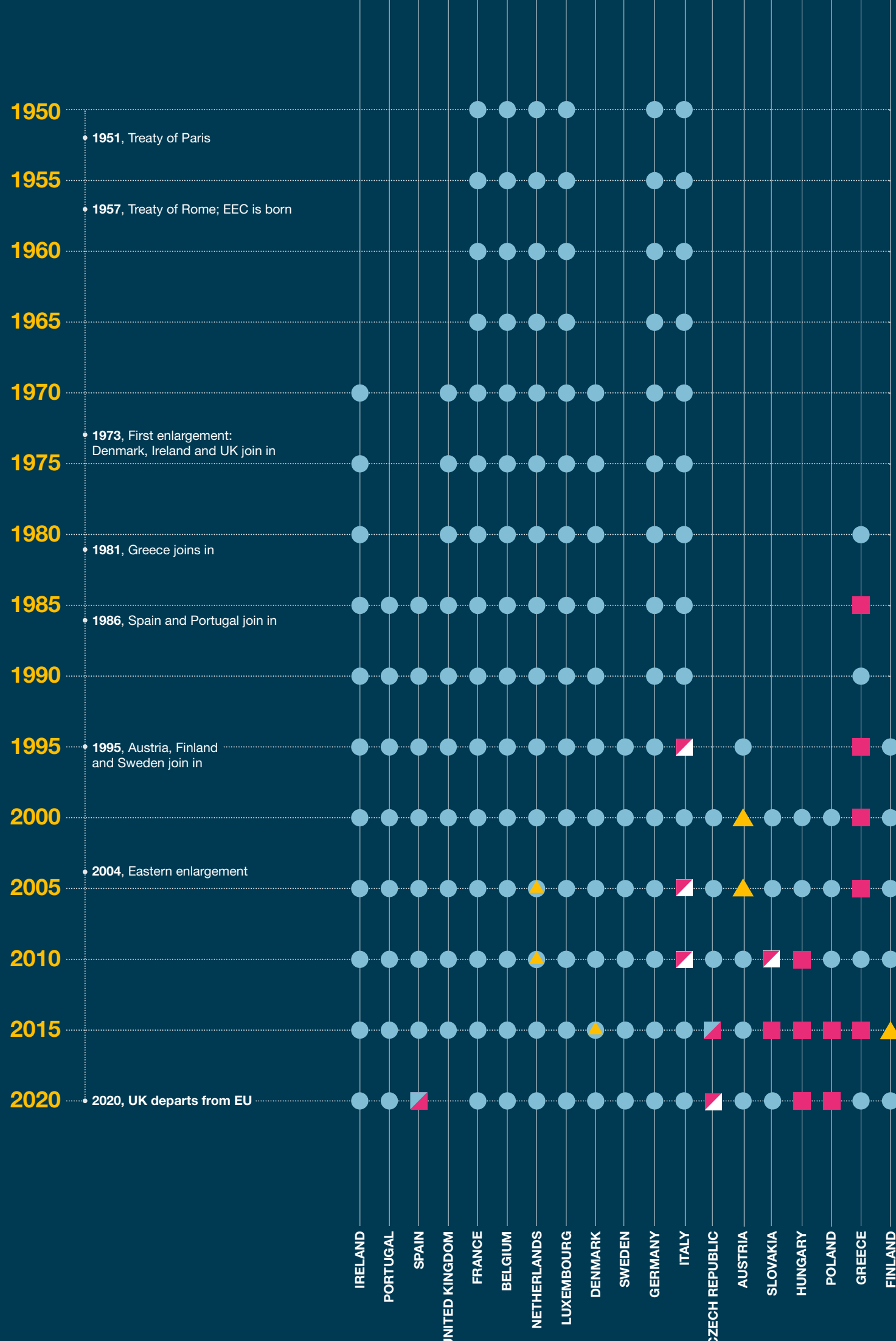


EU was once a club of liberal democracies. Not any longer.

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Following the expansion of EU over the last seventy years, this infographic depicts the evolution, and relative decline, of Europe's post-war **liberal** democratic rule. Back in the 1950s, and for three decades thereafter, all member states had solid liberal democratic governments. The Union was in fact meant to be an exclusive club of liberal democracies. But things did not turn exactly that way. Already by the 1980s, **populism**, an amalgam of democracy and illiberalism (hence, minimally defined as *democratic illiberalism*), won power in Greece and then flourished elsewhere, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the continent. After the 1990s, **nativist** parties—those standing in opposition to migration, further European integration, and globalization—grew strong in the most developed countries in western and northern Europe. Meanwhile in Eastern Europe—whether because of national and ethnic divisions, persisting state corruption, or both—most countries have failed to this date to produce solid and durable liberal democratic governments; instead, as shown by the four CEE countries included herein, most governments in this region stand today as exemplars of democratic illiberalism.



Notes

For several decades in postwar Europe, populism was not an issue at all. The first populist party in the continent that was able to form a government singlehandedly was **Greece's** leftist PASOK in October 1981. It stayed in office for many years, increasingly contaminating the formerly liberal center-right ND party, which then ruled in typical populist fashion during 2004-09. Greece has also been governed by the left-right populist coalition of SYRIZA/ANEL during 2015-19. In **Italy**, Silvio Berlusconi formed three populist-led coalition governments between 1994 and 2011. Hungary has been led by a FIDESZ-dominated populist government since 2010 and **Poland** is ruled by populist PiS since 2015. In the **Czech Republic**, populist Andrej Babi's ANO party formed a minority government in 2017, while in **Slovakia** populist SMER leader Robert Fico enjoyed three terms as prime minister between 2006 and 2018. In **Spain**, the leftist PODEMOS has since 2019 served as junior coalition partner in a predominantly liberal government.

Nativist parties have never ruled singlehandedly in Europe. Instead, they have participated as junior partners in coalition governments in four EU countries: **Austria** (FPÖ; 2000-03, 2003-05 and 2017-19); the **Netherlands** (*List Pim Fortuyn*, 2002-03); **Finland** (*Finns*, 2017-19); and **Italy** (League, 2018-19). In two other countries, **Denmark** and again the **Netherlands**, nativist parties (the *Danish People's Party* and the *Dutch Party of Freedom* respectively) have supported minority liberal incumbents but without receiving cabinet posts. Other important nativist parties have served as coalition partners in governments of two non-EU nations, **Switzerland** and **Norway**.

Sources

For the original discussion of liberal, populist, and nativist, see T.S. Pappas, "The Specter Haunting Europe: Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers", *Journal of Liberal Democracy* 27:4 (October 2016), 22-36, and T.S. Pappas, "Populism vs. nativism" [*Infographic*], 2020. For definitions and a classification of Europe's various party types, see T.S. Pappas "A typology of parties in contemporary Europe, 1990-2020" [*Infographic*], 2021. By far the best account of the failure of liberal parties in CEE to become strong and durable is Tim Haughton and Kevin Deegan-Krause, *The New Party Challenge: Changing Cycles of Party Birth and Death in Central Europe and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). A general theory of populism based on detailed comparative analysis of the cases, including Greece, is in T.S. Pappas, *Populism and Liberal Democracy: A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). For much more on populism, nativism, and liberalism, you may enjoy visiting my blog www.pappaspopulism.com.

Citation

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