

Milestones in the History of the European Union

Wednesday, the 29th of June. One week after the BREXIT- referendum. I´m sitting in a train, leaving the Manchester Airport. Destination: York, an old, lovely city in the north of England. Thoughts about the leaving of the UK from the EU are still spooking around in my head. I´m looking out of the window, and just like its meant to be, there is hanging a huge transparent. Shown on it: The Head of the former prime minister of the UK, David Cameron, in a giant close up. Written next to him: CAMERON LIES!!

I have to admit, I´m not surprised. Not after all that happened. I´m plugging in my earphones and slowly rolling ahead to York.

The BREXIT, or the referendum in which the UK voted to leave the EU is definitively a milestone in the History of the EU. If its a good or bad one is still to discuss. But there are many other situations that play an important role in the European History.

The first milestone in the history of the European Union was the Treaty of Brussels in 1948. It was a military alliance between France, Great Britain and Benelux-States. This pact was an expansion of the Dunkirk Treaty from the year 1947. Additionally in 1954 the West European Union arose out of it.

On the 18th of April in 1951 the European Community for Coal and Steel (ECSC) was founded in Paris. It was a European Marketing Board between Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It allowed the members to trade with coal and steel without paying customs duty. This is by far the most important step, because it was the starting shot for everything that we call the European Union today.

Another milestone were the Roman Treaties. They were signed by Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands on the 25th of March in 1957 and are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year!

The “Treaty of the European Economy community” and the “EURATOM-

Treaty” (European Nuclear community) that came into affect in 1958 later merged with the ECSC to the European Communities.

The EC-merger treaty was like an expansion of this treaty.

Of course, all of those Treaties and agreements were important milestones in the History of the European Union, but which ones are the most important ones? Which ones are the ones that take a big influence on todays politics? And which turned out to be mistakes?

Let’s start off with the beginnings of the European Union. Back then, in 1951, the main countries of the European Union came together for the ECSC. This community was important, since it controlled the weapon production in the area. The people had learned from the brutal wars that were laying behind them, and all they desired was peace. By determining this arrangement, the all time fear of a secret arms race was buried. By calming the people, and being the beginning of the great project European Union, this is by far the most important step in the History. Everything that is coming afterwards is depending on this arrangement.

But, what was coming afterwards? First of all: A lot of treaties. Far too many as if I could name all of them now. So, I’m just going to name the most important ones among the Roman Treaties. In 1958, the EURATOM-Treaty came into affect. Its points are mainly about the handling of the nuclear energy. It says, nuclear energy has to be safe and effective, its use must be peaceful and the safety rules are settled through it. But also it says, Europe has to work together on research and development for achieving its goals and the appropriate benefit. With the EURATOM the Union is also able to have access to the latest and best technical materials and machines.

Also part of the Roman Treaties is the European Economic Community short EEC. It was all about the economic in the EU and how it could be improved. Part of this was to improve the conditions for trading in the Union. For this, the customs duties were

eliminated by opening the borders. As a conclusion of this, a free movement of travelers, exchange of services, capital movement and merchandise traffic was established. Because of this, a better relationship between the states came along and the inner peace was kept and stabilized. Also, the EEC was about adjustments of inner statutory provisions, outer and inner financial stability and improving the living- and working conditions.

As you can see, the Roman Treaties were after the ECSC the most important milestone in the European Union, since it keeps and holds all of the values and principles that are making the EU. By the way: Since 1958 nothing was changed on the treaties, only additions were made in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and in the Treaty of Nice in 2001.

Since the EU was all about being a community and working together, the “Schengen Agreement” in 1985 was a huge step in the direction of even more freedom.

The negotiations took place between France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg, but later many other countries joined it, so today 26 states in total are part of it.

The main regulation of the agreement allows every person to cross the inner borders without any kind of controls or paying. Not part of this agreement is for example Great Britain.

Years later, the Treaty of Lisbon was made. At this point, there already were 27 countries part of the EU. The Treaty was a reformation of the Treaty of the European Union and the Foundation-Treaty of the Union. It modernized the relatively old treaties and decided about additions.

Since then, many Countries have been trying to become a member of the European Union. Possible candidates, which are in negotiations with the EU-Headquarter in Brussels already are, for example, Turkey, Macedonia among them. But while the EU is enjoying a big popularity, some countries are getting more and more unhappy with the policy.

Just like the UK. A few months ago, they decided in a referendum to leave the Union. I have to admit, I couldn't really imagine this to happen. But what I think is important to mention, is that the younger generation, which means the 18-24 year old ones voted with 75 % to stay in the Union. The older generation (65+) voted with more than 80% to leave. Boris Johnson, who was the former Mayor of London and one of the biggest supporters of the BREXIT worked closely together with Nigel Farage, who had been head of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) for 15 years, whose biggest goal was to leave the EU.

The campaigns of both sides, pro and contra were dirty and full of scandals and lies. No one told the people, who were the ones to decide about this important and huge topic, what really was going on in the economy and what would be the consequences of either staying or leaving.

Now, after the result was published, the prime minister of the UK, David Cameron, who was a supporter for staying in the EU, and who was the one that had the idea of the referendum, declared his abdication.

What was expected is either Johnson or Farage to become the new prime minister. But something really unexpected happened. Both refused to apply for the job, with different reasons.

In my opinion this is a clear sign of the "rats leaving the sinking ship".

But that's just my opinion. If it's a good or bad thing, is a question you have to think about yourself. But it definitely is a turning point for the Union. It is common – think about the „broken window theory“- that if there's just one little scratch, the total damage of something is near. Whether or not this is the case, nobody can say. Of course, predictions are taking place by many people, but I always think, no one can take a look in the future.

But beside all of the things that took place in these long years of European history, good or bad, in my opinion the European Union is something great that is worth fighting for!

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