The EU Institutions

# 1 Council of the European Union

Also called the “Council of Ministers” or informally “EU Council”

**Description**

This is the voice of EU member states’ governments, and it is where national ministers from each EU member state meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. It is one of the two decision-making bodies of the EU.

**Competence**

Its competence is to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies (with the European Parliament).

The Council of Ministers also develops the EU's foreign & security policy, as well as concludes on agreements between the EU and other countries or international organisations. Finally it adopts the annual EU budget - jointly with the European Parliament.

**Members**

Members are ministers from each member state. There are no fixed members, instead it meets in 10 different configurations, each corresponding to the policy area being discussed. For example: All Ministers of Education of every country.

**Leader**

Meetings are chaired by the relevant minister from the country with the EU presidency. Each EU country holds the presidency on a 6-month rotating basis.

**Election**

The members are Ministers of national governments, and are thus a result of national parliament elections.

*Decision-making*

*Decisions usually require a qualified majority to be passed: 55% of countries (with 28 current members, this means 16 countries) + representing at least 65 % of total EU population. To block a decision, at least 4 countries are needed (representing at least 35% of total EU population). The exception is sensitive topics like foreign policy and taxation require a unanimous vote (all countries in favour).*

*Preparations of meetings*

*The Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) is responsible for preparing the work of the Council of the European Union. It consists of representatives from the EU countries with the rank of ambassador to the European Union and is chaired by the EU country which holds the Council Presidency. It thus carries out preliminary scrutiny of the dossiers on the Council's agenda (proposals and drafts for acts tabled by the Commission). It seeks to reach agreement at its own level on each dossier, failing which it may suggest guidelines, options or suggested solutions to the Council.*

# European Council

**Description**

This is the EU institution that defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. It consists of the heads of state or government of the member states, together with its President and the President of the Commission.

**Competence**

It defines the EU's overall political direction and priorities. As it is not one of the EU's legislating institutions, it does not negotiate nor adopt laws. It instead sets the EU's policy agenda, by adopting 'conclusions' which identify issues of concern and actions to take.

**Members**

Heads of state of the 28 EU member states, The European Council President, and the President of the European Commission.

**Leader**

The President is elected on a 2,5 year mandate by the European Council by a qualified majority, and chairs European Council meetings and drives forward its work. The president also ensures the external representation of the EU at his/her level on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy.

**Election**

The members are heads of state or government, and are thus a result of national parliament elections.

**Real-life**

Closed discussions, people are on a first-name encounter. Discussion is private, the politicians try to act as a team - 100% need to agree on something.

*Decision making*

*The European Council mostly takes its decisions by consensus. However, in certain specific cases outlined in the EU treaties, it decides by unanimity or by qualified majority. Only the 28 leaders have voting power.*

# European Parliament

**Description**

This is the only directly elected EU body, and represents the EU’s 500 million inhabitants and is one of the two decision-making bodies of the EU. It plays a key role in electing the President of the European Commission.

**Competence**

The European Parliament decides jointly with the Council of the EU on laws.

The results of European Parliament elections are taken into account in the nomination of the President of the European Commission, but the Parliament also has to elect the president and approve the appointment of the Commission.

It supervises the work of the Commission and other EU bodies and cooperates with national parliaments of EU countries to get their input.

Is a forum for discussion of European issues. The members will propose initiatives, comment on the EU current affair and invite national leaders, commissionaires, and businessmen for debates.

**Members**

Directly elected people from the EU member states, called MEPs. The elected members’ group in European political groups according to their beliefs, ideology or political goals, not in national delegations.

**Leader**

Led by a member of the Parliament that is chosen by the Parliament itself on a 2,5 year term. The President chairs the plenary sittings of Parliament, and internal meetings such as the Conference of the Presidents of Political Groups in the Parliament and the Bureau of Parliament. The President represents the Parliament in all legal matters and represents Parliament in its international relations.

**Election**

Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens in the member states every 5th year.

**Real-life**

Like a political circus and not without conflicts

# European Commission

**Description**

This in the EU institution which promotes the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget

**Competence**

The EU’s executive body, it is responsible for proposing and implementing EU laws, guardian of the Treaties, enforcing EU law, and allocates EU funding

**Members**

One selected member from each member state (of which one is the president); This 'College' of Commissioners represents the EU, not their member state. They each has a responsibility for a specific policy area, and often have heavy political experience from their member state e.g. former prime ministers and ministers. The ideologies of the members should be irrelevant for the work.

**Leader**

The President defines the policy direction for the Commission with a vision for the EU.

**Election**

The Members of the Commision is suggested by the member states’ governments, and approved by the European Parliament, and are elected for 5 years.

The president candidate is putted forward by the European Council but approved by the European Parliament together with the rest of the College, after the Parliament elections. The parliament is very eager to have a key role in the nominations of president candidates, and the european political parties will nominate their own candidate for Commission president. The party with the biggest win in the European Parliament election will have their candidate as Commission President. This process is called Spitzenkandidaten. This is an ongoing power-play between the two co-legislating bodies of the EU.

**Real-life**

Top bureaucrats, biggest institution. Will always try to push the EP and the Council.