

## DEUTSCHER LEBENSTIL UND DEUTSCHE KULTUR (German Lifestyle and Culture)

### The Euro celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary

The euro on Saturday marked 20 years since people began to use the single European currency, overcoming initial doubts, price concerns and a debt crisis to spread across the region.



The Euro is projected onto the walls of the European Central Bank in Brussels.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen called the euro “a true symbol for the strength of Europe” while European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde described it as “a beacon of stability and solidity around the world”.

Euro banknotes and coins came into circulation in 12 countries on January 1, 2002, greeted by a mix of enthusiasm and scepticism from citizens who had to trade in their Deutsche marks, French francs, pesetas and liras.

The euro is now used by 340 million people in 19 nations, from Ireland to Germany to Slovakia. Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are next in line to join the eurozone — though people are divided over the benefits of abandoning their national currencies.

European Council President Charles Michel argued it was necessary to leverage the euro to back up the EU’s goals of fighting climate change and leading on digital innovation. He added that it was “vital” work on a banking union and a capital markets union be completed.

The idea of creating the euro first emerged in the 1970s as a way to deepen European integration, make trade simpler between member nations and give the continent a currency to compete with the mighty US dollar.

Officials credit the euro with helping Europe avoid economic catastrophe during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Clearly, Europe and the euro have become inseparable,” Lagarde wrote in a blog post. “For young Europeans... it must be almost impossible to imagine Europe without it.”

In the euro’s initial days, consumers were concerned it caused prices to rise as countries converted to the new currency. Though some products — such as coffee at cafes — slightly increased as businesses rounded up their conversions, official statistics have shown that the euro has brought more stable inflation.

Dearer goods have not increased in price, and even dropped in some cases. Nevertheless, the belief that the euro has made everything more expensive persists.