

## Challenges facing the future development of the EU - 2018 Q6C

The European Union has brought prosperity and stability for its members, however there are some potential challenges facing the future development of the EU.

### Political Union

A strong political union between the member countries is vital for the future of the European Union. However, there are concerns over the formation of common laws on tax rates, the environment, and other issues. To help with these concerns, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was established to outline the common political goals of the EU members.

The EU elected a Foreign Minister to represent the EU on a global level. Some treaties have tried to unify the political aims of the members. For example, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 formed an EU army. This raised concern in Ireland due to Ireland's neutrality. The army could draw Ireland into conflict. The Lisbon Treaty of 2007 also raised concerns in Ireland due to Ireland's neutrality and taxes. This treaty was passed in Ireland in a second referendum with some changes. The EU's unified approach has made it a strong political force.

### Economic Union

EU enlargement has had both positive and negative effects on the economy of its members. As more countries join the EU, the EU's market and labour force grow. The new country's natural resources become available for industry use for all new members. This causes many MNCs (Multinational Corporations) to invest in new member states due to the low cost of labour and resources. Labour shortages in one EU member state can be filled by migrant workers from another EU country. Many new countries in the EU rely heavily on primary economic activities such as agriculture and fishing. Modern technologies in existing EU member states can quickly develop agriculture and industrial output in these countries.

Most new EU members have less developed economies than the existing EU members. The EU Structural and Cohesion Funds invest money to develop these countries' economies. This can be very expensive for the EU, for example the 2004 EU Enlargement cost €25 billion. This was the largest ever EU expansion. Outward migration also takes place in the EU when a new member state joins. The people of the new member state move to richer EU countries with a higher standard of living. For example, 20% of all foreign nationals in Ireland are Polish. As the EU structural funds invest mostly in the new EU members, this reduces the money that goes to other countries.

## **Sovereignty**

Sovereignty is a country's right to make its own laws. The national sovereignty of EU member states was weakened due to the political and economic union in the EU. Member states now have to abide by common law such as environmental policies and family law. Political and economic unity have been achieved on many fronts, however many EU states have a strong sense of nationalism. For example, many Irish people would identify as Irish first, and European second.