Specialized Courts: Regional Economic and Political Integration Agreements
Chapter Fourteen

European Union Courts

Sonja Boelaert*

A. Overview

1. Essential Information

a. The European Union: A Regional Integration Organisation

The European Union (EU) is currently based on two treaties setting out its primary law: the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).\(^1\) The Union now has twenty-seven constituent Member States and covers an area of more that four million squared kilometers. Its 493 million inhabitants are all endowed with Union citizenship in addition to their national citizenship.\(^2\)

Initially there were six founding Member States – Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. Unification of Germany in 1990 brought in the Länder from eastern Germany. The EU was further enlarged in 1995 to include Austria, Finland, and Sweden. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia joined in 2004, followed in 2007 by Bulgaria and Romania. Four candidates, Croatia, Turkey, the former

\* This article is written solely in her personal capacity and does not bind the EU’s institutions.
\(^2\) TFEU, Art. 20 (1) TFEU.