1950 - 1973

IRELAND

- (May) Ireland signs the European Payments Union Agreement.
- (Aug.) Ireland applies for EEC membership.
- (Nov.) Jack Lynch (FF) replaces Seán Lemass (FF) as Taoiseach.
- (Dec.) Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement (AIFTAA) signed.
- (June) Treaty of Rome signed as the first step towards establishing the common market.
- (July) Ireland applies for EEC membership.
- (Dec.) Ireland is admitted to the United Nations.
- (Dec.) Ireland applies for EEC membership.
- (Aug.) Britain and Denmark apply for EEC membership.
- (May) The foreign ministers of the Six open intergovernmental negotiations towards treaties establishing a European Economic Community (EEC) and a European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).
- (Jan.) Foundation of the EEC and EURATOM.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

- (Dec.) Ireland is admitted to the United Nations.
- (Mar.) Treaties of Rome signed as the first step towards establishing the common market.
- (July) Ireland applies for EEC membership.
- (Oct.) European Commission announces negotiations should be opened with Ireland for "full membership" of the EEC.
- (May) Japan signs Declaration on pooling of coal and steel industries.
- (Oct.) Harold Wilson (Labour) replaces Sir Alec Douglas-Home (Conservative) as British Prime Minister.
- (Aug.) The Merger Treaty is signed in Brussels. It merges the executives of the EEC, EEC, and EURATOM to become collectively known as the European Communities (EC).

1950

- (May) Schuman Declaration on pooling Franco-German coal and steel industries.

1951

- (Apr.) Treaty of Paris signed by France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg (the Six) creates the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

1953

- (Feb.) The ECSC comes into existence.

1955

- (Aug.) Ireland joins the IMF and the World Bank.

1957

- (May) de Gaulle's "velvet veto" of Britain's EEC application.
- (July) Ireland applies for EEC membership.
- (May) The foreign ministers of the Six open intergovernmental negotiations towards treaties establishing a European Economic Community (EEC) and a European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).
- (Aug.) Ireland joins the IMF and the World Bank.

1958

- (Nov.) Programme for Economic Expansion laid before the Oireachtas.

1959

- (Jan.) Foundation of the EEC and EURATOM.

1961

- (July) Ireland applies for EEC membership.

1963

- (Aug.) Second Programme for Economic Expansion.
- (Dec.) Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement (AIFTAA) signed.

1964

- (May) Ireland's second application for EEC membership.

1965

- (Oct.) Harold Wilson (Labour) replaces Sir Alec Douglas Home (Conservative) as British Prime Minister.

1966

- (Jul) Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area comes into being.

1967

- (Nov.) Wilson tells House of Commons that Britain is exploring the possibility of joining EC.

1968

- (May) British, Ireland, Denmark and Norway apply for EEC membership.
- (May) de Gaulle's "velvet veto" of Britain's second EEC application.
- (Dec.) European Commission announces that it is not proceeding with Ireland's EC application.

1969

- (Dec.) Third Programme, Economic and Social Development, 1969-72.
- (Dec.) Dr Gaule resigns.

1970

- (Apr.) Dr Gaule resigns.
- (Aug.) Outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

1971

- (Jan.) Ireland joins the EC.
- (Nov.) Ireland is admitted to the United Nations.

1972

- (Jan.) Denmark, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom sign the Treaties of Accession to the European Communities (EC).

1973

- (Jan.) Britain and Denmark join the EC.
In May 1950 the first chapter of European integration, the Franco-German ‘Schuman Declaration’ leading to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), passed Ireland by. On the periphery of Europe Ireland looked inwards, protective of its political sovereignty and believing in economic self-sufficiency, its industries hidden behind protective tariff barriers. While Europe enjoyed the benefits of post-war economic growth Ireland stagnated.

In 1957 the second chapter in European integration began with the Treaty of Rome and its creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). Ireland's fortunes had not improved. Unemployment and emigration were rising, and with lacklustre economic growth forecast, Ireland's future seemed bleak.

Ireland was not invited by the six original members of the EEC to join them and seemed likely to remain outside its ‘Common Market’. Experts planning to develop the Irish economy settled on a model of economic development through export led growth. The protected Irish economy, in particular its dominant agricultural sector, would be opened up to foreign markets. Ireland would embrace free trade and competition.

Membership of the EEC became a key foreign policy goal of Fianna Fáil Taoiseach Seán Lemass from the moment he took office in 1959. Europe moved to the centre stage of Irish foreign policy. Lemass believed that Ireland's economy would prosper within the EEC. He was particularly keen on EEC plans to develop a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as its price guarantees and export subsidies would suit the agriculturally dominated Irish economy.

Ireland's new export-led economic policy began to work. Irish GNP grew by over 4% in 1959 and 1960. Ireland needed to expand its foreign trade further. But was Ireland sufficiently economically developed to withstand the impact of free trade and competition that EEC entry would bring? Could Ireland join the EEC if Britain, its main trading partner, did not? Aware that a British application was becoming a distinct possibility, in July 1961 the Lemass government published a White Paper on the EEC and let its six member states know that in the event of Britain applying for EEC membership Ireland would also apply.

'We might find ourselves a political, as well as an economic, anachronism in the midst of the world's largest political and economic entity.'

Department of Finance memorandum, June 1961.
Ireland applied for full membership of the EEC on 31 July 1961. Associate membership was ruled out as it suggested that Ireland was economically underdeveloped. The application was sent as British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan announced that Britain would also apply for EEC membership. However, when Ireland's EEC entry negotiations might commence was not indicated.

In Brussels thought Ireland sufficiently developed economically for EEC membership. Some did not take Ireland's application seriously, not expecting an Irish application separate to Britain's. Ireland's military neutrality and non-membership of NATO were also problematic in light of moves for European political integration after the July 1961 Bonn Declaration. The Community examined the British and Danish applications, leaving Ireland's aside.

Lemass addressed the Community's fears directly in a speech to the European Commission in January 1962. In October 1962 he visited the capitals of the Six to emphasise that Ireland was sufficiently economically developed to join the EEC and that Ireland's military neutrality and non-membership of NATO were not obstacles to entry. Lemass's personal diplomacy broke the deadlock. In October 1962 the EEC Council of Ministers agreed to open entry negotiations with Dublin on the basis of full membership.

Five of the Six were in favour of opening negotiations, but France remained hesitant, despite de Gaulle giving Lemass the impression of being well disposed towards Britain. Britain's entry negotiations took priority and Ireland's negotiations would hardly begin before March 1963.

Then on 14 January 1963 French President General de Gaulle raised doubts over Britain's suitability for EEC membership and vetoed London's application. Ireland's EEC application was within the collateral damage of de Gaulle's 'Non'. The French President did not veto Ireland's application, but with its main trading partner destined to remain outside the EEC there was no point in Ireland going it alone. For the foreseeable future EEC membership was out of reach and Ireland would adopt a dignified 'wait and see' attitude towards Europe.
After de Gaulle’s veto Ireland’s EEC application went into cold storage. Lemass continued to promote Irish economic modernisation. Ireland’s economy continued to grow, though at 3% per annum instead of the expected 4.3%. Further trade barriers were removed, and the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area created from 1966 the correct environment in Ireland for EEC membership. Lemass wished to show that Ireland was responding to the economic changes taking place in 1960s Western Europe. Irish attempts for an interim trade deal with the EEC failed and the European Commission showed sympathy, but little else, for Ireland’s position. There was some domestic discontent in Ireland about an apparently rudderless EEC policy; the truth was that the EEC was not waiting with open arms to welcome Ireland, and Anglo-French tension continued to cloud the enlargement process.

Lemass resigned in November 1966, and was succeeded as Taoiseach by his Minister for Finance, Jack Lynch. When Lynch met British Prime Minister Harold Wilson in December 1966 he learned that Britain was considering a fresh EEC application. If Britain’s application was reactivated then Ireland’s would be also. When Wilson and Lynch met on 1 May 1967 Wilson explained that Britain indeed intended to renew its EEC application. He told Lynch that Dublin could count on London’s support for simultaneous British and Irish accession. Britain’s application was submitted on 11 May, Ireland’s followed fifteen minutes later. Five days later de Gaulle’s ‘velvet veto’ explained that conditions were not right for Britain to join the EEC.

Lynch undertook courtesy visits to the capitals of the Six in the second half of 1967. He held a successful meeting with de Gaulle in early November, but as 1967 ended the prospects of EEC membership for Ireland remained as far away as ever. In December the Council of Ministers decided against the formal opening of entry negotiations with any of the applicants. On 19 December President of the Council of Ministers Karl Schiller told Dublin that the Six were not proceeding with Ireland’s EEC application.
ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

COMMENCE

July 1968 - September 1970

‘Membership will enable us to participate fully with other democratic and like-minded countries of Europe in the movement towards European unity, based on ideals and objectives to which we as a nation can readily subscribe.’


Following General de Gaulle’s resignation on 28 April 1969 Community enlargement again became possible. Séan Morrissey, Irish Ambassador to the European Communities, sounded a note of caution: ‘there is no evidence of euphoria here (Brussels) in regard to enlargement as a result of the resignation.’ There would be no overnight Irish accession.

Patrick Hillery became Minister for External Affairs after the Irish June 1969 general election, replacing the United Nations-focused Frank Aiken. Hillery’s appointment signalled Dublin’s determination to achieve EC membership. Ministerial visits to the European Commission and to the capitals of the Six took place through summer 1969 promoting a positive image of Ireland across the European Communities. Hillery had to overcome a proposal that Britain’s application be dealt with before Ireland’s, potentially separating Ireland from its main export market.

Ireland welcomed the agreement of the Six at The Hague in December 1969 that entry negotiations would begin in mid-1970. They eventually began on 30 June 1970, with the first face to face negotiations between Ireland and the Commission commencing in September 1970.

As a result of the Hague Summit and, the decision to complete the Common Market, commence steps towards a European Monetary System and commence greater foreign policy co-ordination, the Europe that Ireland was negotiating to join was a more advanced entity than the original Common Market. Newly appointed Irish Ambassador to the European Communities Sean Kennan explained in early 1970 that ‘with regard to foreign affairs and defence, the evolution of common policies in the Community is for the future and we would participate in their shaping as members.’ Kennan understood the primary political goal of European integration as he continued:

The EEC has been such a success in this regard that war between its members is no longer conceived as possible. As a European country with no less an interest in stability and peace on the Continent we would be serving a fundamental political interest of our own by joining and further promoting this endeavour.

1. Morrissey to O’Sullivan, DFA, teleprinter message, 30 April 1969. (NAI 2000/6/386)

2. Kennan to Morrissey, 14 May 1970. (NAI DFA 2003/10/60)
NEGOTIATING MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

September 1970 - January 1972

‘For the first time in decades we will have the opportunity to compete freely and fairly with neighbouring countries and I have every confidence in our abilities to hold an equal place in the Europe of tomorrow.’


Hillery preceded Ireland’s accession negotiations with further visits to the capitals of Community members to ensure they understood that Ireland would undertake the political and economic obligations of membership. Backing this up a White Paper, agreed by Cabinet in April 1970, Membership of the European Communities – Implications for Ireland was published.

Protecting Ireland’s interests during the entry negotiations and the transitional period following entry, particularly in trade, agriculture, industry and fisheries were Ireland’s main negotiating concerns. The Committee of Secretaries, the Heads of the senior government departments, considered that ‘the most important objective for us in these negotiations will be protection during the transitional period of our interests in the British market, particularly as regards agriculture.’

Despite the fraught state of Anglo-Irish relations, and what turned out to be the worst phase of the Northern Ireland Troubles coinciding with the entry negotiations, Hillery worked closely with his British counterparts to ensure that Britain and Ireland understood matters of joint concern through the entry negotiations.

The negotiating team, led by Hillery, was given considerable freedom by Dublin. The Cabinet discussed Europe only when the most important aspects of the negotiations required a decision. On 15 September 1970, the Cabinet agreed that the negotiators were ‘to signify the acceptance, without reservation, of the principle of equal pay for men and women.’

The negotiators had a broad outline of what had to be concluded, but there was much detail to be filled in and hard bargaining through the course of the accession talks.

The most significant concerns facing Ireland through 1971 were the five-year transitional measures for industry and agriculture, and the complex question of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The final negotiating session took place on 18 January 1972. The Chairman, Luxembourg’s Permanent Representative to the European Communities, Jean Dondelinger, declared all outstanding problems solved and the proceedings closed with appropriate toasts. The signing ceremony for Ireland’s EC accession followed at the Palais d’Egmont in Brussels on 22 January 1972.


4. Cabinet Minutes (GC 13/73), 15 September 1970. (NAI 2001/5/1)
IRELAND’S KEY NEGOTIATORS

DR PATRICK HILLERY (1923-2008) was Ireland’s Minister for External/Foreign Affairs from 1969 to 1972. A Fianna Fáil TD from 1951 to 1973, he was Minister for Education from 1959 to 1965, Minister for Industry and Commerce from 1965 to 1966 and Minister for Labour from 1966 to 1969. After Ireland’s entry to the European Community, Hillery was Vice-President of the European Commission with responsibility for social affairs (1973-6). In 1976 Patrick Hillery was elected President of Ireland, holding the post to 1990.

SEÁN MORRISSEY (1916-2002) Assistant Secretary at the Department of External Affairs, led the Irish team of officials negotiating Ireland’s entry into the European Community. A former Legal Adviser at the Department of External Affairs (1955-62), he was appointed Assistant Secretary in 1962 and in 1964 was appointed Ambassador to Switzerland. In 1966 Morrissey was appointed head of the Irish Mission to the European Communities. In February 1970 Morrissey was brought back to Iveagh House as Assistant Secretary to head the EC division and in mid-June 1970 was appointed by Patrick Hillery to take charge of Ireland’s EC entry negotiating team.

SEÁN P. KENNAN (born 1918) headed the Irish Mission to the EC during the accession negotiations, and was Ireland’s Ambassador to the European Communities from 1970 to 1972, and Ireland’s first Permanent Representative to the European Communities (1973). Kennan held a variety of overseas postings in London, Paris and Canberra. In 1965 he became Permanent Representative to the European Office of the United Nations at Geneva, from where he was posted to Brussels in 1970.

CHRISTOPHER P. (ROBIN) FOGARTY (1928-95) was a Counsellor in the Department of Foreign Affairs who played a key role in the writing of the 1972 Irish White Paper on EC membership and was widely known for briefing journalists through the 1973 referendum on EC membership. After holding a number of posts in the United States, Lagos and Copenhagen, he was appointed to the EC entry negotiating team in 1970. Fogarty’s abilities were apparent in his grasp of complicated briefs and detail. When Patrick Hillery became Irish EC Commissioner in 1973, Fogarty became for a short period his Chef de Cabinet.

DENIS J. MAHER (1916-84) was the Department of Finance representative on the team which negotiated Ireland’s EC entry. Maher worked largely on economic and foreign trade issues and was closely involved with the preparation of the various White Papers on Ireland’s entry to the EC. His account of Ireland’s accession, which he wrote at the suggestion of Patrick Hillery, was published posthumously in 1986 as The Tortuous Path - The course of Ireland’s entry into the EEC: 1948-73.

JAMES O’MAHONEY was an Assistant Secretary at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and a senior member of the EC entry negotiating team.

DESMOND CULLIGAN was an Assistant Secretary at the Department of Industry and Commerce and a senior member of the EC entry negotiating team.
The foundations of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and a single European market in agricultural goods were laid in 1958. Ireland supported the CAP from its inception, as it anticipated that it would bring prosperity to Irish farmers and increase the volume of Irish agricultural production. The CAP provided support for the domestic agricultural sector via guaranteed prices, and opened European export markets for Irish agricultural goods at a time when Ireland was a mainly agricultural economy reliant on exports to Britain. The CAP was a key issue facing Ireland during the accession negotiations. Ireland wanted to look after its domestic agricultural interests, and ensure that Britain did not gain concessions for special arrangements with third countries that would damage Irish agricultural exports to Britain.

The main agricultural products in the Community were subject to the CAP by mid-1968. Ireland's accession negotiations were unexpectedly challenged on the opening day when the Commission introduced proposals for a parallel Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to be implemented by 1 February 1971. The resulting impasse over the CFP, a highly complex issue, took eighteen months to resolve.

For Ireland, the CFP was dominated by the need to ensure fair competition and maintain existing fishing rights in inshore waters. Ireland relied on inshore fishing and had no deep-sea fishing fleet. It feared that the better-equipped fleets of other member states would deplete its stocks. Ireland thus wanted to protect the three-mile limit of its territorial waters from outside fleets.

Ireland presented doomsday scenarios on the impact of CFP on the Irish fishing industry. The Commission remained stubborn. It argued that Ireland must accept the acquis communautaire on fisheries and hoped to deal with Irish concerns through transitional measures once the CFP came into force.

Following a November 1971 intervention by the head of the British negotiating team, the Commission sought compromise. Ireland obtained a ten-year extension of its fisheries to a twelve-mile limit from Lough Foyle to Cork and in the Irish Sea, and got a far better deal than its original proposal to preserve Irish fisheries to the three-mile limit. This deal introduced conservation of fish stocks to the CFP in a manner not previously incorporated, and while protecting 92% of Ireland's fish catch, also suggested a CFP designed for a Community of Ten rather than Six.
THE COMMON MARKET AND IRISH INDUSTRY

Membership of the EC involved participation in a nine-member European customs area with free trade between members and a common external tariff.

Irish trade and industry policy had from the 1930s to the 1950s been predicated on policies of protectionism and self-sufficiency. These policies failed to deliver growth, resulting in unemployment and emigration. In an attempt to boost economic growth, employment and Ireland's overall standard of living, Taoiseach Seán Lemass championed policies developed by civil servants and academics in the 1950s to build the Irish economy through export-led growth.

Ireland would deconstruct its tariff walls and trade restrictions and embrace the cut and thrust of free trade and globalisation. The hope was that by joining the EC Ireland could belatedly join the post-war boom. But could its protected economy withstand the blast of free trade and competition?

EC members set a twelve year transitional period for the introduction of the 'Common Market' set out in the Treaty of Rome. This period was to come to an end on 31 December 1969. By 1 July 1962 the Six had reduced customs duties levied between member states on industrial products to 50% of their 1957 level. On 1 July 1968 a full European customs union came into force. Customs duties for intra-Community trade were abolished, and a common customs tariff was introduced as a replacement for national customs duties in trade with the rest of the world.

A major Irish achievement was the continuance to 1985 of special arrangements for the Irish motor assembly industry to secure employment and enable it to adapt to free trade. Special arrangements lasting until 1977 were also agreed for the small Irish steel industry to enable it to reorganise. Ireland would retain until 1977 quota restrictions on certain textile imports from low cost countries.

Ireland obtained transitional arrangements under which it could gradually dismantle its own trade protection system between 1973 and 1977. Via a special protocol to the accession treaty, Ireland was also able to maintain aids and incentives to industrial development. Ireland would thus participate in a progressive manner with the EC's customs union.

Blissfully unaware of the impending oil crises of the 1970s and economic recession, the 1972 White Paper on Europe anticipated an average of 5% economic growth per annum during the transitional period, and growth surpassing 1960s levels in manufacturing industries.

‘I put it to the Community that it would be shortsighted to turn down reasonable proposals aimed at stimulating industrial development in Ireland.’

Memorandum by Dr Patrick Hillery regarding negotiations on industrial incentives, c.1977.
SOVEREIGNTY: THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Ireland’s achievement of its independence had been painful, involving partition of the country, a civil war, and ca. 6000 fatalities. With this background, when Lemass applied for EC membership in 1961, Ireland’s possible loss of sovereignty through EC membership was a significant discussion point and a considerable concern to some. Despite a determination in the Treaties of Rome to establish an ever closer union among the European peoples, and subsequent declarations and statements by the Six, European political union remained a vague concept in the 1960s and early 1970s.

From its first interaction with European integration through its response to the Briand Plan of 1929, Ireland had been cautious about pooling sovereignty, and favoured a Europe of the states through to the early 1960s. Lemass indicated in 1961 and 1962 that Ireland would be prepared to undertake the political commitments of European integration, and was even prepared to forego military neutrality if necessary. However, the Treaties of Paris and Rome as acceded to by Ireland entailed no military or defence commitments. Ireland would, however, participate in exchanges of views on foreign policies between the Nine.

On its own, Ireland was a small country, independent, but with little power to influence global events. In acceding to the EC Ireland was sharing sovereignty, pooling it rather than losing it. As to the future, the 1972 White Paper on Europe gave Dublin’s view that ‘the achievement of an ever-closer union must be pursued with due deliberation’. Co-operation in the political sphere should develop on a progressive but gradual basis.

As for the ultimate political impact of EEC membership, Seán Kennan expected ‘some diminution of our present sovereignty’ balanced against membership promoting ‘the long-term political aim of reduced dependence on the British market’ giving Ireland access to European export markets and a role in the shaping of community policies. In global terms Ireland ‘could exercise a worldwide political influence which could not be ours in isolation.’ Kennan continued that ‘membership could obviously contribute significantly towards the ending of Partition.’

The relationship between Northern Ireland and European integration in Irish foreign policy was at best aspirational between 1950 and 1973. Vague notions circulated about Irish unity within a united Europe, but the partition of Ireland remained. A nightmare scenario facing Dublin was that Britain might gain EC entry before Ireland, placing Northern Ireland inside the EC with the Republic of Ireland remaining outside.

Despite the continuing frosty relationship between Dublin and Belfast, the 1950s saw three significant developments in North-South co-operation in Ireland which at the time were compared to European integration. First was the 1950 cross-border agreement on the Lough Erne Drainage and Development Scheme, which saw the building of two power stations on the River Erne and the solution of historic drainage problems in Lough Erne. In 1952, agreement was reached on the common operation of fisheries in Lough Foyle, following a prolonged territorial dispute over jurisdiction. Finally in 1953, Dublin and Belfast agreed to jointly operate the cross-border Dublin to Belfast railway line.

In the late 1950s moves were made by Northern Ireland industrialists, with the secret blessing of the Belfast government, to get Dublin to reduce tariffs on Northern Ireland exports to the Republic of Ireland. This process began in the early 1960s, and cross-border trade received special treatment in the 1965 Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement.

Cross-border summits at prime ministerial level between Seán Lemass, Jack Lynch and Northern Ireland Prime Minister Terence O’Neill took place in 1965, 1967 and 1968, and a considerable degree of cross-border ministerial contact resulted in agreements covering electricity interconnection, legal matters, agricultural and tourism issues.

Relations between Dublin and Belfast had again grown cool by 1968 and there were no lasting results from the 1965 to 1968 meetings comparable to the reconciliation of Franco-German relations following the May 1950 Schuman Declaration.

Civil rights disturbances in 1968 and demands for reform of the Northern Ireland political system led to the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969. Arriving at a solution in Northern Ireland was seen as a Dublin-London issue, and little reference was made to finding a solution within a European context, though diplomats from time to time speculated on the possibilities. Hopes were expressed that European Regional Policy might assist the economic regeneration of the border areas. Following Community membership free cross-border trade became a reality in Ireland, but the Irish political border remained.

‘On the Northern Ireland problem it does not seem unrealistic to envisage that membership of the Community (jointly with Britain) will, in the nature of things, ease the way towards eventual abolition of the border, at least in the long term if not in the immediate or medium term.’

T.V. Commins, Irish Ambassador to France, to Sean Morrissey, Assistant Secretary, Dept. of Foreign Affairs, 16 April 1970.

On the Northern Ireland problem it does not seem unrealistic to envisage that membership of the Community (jointly with Britain) will, in the nature of things, ease the way towards eventual abolition of the border, at least in the long term if not in the immediate or medium term.”

T.V. Commins, Irish Ambassador to France, to Sean Morrissey, Assistant Secretary, Dept. of Foreign Affairs, 16 April 1970.
The reforms of the 1960s made Ireland’s economy fit for EC membership, but the economy was not strong enough to deal with the strains of membership at national level, and Ireland’s increased prosperity was not shared equally across the country. Community membership would assist Ireland to overcome its economic underdevelopment at national and regional level as European Regional Policy aimed to ensure comparable levels of prosperity across the Community.

The most immediate benefits of Community membership to less-developed areas of Ireland were expected to be from the CAP. Regional and structural policies were not part of the entry negotiations, but during the negotiations Patrick Hillery spoke openly about the regional development problems facing Ireland. He explained that the Community would need to supplement ongoing Irish national measures for regional development such as industrial incentives, grants and fiscal measures and various infrastructural development projects.

Without a well-structured EC regional policy Ireland would suffer greatly under full-scale economic and monetary union, which was initially envisaged by 1980. A September 1971 Cabinet memorandum set out a bleak scenario if regional policy was not adequately designed:

A full-scale economic and monetary union could generate powerful economic forces which would tend to attract the mobile forces of production – labour and capital – to the most efficient centres of production and the area of highest economic activity. This would have serious implications for this country which is faced with high unemployment, emigration, a comparatively small industrial sector and a lower rate of economic growth than the existing community. It is essential, therefore, from our point of view that the community assumes more explicit and wide ranging responsibilities in relation to regional policy.

There was also hope expressed that regional development could assist the development of Irish border areas and thus assist in bringing peace to the island.

To aid Irish problems over industrial development, a protocol was added to the Accession Treaty recognising Ireland’s need to undertake development policies to ensure economic expansion and the improvement of living standards, and allowing the retention of industrial incentives.

"Membership will provide the conditions in which we can best pursue our economic and social development; conditions much more favourable to us than if we were to remain outside the Communities."—1972 Irish Government White Paper on Europe, p. 67.


[Image: Ireland and the common market regional development]

[Image: Memos and memoranda on regional policy in Ireland]
Referendum 1972: Campaign for a Yes Vote

Ireland's accession to the European Communities required a change in the Constitution and so the matter was put to a popular vote via a referendum on 10 May 1972. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as well as many interest groups and the media campaigned for a 'Yes' vote. The 'No' campaign represented a much smaller group (See Panel 15). Despite the imbalance in size there was a thorough debate in Ireland on EC accession through 1971 and 1972.

Through 1971, the 'No' campaign gained ground, and it seemed that public opinion in Ireland was moving from a pro-European stance. The Department of External Affairs, working closely with the Irish Council of the European Movement, developed a 'Yes to Europe' campaign designed to counter the 'No' campaign. Their key points were selling the immediate benefits of EC membership to the agricultural community through increased prices via the CAP, and the longer term benefits to industry and employment of access to European markets. The government estimated the creation of 50,000 jobs through EC membership by 1980.

Before the 1995 McKenna judgement, the Irish state did not have to provide information on the pros and cons of any referendum issue. In 1972, the government could freely use state funding to campaign for a 'Yes' vote. The 'Yes' publicity campaign operated via regular Ministerial speeches, accessible pamphlets, specialised leaflets and newspaper articles. They also used popular prime time television programmes to get their pro-EC entry points across. Very little government time was spent highlighting the possible drawbacks from Community membership.

One of the greatest assets for the 'Yes' campaign was Jack Lynch - his 'Honest Jack' image being fruitfully used to convince ordinary people of the benefits of EC membership. Lynch argued that those who wished to vote 'No' were voting to increase Ireland's dependence on Britain. Lynch and Hillery canvassed widely among interest groups. A 'Yes' vote would ensure that Ireland, in Hillery's words, achieved 'our national aims of full employment, an end to involuntary emigration and a standard of living for all our people comparable to that enjoyed by our neighbours in Western Europe'.

To Hillery the difference between EC membership and staying out was as simple as a full order book if Ireland became a Community member, or an empty one if Ireland stayed out.


“IN THE COUNTRY’S BEST INTERESTS”
Labour and Sinn Féin campaigned for a ‘No’ vote. Labour argued that Ireland should have applied for associate membership of the EC. The party suggested that as an associate member Ireland would have the right to export all its industrial products to the EC, dismantle trade protection measures more slowly and retain special aid for Irish industry. In short, associate membership would have given Ireland greater freedom of action without the formal ties of EC membership. However, this would have left Ireland without voting rights, and without a say in developing policies of common interest.

Sinn Féin proposed a ‘New Ireland’ instead of admission to the Community. This would involve a new constitution, new governmental structures, complete state control over the import and export of capital, state control of industries and of the country’s mineral resources.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions at its 1971 national conference said it was not in a position to express any support for Ireland’s proposed entry into the EC. At a Special Delegate Conference in January 1972 nine out of thirteen unions with motions tabled were opposed to Ireland’s EC membership. ICTU estimated 30,000 job losses if Ireland joined the EC.

A principal aim of the ‘No’ vote was to protect Irish sovereignty. Here the Common Market Study Group, a broad coalition of the Irish Left including future President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, Raymond Crotty, Anthony Coughlan and John B. Keane, was the most vocal anti-EC grouping. It was effective in raising the profile of the ‘No’ vote in the Dublin area. It suggested that the supranationalism of the Common Market was the opposite of genuine internationalism and that the EC demanded the suppression of national sovereignty and the independence of small states. Citing Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, Austria, Sweden, Spain and Portugal, the CMSG argued that the problems of staying out were less than the dangers of entry. Arguments were also made that by joining the EC Ireland would open itself to future defence commitments. A further CMSG argument was that the CAP would result in such changes to Irish agriculture as to reduce the number of farms, create resulting widespread unemployment, greater emigration and the destruction of the social fabric of Irish society.

“KEEP IRELAND FREE - VOTE NO TO THE EC”
REFERENCE 1972: THE RESULT

Membership of the EC would lead to the application of Community legislation to Ireland. This conflicted with Article 15 of the 1937 Constitution which placed the sole and exclusive power for the making of laws for the State in the Oireachtas and expressly stated that no other legislative authority had power to make laws for the State.

The proposal was put forward through referendum to amend the Constitution to add a section which deals with international relations (Article 29) to enable Ireland to join the EC and allow Community legislation to have the force of law in Ireland:

The State may become a member of the ECSC, the EC and the European Atomic Energy Community. No provision of this Constitution invalidates laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by the State necessitated by the obligations of membership of the Communities or prevents laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by the Communities, or institutions thereof, from having the force of law in the State.

The ‘Yes’ Campaign had the support of the government and main opposition party, Fine Gael, as well as interest groups and the media. The ‘No’ Campaign was a much smaller grouping made up of the Labour Party, Sinn Féin, the main trade unions and a broad grouping of the Irish Left.

VOTING TOOK PLACE ON THURSDAY 10 MAY 1972 BETWEEN 9AM AND 9PM

- 1.8 million eligible voters
- 1.2 million voted
- 70.88% turnout
- 0.83% spoiled vote

The result was an overwhelming ‘Yes’ vote
- 83.1% ‘Yes’
- 16.9% ‘No’

Counted by constituency-
- Donegal North East 91.7% - highest ‘Yes’ vote
- Dublin South West 73% - lowest ‘Yes’ vote

Counts in Detail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>‘Yes’</th>
<th>‘No’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donegal North East</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin South West</td>
<td>73%</td>
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The ‘Yes’ Campaign had the support of the government and main opposition party, Fine Gael, as well as interest groups and the media. The ‘No’ Campaign was a much smaller grouping made up of the Labour Party, Sinn Féin, the main trade unions and a broad grouping of the Irish Left.
Ireland joined the EC on 1 January 1973 without fanfare. Ambassador Seán Kennan presented letters to the Council of Ministers formally giving Ireland's assent to the changes brought about by enlargement to the Treaty of Rome. Kennan now formally became Irish Permanent Representative to the European Community. It was eleven and a half years since Lemass first lodged Ireland's application in Brussels Ireland had modernised its economy since 1961 but it still had to catch up with continental Europe in many ways.

There was neither ceremony nor flourish in Dublin or Brussels. RTE radio and television broadcast no programme reflecting the greatest change in Ireland's sovereignty and international relations since independence. The Italian President, in his New Year's message welcomed Ireland, Britain and Denmark, with their 'glorious traditions' into the EC. Norway had rejected accession earlier in 1972, and already almost half the population of Britain were unhappy with EC membership.

A small number of low-key events were held to mark Ireland's accession. Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Lenihan spoke at an Irish Management Institute celebratory lunch, and tree planting ceremonies were held in every county. Children born on New Year's Day 1973 were presented with a special medal. Opponents of Ireland's entry into the European Communities still maintained that entry would begin a period of great threat to the social, economic and political fabric of Irish society.

Patrick Hillery became Ireland's first European Commissioner and in the weeks ahead Hillery, Irish Ministers and Irish officials began serving in the various Community institutions. Ireland was now a member of the largest trading bloc in the world and an economy second richest only to the United States of America.

Ireland's national airline - Aer Lingus - took out a full page advertisement on page 3 of the New Year's Day 1973 Irish Times. With the line 'The Common Market is a bit Irish' it showed in a surreal cartoon how a selection of flat-capped Irishmen came to terms with Italian pasta, German beer and French fashion and how these same men contributed potatoes and Guinness to bemused Frenchmen, Aran jumpers to admiring German Frauleins, an 'O'Brien Steelworks' in the Ruhr and an Irish crane straightening the leaning tower of Pisa. The slogan was 'we have something to contribute economically and socially to European life'. The paper's New Year's Day editorial indulged in purple prose; Ireland was embarking on 'an adventure which, like all adventures, will have perils and problems; it will also have rich opportunities, not the least being the help of friends and neighbours. For we are amongst friends'.