

The United Kingdom's accession

Source: CVCE. European Navigator. Etienne Deschamps.

Copyright: (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_united_kingdom_s_accession-en-6f74381b-6d48-4a79-b4b8-0d8bd442b974.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



The United Kingdom's accession

In the United Kingdom, the House of Commons approved accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) on 28 October 1971 in a vote described as historic. Despite divisions within the political parties, the 'yes' vote carried the day.

British public opinion was, however, seriously divided on the merits of accession to the EEC. This uncertainty was evident in the conduct of Members of Parliament at the time of the vote. The political make-up of the group of MPs who approved the Treaty was just as mixed as that of the group which opposed it. In addition to the majority of the Conservative Party, 69 Labour MPs were among the 356 supporters of British involvement in European integration. Among the 244 opponents of British membership of the EEC were most Labour MPs, together with 39 Conservatives. The number of supporters of British participation declined further when national legislation was adapted to bring it in line with Community legislation.

On 22 January 1972, in Brussels, the United Kingdom signed the Accession Treaty. On 13 July 1972, the House of Commons once again declared itself in favour of accession. On 20 September 1972, the House of Lords followed suit. On 6 October, the Queen gave the Royal Assent to the accession of the United Kingdom to the European Community, which came into effect on 1 January 1973.