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The Future of the Integration Process

Objectives and Concepts

- **Objectives:** to understand Lisbon treaty and the current problems facing the integration process.
- **Concepts:** Lisbon Treaty, Eurocrisis, democratic deficit, Brexit

The Crisis Years

- Rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands constituted the biggest crisis in the EU's history. Two founding members rejected the Treaty.
 - This prompted uncertainty about the EU's legitimacy and future
- Furthermore, the EP elections in 2004 recorded the lowest ever turnout
- Euroscepticism was on the rise.

The Lisbon Treaty

- In response, the European Council instigated a period of reflection.
- The German Presidency revived treaty discussions in early 2007 and a new intergovernmental conference convened the same year.
- Lisbon Treaty was signed by member-states in December 2007. It is the latest treaty of the integration process.
- Yet, democratic legitimacy of the Treaty is in question as vast majority of provisions contained in the previous Constitutional Treaty was retained. Only key changes were made such as removal of references to 'constitution' and symbols.

The Lisbon Treaty

- The Treaty covered institutional reforms, such as:
 - Two new positions were created, President of the European Council and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
 - Changes were made to the voting system: double majority system was agreed upon and extended to new policy areas.
 - EP powers was expanded, and greater role was given to the national parliaments
 - Reduction in the size of the European Commission
- Charter of Fundamental Rights became part of the Treaties.

Further Enlargement?

- The enlargement process is not particularly on the agenda, but countries are in the waiting line for membership.
 - Candidate countries that are negotiating – or waiting to start negotiations: Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.
 - Potential candidates that were promised the prospect of joining when they are ready: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo.

Euro-crisis

- Global financial crisis (late 2008) also had an impact on the Euro-zone.
- Stability and credibility of the Euro was impacted by weaker European economies, particularly Greece.
- In May 2010, the EU and IMF agreed to provide financial assistance to Greece. It is called a “the Greek ‘bail out’”.
- Europe 2020 strategy (agreed in June 2010) aims to promote jobs, growth and structural reforms across the EU.

Brexit

- UK had always a minimalist view of integration. Two examples:
 - Labour party in UK under Harold Wilson renegotiated accession and went to a referendum in 1975. UK is the only member state to renegotiate after accession.
 - Thatcher also had a difficult relationship with the communities, asked for a rebate from the budget.
- On 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom notified the European Council of its intention to leave the European Union, in accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. On 29 April 2017, the European Council adopted guidelines which define the framework for the negotiations and set out the EU's overall positions and principles. The process is continuing.

Readings and Videos

- Read about what is happening in the EU in the past few years. https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/2010-today_en
- Analyse this site and read the current status of the negotiations between the EU and the candidates. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/check-current-status_en
- Analyse these slides, specifically concentrating on the institutions. https://europa.eu/european-union/documents-publications/slide-presentations_en
- Brexit- the European Commission Official Channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH7ST8fWupQ&list=PLJmEREKFYU8WAmFOAh0HdDSntvAjlYmXJ&index=9>
- The Lisbon Treaty - EPP Group Official Channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2-pNqKcHuc>