers only the technical and theoretical information necessary for a practical, working understanding of the EU.

The first and second parts provide some background to the evolution of the EU, and a summary introduction to its primary institutions and central organs – their responsibilities and composition – as introduced by the 1992 Treaty on European Union (TEU).

The third part addresses, in more detail, the structures and operation of the three primary law-making institutions – the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament – including their roles, responsibilities and the scope of their authority in the legislative process; their internal structures and organisation; and their inter-relationship with other institutions and central bodies of the EU.

The fourth part addresses the Community's legislative processes. To this end, the roles of the institutions, as well as the different procedures existing within

the community framework, are presented.

The fifth part addresses the nature and extent of the Community's external personality and its common commercial policy. This part includes a section on effective advocacy for external parties which have present, or potential, involvement with various organisations within the EU institutional structure and exposure to Community measures and policies.

The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which took place in Amsterdam in June 1997, led to the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam in October of that year. As a result, it affects the mandate and the manner of operation of the principal institutions of the EU. At the time of publishing, a complete and fully-agreed consolidated text of the TEU, incorporating all textual revisions with a single numbering system, did not exist. We regret any confusion which may result from this situation.

*This handbook is a working document released under the sole authority of the Canadian Mission to the European Union for official use only. It does not reflect in any way the views of the Government of Canada.*