WEU

Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UK. It meets three times a year for approximately a week. The work of the Assembly is prepared by parliamentary committees. Since June 1989 representatives of a number of central and East European countries have been permitted to attend as non-voting members (‘special guests’). Armenia and Azerbaijan have subsequently become full members.

Although without legislative powers, the Assembly acts as the powerhouse of the Council, initiating European action in key areas by making recommendations to the Committee of Ministers. As the widest parliamentary forum in Western Europe, the Assembly also acts as the conscience of the area by voicing its opinions on important current issues. These are embodied in Resolutions. The Ministers’ role is to translate the Assembly’s recommendations into action, particularly as regards lowering the barriers between the European countries, harmonizing their legislation or introducing, where possible, common European laws, abolishing discrimination on grounds of nationality, and undertaking certain tasks on a joint European basis.

Official languages. English and French.

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Publications. European Yearbook, The Hague; Yearbook on the Convention on Human Rights, Strasbourg; Catalogue of Publications (annual); Sports Information Bulletin (quarterly); Activities Report (annual); Naturopa (3 a year); European Heritage (bi-annual); Strategy Bulletin (6 a year).

Further Reading


WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION (WEU)

Origin. In March 1948 the signing of the Brussels Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Defence by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the UK opened the way for the establishment of the Western European Union. Six years later, the Paris Agreements, signed in Oct. 1954, which amended the Brussels Treaty, gave birth to WEU as a new international organization and provided for the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy to join. WEU came into being in 1955. Today, as an international defence and security organization, it brings together 28 nations encompassing four types of status: member state, associate member, observer and associate partner. Only the ten member states are signatories to the modified Brussels Treaty and have full decision making rights in WEU. The other 18 countries have been increasingly associated with WEU’s activities. WEU’s role and operational capabilities developed considerably after 1991. This development was based on close co-operation with the European Union and NATO. WEU acquired the necessary instruments to undertake any European-led crisis management operations and worked to develop them further as preparation for the establishment within the European Union of a crisis management capability in accordance with the decisions taken at the Cologne European Council in June 1999. Following decisions taken by the European Council since its meeting in Cologne to strengthen the European Security and Defence Policy within the EU, WEU relinquished its crisis management functions to the EU on 1 July 2001.

Member states. Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Associate members: Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Turkey. Observers: Austria, Denmark,
Finland, Ireland and Sweden. Associate partners: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Reform. A joint meeting of the foreign and defence ministers within the WEU framework, held in Rome on 26–27 Oct. 1984, was marked by the adoption of the founding text of WEU’s reactivation: the Rome Declaration. Work on the definition of a European security identity and the gradual harmonization of its members’ defence policies were among the stated objectives. Ministers recognized the ‘continuing necessity to strengthen western security, and that better utilization of WEU would not only contribute to the security of Western Europe but also to an improvement in the common defence of all the countries of the Atlantic Alliance’.

In 1987 WEU foreign and defence ministers adopted the Hague Platform on European Security Interests, defining the conditions and criteria for European security, and the responsibilities of WEU members to provide an integrated Europe with a security and defence dimension. In 1987 and 1988, following the laying of mines in the Persian Gulf during the Iran–Iraq war, minesweepers dispatched by WEU countries helped secure free movement in international waters. Operation Cleansweep helped to complete the clearance of a 480-km sea lane from the Strait of Hormuz, and was the first instance of a concerted action in WEU. During the Gulf Crisis, at the end of 1990 and early 1991, co-ordinated action took place among WEU nations contributing forces and other forms of support to the coalition forces involved in the liberation of Kuwait.

In Maastricht, on 10 Dec. 1991, WEU ministers stated that: ‘WEU will be developed as the defence component of the European Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance. To this end, it will formulate common European defence policy and carry forward its concrete implementation through the further development of its own operational role’. The Declaration then proposed ways of strengthening WEU’s relations with the European Union and NATO, as well as measures to develop its operational role. A number of practical decisions were taken, including the transfer of the WEU headquarters from London to Brussels, which was completed in Jan. 1993.

At a meeting in Bonn in June 1992 WEU ministers went on to adopt the Petersberg Declaration, agreeing that the WEU should have a military capability in order to conduct humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking (the so-called ‘Petersberg tasks’) at the initiative of the WEU Council or following a request by the European Union, the OSCE or the UN.

At the Alliance Summit of Jan. 1994 NATO leaders gave their full support to the development of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) and to the strengthening of the WEU. They declared their readiness to make collective assets of the Alliance available for WEU operations. The Alliance leaders also endorsed the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs) with the objective not only of adapting Alliance structures to NATO’s new missions but also of improving co-operation with the WEU, and in order to reflect the emerging ESDI. Work on the CJTF concept came to fruition at the NATO Ministerial meeting in Berlin in June 1996. One of the fundamental objectives of the Alliance adaptation process identified by NATO Ministers in Berlin was the development of the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance.

With the agreement on the Treaty of Amsterdam revising the Treaty on European Union, WEU has drawn closer to the EU. In particular, the European Council’s guidelines for the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) ‘shall obtain in respect of WEU for those matters for which the Union avails itself of the WEU’; and the Petersberg tasks have been incorporated into the EU Treaty. It is stated that WEU is an integral part of the development of the European Union, giving the Union access to an operational capability, notably in the context of the Petersberg tasks. In the WEU Ministerial Declaration of 22 July 1997 responding to the Treaty of Amsterdam, WEU confirmed its readiness to develop WEU’s relations with the EU and work out arrangements for enhanced co-operation.

Further to the decisions taken by the Cologne European Council in June 1999, the EU is setting up the capabilities and instruments needed to fulfil its new responsibilities in the area of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks. Following decisions taken by the European Council since its meeting in Cologne