



WORKBOOK

EU Institutions



EU Institutions



This resource aims to provide participants with an overview of the European Union and its main institutions.

What is the European Union



The European Union or EU is a political and economic union of 28 countries in Europe. Member countries include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The initial aim of a union of European countries was to establish peace and prosperity in Europe by increasing economic cooperation between countries following the Second World War. This led to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958 between six countries. As more countries joined the Union, the goals expanded to include policy development on a range of issues including climate, security, justice, health, environment and migration. To reflect this evolution the name was changed to the European Union in 1993.

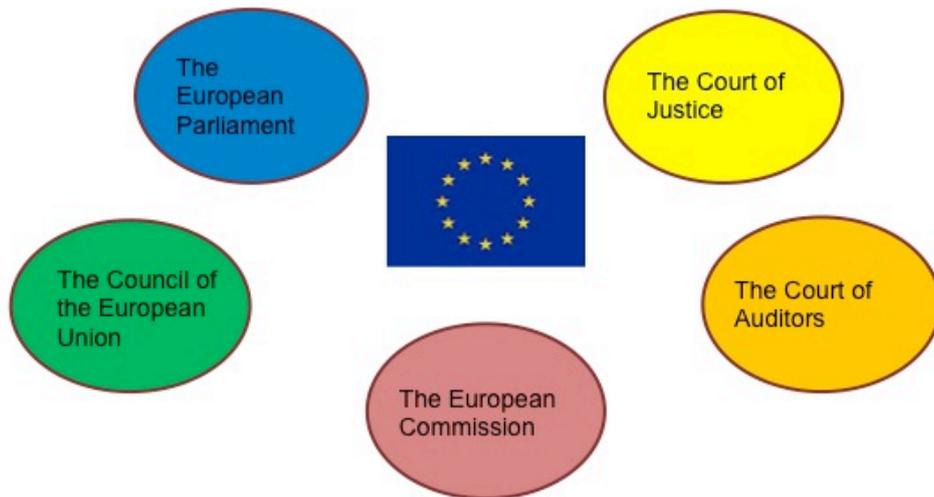
What is the European Union



Today the European Union has four main aims:

1. To protect human rights and freedoms by establishing European citizenship
2. To cooperate with member states in the area of justice to ensure freedom, security and justice
3. To promote economic and social progress through a range of co-operative initiatives which include the single market, a common currency (the euro), social and regional development and environmental protection.
4. To assert Europe's role in the world

The 5 main EU Institutions



The European Union function through 5 main institutions:

1. The European Parliament
2. The Council of the European Union
3. The European Commission
4. The Court of Justice
5. The Court of Auditors

The 3 institutions which are responsible for EU legislation are:

- The **European Parliament**, which is elected by EU citizens through elections held every 5 years.
- The **Council of the European Union**, which represents the governments of member countries.
- The **European Commission**, which represents the interests of the Union as a whole.

The European Parliament



Responsibilities:

- Legislation - This power is shared with the Council of the European Union.
- Finance – The supervision of EU spending. This responsibility is also shared with the Council of the European Union.
- Democratic supervision - all EU Community activities are supervised.
- The European Parliament monitors negotiations with countries that wish to join the EU and has the power to approve or veto their membership.



The European Parliament is the institution that represents the citizens of the 28 EU states. The Parliament consists of 751 MEPs who are elected every 5 years.

The European Parliament is currently presided over by Antonio Tajani who oversees the activities of the parliament. The President is elected every two and a half years.

MEPs sit in eight political groups which are based on political affiliation rather than nationality. MEPs usually vote with their chosen group but are not obliged to do so.

MEPs work in 24 committees which include the following:

- Foreign Affairs
- Human rights
- Security and Defence
- Development
- International Trade

The European Parliament



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- Budgets

There are 44 delegations that work with parliaments of non-EU countries, for example, negotiating with countries that wish to join the EU.

The main powers of the Parliament are:

- Legislation - This power is shared with the Council of the European Union.
- Finance – The supervision of EU spending. This responsibility is also shared with the Council of the European Union.
- Democratic supervision - all EU Community activities are supervised by the Parliament. The European Commission must submit reports on its activities to the Parliament.
- The European Parliament also monitors negotiations with countries that wish to join the EU and has the power to approve or veto their membership.

The council of the European Union



- The Council of the European Union is the main decision making body in the EU.
- It shares legislative power with the European Parliament adopting proposals submitted by the European Commission.
- It shares responsibility for EU spending with the European Parliament.
- There are 28 members - one from each EU state
- Each member state holds the presidency on a 6 month rotating basis.



The Council of the European Union, comprising one government minister from every member state, is the main decision making body in the EU. It shares legislative power with the European Parliament adopting proposals submitted by the European Commission. It also shares responsibility for EU spending with the European Parliament. Each member state holds the presidency on a 6 month rotating basis.

Council meetings are arranged by topic. Only the representing ministers from each state with responsibility for that topic will attend the meeting, for example, the ministers for education or ministers for agriculture will meet if those subjects are being discussed. Ministers have the authority to commit their governments to any decisions agreed on at the meetings.

The European Commission



- The Commission initiates new legislation by making proposals and implementing decisions made by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.
- It has responsibility, with the Court of Justice, to ensure that EU legislation is applied by member countries.
- It represents the EU internationally, negotiating trade agreements with non-EU countries and working with international bodies on issues such as humanitarian aid.



The European Commission is based in Brussels, Belgium and is composed of 28 Commissioners, one from each country, and led by a Commission President. The current president is Jean-Claude Juncker. The President is nominated by the governments of member states in consultation with the European Parliament. Each individual state nominates their own EU commissioner and then all members must be approved by the European Parliament. Commissioners serve for a renewable 5 year term. They are each given an area of responsibility, or portfolio, by the President and must represent the interest of the EU in their role. The Commission meets weekly and makes decisions on policies through majority vote.

The main function of the Commission is to initiate new legislation by making proposals and implementing decisions made by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

The Commission also has the responsibility, with the Court of Justice, to ensure that EU legislation is applied by member countries and to initiate proceedings against Member States or businesses if EU law is not complied with.

The European Commission



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The Commission employs a staff of over 23,000 people, recruited from the various member states, to assist in its running or within the institution as interpreters, administrative staff, lawyers, economists etc. Staff are based in the European Commission offices in Luxembourg, in all EU countries and in cities throughout the world.

The Court of Justice



- The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ensures that European law is interpreted and applied in each member state.
- It comprises of 28 judges, one from each member state.
- There are also 8 Advocate Generals who assist the ECJ in making decisions.
- Judges and Advocate Generals must be suitably qualified.
- Their term lasts 6 years and is renewable.



The responsibility of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) is to ensure that European law is interpreted and applied in each member state. It comprises of 28 judges, one from each member state. In addition, there are 8 Advocate Generals who assist the ECJ in making decisions.

The Judges and Advocate Generals are appointed by joint agreement of the governments of the member states and must be properly qualified and hold no other paid or unpaid position while they are engaged by the ECJ. Their term lasts 6 years and can be renewed. The European Court of Justice sits and hears cases all year round.

The Court of Auditors



- The European Court of Auditors oversees and audits the budgets and accounts of the European Union Institutions.
- The Court is composed of 28 members, one from each state, with experience in auditing public finances.
- Candidates are appointed by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament for a renewable term of 6 years.
- Court members elect a president for a term of 3 years.



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A report on the spending of EU money is published annually by the Court of Auditors which is available for anyone to read in the Official Journal of the Community. The European Court of Auditors headquarters are in Luxembourg.

My Rights as an EU Citizen are...



- The right of free movement and residence in the territory of the Member States.
- The right to vote and stand for election in European and local elections.
- The right to diplomatic protection in third countries.
- The right to petition the European Parliament.
- The right to bring complaints before the European Ombudsman.
- The right to address any of the Union's institutions or bodies in one of the official languages and to receive an answer in the same language.



As a European citizen, you have the following rights:

- The right of free movement and residence in the territory of the Member States.
- The right to vote and stand for election in European and local elections.
- The right to diplomatic protection in third countries
- The right to petition the European Parliament
- The right to bring complaints before the European Ombudsman.
- The right to address any of the Union's institutions or bodies in one of the official languages and to receive an answer in the same language.
- The right to access official European Parliamentary documents

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Groups can apply to visit the European Parliament in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg where they can meet with an official who will explain the workings of the Parliament.

EU members can submit a petition to the European Parliament, as an individual or as part of a group, on issues concerning them directly which fall within the European Union's remit.

Activity 1 – Fill in the names of the EU Countries



Provide each participant with a print out of this map and ask them to fill in the names of the EU countries.

Activity 2 – Connect the facts



The European Commission	It has 28 members with experience in auditing public finances
The Court of Auditors	The current president is Jean-Claude Juncker
The European Parliament	There are 8 Advocate Generals who assist in making decisions
The Court of Justice	Each member state holds the presidency on a 6 month rotating basis
The Council of the European Union	The President is elected every two and a half years



Provide each participant with a printed version of this slide and ask them to connect the correct fact with the relevant EU institution.

Thanks!

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