Established in 1957, the European Union (EU) has grown from the six original members to 28 Member States as a result of six enlargements. EU enlargement policy currently concerns those countries applying for EU membership, and the potential candidates from the Western Balkans. The Treaty on European Union (Art. 49) and the Copenhagen criteria provide the framework for enlargement, the objective being to prepare applicant countries so that they can assume their obligations as Member States on accession. The EU's stabilisation and association process aims over time to bring the potential candidate countries' legislation and standards closer to those of the EU.

See also:

External relations
Foreign and security policy