THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
MADE SIMPLE

2014-2019

The European Parliament Made Simple is produced by the American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham EU) as a introduction to the workings of the European Parliament for amateurs and experts alike.

Foreword

Susan Danger

Managing Director

American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union

It is with great pleasure that I present AmCham EU's newest guide, *The European Parliament Made Simple*. The Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2009, gave the European Parliament greater power in EU decision-making and an increased role in selecting and approving the European Commission.

As a result, this year's European election has a greater democratic influence than ever before. With this in mind, AmCham EU has published The European Parliament Made Simple to explain the Parliament's expanded powers and roles, for both the Brussels policy community and public affairs professionals in the EU and US.

It is vital that the European Parliament and business continue to work together to further prosperity and create jobs for Europe. As Europe continues to recover from the economic crisis, it is essential for the European Parliament, working within the EU, to help lead the way. AmCham EU is committed to doing its part to keep the transatlantic economy strong and growing.

For this to happen, it will be important to continue the process of dismantling trade barriers. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is an important opportunity to strengthen the economic relationship between the EU and US. It is in the best interest of both the EU and US to see this agreement completed in the European Parliament's new term.

On both sides of the Atlantic, we are committed to the prosperity and well being of our citizens. Together, we can ensure that this becomes a reality.

I hope this guide will prove beneficial in helping you navigate the Parliament's structure and better understand its increased competences and powers.

AmCham EU

Contents

Foreword by Susan Danger, Managing Director, American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham EU)

AmCham EU's *Agenda for Action 2014-2019*

Europe is slowly emerging from the most severe economic crisis in decades. As a result of concerted European action, many economic risks have been mitigated. But there is no room for complacency, as long-term challenges remain considerable.

Unemployment continues to be a persistent problem across the EU. Public debt levels are chronically high. Demands for health and social services are escalating and straining resources. A hesitant economic recovery and the changing global competitive environment pose challenges. The question remains whether Europe can appropriately respond to those challenges.

History suggests it can. Europe is built on strong foundations, and is home to many of the world's most respected companies, strong economic and cultural traditions and a highly educated workforce. Acting together, business leaders, policy-makers and EU citizens can create a new wave of productivity and prosperity.

Yet the EU faces some critical choices. Get them right, and Europe will continue to be a key player in shaping and building the global economy. Get them wrong, and Europe will lose the opportunity to capitalise on its talent, knowledge and traditions. If Europe falls behind in the global economic race, the social and political consequences will be profound.

The American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham EU) is the voice of American business in Europe. Aggregate US investment in Europe totalled €2 trillion in 2013 and directly supports more than 4.3 million jobs on the continent. We are committed to helping the EU become more competitive through bold policies that support an integrated and innovative Europe. With such policies in place the region can position itself to leverage new waves of future growth and secure its place on the global geo-economic map for the long term.

The goal is to move beyond crisis management, toward a more strategic and dynamic phase of growth. In the following pages we are proposing five action areas that we believe need to be addressed if the EU is to accomplish this. In each of the five action areas, we will be proposing specific recommendations that will be reviewed and updated annually as needed over the next five years.

AmCham EU's five key action areas

★ Build skills for the future

If Europe is to compete in an ever-changing global environment, policies need to be in place to ensure its citizens are well-equipped to meet the needs of the future marketplace. This will require investment in training and skills development at every stage of workers' lives to remain relevant to the needs of society and the economy.

★ Drive integration to create an attractive internal market

Europe needs to complete the Single Market, particularly in the areas of services, the digital market, energy and transportation. Efforts also need to be made to improve harmonisation of policies and regulation. The objective should be to make Europe an attractive destination for investment and a hub of economic growth and innovation which contributes to global regulatory and industrial standards.

★ Embrace revolutionary change for industrial leadership

Europe has built a strong industrial foundation and now is the time to capitalise on its expertise across all sectors including pharmaceuticals, healthcare, energy, transport, aerospace, security, chemicals, biotech and digital technologies. The objective should be to establish policies to keep European industry at the cutting edge to ensure sustainable economic growth.

★ Develop new models of innovation and entrepreneurship

Innovation and entrepreneurship have been hailed as great drivers of growth. The next generation of entrepreneurs need to be supported and encouraged through incentive programmes. At the same time, fresh models of partnership between governments, businesses and the wider civil society need to be developed and promoted. The objective should be to foster dynamic and flexible thinking to generate economic opportunities for the future.

★ Lead by example towards global integration

Europe needs to remain a global hub for trade, investment and ideas, while taking advantage of the global economic landscape more systematically. The objective should be to ensure that European industries can compete successfully in an increasingly integrated global economy. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement offers the opportunity to enhance cooperation between the EU and the US and the possibility of establishing regulatory standards which will have a profound impact on the way business is conducted globally for decades to come.

CHAPTER 1:

FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Introduction

The European Parliament is the only directly democratically elected body of the European institutions. Every five years each Member State holds national elections to decide who will represent them in the European Parliament. Over 400 million people were eligible to vote in the 2014 election, the second-largest democratic electorate in the world after India.

The Parliament is based in three locations: Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg and Strasbourg (France). The administrative offices are based in Luxembourg, the majority of preparation work on laws is done in Brussels and the entire Parliament meets as a whole 12 times per year in Strasbourg to vote on proposals for new laws. These sessions are known as plenaries. Two-day 'mini plenaries' are also occasionally held in Brussels to vote on those proposals that were not covered during the plenary in Strasbourg.

The national representatives are known as members of the European Parliament or MEPs. There are currently 751 MEPs in total. They are supported by a secretariat staff of 6,000. The Parliament's political groups also all have their own secretariat, totalling around 700. The size of each group secretariat varies in accordance with the number of MEPs in the group. MEPs also employ parliamentary assistants who help them with their parliamentary work.

The number of MEPs allocated to a country depends on the population size of the Member State. Germany, with a population of 80.7 million, has 96 MEPs and Malta, with the smallest population of just 400,000 has only six MEPs.

The Parliament began life as an advisory body in 1958, appointed by Member States' governments. Since then its powers have grown, along with its size. In 1979, its representatives were directly elected by people in the Member States for the first time.

As the EU has expanded in membership, so has the European Parliament. In 1979, when the EU had nine member countries, there were 410 representatives. The current EU 28 has 751 MEPs, which is capped by the Lisbon Treaty. As a result of the implementation of the treaty, which came into force after the last European elections, the number of MEPs increased temporarily to 766, because legislation did not allow the ealry termination of an MEP's mandate, as well as Croatia's accession. The 18 new 'Lisbon' MEPs came from: Spain (4 MEPs); Austria, France and Sweden (2 MEPs each); and Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and the UK (1 MEP each). Croatia was given 12 seats on its accession.

Growth of the Parliament

Year	Number of MEPs	Member States
1973	198	9
1979	410	9
1984	434	10
1989	518	12
1994	567	12*
1999	626	15
2004	785	27
2009	736	27
2012	754	27
2013	766	28
2014	751	28

* German reunification

Role and powers of the European Parliament

European Parliament in Strasbourg

European Parliament in Brussels

The three main roles of the European Parliament are:

★ To pass EU laws;
★ Democratic supervision of the other institutions; and
★ To approve the budget.

Legislative powers

The Lisbon Treaty introduced a new set of legislative procedures which simplified and consolidated policy-making in the EU, even if they retain the essential elements of the previous procedures (co-decision, consultation, assent). The Parliament can now participate in the legislative process in essentially two ways:

Ordinary legislative procedure

The "old" co-decision procedure, which represents the core legislative power of the Parliament, has been extended by the new text to cover virtually all areas of EU policy-making under the new title of "ordinary legislative procedure". Through this procedure, legislation is adopted jointly by the Parliament and the Council on a proposal from the Commission; Parliament and Council act on an equal footing, meaning neither of them can adopt legislation without the agreement of the other.

The ordinary legislative procedure represents the culmination of a gradual increase of powers by Parliament since the inception of the "Common Assembly" in 1952. Most recently, following the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty, the revised (and renumbered) article 251 presented a slightly modified, or 'simplified co-decision' procedure whereby the number of Parliamentary readings was reduced from three to two. This

reformulated procedure required agreement on a joint text (with the Council deciding by qualified majority and the Parliament by an absolute majority of votes cast) within six weeks; however, in case the Parliament and the Council did not reach an agreement (and if the Conciliation Committee convened to overcome those differences failed), the proposal was deemed 'to have not been adopted'. This was a remarkable innovation as it meant the Parliament's lack of approval in practice amounted to a blocking power. The influence of Parliament in the legislative process was significantly increased and paved the way for the later revisions which consolidated the trend.

In 2003, the Treaty of Nice extended the use of the co-decision procedure to new areas, such as transport, employment, customs cooperation, social policy, environment, development, countering fraud and data protection (previously it only regarded areas such as the single market, education, vocational training, public health, consumer protection, Trans-European Networks [TENs] and technological research and development). In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty continued the trend of expanding the Parliament's legislative powers to include crucial areas such as agriculture and fisheries, justice and home affairs and external trade.

Under the ordinary legislative procedure, legislation is adopted in three readings for Parliament and Council, with the possibility to conclude at each reading. The majorities in Parliament and Council for adoption of positions remain essentially the same as in Nice. Deadlines also remain generally unchanged, although national parliaments have eight weeks to undertake a subsidiarity check.

AmCham EU

Special legislative procedures

A category of special legislative procedures covers other forms of interaction between the Council and the Parliament. These essentially match older procedures which have been streamlined and integrated under a common name.

Consultation procedure

The Parliament's opinion must be obtained before the Council can adopt a legislative proposal from the Commission, but it is the Council that makes the final decision. Although the Parliament's opinion carries no legal weight, it is regarded, particularly by the European Court of Justice, as an integral part of the legislation-making procedure. The procedure is typically applied in sensitive areas (with limited EU intervention) such as taxation and social security.

Consent procedure

In a single reading without amendments, the Parliament's approval is required. Under the Nice Treaty, the procedure (then-called "assent") applied to a new provision regarding a breach of fundamental rights by Member States (article 7 of the EU treaty), as well as to the accession of new members, uniform electoral procedures, the conclusion of certain international agreements and matters related to economic and social cohesion. The Lisbon Treaty further extended this to include, for example, the adoption of the results of negotiations on international agreements, procedures for European elections, combating discrimination and citizen's rights.

Budgetary powers

The Parliament received extensive powers of control over the Community budget following the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty. The procedure involved two readings in each institution, with the Parliament having the final say over non-compulsory expenditure (structural funds and other 'creative' spending, e.g. R&D) and the Council retaining power over compulsory expenditures (treaty-specified elements, such as agriculture). Non-compulsory expenditure typically represented over half of the Community's budget and amounted to around €45 billion annually. The Parliament was also entitled to propose amendments to compulsory expenditure.

Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the Parliament has gained greater powers over the entirety of the EU budget, as its authority has been extended to cover the totality of expenditures (the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditures has been eliminated as a result). At the same time, the Commission is no longer required to submit a preliminary draft budget to the Council and is thus able to submit it directly to the Parliament when it deems it appropriate. Ultimately, with its power to adopt or reject the entire budget package, the Parliament is in charge of monitoring the implementation of budgetary measures and has the final say in deciding the EU's budget.

The Parliament is also required to give a 'discharge' to the Commission in respect of the implementation of previous budgets (Article 319 EC). Historically, delaying the discharge has been used by the Parliament as a means of exerting political pressure on the Commission. The momentum that built up around the discharge of the accounts for the 1997 budget played a significant role in the resignation of the Commission in February 1999.

Control powers

The Parliament exercises democratic supervision over all Community activities.

Ombudsman

The Ombudsman's role is to ensure transparency and democracy by safeguarding citizens' political, civil and social rights in their interaction with the institutions and bodies of the EU (Commission, Council, Economic and Social Committee, Council of the Regions, Parliament, Court of Auditors and Court of Justice). The first Ombudsman, Jacob Söderman, was elected by the European Parliament in July 1995. Emily O'Reilly, the first female European Ombudsman, was elected by the European Parliament to become the third, taking office in October 2013. Normally, the term of the ombudsman mirrors the mandate of the European Parliament, though O'Reilly was elected early following the retirement of her predecessor.

The European Ombudsman is modelled on equivalent bodies in a number of European states (Scandinavian countries, UK and Spain). Every European citizen or other national residing in the Union, and any legal body, as well as the Parliament itself, may ask the Ombudsman to investigate administrative abuse. However, the

Ombudsman may also act on his or her own initiative. The Ombudsman has the competence to conduct inquiries into the institutions in question, and to have access to files related to the case. In cases where an investigation leads to the conclusion of maladministration (e.g. administrative irregularities and omissions, abuse of power), the Ombudsman must send a report to the Parliament and may recommend ways to remedy the matter. The Ombudsman has been an important voice in the calls for greater transparency and an effective troubleshooter in the fight against fraud and mismanagement within the institutions, particularly the Commission.

Committee of Inquiry and Committee of Petition

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) formalised the Parliament's practice of setting up temporary Committees of Inquiry to investigate alleged contravention or mismanagement in the Community institutions. These committees are required to submit a report to the Parliament within 12 months after which they are disbanded. So far, there have been ten Committees which focused on:

1. The issues of the Community transit system;
2. Public responses to the BSE crisis;
3. The communications interception system known as ECHELON;
4. Human genetics and other new technologies of modern medicine;
5. Foot and mouth disease;
6. Improving safety at sea;
7. Policy challenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union 2007-2013;
8. The crisis of the Equitable Life Assurance Society;
9. The alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners; and
10. Climate change.

Furthermore, the TEU codifies the right of European citizens to address written requests or complaints to the European Parliament. The Parliament deals with the petitions in a specific committee (Petitions Committee), which prepares an annual report on its work.

Approval of the Commission

By voting a motion of censure on the Commission's annual report of activities, the Parliament can

---

Commission President's Question Hour

Introduced for the first time in 2009, after José Manuel Barroso's re-election as Commission President, 'question hour' gives all MEPs an opportunity to question the president of the European Commission on any subject, although they tend to focus on the main issues of the day.

The question hour takes place on Tuesday afternoon of the Parliament's Strasbourg plenary session. It operates similarly to the way heads of government are questioned by national parliaments in some Member States. There is half an hour of free questioning and half an hour of questions on a chosen topic of the day. MEPs have a minute to ask their questions, and President Barroso has one minute to answer.

In addition to new Q&A with the Commission president, MEPs also enjoy the well-established practice of Q&A sessions with Commissioners and ministers from the national government whose country is holding the Council Presidency. These also take place on Tuesday afternoon, but these are more prepared in advance.

MEPs can also send written questions to the Council and Commission. These must be answered within three to six weeks.

---

force the Commission as a whole to resign. The Treaty on the European Union reinforced this power by attributing to the Parliament the right to be consulted on the choice of the President of the Commission, and by making the Commission as a whole subject to a vote of approval by the Parliament. Consequently, the term of both institutions has been aligned (five years), each time allowing the Parliament six months to settle before voting on the new Commission and its President.

Written & oral questions

The MEPs have the right to present oral (at the plenary session) or written questions to the Commission. This is a source of information as well as a way for the individual MEP to highlight important issues.

European elections

Elections take place once every five years. The last elections were held in May 2014 and were characterised by a low turnout by the electorate and protest votes against parties in government.

At the first elections in 1979, the turnout was around 63% compared to only 43.09% in 2014. There is usually a fairly large gap between voter turnout in national elections compared with European elections. For example, in Austria, the last national election saw a voter turnout of around 77.2%, while turnout for the last European elections was only 45.7%.

The turnout was most disappointing in the new Member States, while the older Member States actually experienced growth in voter turnout as a whole. Slovakia had the dubious honour of breaking the United Kingdom's record for the worst voter turnout in a European election with only 13% of the country's population of voting age casting a vote. Poland, the largest of the incoming Member States, registered a 22.7% turnout.

Explaining voter turnout

Possible explanations for this trend can be found within and outside the Parliament, the least of which seem to be directly applicable to the actual work of the MEPs. The following provides an outline of suggested reasons for the low voter turnout:

★ In general, only national elections generate voter interest. The result was no worse than those traditionally obtained at most local or regional elections across the EU. Most nations experience a phenomenon known as the 'Euro-gap' which has shown that voter turnout was on average 20% lower for the European elections than for the previous national elections amongst the EU 15 and 30% on average amongst the new Member States;

★ National politics dominate over European issues. Voters often use the European elections as an opportunity to cast a vote for or against the policies of their respective national governments. In many pro-European Member States, it is often difficult to distinguish between the European policies of national parties. In others, such as the UK, the level of European debate narrows down to either pro- or anti-European platforms, with little time spent on actual EU issues and policies; and

★ The European Parliament and European politics in general are too removed from the European electorate. The concern about low voter turnout has triggered a number of efforts at EU level, including the Parliament launching a campaign to raise awareness, but concrete action remains to be seen. Furthermore, the sheer size of the EU and European Parliament constituencies makes it very difficult to establish a real connection between voters and their MEPs. Indeed, a German MEP represents 840,000 people, while a Maltese MEP represents 75,500 people.

Voter turnout in European elections

1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
62%	59%	58.4%	56.7%	49.5%	45.5%	43%	43.09%
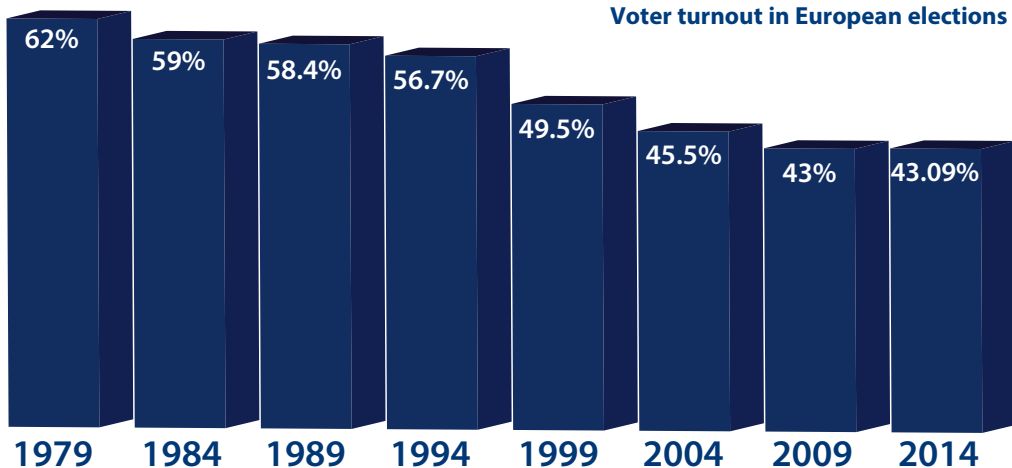
Number of MEPs per Member State

Member State	up to 2004	2004-2007	2007-2009	2009-2012	2012-2014	post-2014
Austria	21	8	18	17	19	18
Belgium	25	24	24	22	22	21
Bulgaria	-	-	18	17	18	17
Croatia	-	-	-	-	12	11
Cyprus	-	6	6	6	6	6
Czech Republic	-	24	24	22	22	21
Denmark	16	14	14	13	13	13
Estonia	-	6	6	6	6	6
Finland	16	14	14	13	13	13
France	87	78	78	72	74	74
Germany	99	99	99	99	99	96
Greece	25	24	24	22	22	21
Hungary	-	24	24	22	22	21
Ireland	15	13	13	12	12	11
Italy	87	78	78	72	73	73
Latvia	-	9	9	8	9	8
Lithuania	-	13	13	12	12	11
Luxembourg	6	6	6	6	6	6
Malta	-	5	5	5	6	6
Netherlands	31	27	27	25	26	26
Poland	-	54	54	50	51	51
Portugal	25	24	24	22	22	21
Romania	-	-	35	33	33	32
Slovakia	-	14	14	13	13	13
Slovenia	-	7	7	13	8	8
Spain	64	54	54	50	54	54
Sweden	22	19	19	18	20	20
United Kingdom	87	78	78	72	73	73
Total	**626**	**732**	**785**	**736**	**766**	**751**
Majority	**314**	**367**	**392**	**369**	**384**	**376**

AmCham EU

Distribution of Seats in the European Parliament

Jan Mayen (Nor.)
ICELAND
The Faeroes (Den.)
FINLAND (13)
NORWAY
SWEDEN (20)
RUSSIA
ESTONIA (6)
LATVIA (8)
LITHUANIA (11)
REP. OF IRELAND (11)
UNITED KINGDOM (73)
DENMARK (13)
Russia
BELARUS
NETHERLANDS (26)
BELGIUM (21)
GERMANY (96)
POLAND (51)
LUXEMBOURG (6)
CZECH REP. (21)
UKRAINE
SLOVAKIA (13)
FRANCE (74)
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA (18)
HUNGARY (21)
MOLDOVA
SLOVENIA (8)
ROMANIA (32)
ITALY (73)
CROATIA (11)
GEORGIA
PORTUGAL (21)
ANDORRA
SERBIA
BULGARIA (17)
SPAIN (54)
ALBANIA
Gibraltar (UK)
GREECE (21)
TURKEY
MOROCCO
MALTA (6)
SYRIA
TUNISIA
CYPRUS (6)
LEBANON
ALGERIA
ISRAEL
The Palestinian Authority

1 : MONTENEGRO
2 : FYR MACEDONIA
3 : KOSOVO
4 : BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
5 : LIECHTENSTEIN
6 : MONACO

Seats in the European Parliament are allocated roughly on the basis of the size of a country's population. Germany, with a population of 80.7 million, gets 96 seats, the most of any country. Malta with a population of only 400,000 receives just six seats in the European Parliament. This seat allocation was made in the Nice Treaty signed in 2001.

The Nice Treaty was signed in the French city of Nice in December 2001 to prepare for the recent enlargements of the EU. The twelve Member States that have joined since 2004 needed to be accommodated in the Parliament and to do so the existing Member States agreed to a reduction in the allocation of seats in the Parliament.

Germany and Luxembourg were the only two countries not to get a smaller allocation of seats once the Nice Treaty entered into effect. This may seem unfair, but to put it into context, in Germany for every MEP there are 830,000 constituents. Germany has always been under-represented in the Parliament so this was seen as redressing the balance. Luxembourg, by contrast, retained one MEP for every 75,000 constituents, six in total for its population of 450,000. This is the same number allocated to Estonia with a population of almost one million more.

The smaller countries have a higher representation than their population merits in order to give them a greater voice in Europe. On average there is one MEP for 624,000 people in Europe. This would mean countries such as Luxembourg and Malta would not have a large enough population to qualify for an MEP if allocation was decided purely and simply on population size. To give the smaller countries a voice in the European Parliament and the other institutions their representations are weighted.

Organisation and parliamentary life

President

The president is the figurehead of the Parliament and is elected by the Parliament to serve a renewable term of two-and-a-half years (i.e. half an MEP's elected term of office). The president represents the Parliament to the other institutions and internationally. He also chairs the Parliament's plenary meetings and key governing bodies:

★ The 'Bureau' – which lays down the Parliament's internal rules and budget

★ The 'Conference of Presidents' – which makes decisions on the organisation of the Parliament's work and legislative planning.

The current president is the socialist MEP, Martin Schulz (S&D, DE). His election was secured through an agreement between the three biggest political groups in the Parliament. Schulz is the first president of the Parliament to be re-elected, and his election was supported in exchange for the three main political groups' support for Jean-Claude Juncker, the EPP's 'spitzenkandidat', for the presidency of the European Commission. Traditionally, the presidency of the European Parliament transfers to a candidate from one of the other political groups at the mid-point of the Parliament's mandate.

The Bureau and the Quaestors

The Bureau is the key parliamentary internal governing body which oversees the administrative side of the Parliament's work as well as its budget. It is made up of the president, 14 vice-presidents and 5 quaestors. Nominated by a political group (or at least 40 MEPs) and elected in a secret ballot by a majority of MEPs, the vice-presidents and questors serve a two-and-a-half year term (which can be renewed).

The 14 vice-presidents assist the president in carrying out his/her duties. For example, they chair plenary meetings in his/her absence. Some are assigned particular roles, such as overseeing relations with national parliaments.

The five quaestors are charged with the day-to-day running of the administration and finances of the European Parliament. In the Bureau, they act as advisors and ensure that MEPs have the necessary infrastructure to do their job.

The Conference of Presidents

The Conference of Presidents consists of the president of the European Parliament plus the chairs of the seven political groups. Its functions are to draw up the draft agenda for the plenary sessions and to distribute dossiers to the relevant committees.

Political groups

In the European Parliament, most MEPs sit in pan-EU political groups. These are formed by national political parties according to their political affiliation and not by nationality.

MEPs therefore work largely along political rather than national lines as you might expect. Only very occasionally do national MEPs go against their groupings and usually only when particular issues are of national importance.

Who is the 'The Bureau'?

The current Bureau consists of:

President of the European Parliament
Martin Schulz (S&D)

14 vice-presidents
Antonia Tajani (EPP)
Mairead McGuinness (EPP)
Rainer Wieland (EPP)
Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (EPP)
Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (EPP)
Adina-Ioana Vâlean (EPP)
Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)
Corina Cretu (S&D)
David-Maria Sassoli (S&D)
Olli Rehn (ALDE)
Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE)
Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/EFA)
Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL)
Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR)

Quaestors (with observer status)
Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (EPP)
Bogusław Liberadzki (S&D)
Catherine Bearder (ALDE)
Andrey Kovatchev (EPP)
Karol Adam Karski (ECR)

It is elected by the Parliament as a whole for a renewable period of two-and-a-half years.

There are seven political groupings in the European Parliament (see page 18). Each political group has its own secretariat that supports MEPs, which is paid through Parliament funding.

The political group secretariats assist the MEPs by drafting reports, arranging meetings and providing administrative back-up to the MEPs in general.

The political groups elect the Bureau, committee chairs and vice-chairs, rapporteurs and also members of committees.

To form a political group, there must be:

★ At least a quarter of all Member States represented (i.e. MEPs from seven different EU countries);
★ Some kind of political affinity between each other; and
★ A minimum of 25 MEPs.

The larger the political group, the more funding it receives, the more key committee posts it gets and the longer it can speak in debates.

Political groups therefore incorporate diverse political backgrounds, and lack the same degree of cohesion as national political parties. For example, the Greens/EFA group consists of European green parties and progressive regionalist parties. Some political groups are affiliations of European political parties (which are made up of national parties not individuals), such as the European People's Party (EPP).

'Non-attached' members
Not all MEPs belong to a political group. Thirty MEPs sit as 'non-attached' (NI) members, outside political groups.

The diagram on page 17 represents the size and political positioning of each group within the European Parliament.

Parliamentary assistants
MEPs are also supported by parliamentary assistants, which they recruit themselves. However, since 2009, assistants based in Brussels (or Luxembourg/Strasbourg) fall under the Parliament's administration, with the same conditions of employment as non-permanent EU staff. Assistants based in MEPs' Member States are handled by qualified paying agents, guaranteeing the proper tax and social security arrangements.

European Parliament Secretariat – the 'General Secretariat'
The Parliament also has a secretariat, headed by a secretary-general. It is often referred to as the 'General Secretariat' in order to avoid confusion with political group secretariats. Based in Luxembourg and Brussels, it is made up of around 4,600 staff, most of which are officials recruited by competition from all the EU countries. A third of these are translators and interpreters.

The secretariat coordinates legislative work

Parliament presents

1952 - 1954	Paul-Henri Spaak (Socialist, BE)
1954 - 1954	Alcide de Gasperi (Christian Democrat, IT)
1954 - 1956	Giuseppe Pella (Christian Democrat, IT)
1956 - 1958	Hans Furler (Christian Democrat, DE)
1958 - 1960	Robert Schuman (Christian Democrat, FR)
1960 - 1962	Hans Furler (Christian Democrat, DE)
1962 - 1964	Gaetano Martino (Liberal, IT)
1964 - 1965	Jean Duvieusart (Christian Democrat, BE)
1965 - 1966	Victor Leemans (Christian Democrat, BE)
1966 - 1969	Alain Poher (Christian Democrat, FR)
1969 - 1971	Mario Scelba (Christian Democrat, IT)
1971 - 1973	Walter Behrendt (Socialist, DE)
1973 - 1975	Cornelis Berkhouwer (Liberal, NL)
1975 - 1977	George Spénale (Socialist, FR)
1977 - 1979	Emilo Colombo (Christian Democrat, IT)
1979 - 1982	Simone Veil (Liberal, FR)
1982 - 1984	Piet Dankert (Socialist, NL)
1984 - 1987	Pierre Pflimlin (Christian Democrat, FR)
1987 - 1989	Sir Henry Plumb (Conservative, UK)
1989 - 1992	Enrique Barön Crespo (Socialist, ES)
1992 - 1994	Egon Klepsch (Christian Democrat, DE)
1994 - 1997	Klaus Hänsch (Socialist, DE)
1997 - 1999	José María Gil-Robles (Christian Democrat, ES)
1999 - 2002	Nicole Fontaine (Christian Democrat, FR)
2002 - 2004	Pat Cox, (Liberal, IE)
2004 - 2007	Josep Borrell Fontelles (Socialist, ES)
2007 - 2009	Hans-Gert Pöttering (Christian Democrat, DE)
2009 - 2012	Jerzy Buzek (Conservative, PL)
2012 - Present	Martin Schulz (Socialist, DE)

and organises plenary sessions and meetings. It also provides technical and expert assistance to parliamentary bodies and MEPs. As the Parliament operates in all 24 official languages of the EU, the secretariat also provides a comprehensive multilingual service (i.e. translation and interpreting services). Consequently, the European Parliament is the world's largest employer of interpreters and translators.

Parliamentary committees

There are 20 'standing' committees. These range in size from 25 to 76 members. Each covers a specific area of the EU's activities. Committees tend to meet in the two weeks following a Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg. The committees prepare the work for the Parliament. Membership of the committees largely reflects the national and political balance of the Parliament as a whole. Committee members are appointed through political negotiations shortly after the European elections.

Each committee has a chair, up to four vice-chairs and a secretariat. To distribute these posts between political groups, the Parliament uses proportional representation. This leads to the political groups with the most MEPs receiving the majority of the posts.

The size and therefore the importance of the committees differs depending upon the topics with which they deal and increasingly upon the powers the Parliament has in particular areas. In certain areas the Parliament can only play an advisory role such as economic policy and foreign affairs. However, in other areas such as the environment, transport, energy, consumer protection, public health and the internal market, the Parliament is on an equal footing with the Council and therefore has an important say in what laws get adopted. Surprisingly the largest, with about 80 members, is the Foreign Affairs Committee which can only play an advisory role on policy. Environment is the second largest with nearly 70 members and another non-legislative committee, Constitutional Affairs, is the smallest with just over 20 members. The decision-making procedures of the institutions are explained in Chapter 4.

In addition to having 'full' members, committees also have 'substitute' members. Substitutes are entitled to attend and speak at committee meetings and, if the full member is absent, to take part in the vote. There is an equal number of substitutes as full members (e.g. if the Constitutional Affairs committee has 24

Key positions in the Parliament

Political group chairs – The leader of a political grouping. It is this person's job to work with each national political party to determine the priorities and policies for the political grouping as a whole. He or she chairs group meetings and acts as the spokesperson for the party. Between them and the bureau of the Parliament, they decide upon the allocation of reports between committees and decide upon the plenary agenda. Chairs must also coordinate the work of party administrators.

Committee chairs – This MEP chairs committee meetings and coordinates the committee work. The committee chairs meet with each other for the Conference of Committee Chairs to distribute reports amongst the committees.

Rapporteurs – When a Commission proposal is submitted to the Parliament it is allocated to a lead committee. In this committee the various political groups bid for the proposal. The winning political party then appoints one of its MEPs to draft a report to submit to the Parliament. This person is known as the rapporteur. Other political groups will appoint a shadow rapporteur to follow the development of the report closely.

Coordinators – For each committee, a political group will appoint an MEP to be their lead member. This person will work closely with the group administrator, bid for reports on behalf of the party and along with rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs indicate to other MEPs in their political grouping how to vote during plenary sessions.

Administrators – For each committee and for each party represented in the committee, an administrator is employed by the party to support the work of the MEPs and to provide them with guidance on technical issues and/or political orientation.

members, it would have 24 substitutes.)

Each political group appoints a coordinator for a committee. The committee coordinator is knowledgeable in the policy area in which the committee deals. They guide other MEPs in the party on voting in that particular area. For this reason, coordinators hold a great deal of power in the Parliament. Each committee is also followed by a member of the political group secretariat called an administrator. They provide administrative assistance and political guidance to the coordinator and the MEPs.

All the chairs of the standing and temporary committees also meet as the Conference of

committee chairs. Together they may make recommendations to the Conference of Presidents about the work of parliamentary committees and the drafting of plenary agendas.

Delegations and joint parliamentary committees (JCRs)

In addition to parliamentary committees, there are 44 delegations/Joint Parliamentary Committees (JCRs) each made up of around 15 MEPs. Each delegation/JCR is headed by a chair and two vice-chairs and generally holds a yearly meeting in the country or countries for which it is responsible:

★ Interparliamentary delegations, which develop relationships with non-EU countries that have not applied for EU membership (e.g. Israel, the US, etc.); and

★ Joint parliamentary committees (JCRs), which work together with countries that have applied for membership of the EU, or that have Association Agreements with the EU (e.g. Turkey, Albania, etc).

Parliament also has five multilateral assemblies, which bring together MEPs and parliamentarians from African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP-EU JPA), the Mediterranean (EMPA), Latin America (EUROLAT), EU's eastern neighbouring countries (EURONEST) and NATO countries.

Plenaries

Plenary sessions (also referred to as a 'part-sessions') are the high point of the Parliament's activities. During a plenary session, MEPs debate

The Strasbourg 'travelling circus'

The Parliament building in Strasbourg

The Parliament's multiple locations ('seats') pose a recurring controversy. It has three official seats: Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. The Strasbourg seat is particularly controversial since Parliament only goes there for a four-day monthly plenary session. These are unpopular amongst MEPs who have to spend time travelling between Brussels and Strasbourg when they could just as easily meet in Brussels. It takes approximately four to five hours to get from Brussels to Strasbourg by road or rail and an hour by plane. Every Friday before the Strasbourg plenary, the MEPs' staff pack the documents they need for the week ahead into 100-litre trunks (called 'cantines'). These are then collected and transported by road to the MEPs' offices in Strasbourg.

European Commission officials and staff also regularly travel to Strasbourg, with the whole college of 28 commissioners meeting in the French city on the Tuesday of plenary week. In addition to this, there are journalists and lobbyists.

Altogether, it is a costly affair, financially and environmentally. The total cost of maintaining three places of work adds up to €200 million per year. In 2007, a European Parliament report found that the 450 km commute also generates over 20,000 tonnes of CO_2 a year, damaging the environment and the EU's credibility. In 2008, the Parliament directly saved between €3-4 million when it temporarily held two plenary sessions in Brussels instead of Strasbourg, after the ceiling in Strasbourg building collapsed.

Despite these costs, the controversy looks set to continue. In 2006, the 'one seat' campaign organised by then MEP Cecilia Malmström drew over one million signatures, but it failed to lead to any change. A 2011 attempt by MEPs to combine two plenary sessions was overturned by the European Court of Justice in

Member State governments are reluctant to tackle the issue because geographical locations of the institutions can only be altered through a change in the EU treaties and a unanimous vote from the Member States. Having spent many years discussing the Lisbon Treaty, few are keen to embark on another lengthy and complex process. The French and Luxembourgish governments have already made it clear that they are not keen to open discussions, with former French president Nicholas Sarkozy saying the Strasbourg seat was 'non-negotiable'.

Monthly cycle for an MEP

Week 1	**Committee meetings**. MEPs sit with their committees and debate reports going through Parliament. They will work from a report drafted by one of the MEPs (the rapporteur) and propose amendments.
Week 2	Committee meetings continue but there is often a two-day **'mini plenary' held in Brussels** during which MEPs will vote on reports not covered in the last plenary in Strasbourg.
Week 3	**Group meetings**. MEPs debate the reports in their groups and advise fellow MEPs of major issues arising in their committees. They will recommend which way to vote on controversial or important issues ahead of the plenary and suggest any amendments for the group to put forward.
Week 4	**Plenary session in Strasbourg**. Plenaries are the highpoint in the Parliament's work - where all the work done by the committees and political groups culminates and all proposals for laws are adopted or rejected by the Parliament and amendments are voted upon. MEPs also debate issues with key EU figures, such as the Commission President or a head of government/state from the Member State holding the EU Presidency. In the four-day Strasbourg plenary (Monday-Thursday), the most important days are Tuesday and Wednesday.

and vote on all the proposals going through the Parliament.

Parliament holds a four-day plenary session (from Monday to Thursday) every month (except August) at its Strasbourg seat. It also holds two-day 'mini' plenary sessions in Brussels (Wednesday and Thursday) six times a year.

Plenaries are chaired by the president (or by one of the 14 vice-presidents). He/she ensures that the proceedings and voting are correctly conducted. Commissioners and representatives from the Council (i.e. ministers from the Member State holding the Council presidency) also attend and take part in the debate with MEPs. The plenary agenda is prepared in detail by the Conference of Presidents of the political groups. The Conference of Committee Chairs (composed of the chairs of all the standing and temporary parliamentary committees) can also make recommendations for the plenary agenda.

Committee meetings
Committee meetings are mainly held in Brussels. Committee meetings allow MEPs from a range of political groups who have a particular interest in a policy area to examine the merits of Commission proposals and advise their colleagues in their political groups accordingly.

Working patterns
MEPs and Parliament staff divide their work between Strasbourg, Brussels and their constituency according to their monthly working rhythm: a one-week plenary session (Strasbourg), and three additional four-day sessions (Brussels), made up of one to two weeks per month of committee work in preparation for each plenary session (Brussels) and one week per month of political group meetings (usually held in Brussels but can be held in other Member States on occasion).

Generally MEPs arrive in Brussels on Monday and go back to their constituency on Thursday afternoon. If it is a Strasbourg week, they will travel to Strasbourg on Monday morning and leave either Thursday night or Friday morning.

Distribution of committee chairs

The number of chair positions held by each political group is shown below:

EPP	8
S&D	7
ALDE	3
ECR	2
Greens/EFA	1
GUE/NGL	1

AmCham EU

MEPs' salaries and expenses

Until 2009 MEPs received the same salary as members of their national parliaments. As a result, Italian MEPs earned around €12,000 per month, four times more than their Spanish counterparts – and about 14 times more than MEPs from some new Member States. Hungarian MEPs were the worst off compared to their peers, receiving only €840 per month. After the June 2009 European elections, a new salary and expenses system was introduced.

From now on, all MEPs receive a standard monthly gross salary that is set at 38.5% of the salary of a judge at the European Court of Justice (€8,020.53 in 2014; €6,250.37 after EU tax and accident insurance. Member States can also subject the salary to national taxes). They also get a flat-rate monthly allowance of €4,299 per month to cover the cost of running an office in their constituencies.

In addition, MEPs can claim travel related to their official duties in Brussels and Strasbourg. In the past, they could claim for an expensive first class flight even if they flew with a discount airline. But under the new rules they will have to submit their ticket (which can be business class on air, or first class on rail) and will be reimbursed for what they paid. For travel outside their own Member States, MEPs can claim a maximum of €4,243 per year.

MEPs also get a daily subsistence allowance – currently €304 – for attending official parliamentary meetings within the EU. It covers accommodation, meals and all other expenses involved in such attendance. MEPs have to sign a register in order to receive it. MEPs are also eligible for a €152 daily subsistence allowance, plus accommodation and breakfast expenses, when they attend meetings outside the EU; again, provided that they signed the official attendance register at the meeting.

From 2014, the maximum monthly amount available for employing staff is €21,209 per MEP. None of these funds are paid to the MEP themselves. Up to a quarter of this budget can be used for services from service providers chosen by the MEP, such as ordering an expert study on a particular subject.

Impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Parliament

As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament has now been:

★ **Placed on equal footing with the Council as co-legislator**, deciding on the vast majority of EU legislative issues. The Lisbon Treaty extends the use of codecision (now called 'the ordinary procedure') to include approximately 50 new policy areas, most significantly in the fields of freedom, security and justice, trade and agriculture;

★ **Granted the power of consent over any international agreement** encompassing areas which are subject to the codecision procedure e.g. trade, agriculture;

★ **Given a greater role in the setting of the EU budget**, following the removal of the distinction between 'compulsory' and 'non-compulsory' expenditure. Now, the Council and the Parliament decide the entire EU budget together;

★ **Given greater oversight power:** MEPs elect the President of the European Commission, which is nominated by the European Council. Previously, Parliament was only asked to give its consent. Meanwhile, the appointment of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security P olicy requires the Parliament's consent; and

★ **The number of MEPs set at 751** (under the Nice Treaty, there were 736 MEPs). However, the number of MEPs in the Parliament has risen temporarily and exceptionally to 766 until June 2014, as a result of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and Croatian accession in 2013.

CHAPTER 2:

THE 8TH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Political groups 2014-2019

European People's Party (EPP)

The largest grouping in the Parliament with 221 MEPs. It is comprised of centre and centre-right parties such as the Christian democrats, conservatives and popular parties. From 1999 to 2009, the group was known as the European People's Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED), as it included the European Democrats (ED), a loose association of Eurosceptic parties. The EPP-ED arrangement ended in 2009, when the ED parties left to form the European Conservatives and Reformists group.

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

The second largest grouping in the Parliament with 191 MEPs. The S&D is made up of left-leaning socialist and labour parties and is the only group with members from all EU Member States. The party chair is Gianni Pittella, an Italian Social Democrat. Their share of the seats increased by 0.4% in the 2014 elections due to a strong showing in both Italy and the United Kingdom.

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

The European Conservatives and Reformists is a eurosceptic, anti-federalist, conservative political group in the European Parliament, and rode the wave of eurosceptic sentiment to increase their seats in the European Parliament. Established shortly after the 2009 elections, the group currently comprises 70 members, making it the third-largest group in the European Parliament. The largest parties in the group are the British Conservative Party, the Polish Law and Justice Party and the Czech Civic Democratic Party.

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

ALDE holds the centre ground in the European Parliament. The group includes MEPs from liberal parties across Europe. 2014 represented an unsuccessful election year for the ALDE as their total number fell from 83 seats to 67, due in large part to a poor showing by the British Liberal-Democrats and the partial defection of the Romanian National Liberal Party to the EPP Group .

European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)

The group unites the European United Left subgroup, comprised of Communist and Socialist parties from across Europe, and the Nordic Green Left subgroup, made up of MEPs from the Nordic Green Left Alliance parties of Sweden and Finland. The GUE/NGL is a confederal group composed of MEPs from national parties that retain control of their MEPs. Therefore, the group tends to be divided on certain issues. With a total of 52 MEPs, this group saw its proportion of seats rise in the last election.

Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)

The fifth largest political group in the European Parliament, the Greens/European Free Alliance had a disappointing election campaign in 2014, winning 50 seats, down from 58. As in previous elections, the group has significant support in Germany, plus a number of seats in France and the UK as well. The Greens are a combination of environmental parties and smaller regionalist parties such as Plaid Cymru from Wales and Iniciativa Per Catalunya from Catalonia.

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)

This staunchly Eurosceptic and anti-federalist group was established following the 2009 elections when MEPs from the Independence and Democracy (IND/DEM) and Union for a Europe of the Nations (UEN) group forged a new alliance as both groups. This group was perhaps the biggest beneficiary of the increased euroscepticism in the run-up to the European elections. The Group holds 48 seats, up from 32, and part of its success is due to the success of the new Five Star Movement in Italy.

Non-attached members (NI)

There are 52 non-attached MEPs in the European Parliament. Groups such as the Austrian Freedom Party, the French National Front, Bulgaria's Ataka (Attack Coalition) Romania's Partidul România Mare and Italy's Lega Nord, all of whom campaign on a right-wing anti-immigration agenda. In addition, there are a number of independent MEPs who simply chose not to be a part of one of the traditional political groups

THE 8TH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Composition of the European Parliament

Result of the European election, 2014

ALDE: 67

EPP: 221

S&D: 191

ECR: 70

Greens/EFA: 50

EFDD: 48

GUE: 52

Non-attached: 52

751 MEPs
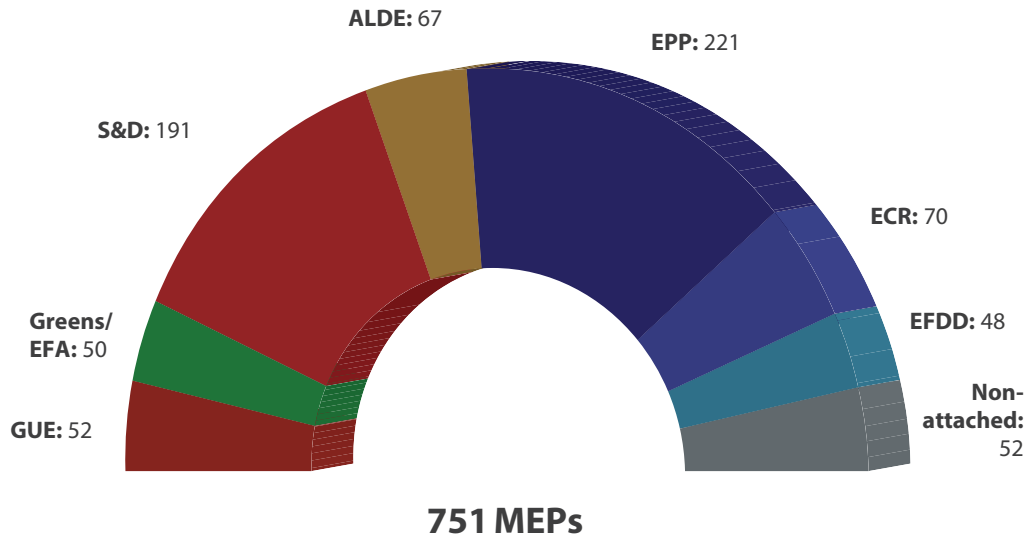
In the European Parliament, national political parties come under European umbrella parties according to their political affiliation. To form a political group, there must be at least seven of the Member States represented, a political affinity between national parties, and a minimum of 25 MEPs. MEPs work largely along political lines rather than along national lines as one might expect. Only very occasionally do MEPs go against their political grouping and usually only when particular issues are of national importance.

While turnout was disappointing in many of the Central and Eastern European countries, many of the older Member States actually experienced a growth in voter turnout as a whole. Slovakia had the dubious honour of the worst voter turnout in a European election with only 13% of the country's population of voting age casting a vote. Poland, the largest of the incoming Member States, registered a turnout of 22.7%. Although compared to national elections the turnout was poor, it was in fact no worse than at local or regional elections.

On average it is estimated that there was approximately a 20% reduction in turnout for the European elections compared with the preceding national general elections. One theory is that this is due to MEPs being too far removed from his or her constituents, resulting in voters not connecting with the MEPs. For example, in Germany each MEP represents 840,000 constituents. Even in Luxembourg, which has the smallest constituency, each MEP represents approximately 76,500 constituents.

While much of the electorate will vote on national issues rather than European ones, in many pro-European Member States there is often not much difference between the national parties on positions towards the European Union. In other Member States, especially the more eurosceptic ones, campaigning often comes down to pro-Europe versus anti-Europe stances. This, mixed with voter apathy, often gives rise to the emergence of eurosceptic, anti-federalist parties that do not normally feature in national politics such as the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Catholic League of Polish Families and Self Defence in Poland.

Voters often use the European elections to protest against a governing party. In 2014, the British coalition government parties both lost group to UKIP. France's governing Socialist Party lost out to Marine LePen's National Front, which won the election in France.

Political groups

The European election in May 2014 saw several changes to the political groupings as a response to new formations and alliances among political parties across the EU. With a wave of euroscepticsm before the elections, a number of new parties were returned and there was growth among non-attached parties. In addition, a number of parties re-evaluated their group membership given the rise of the eurosceptics and a need to find a stable majority.

The EPP, consisting of centre-right, pro-integration parties, is the largest party in the European Parliament and is expected to have a major role in the new insititutions. The EPP currently holds the presidency of the European Commission led by President Jean-Claude Juncker, the former prime minister of Luxembourg. Though officially appointed by the European Council and pproved by the Parliament, the Lisbon Treaty required national leaders to take into account the results of the European elections. As such, Juncker was

Breakdown of the European Parliament (2014-2019)

	EPP	S&D	ALDE	GREENS/EFA	ECR	GUE/NGL	EFDD	NI
Austria	5	5	1	3	-	-	-	4
Belgium	4	4	6	2	4	-	-	1
Bulgaria	7	4	4	-	2	-	-	-
Croatia	5	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
Cyprus	2	2	-	-	-	2	-	-
Czech Republic	7	4	4	0	2	3	1	-
Denmark	1	3	3	1	4	1	-	-
Estonia	1	1	3	1	-	1	-	-
Finland	3	2	4	1	2	-	-	-
France	20	13	7	6	-	4	1	23
Germany	34	27	4	13	8	8	-	2
Greece	5	4	-	-	1	6	-	5
Hungary	12	4	-	2	-	-	-	3
Ireland	4	1	1	-	1	4	-	-
Italy	17	31	-	-	-	3	17	5
Latvia	4	1	-	1	1	-	1	-
Lithuania	2	2	3	1	1	-	2	-
Luxembourg	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Malta	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	5	3	7	2	2	3	-	4
Poland	23	5	-	-	19	-	-	4
Portugal	7	8	2	-	-	4	-	-
Romania	15	16	1	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	6	4	1	-	2	-	-	-
Slovenia	5	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Spain	17	14	8	4	-	11	-	-
Sweden	4	6	3	4	-	1	2	-
United Kingdom	-	20	1	6	20	1	24	1
TOTAL	221	191	67	50	70	52	48	52

supported by the European Parliament and was appointed by European Council, despite the lack of support from the UK's David Cameron and Hungary's Viktor Orbán, who believed that appointing the EPP's 'spitzenkandidat' gave the Parliament too much power over the Member States.

The second largest party in the European Parliament is the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), which encompasses political parties from the former Party of European Socialists (PES) and the ED wing of the former EPP-ED. Being the second largest party, the S&D formed an informal 'grand coalition' with the EPP and ALDE and thereby assumed the presidency of the institution in exchange for supporting the EPP candidate for president of the Commission.

The European Conservative and Reformist (ECR) party is the third largest party and is composed of the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom, Law and Justice (PiS) of Poland, and Alternative for Germany (AFD) of Germany. In addition to these three parties, MEPs representing twelve other countries are also members of the ECR. The ECR grouping was formed after the EPP-ED grouping was deemed to be too federalist and not critical enough of the EU establishment. Although the change came into effect just ahead of the 2009 elections, the ECR grouping dates back to 2005, and possibly earlier. Members of the ECR were already informally working together in the Movement for European Reform but had not succeeded in forming a political group under the European Parliament's rules.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the fourth largest party in the European Parliament is composed of European liberal parties and some members of the former Union for European Nations (mostly centre-right parties). The 2014 elections saw the return of the ALDE group with 67 seats.

The GUE/NGL is the fifth grouping composed of MEPs from left-wing national parties. The group has the chairmanship of one committee. Overall the group has a limited reach with just under 7% of the seats.

The sixth largest group in the European Parliament, the Greens-European Free Alliance (Green/EFA) consists of two distinct European political parties - the European Green Party (EGP) and the European Free Alliance (EFA). The alliance has generally limited its membership to progressive parties. These European parties are joined by national parties, such as Dutch Europe Transparent (between 2004 and 2009) and the Swedish Pirate Party (since 2009).

The remaining EFDD and the NA together have just over 13% of the seats and are characterised by activist and protest votes on the far right. The latter does not meet the threshold to form a group in the European Parliament, leaving MEPs to vote on an ad hoc basis and without any chairmanships of committees or delegations.

The structure of the European Parliament

751 MEPS

7 Political Groups
+ 52 non-attached MEPs

Bureau
president + 14 vice-presidents
+ 5 quaestors

Secretariat
1 secretary-general +
10 directorates-general

Enlarged Bureau

Bureau members + chairs
of the 7 political groups

44 interparliamentary delegations and joint parliamentary assemblies

20 committees
2 subcommittees

AmCham EU
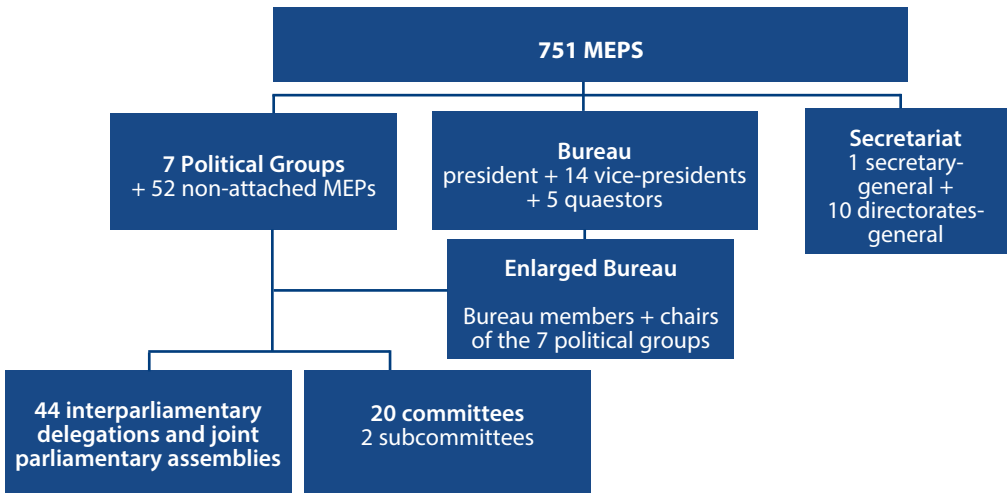
The European People's Party (EPP)

Position in the Parliament: The largest grouping in the Parliament with 221 MEPs.
It is also a strong political force in the EU institutions. The President of the European Commission belongs to a party affiliated to the EPP group.

Composition: Centre and centre-right parties such as Germany's Christian Democrats (Christlich Demokratischen Union Deutschlands) and France's UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire).

2014 European elections: The EPP won a clear victory retaining their position as the largest political group in the Parliament despite losing UK Conservatives. After the elections, David Cameron's British Conservatives left the EPP group to form another political grouping, the European Conservatives and Reformists, with other European parties opposed to the Treaty of Lisbon.

Group chair: Manfred Weber (Germany, Christian Social Union)

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
221	5	4	7	5	2	7	1	1	3	20	34	5	12	4

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
17	4	2	3	3	5	23	7	15	6	5	17	4	-

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

Position in the Parliament: Second largest grouping in the Parliament with 191 MEPs.

Composition: Formed after the 2009 European elections, the S&D is made up of left-leaning socialist and labour parties from the former Party of European Socialists (PES). It is the only political group to have MEPs from all 28 Member States.

2014 European elections: The S&D's share of the seats dropped slighlty, losing three seats. However, overall the group did well, winning additional seats in Italy and the UK.

Group chair: Gianni Pittella (Italy, Democratic Party).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
191	5	4	4	2	2	4	3	1	2	13	27	4	4	1

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
31	1	2	1	3	3	5	8	16	4	1	14	6	20

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

Position in the European Parliament: Established shortly after the 2009 European elections, the group currently comprises 70 members, making it the third-largest group in the European Parliament.

Composition: The European Conservatives and Reformists is a eurosceptic, anti-federalist, conservative political group in the European Parliament. The largest parties in the group are the British Conservative Party, the Polish Law and Justice Party, the German Alternative for Germany, and the Czech Civic Democratic Party.

2014 European elections: Riding a wave of euroscepticism, the ECR did very well in the 2014 elections, gaining 14 seats and becoming the third largest group in the Parliament.

Group chair: Syed Kamall (UK, Conservative Party).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
70	-	4	2	1	-	2	4	-	2	-	8	1	-	1

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
0	1	1	-	-	2	19	-	-	2	-	-	-	20

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

Position in the Parliament: Holds the centre ground in the European Parliament.

Composition: The group has 68 MEPs from liberal parties around Europe.

2014 European elections: Proportionally, ALDE lost out significantly in the 2014 election, being knocked down to fourth place, from third. The party suffered from poor results in the UK and Germany, in addition to the Romanian National Liberal Party defecting to the EPP.

Group chair: Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium, Open-VLD).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
68	1	6	4	2	-	4	3	3	4	7	4	-	-	1

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
-	-	3	1	-	7	-	2	1	1	1	8	3	1

AmCham EU
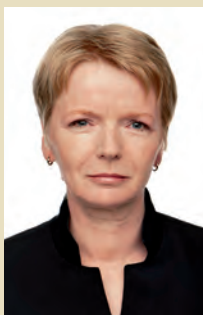
The Confederal Group of European United Left / Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)

Position in the European Parliament: The GUE/NGL is the 5th largest group with 52 MEPs.

Composition: The GUE/NGL is a confederal group uniting two small groups: European United Left, comprised of Communist and Socialist parties from across Europe; and the Nordic Green Left, made up of MEPs from the Nordic Green Left Alliance parties of Sweden and Finland. The group therefore tends to be divided on certain issues.

2014 European elections: With a total of 52 MEPs, this group saw its proportion of seats inrease in the last election.

Group chair: Gabriele Zimmer (Germany, Die Linke).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
52	-	-	-	-	2	3	1	-	1	4	8	6	-	4

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
3	-	-	-	-	3	-	4	-	-	-	11	1	1

The Greens / European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)

Position in the Parliament: Sixth largest political group in the European Parliament with 50 MEPs.

Composition: The Greens/EFA are a combination of environmental parties and smaller regionalist parties, such as Plaid Cymru from Wales in the United Kingdom and Iniciativa Per Catalunya from Catalonia in Spain.

2014 European Elections: The group lost ground during the 2014 election, losing eight seats.

Group chair: The group is co-chaired by Philippe Lamberts (Belgium, Ecolo) and Rebecca Harms (Germany, Bündis 90/Die Grünen).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
50	3	2	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	6	13	-	2	-

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
-	1	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	4	4	6

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD)

Position in the European Parliament: Staunchly Eurosceptic and anti-federalist.

Composition: The group is composed of MEPs from eurosceptic and protest parties. In addition to established parties such as the UK Independence Party, it also includes new protest parties such as the Italian Five Star Movement.

2014 European elections: The group was highly successful in the UK and was able to increase its seat share with new members like the Italian Five Star Movement, though it lost out from parties leaving, including the Italian Northern League.

Group chair: The group is co-chaired by Nigel Farage (UK Independence Party) and David Borrelli (Italy, Muovimento Cinque Stelle).

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
48	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
17	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	24

Non-attached MEPs (NIs)

Position in the European Parliament: There are 52 non-attached MEPs in the European Parliament who do not belong to a political group.

Composition: Political parties such as the Austrian Freedom Party, the French National Front, Belgium's Vlaams Belang, Bulgaria's Ataka (Attack Coalition), Romania's Partidul România Mare and the UK's British National Party (BNP) all of whom campaign on a right-wing anti-immigration agenda. There are also some non-attached independent MEPs s

EU	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE
52	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	2	5	3	-

IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK
5	0	-	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Conference of Presidents

President
★ Martin Schulz (Chair, DE)

Members
★ Manfred Weber, (Chair, EPP, DEs)
★ Gianni Pittella (Chair, S&D, IT)
★ Guy Verhofstadt (Chair, ALDE, BE)
★ Rebecca Harms (Co-Chair, Greens/EFA, DE)
★ Philippe Lamberts (Co-Chair, Greens/EFA, BE)

★ Syed Kamall (Chair, ECR, UK)
★ Gabriele Zimmer (Chair, GUE/NGL, DE)
★ David Borrelli (Co-chair, EFDD, IT)
★ Nigel Farage (Co-chair, EFDD, UK)

The Conference of Presidents is made up of group leaders. Their main role is to draw up the agenda for plenary sessions and decide on the composition and remits of committees and delegations.
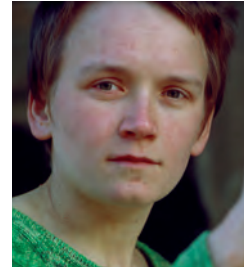
AmCham EU

Silvio Berlusconi was an MEP before he became Italian prime minister, as was former French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Alessandra Mussolini MEP is the granddaughter of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

Daciana Sârbu MEP is the wife of Victor Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania.

Ilke Schröder MEP was only 21 when she was elected an MEP in 1999.

The MEPs tend to be a more varied mix compared to the commissioners. They come from a variety of backgrounds, a factor that that adds to the democratic voice of the European Parliament.

Among the MEPs in the new Parliament (2014-2019), some are **former government ministers**, such as Cecile Kyenge, the first black minister in Italian history who served in Enrico Letta's cabinet as minister for immigration.

There are also some **former prime ministers**, notably:

★ Alojz Peterle (Slovenia – prime minister 1990-1992)
★ Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium – 1992-99)
★ Jerzy Buzek (Poland – 1997-2001)
★ Anneli Jäätteenmäki (Finland – 2003)
★ Theodor Stolojan (Romania – 1991-92)

But this is by no means new as previous Parliaments have included the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (MEP from 1989-1993) and former German chancellor Willy Brandt (MEP from 1979-1983).

There are also a few **former European commissioners** among the members of the new Parliament:

★ Olli Rehn (Finland) – former Commissioner for Monetary Affairs and Vice-President of the Commission
★ Antonio Tajani (Italy) - former Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship and Vice-President of the Commission
★ Danuta Hübner (Poland) – former Commissioner for Regional Policy
★ Louis Michel (Belgium) – former Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

★ Viviane Reding (Luxembourg) – former Commissioner of Justice

Other MEPs have come from a **number of backgrounds including doctors, lawyers, teachers, farmers, architects, journalists, musicians, sports stars, TV presenters and fashion models.** These include Patrick O'Flynn (United Kingdom), former Political Editor for the Daily Express; Michela Giuffrida (Italy) of La Repubblica; and Eva Kaili (Greece), former news anchor for Mega Channel, a top Greek television station. Others like Elisabetta Gardini (Italy) and Barbara Matera (Italy) were TV presenters and models before moving into politics.

For some, being a politician is a family affair. In the new Parliament for example, Daciâna Sarbu is the wife of the prime minister of Romania, Victor Ponta. Jarosław Wałęsa, the son of Polish Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, sits as a conservative Polish MEP. Moderate Swedish MEP Anna Maria Corazza Bildt is the wife of Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt.

For other, the political bloodline stretches back several generations. Among the new MEPs is Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of the infamous Italian fascist dictator. Also the niece of actress Sophia Loren, Mussolini was an actress and model before entering politics.

There is also quite an age spread among the 2014 class of MEPs – 66 years. The oldest is newly-elected Manolis Geizos of Greece, who is 92 years old. Geizos is considered the greatest living authority on the Greek resistance movement and was himself a political prisoner for 16 years. The youngest is 26 year-old Anders Primdahl Vistisen from the Danish People's Party. This may seem young, however Ilke Schröder was only 21 when she was elected an MEP in 1999.

European Parliament committees

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice- Chairs
Foreign Affairs	(AFET)	**Elmar Brok** (**EPP**, Germany)	Ryszard Legutko (ECR, Poland) Javier Couso Permuy (GUE/NGL, Spain) Ioan Paşcu (S&D, Romania) Andrej Plenković (EPP, Croatia)

The Foreign Affairs Committee is responsible for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European security and defence policy (ESDP). It addition, it acts to strengthen the EU's political relations with third countries, negotiates the accession of European states to the EU, and deals with issues concerning human rights and the promotion and protection of democratic values in third countries.

Development	(DEVE)	**Linda McAvan** (**S&D**, UK)	Maurice Ponga (EPP, France) Paavo Väyrynen (ALDE, Finland) Kostas Chrysogonos (GUE/NGL, Greece) Nirj Deva (ECR, UK)

The Development Committee is responsible for promoting, implementing and monitoring the development and cooperation policy of the EU, notably talks with developing countries; aid to developing countries; and promotion of democratic values, good governance and human rights in developing countries.

International Trade	(INTA)	**Bernd Lange** (**S&D**, Germany)	Tokia Saïfi (EPP, France) Yannick Jadot (Greens/EFA, France) Iuliu Winkler (EPP, Romania) Jan Zahradil (ECR, Czech Republic)

The International Trade Committee is responsible for matters relating to the establishment and implementation of the EU's common commercial policy and its external economic relations, in particular with the WTO and trade relations with third countries and regional organisations.

Budgets	(BUDG)	**Jean Arthuis** (**ALDE**, France)	Petri Sarvamaa (EPP, Finland) Jens Geier (S&D, Germany) Siegfried Mureşan (EPP, Romania) Patricija Šulin (EPP, Slovenia)

The Budgets Committee is responsible for the multiannual financial framework of the EU's revenue and expenditure and the EU's system of own resources. It also oversees the Parliament's budgetary prerogatives, namely the budget of the EU and implementation of interinstitutional agreements in this field.

Budgetary Control	(CONT)	**Ingeborg Grässle** (**EPP**, Germany)	Derek Vaughan (S&D, UK) Igor Šoltes (Greens/EFA, Slovenia) Martina Dlabajová (ALDE, Czech Republic) Dan Nica (S&D, Romania)

The Budgetary Control Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the EU's budget, ensuring that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently, effectively and according to EU law. It audits the accounts of EU institutions and suggests improvements in order to ensure sound financial management.

Economic and Monetary Affairs	(ECON)	**Roberto Gualtieri** (**S&D**, Italy)	Markus Ferber (EPP, Germany) Peter Simon (S&D, Germany) Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, Belgium)

The most important function of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee is in relation to the European Central Bank (ECB). The ECB is accountable for its actions to ECON. Every three months, the president of the ECB appears before the Committee to report on monetary policy; both actions taken and future prospects.

AmCham EU

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Employment and Social Affairs	(EMPL)	**Thomas Händel (GUE/NGL**, Germany)	Marita Ulvskog (S&D, Sweden) Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP, Poland) Ulla Tørnæs (ALDE, Denmark) Agnes Jongerius (S&D, Netherlands)

The Employment and Social Affairs Committee is responsible for EU employment policy and all aspects of social policy, such as working conditions, social security and protection, health and safety measures in the workplace, vocational training, social dialogue, the free movement of workers and the European Social Fund.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	(ENVI)	**Giovanni La Via (EPP**, Italy)	Benedek Jávor (Greens/EFA, Hungary) Daciana Sârbu (S&D, Romania) Pavel Poc (S&D, Czech Republic) Gilles Pargneaux (S&D, France)

The Environment, Public Health and Food Committee is responsible for environmental policy and environmental protection measures, including oversight of the European Environment Agency; public health, including oversight of the European Medicines Agency and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; and food safety issues, including oversight of the European Food Safety Authority.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Industry, Research and Energy	(ITRE)	**Jerzy Buzek (EPP**, Poland)	Patrizia Toia (S&D, Italy) Hans-Olaf Henkel (ECR, Germany) Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL, Czech Republic) Morten Petersen (ALDE, Denmark)

The Industry, Research and Energy Committee's areas of responsibility relate to industry, especially technology-intensive manufacturing, information technology and telecommunications. It also coordinates European space policy and has ties with the European Space Agency. It has oversight duties in relation to the Joint Research Centre and the Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements, as well as similar projects.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Internal Market and Consumer Protection	(IMCO)	**Vicky Ford (ECR**, UK)	Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP, Sweden) Robert Rochefort (ALDE, France) Catherine Stihler (S&D, UK) Sergio Cofferati (S&D, Italy)

The Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee is responsible for the coordination at Community level of national legislation in the sphere of the internal market and customs union, the identification and removal of potential obstacles to the functioning of the internal market; and the promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers in the context of the establishment of the internal market.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Transport and Tourism	(TRAN)	**Michael Cramer (Greens/EFA**, Germany)	Dominique Riquet (ALDE, France) Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (EPP, Germany) Tomasz Poręba (ECR, Poland) István Ujhelyi (S&D, Hungary)

The Transport and Tourism Committee is responsible for matters relating to the development of a common policy for rail, road, inland waterways, maritime and air transport. In addition, it promotes the establishment and development of trans-European networks of tourism, as well as transport safety.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice-Chairs
Regional Development	(REGI)	**Iskra Mihaylova (ALDE**, Bulgaria)	Younous Omarjee (GUE/NGL, France) Stanislav Polčák (EPP, Czech Republic) Joachim Zeller (EPP, Germany) Andrea Cozzolino (S&D, Italy)

The Regional Development Committee is responsible for regional and cohesion policy, in particular the European Regional Development Fund, the impact of EU policies on regional affairs, coordination of the EU's structural instruments and cooperation with outermost and island regions of the EU.

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice- Chairs
Agriculture and Rural Development	(AGRI)	**Czesław Siekierski (EPP**, Poland)	Eric Andrieu (S&D, France) Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR, Poland) Clara Aguilera García (S&D, Spain) Viorica Dăncilă (S&D, Romania)

The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee is responsible for the operation and development of the common agricultural policy (CAP); legislation on veterinary and plant-health matters, and animal husbandry; improvements in the quality of agricultural products; supplies of raw materials for agriculture; and the Community Plant Variety Office Forestry.

Fisheries	(FISH)	**Alain Cadec (EPP**, France)	Isabella Lövin (Greens/EFA, Sweden) Jarosław Wałęsa (EPP, Poland) Werner Kuhn (EPP, Germany) Renata Briano (S&D, Italy)

The Fisheries Committee's responsibilities relate to the operation and development of the common fisheries policy, the conservation of fishery resources, structural policy in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and the common organisation of the fisheries products market.

Culture and Education	(CULT)	**Silvia Costa (S&D**, Italy)	Andrea Bocskor (EPP, Hungary) Mircea Diaconu (ALDE, Romania) Helga Trüpel (Greens/EFA, Germany) Michaela Šojdrová (EPP, Czech Republic)

The Culture and Education Committee is responsible for safeguarding cultural heritage, cultural exchange and artistic creation of the nations in the EU; reviewing the Union's education policy, both in education systems and in lifelong-learning programmes, such as museums and libraries; and the development of a sports and leisure policy.

Legal Affairs	(JURI)	**Pavel Svoboda (EPP**, Czech Republic)	Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D, Poland) Jean-Marie Cavada (ALDE, France) Axel Voss (EPP, Germany) Mady Delvaux (S&D, Luxembourg)

The Legal Affairs Committee is responsible for the interpretation and application of European law, compliance of EU acts with primary law, the interpretation of international law in its relation to the EU, and the simplification of Community law.

Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	(LIBE)	**Claude Moraes (S&D**, UK)	Kinga Gál (EPP, Hungary) Iliana Iotova (S&D, Bulgaria) Jan Albrecht (Greens/EFA, Germany) Barbara Kudrycka (EPP, Poland)

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee is responsible for the protection of citizens', human and fundamental rights within the EU, including the protection of minorities. It also promotes legislation for the protection of natural persons and developing the scope of freedom, security and justice in the EU.

Constitutional Affairs	(AFCO)	**Danuta Hübner (EPP**, Poland)	Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL, Italy) Pedro Silva Pereira (S&D, Portugal) Kazimierz Ujazdowski (ECR, Poland) Paulo Rangel (EPP, Portugal)

The Constitutional Affairs Committee is responsible for dealing with institutional matters such as the Treaties of the European Union and the Parliament's rules of procedure. In addition, it also deals with interinstiutional agreements and consequences of EU enlargement negotiations.

AmCham EU

Committee	Acronym	Chair	Vice- Chairs
Women's Rights and Gender Equality	(FEMM)	**Iratxe García Pérez (S&D**, Spain)	Barbara Matera (EPP, Italy) Inês Zuber (GUE/NGL, Portugal) Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D, Lithuania) Jana Žitňanská (ECR, Slovakia)

The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee is responsible for the definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the EU, the promotion of women's rights in third countries, equal opportunities policy, especially with regard to the workplace, and the removal of all forms of discrimination based on sex.

Petitions	(PETI)	**Cecilia Wikström (ALDE**, Sweden)	Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (EPP, Spain) Roberta Metsola (EPP, Malta) Marlene Mizzi (S&D, Malta) Pál Csáky (EPP, Slovakia)

The Petitions Committee is responsible for addressing the petitions brought forward by any EU citizen on a matter within the EU's sphere of activities. The Committee hears cases, some 1,500 each year, sometimes presented in Parliament by the citizen themselves.

2 Subcommittees

Human Rights	(DROI)	**Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco (S&D**, Spain)	Cristian Preda (EPP, Romania) László Tőkés (EPP, Hungary) Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/EFA, Germany)

The Human Rights Subcommittee is responsible for issues concerning human rights, the protection of minorities and the promotion of democratic values in third countries. It assists the Foreign Affairs Committee in these matters.

Security and Defence	(SEDE)	**Anna Fotyga (ECR**, Poland)	Michael Gahler (EPP, Germany) Jaromír Štětina (EPP, Czech Republic) Afzal Khan (S&D, UK) Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL, Germany)

The Security and Defence Committee assists the Foreign Affairs Committee in their competences for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European security and defence policy (ESDP).

CHAPTER 3:

DECISION-MAKING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

In this chapter:

★ **Where responsibility lies**

★ **Decision-making procedures**

★ **Ordinary legislative procedure**

★ **Special legislative procedure**

★ **Step-by-step guide through the process**

★ **Roles of the EU institutions and national parliaments**

MEPs voting in the European Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg (FR)

DECISION-MAKING IN THE EU

Introduction

The most complex aspect of the European Union is its methods of policy-making.

There is no single method of taking decisions at European (EU) level. The procedures vary depending on the policy area concerned.

Generally speaking, the main actors in the EU decision-making process are: the European Commission; the European Parliament (representing EU citizens) and the Council (representing the Member State national governments). Collectively, they form the so-called 'EU institutional triangle'.

Since the entry into effect of the Treaty of Lisbon (December 2009), there are two main decision-making procedures:

- ★ **The ordinary legislative procedure** (commonly known as 'codecision')
- ★ **Special legislative procedures**

Before the Lisbon Treaty, EU decision-making was organised around the so-called 'three pillar' structure established by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Each pillar represented a different policy area with different decision-making procedures and methods of cooperation (see diagram on p.32).

The Treaty of Lisbon abolished this three-pillar structure in 2009, incorporating everything into one 'EU' bloc. The only significant remnant of the pillar structure is the common foreign security policy (CFSP) and common European security and defence policy (CSDP), which retain their intergovernmental nature. This sets them aside from the other policy areas, within this new structure which generally speaking uses the so-called 'Community method'. Furthermore, under Lisbon, Euratom (the European Atomic Energy Community) is no longer an integral part of the EU.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the division of responsibility for policy competence between Member States and the EU can be described as exclusive, shared or supported.

What does supranational (the 'Community method') mean?

Decisions and policies adopted using the 'Community method' are formed through the European institutions i.e. the Member States have empowered the European Commission, Council and European Parliament to make laws in the areas designated under the 'European Community' first pillar.

What does 'intergovernmental' mean?

Governments acting together to form decisions and policies that will benefit the EU as a whole. This applies to decisions made on the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and some elements of justice and home affairs (JHA).

Key statistics in EU decision-making

During the July 2009-July 2014 legislature:

- 317 pieces of legislation were approved through the codecision procedure (now the ordinary legislative procedure);
- An increased tendency to agree by consensus in Council;
- An increase in the length of time to reach an agreement; and
- 87% of agreements were reached in the first reading.

The vast majority of Commission proposals are dealt with before the end of a parliamentary term. The rest are either dealt with in the new legislature or, in a few cases, have been withdrawn.

The structure of the EU

Pre-Lisbon Treaty
(Treaty of Nice)

EUROPEAN UNION

First pillar	Second pillar	Third pillar
European Community (EC) Including policy areas such as: Customs union and Single Market Common agricultural policy Common fisheries policy EU competition law Monetary policy (in the Eurozone) EU citizenship Education and culture Trans-European transport infrastructure Consumer protection Healthcare Research Environmental law Social policy Asylum policy Schengen treaty Immigration policy **European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, until 2002)** Coal and steel industry **European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM)** Nuclear power	**Common foreign and security policy (CFSP)** **Common European security and defence policy (CSDP)** Including: Peacekeeping Police missions	**Justice and home affairs (JHA)** Including: Asylum and immigration Police cooperation Judicial cooperation
Supranational ('Community method')	**Intergovernmental -** **Decisions are political rather than legal as they are not binding under EU law.**	**Originally purely intergovernmental, but some issues became part of the first pillar under the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999).**

Post-Lisbon Treaty
(2009-present)

Common foreign and security policy (CFSP)

Common European security and defence policy (CSDP)

Intergovernmental

EUROPEAN UNION

Supranational ('Community method')

European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM)
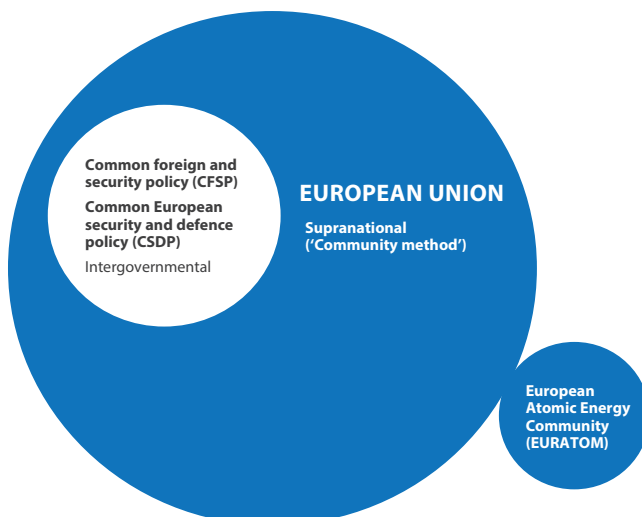
Where responsibility lies

The European Union has a growing field of competence. Estimates vary considerably on how much national legislation derives from the EU. Some calculate as much as 84% whilst others as little as 10%. Although it is difficult to work out an accurate figure, the importance of the EU in policy-making in Europe remains clear.

While the scope of responsibilities allocated to the EU has widened over the years, it is important to remember that the EU works on the principle of 'subsidiarity'. This means all decisions should be made as close to the citizen as possible – at local council level, regionally or by the Member State government before reaching Brussels. Under the Lisbon Treaty, Member State national parliaments gained a new role in checking that EU institutions respect the subsidiarity principle.

As the Member States have transferred policy areas to the EU, the European institutions have become more important and relevant to people in the Member States. Having said this, the EU only has powers given to it by the 28 Member States under the treaties. As a general rule, Member States are keen to hold on to powers that will get media attention or are in sensitive policy areas, such as foreign affairs and taxation. Issues that are cross-border in nature are best dealt with at the EU level, such as international crime, trade, customs and pollution. More technical issues are also more likely to be under the EU's remit.

Having the EU responsible for certain competencies has its advantages. The environment is an example; the cross-border nature of pollution means it is much more effective fighting pollution as a block of countries rather than individual ones. The Member States have also found that cooperation gives them a greater voice. This is true in foreign policy, for example.

Subsidiarity

A principle that underpins EU policy-making. It means that the EU should only introduce laws that are necessary at an EU level. Decisions should be made as close to the citizen as possible, meaning that the EU should not interfere in policy that can be dealt with by local government.

Proportionality

The scope and strength of policy proposals; policy solutions should be proportional to the problem they are trying to solve. For example completely banning the use of cars should not be a policy solution for cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Who is responsible for what?

EU	EU & MEMBER STATES	MEMBER STATES
Exclusive areas of responsibility	**Joint areas of responsibility**	**Exclusive areas of responsibility**
Customs union Competition policy Monetary policy (for Member States that use the euro) Conservation of marine biological resources International trade policy International agreements (if the EU has a corresponding internal competence)	Internal market Social policy (as defined in the Treaty) Economic, social and territorial cohesion Agriculture and fisheries (except for the conservation of the biological resources of the sea – which is an exclusive EU responsibility) Environment Consumer protection Transport Trans-European transport infrastructure Energy Area of freedom, security and justice Joint security issues with regard to aspects of public health Research, technological development and space Development cooperation and humanitarian aid Space and energy	Protection and improvement of human healthcare Industry Culture Tourism Education, professional training, youth and sport Civil protection Administrative cooperation *The EU may provide support and coordination for the European aspects of these areas but this cannot include harmonisation.* *The EU has no competence in any area that is not mentioned in the treaties.*

Specific arrangements: there are specific arrangements in the treaties for the coordination of economic and employment policies.

The common foreign and security policy is also governed by a special system.

DECISION-MAKING IN THE EU
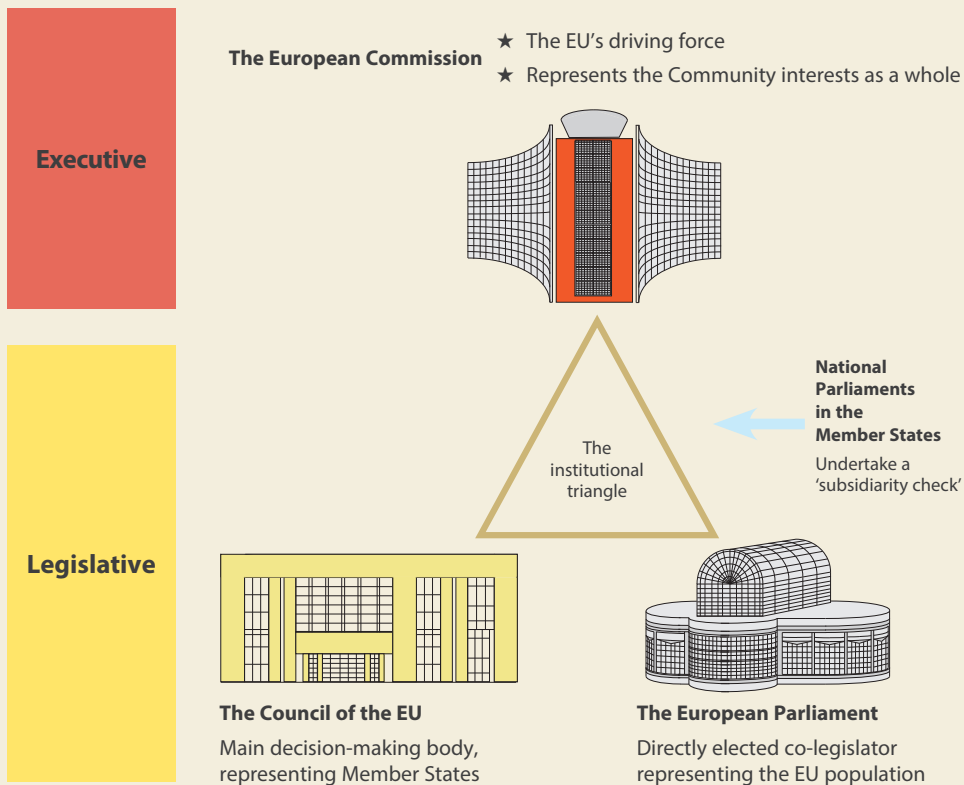
Decision-making procedures

The way in which policies are made at the EU level is dictated by the various EU treaties. Essentially, it is the policy area that determines how the institutions interact to make laws. Heavily simplified, it is a three-way relationship where the Commission makes proposals for laws while the Parliament and Council amend and adopt proposals.

When the Commission drafts a proposal, it allocates a legal basis to it, which is determined by the subject of the policy proposal. The legal basis drives which decision-making procedure is used:

★ The **'ordinary legislative procedure'** (codecision) – in which the Council and European Parliament decide on legislation together.

★ The **'special legislative procedure'**
- *Consent procedure* (previously known as 'assent')
- *Consultation procedure*

The proposal's legal basis also dictates voting method used in the Council (either qualified majority or unanimity, see page 88).

The key actors in the EU decision-making process

Executive

The European Commission
★ The EU's driving force
★ Represents the Community interests as a whole

The institutional triangle

National Parliaments in the Member States
Undertake a 'subsidiarity check'

Legislative

The Council of the EU
Main decision-making body, representing Member States

The European Parliament
Directly elected co-legislator representing the EU population

The European Commission

Abbreviation / (Acronym): the Commission (EC)

Created: 1958

Composition: 28 Commissioners, supported by 33,000 officials (civil servants)

Term of office: 5 years (current term 2014-2019)

Location: Brussels (BE), Luxembourg (LU), plus representations in Member States

The European Commission is seen as the driver of European integration, pushing EU Member States closer toward each other both politically and economically. It consists of 28 Commissioners - one from each Member State, who serve a five-year term - and some 33,000 civil servants.

The Commission is effectively a civil service for Europe. It does however have more power than an ordinary civil service, as its Commissioners are more-or-less the equivalent of government ministers at the European level. The Commissioners are expected to act in the interests of the EU as a whole, rather than for the Member States that appointed them.

The Commission is based primarily in Brussels, Belgium but also has a large presence in Luxembourg. The Commission also has representative offices in each of the 28 Member States.

Role

It is the Commission's role to:

★ Initiate legislation through proposals;

★ Act as guardian of the EU Treaties that the Member States have signed up to;

★ Ensure, as with the European Court of Justice, that EU laws are implemented fully and correctly in the Member States; and

★ Represent the EU in negotiations with other non-EU countries and international organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Decision-making in the Commission

The Commission decides collectively, on the basis of proposals put forward by one or more individual commissioners. It has four ways of deciding:

1. At the weekly meetings of the 28 commissioners (known as 'meetings of the College of Commissioners') – any commissioner can call for a vote. The Commission decides by simple majority and the president has a casting vote.

2. By written procedure – the proposal is circulated in writing to all commissioners, who then notify their reservations or amendments within a set period of time. Any commissioner can call for a debate, in which case the dossier will be included in the agenda of a Commission meeting. If there are no reservations or amendments, the proposal is tacitly adopted.

3. By empowerment – the Commission can empower one or more of its members to decide in its name, provided that the principle of collegiality (that the Commissioners act as a college, not as individuals) is respected. Under certain conditions, the same procedures can be used to delegate decision-making powers further to directors-general and heads of service.

4. By delegation – the Commission can delegate some decisions to directors-general and heads of service, who then act in its name.

The Council of the European Union

Abbreviation: the Council;
Council of Ministers

Created: 1958

Composition: 28 Member State representations plus secretariat of 3,500

Location: Brussels (BE) and Luxembourg (LU)

The Council of the European Union (known as 'the Council' or 'Council of Ministers') is the voice of Member States in the EU decision-making process. It is where Member State government ministers meet to discuss and approve proposals for EU laws. The Council meets in different formations, according to the various policy areas.

The presidency of the Council is rotated among the Member States, with each Member State taking on the role for six months at a time.

All Member States have permanent representations in Brussels to deal with the day-to-day work of the Council and prepare the ground for meetings of national leaders and ministers.

The Council is based in Brussels, though some ministerial meetings also take place in Luxembourg and elsewhere in the Member States.

Role

The Council has five main roles:

1. Pass EU laws

The Council co-legislates with the Parliament on most legislation. However, policy areas which are highly sensitive for Member States still require unanimity in the Council.

2. Coordinate broad EU economic policy

Through the Council (and European Council), national leaders set broad economic and political goals for the EU as a whole.

3. Develop and implement foreign and security policy

The Council defines and implements the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) following guidelines from the European Council. The Council also concludes international agreements, negotiated by the Commission, on behalf of the Union between the EU Member States and other countries or international organisations.

4. Coordinating police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters

5. Setting the EU budget with the European Parliament

The Council, together with the Parliament, approves the annual budget of the EU which is proposed by the Commission.

Organisation

The Council is comprised of government representatives from each of the 28 Member States and acts on three different levels (ministerial; ambassador; working group/committee). The Council meets regularly at ministerial level in ten different sectoral councils:

- ★ **General Affairs Council** (GAC)*
- ★ **Foreign Affairs Council** (FAC)*
- ★ **Economic & Financial Affairs** (ECOFIN) Ministers from the Eurozone countries meet in '**Eurogroup**' meetings
- ★ **Justice & Home Affairs** (JHA)
- ★ **Employment, Social Policy, Health & Consumer Affairs** (EPSCO)
- ★ **Competitiveness** (COMPET)
- ★ **Transport, Telecommunications & Energy** (TTE)
- ★ **Agriculture & Fisheries** (AGRIFISH)
- ★ **Environment** (ENVI)
- ★ **Education, Youth & Culture** (EYC)

* Formerly one Council prior to the Lisbon Treaty. The High Representative for EU Foreign and Security Policy chairs the FAC.

The ordinary legislative procedure (codecision)

The majority of EU legislation is adopted under the codecision procedure, renamed 'the ordinary legislative procedure' by the Lisbon Treaty.

Under codecision, the European Parliament, the voice of EU citizens, makes decisions on EU legislation jointly with the Council, the voice of the Member State governments. The parity in the decision-making process increases the incentive for all parties to compromise, as a failure to agree would lead to legislative proposals failing.

Introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 and extended by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999, codecision has grown in scope over the years, resulting in no fewer than 85 policy areas currently falling under the procedure.

The procedure has three key stages: first reading; second reading and a third reading with conciliation. In practice, it is often not necessary for all draft legislation to go through every stage, as agreement can be reached at any of these key stages if the Parliament and Council agree.

The process

Step 1: The Commission presents a legislative proposal – normally for a regulation, a directive or a decision – to the European Parliament and Council. It also simultaneously forwards it to national parliaments.

First reading

Step 2: The Parliament carries out its first reading of the Commission's proposal and, if necessary, submits amendments in its opinion (this stage takes as long as is deemed necessary by both the Council and the Parliament).

Step 3: Following the completion of its own first reading of the Commission proposal and assessing the Parliament's amendments, the Council adopts a common position (if the Council is in agreement then the procedure ends here and the legislation will be adopted).

Second reading

Step 4: The Parliament undertakes a second reading of the Council's common position and, if necessary, proposes a recommendation containing amendments. On each amendment the Commission gives its opinion (here the Parliament has a time limit of three months – extendable to four – to respond).

Step 5: The Council has a second reading and decides whether to accept or reject the Parliament's second reading amendments (if the Council is in agreement the procedure ends here and the legislation will be adopted).
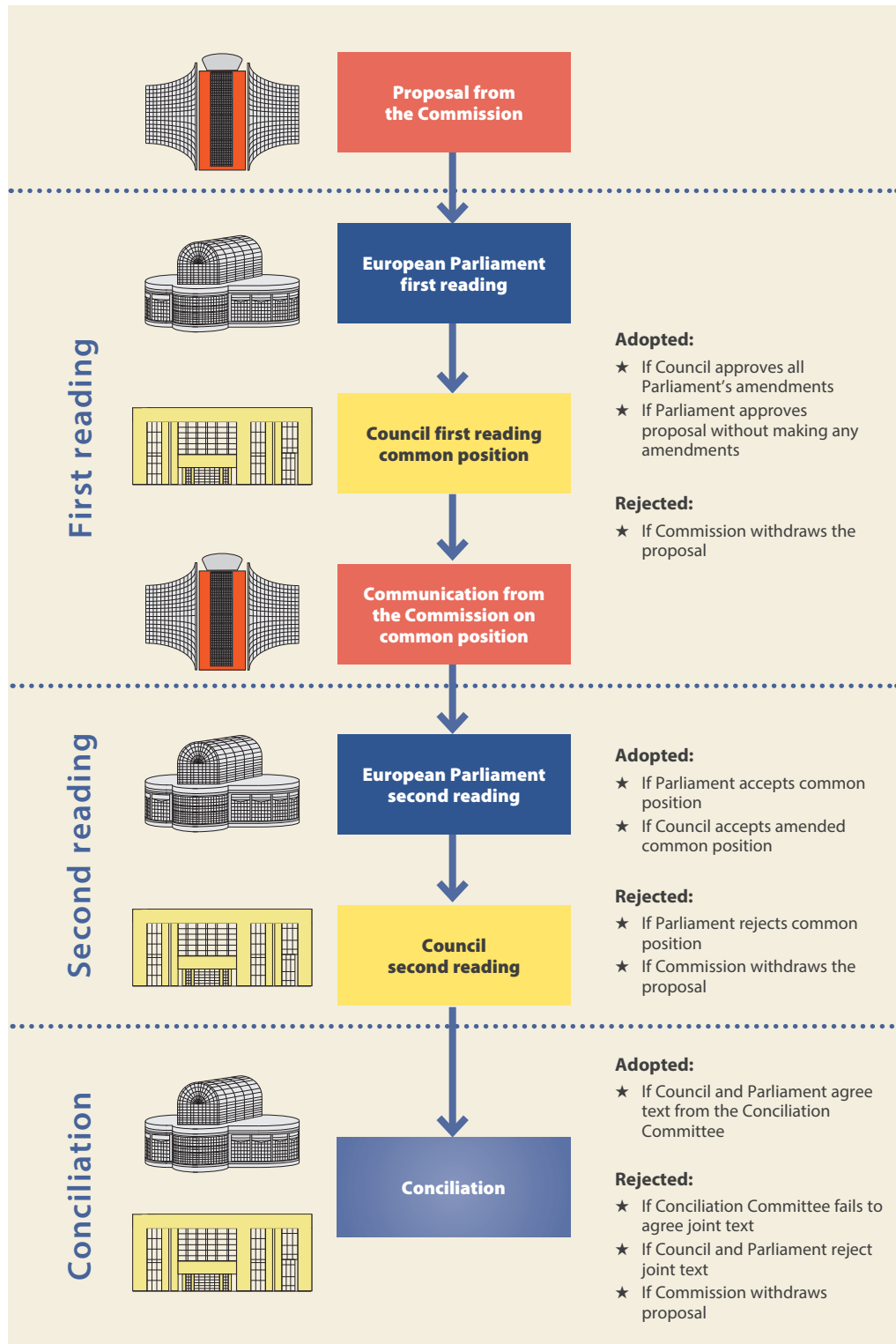
Third reading (conciliation)

Step 6: If and when there is agreement, the Council and the Parliament formally adopt the text at a third reading (conciliation). Should the conciliation committee fail to reach an agreement, the legislation fails.

All the way through the codecision procedure, the Council votes by qualified majority, except where the treaty requires the use of a unanimous vote.

The Parliament votes on its first reading by a simple majority of MEPs. During the second reading however, the Parliament must vote on its opinion by an absolute majority (at least 384 votes; 376 after the 2014 parliamentary election).

Despite its complicated structure, codecision has proven to be a success. During the 2004-2009 legislature of the European Parliament, 477 pieces of legislation were passed through the codecision procedure. There was a significant increase in the relative number of first reading agreements (from 72% to 87%, compared to the previous 2009-2014 legislature).

The ordinary legislative procedure (codecision procedure)

First reading

Proposal from the Commission

European Parliament first reading

Council first reading common position

Adopted:
- ★ If Council approves all Parliament's amendments
- ★ If Parliament approves proposal without making any amendments

Rejected:
- ★ If Commission withdraws the proposal

Communication from the Commission on common position

Second reading

European Parliament second reading

Adopted:
- ★ If Parliament accepts common position
- ★ If Council accepts amended common position

Rejected:
- ★ If Parliament rejects common position
- ★ If Commission withdraws the proposal

Council second reading

Conciliation

Conciliation

Adopted:
- ★ If Council and Parliament agree text from the Conciliation Committee

Rejected:
- ★ If Conciliation Committee fails to agree joint text
- ★ If Council and Parliament reject joint text
- ★ If Commission withdraws proposal

AmCham EU

The special legislative procedure

Under this method, the Commission forwards a proposal to the Parliament, which can approve or reject it in its entirety. It may also put forward amendments, which the Commission must take into account. The Commission ultimately decides if it will accept any of these changes and, if it does, sends the Council an amended proposal.

The Council scrutinises the amended proposal and either approves or amends it still further. In this procedure, as in all others, if the Council amends a Commission proposal it must do so by a unanimous vote.

It must be noted, however, that the Council is under no obligation to accept the amendments proposed by the European Parliament.

The consultation procedure is still used for legislation concerning internal market exemptions and competition law.

Consent (assent)

This is exactly the same as the consultation procedure, except that the Parliament cannot suggest amendments. It must either accept or reject it. Approval (consent, known as 'assent' prior to the Lisbon Treaty) needs an absolute majority among MEPs.

The consent procedure applies to the admission of new Member States, methods of withdrawal from the EU, subsidiary general legal basis provisions and combatting discrimination.

Types of EU legislation

Primary legislation
Primary legislation refers to the EU treaties. Since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU is now governed by two treaties:

★ The Treaty on European Union (TEU) – The Maastricht Treaty, as amended by the Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon treaties.
★ The Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) – The Treaty of Rome, as amended by all the subsequent treaties, including the Lisbon Treaty.

Secondary legislation

Regulations
These are laws that apply to everyone, including all Member States. Regulations become part of national law and are enforced through national courts once they become law. They do not need to be brought in by any national legislation.

Directives
Directives are less prescriptive than a regulation. A directive is a form of order to Member States to implement national legislation to achieve a specific result. It is up to the national governments to decide on the form and method of the legislation necessary to achieve that result. Usually, a directive will specify a deadline for the implementation of legislation.
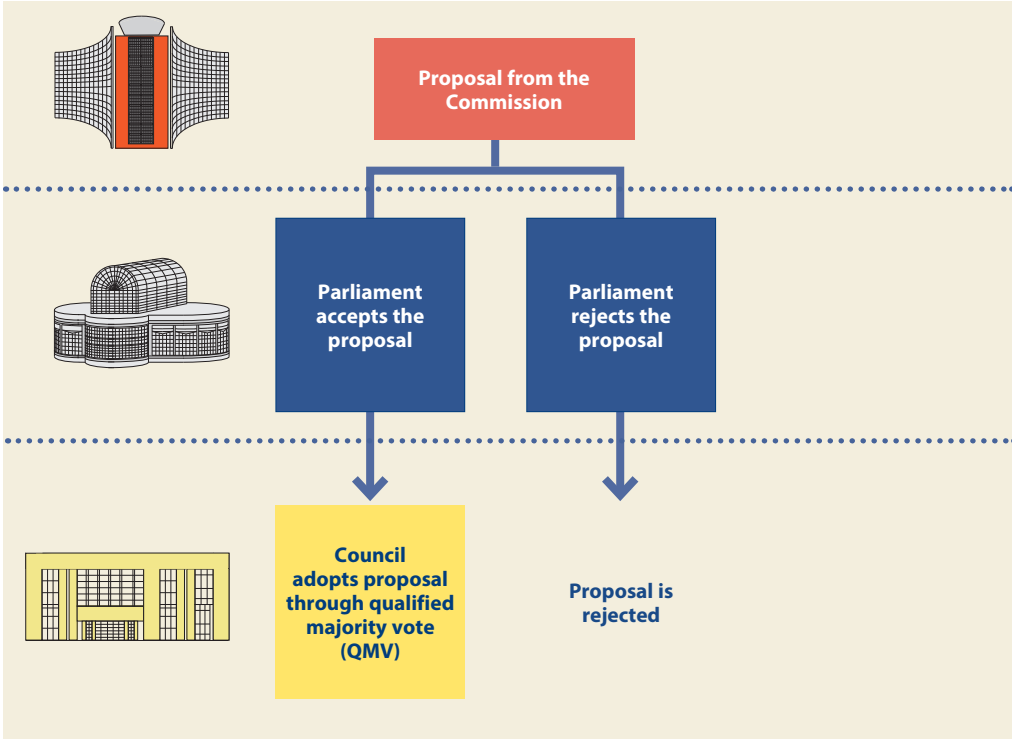
Decisions
Decisions are issued by the Council or the Commission. A decision is applied to a limited and defined group of persons, e.g. one Member State or a corporation and that group is bound to comply with that decision.
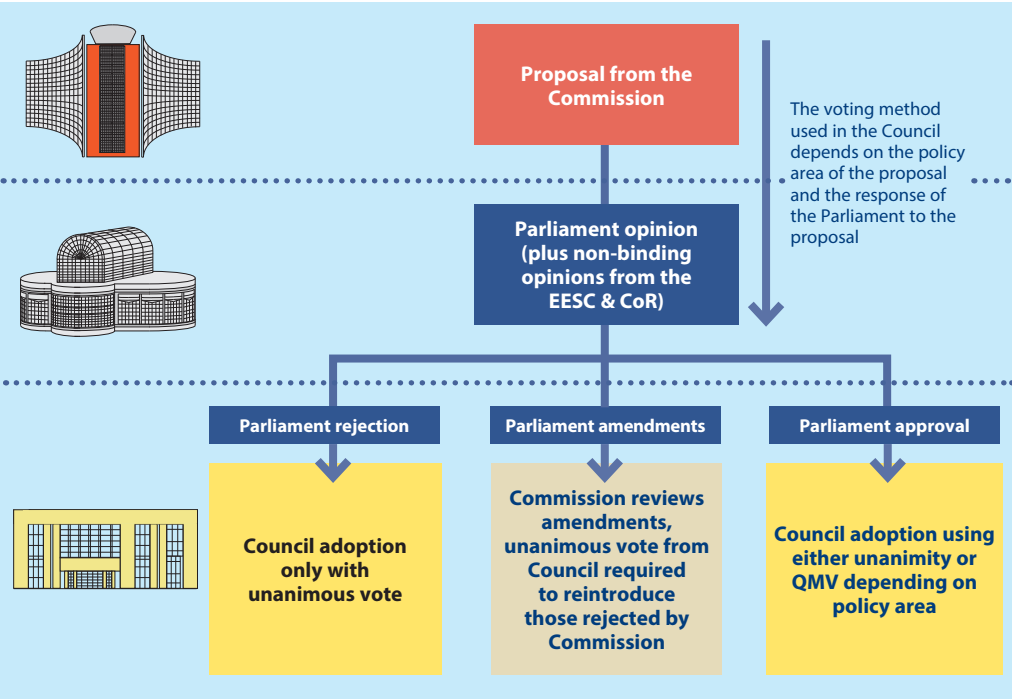
Recommendations and opinions
Recommendations and opinions are not binding; they are simply recommended courses of action from the institutions on various topics. Although such documents are not enforceable, they are widely used to introduce best practice in Member States.

Consent procedure (formerly known as 'assent')

Proposal from the Commission

Parliament accepts the proposal

Parliament rejects the proposal

Council adopts proposal through qualified majority vote (QMV)

Proposal is rejected

Consultation Procedure

Proposal from the Commission

The voting method used in the Council depends on the policy area of the proposal and the response of the Parliament to the proposal

Parliament opinion (plus non-binding opinions from the EESC & CoR)

Parliament rejection

Parliament amendments

Parliament approval

Council adoption only with unanimous vote

Commission reviews amendments, unanimous vote from Council required to reintroduce those rejected by Commission

Council adoption using either unanimity or QMV depending on policy area

AmCham EU

Step-by-step guide through the ordinary procedure

This section runs through in more detail the path that most proposals take to become laws. Since the majority of laws at EU level are passed using the ordinary legislative procedure (codecision) this is the process we shall follow to demonstrate how the procedure works.

This procedure places an emphasis on consensus by all of the European institutions. A failure to do so ends the legislative process.

Preparation of the proposal

Step 1: Commission initiates

The Commission initiates legislation in response to policy objectives set up on the request of the Council, the European Parliament, the Member States and other stakeholders (trade unions, pressure groups, NGOs, business groups etc.). Commission proposals must identify the European interest and implement the objectives of the Treaty.

Legislative proposal assigned to a DG

Each legislative proposal is assigned to the relevant directorate-general (DG) unit (sub-office) and desk officer. The desk officer is responsible for compiling the first draft. A first draft is produced on the basis of an impact assessment. This is then submitted for a six-week consultation period among stakeholders – those groups or individuals that will be affected by the proposed law. Once approved, the Commission enters the proposal into its annual work programme, known as the strategic planning and programming cycle, which sets out its priorities and strategic objectives.

Here the text goes through an 'inter-service' consultation, involving all of the DGs, where it is either approved (marked as an 'A' point) or left open to further discussion (marked as a 'B' point). Once the in-house legal service has given its endorsement, the same procedure is then observed before the weekly Cabinet members meeting.

At this point the proposal goes before HEBDO (an abbreviation of 'hebdomadaire' meaning 'weekly' in French) which is comprised of the heads of cabinet. Again, decisions on the proposal are indicated by an 'A' or 'B' point.

It should be pointed out that throughout this

Policy areas under codecision

The codecision procedure principally covers the following areas:

★ Agriculture and fisheries
★ Non-discrimination on the basis of nationality
★ The right to move and reside
★ The internal market
★ Employment
★ Customs co-operation
★ Transparency
★ Equal opportunities
★ The implementation of decisions regarding the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund
★ Freedom, security and justice
★ Criminal matters and criminal law, Eurojust, Europol and police cooperation
★ Education and vocational training
★ Culture
★ Health and consumer protection
★ Transport and trans-European networks
★ Research and development
★ Environmental policy
★ Fraud prevention and the establishment of a data protection advisory body

What is an 'interservice consultation'?

This is a stage in the Commission's approval process that lasts ten days, whereby a proposal is circulated to all directorates-general dealing with different policy areas for them to judge whether or not it will have an impact on their policy area. They may then deliver a favourable, negative or suspended opinion. A suspended opinion delays the process to give the directorates-general more time to look at the proposal.

What is an 'impact assessment'?

This is conducted by the Commission and aims to ensure that the benefits that come from a proposal in one area do not come at a greater cost in another. This tries to ensure there is an adequate balance between economic, environmental and social concerns.

drafting phase the relevant commissioner is regularly updated about the proposal's content.

The legislative proposal is finally adopted by the College of Commissioners and forwarded to the Council and the European Parliament (EP) – the next stage in the process.

First reading

Step 2 (a): Council examines the proposal

In the Council, the proposal's content is discussed by a working group of experts, through an informal debate, and a general approach is agreed. Under the direction of the country holding the presidency of the Council, it is then deliberated in further detail by experts from each of the Member States in the Council's working groups to secure a political agreement. Should they fail to reach an agreement, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), will be convened. If Coreper reaches an agreement, the proposal is submitted to the Council for approval. If it does not, the issues are marked for debate by ministers at Council meetings.

Extension of codecision by the Lisbon Treaty

Under the Lisbon Treaty the number of areas which fall under codecision nearly doubled from 44 to 85 areas.

Among the new areas are:

★ Agriculture and fisheries (which previously fell under consultation)
★ Freedom, security and justice (which previously fell under consultation)
★ External trade (Parliament previously not involved at all)

Step 2 (b): European Parliament examines the proposal ('first reading')
Parliamentary committee assigned and 'rapporteur' appointed

At the same time as the Council examines the proposal, the European Parliament carries out its first reading of the proposal. An appropriate parliamentary committee is named and its coordinators will bid for the reports using a points system. The number of points allocated to political groups are based on the group's size. The political group that bids the most points then

Key people in the decision-making process in the European Parliament

Rapporteur – the person charged with drafting the report in the European Parliament for the lead committee following an issue. The rapporteur is chosen from the political group that bids the most points for a report.

Shadow rapporteur – the person from another political group in the lead committee charged with following the issue and advising his/her political group on the progress and controversial aspects of a report before advising the group how to vote on proposals.

Co-rapporteur – the person appointed to draft an opinion from other committees that have requested their opinions be included in reports going through the Parliament.

assigns a rapporteur, who will draft the report. Other political groups also appoint a shadow rapporteur, who will be responsible for preparing his/her group's position and monitoring the work of the rapporteur. At this stage, other committees may also be asked to submit an opinion.

Step 2 (c): EU advisory bodies invited to submit their positions

Although their opinions are not binding, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) are also invited to set out their respective positions.

Proposal examined by the parliamentary committee

The parliamentary committee then convenes on a number of occasions to study the rapporteur's report. At this point the rapporteur and fellow committee members (or substitute members) may put forward amendments to the Commission's proposal. These amendments, including those proposed by the committees putting forward an opinion, are put to the vote in the responsible committee, by way of a simple majority.

Once adopted in the committee, the amended proposal is placed on the agenda of the European Parliament plenary session. At this stage, amendments – including those adopted in parliamentary committee – can only be tabled by a political group or a minimum of 37 Members and put to the vote in the European Parliament plenary.

AmCham EU

Debate and vote in plenary sessions

The vote in the plenary is generally preceded by a debate, in which the commissioner concerned announces and explains the Commission's position on the amendments tabled. The Commission's position on the Parliament's amendments is prepared by the relevant directorate-general and approved, by simple majority, through an inter-institutional relations group.

It is worth noting that if the lead committee approves the draft report almost unanimously (fewer than 10% of votes against), the report can be adopted by the plenary without further amendment or debate.

Although the EU treaties do not explicitly allow the European Parliament to reject the Commission's proposal at first reading, the president of the European Parliament can suspend the vote and request the withdrawal of the proposal should the amended text fail to secure a majority of the votes cast. If the Commission withdraws the proposal, the legislative procedure will end. In the event of the Commission refusing to withdraw its proposal, the document is referred back to the Parliament committee. The Parliament can also adopt a report that completely nullifies the original Commission proposal. This tends not to halt the legislative procedure as the Commission can compile an amended proposal and, as will be explained, the Council can adopt a common position.

> **What are 'plenary sessions'?**
>
> These sessions are attended by all MEPs to vote on proposed legislation and amendments. Plenary sessions are held in Strasbourg every month for one week. Monthly two-day 'mini-plenaries' are also held in Brussels in between the Strasbourg sessions to cover any remaining issues.

Second reading

Step 3: Council examines the Parliament's amendments

When the European Parliament has concluded its first reading, it is then referred to the Council, which considers whether to adopt or reject the recommended changes. If the Council rejects the Parliament's amendments, it will adopt a common position – generally agreed by qualified majority – which is then made available to the public. It is first published in one language and

> **Parliament voting**
>
> Absolute majority – this requires that at least one third of all MEPs are present and that the majority of those present vote in favour of the proposal.
>
> Voting is usually done through a simple show of hands. If the result is too close to judge, MEPs are requested to vote electronically.
>
> In some situations political groups or a group of at least 32 MEPs may request a roll call vote. This is the only way of officially recording how MEPs vote on proposals.

then translated into others. However, getting a common position approved is not easy. Depending on the complexity and political sensitivity of the document, it can take up to 15 months.

Step 4: European Parliament examines Council's common position (second reading)

This common position is then sent back to the European Parliament for second reading. The procedure within the Parliament is similar to first reading except it is the Council's common position and not the Commission's proposal that is now under scrutiny.

The second reading can include amendments, but these must comply with one of the following conditions:

★ It includes amendments adopted at the first reading that were not accepted by the Council;

★ It is related to a part of the common position that did not appear in, or is substantially different from, the Commission's initial proposal; or

★ It introduces a compromise between the Council and the Parliament.

Parliament now has three months to submit an opinion which can, if necessary, be extended to four. The second reading will lead to one of three

> **Voting procedures in the Council**
>
> **Simple majority** – this requires the majority of Member States i.e. 15 out of 28 Member States.
>
> **Qualified majority** – this requires 260 votes out of 352 total votes in the Council; a majority of Member States and 62% of the EU's population.
>
> **Unanimity** – requires all 28 Member States to vote in favour of the proposal.

possible outcomes:

★ The Parliament unanimously accepts the Council's common position (or gives no response within three months) and the act is adopted at the next Council meeting;

★ It rejects the common position outright, needing an absolute majority of MEPs and the legislative process is at an end (the Council no longer has the option of convening the conciliation committee); or

★ The European Parliament approves, again by absolute majority, amendments to the common position. The Commission can either accept or reject the changes and the text is sent back to the Council.

Should the Commission endorse the Parliament's amendments to the common position, the Council will vote on the new text either unanimously or by qualified majority (depending on the policy area).

However, if the Commission is opposed to some of the Parliament's amendments, the Council can only decide on their inclusion in the legislative act by a unanimous vote.

Third reading (conciliation)

Step 5: Conciliation Committee meets

In the event that the Council and the Parliament fail to reach an agreement, then the Member State holding the Council presidency – in consultation with the president of Parliament – will set up a Conciliation Committee in a final attempt to reach a consensus. The Conciliation Committee has six weeks to approve a joint proposal. If the committee fails to do this, the draft proposal can no longer be approved and the legislative procedure will end.

If a joint text is elaborated, the Council and the Parliament must repeat their agreement through a third reading, again within a six-week period (which, if required, can be extended to eight). Once the Council (by qualified majority) and the Parliament (by absolute majority) have given their approval, the act can then be officially adopted.

Publication in the Official Journal and entry into force

The directive is then published in the EU's 'Official Journal' with a deadline for its implementation of approximately three years by the Member States.

Conciliation

Conciliation represents the last step in the codecision procedure and the last chance for the institutions to reach agreement on a proposal.

It takes the form of a committee known as the Conciliation Committee, which includes 28 members of the Council (one from each Member State) and an equal number of MEPs split proportionally along party lines.

The Conciliation Committee must be set up within six to eight weeks of the Council's second reading. They then have a further six to eight weeks to form a joint text.

The joint text then goes to the Parliament and Council to be approved without any possibility of amending the text. There is a time limit set of six to eight weeks where the Parliament and the Council must vote on the proposal.

If the Parliament or Council reject the text or if the Conciliation Committee fails to reach an agreement the proposal is not adopted and therefore falls.

How to track EU legislation

There are two websites that track proposals in the decision-making procedure.

PreLex is an online database, managed by the European Commission, which allows users to follow all Commission proposals (legislative and budgetary dossiers, conclusions of international agreements) and communications from their transmission to the Council or the European Parliament.

http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/apcnet.cfm

The Legislative Observatory is a similar online database managed by the European Parliament.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/

Implementation and transparency

Primary responsibility for implementing EU law lies with the Member States, but because it is necessary to have uniform implementing conditions, the Commission must exercise its executive power.

The European Courts of Justice also have a role to play, ensuring that EU law is correctly applied throughout the EU.

'Implementing' and 'Delegated' acts (formerly 'comitology')

Each legislative instrument specifies the scope of the implementing powers conferred on the Commission by the Council of the European Union. Prior to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, a system of committees, composed of representatives of the Member States, assisted the Commission with its task of exercising conferred implementing powers. This committee system was known as 'comitology'.

After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the old 'comitology system' became obsolete and replaced by two new types of 'non-legislative acts'. These are referred to as 'delegated acts' and 'implementing acts'.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, new legislation has to be adopted in accordance with the provisions on delegated acts and implementing acts. The details of how exactly these provisions will be applied are currently under discussion. Until a new legal framework has been adopted, the current comitology rules continue to apply.

Implementation by the Member States

How each Member State implements a new directive varies according to its legal structure. In the United Kingdom, for example, EU laws are brought in by means of statutory instruments. However in certain cases where major changes to the law are required, the national parliament must pass a separate act in order to incorporate them.

Pace of EU legislation

Law-making at the EU level has slowed considerably since its peak in the early nineties as the Single Market took shape. At that stage up to 7,000 laws were being introduced per year. This figure has now dropped to around 1,500 per year as the Commission focuses more on ensuring that existing laws are properly implemented.

Transparency of law-making

In recent years, greater transparency in EU law-making has been a topic of increasing importance and discussion in Brussels and national capitals.

Most of the efforts for greater transparency have largely focused on the Council. Over the years, Council meetings have gradually been opened up to the public with public sessions first being introduced in the 1990s. In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon extended the use of public sessions to include deliberations not just on draft legislation under codecision, as was the case under previous provisions, but all legislative items on Council agendas.

The role of interest representation organisations has been another key focus in the drive for greater transparency. In 2008, the Commission set up a voluntary register for associations, companies, NGOs, trade unions and other entities which regularly engaged with European institutions. The American Chamber of Commerce to the EU was one of the first associations to register. There were approximately 3,000 organisations on the register (August 2010). The European Parliament also managed a register of interest organisations.

In June 2011, the Joint Transparency Register came into effect. This register is a combination of both old registers and it is expected to ultimately lead to a common register of all three main EU institutions (Commission, Parliament and Council).

CHAPTER 4:

REFERENCES

In this chapter:

★ **Sources of further information**

★ **Member State abbreviations**

★ **AmChams in the Member States**

★ **AmCham EU member companies**

Reflection of the Berlaymont building, the European Commission's HQ, Brussels (BE)

Sources of more information

Europa
Europa is the web portal of the European Union. It provides up-to-date coverage of what is going on in EU institutions and essential information on European integration. www.europa.eu

Europe Direct
An EU information service which helps answer questions about the EU. It is accessible by phone (00800 678 91011) and online (email and web assistance). It also has a network of information centres across the EU. www.ec.europa.eu/europedirect

Official EU Bookshop
Managed by the publications office of the European Union, the 'EU Bookshop' gives you online access to the European Union's official publications. Publications can be downloaded for free in PDF format. www.bookshop.europa.eu

Eur-Lex / Official Journal of the EU
This official EU website gives access to European Union law and other public documents. The online database contains nearly 3 million documents with texts dating back to 1951. It is updated daily and is available in all official EU languages.

The site also gives access to the EU's 'official journal'. Produced every working day in all official languages of the European Union, the Journal is the official record of all the EU's activities, publishing all EU legislation, announcements and invitations to tender. www.eur-lex.europa.eu

The EU Treaties Office
The European Commission's database containing all the bilateral and multilateral treaties or agreements concluded by the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), and the former European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and those concluded under the Treaty on European Union (It does not include the EU treaties – these can be found on Eur-Lex) www.ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/

Eurostat
The official statistical office of the European Union which publishes statistics at European level enabling comparisons between countries and regions. www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat

EU policy trackers

Monitor EU legislation through these websites:

★ Pre-Lex (managed by the European Commission) www.ec.europa.eu/prelex
★ The Legislative Observatory (managed by the European Parliament) www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil

EU public consultations

Take part in shaping EU policies! Visit: www.ec.europa.eu/yourvoice

EU Joint Transparency Register
The European Commission and European Parliament have established a joint register providing information about the interest representatives (lobbyists) who engage with European institutions. www.ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister

EU news media

Agence Europe (daily, subscription) www.agenceurope.com

Europolitics (daily, subscription) www.europolitics.info

EUObserver (daily) www.euobserver.com

EurActiv (daily) www.euractiv.com

The European Voice (weekly, subscription) www.europeanvoice.com

E-sharp magazine (monthly, subscription) www.esharp.eu

EU Media Monitoring (daily) www.emm.newsbrief.eu

Further reading

Cini, Michelle, and Dr. Perez-Solorzano Borragan, Nieves (2013) *European Union Politics*, Fourth edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England.

Guéguen, Daniel (2010) *The New Practical Guide to the EU Labyrinth*, 10th Edition, EIS Publishing, Brussels.

Piris, Jean-Claude (2010) *The Lisbon Treaty: A Legal and Political Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England.

Nugent, Neil (2010) *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, 7th Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, London, England.

Hamilton, Daniel S., and Quinlan, Joseph P., (2014) *The Transatlantic Economy 2014, Center for Transatlantic Relations*, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, USA

Hamilton, Daniel S., (2011) *Europe 2020: Competitive or Complacent?, Center for Transatlantic Relations*, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, USA

Useful addresses

European Commission (Headquarters)
The European Commission
Rue de la loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
T: +32 (0)2 299 11 11
F: +32 (0)2 295 01 38 / 39 / 40
E-mail: firstname.lastname@ec.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu

The European Commission has representation offices in each of the Member States.
Visit: http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm

European Parliament
http://www.europarl.europa.eu

Brussels, Belgium:
Rue Wiertz 47
B-1047 Brussels
T: +32 (0)2 299 11 11
F: +32 (0)2 295 01 38

Strasbourg, France:
Palais de l'Europe
Place Lenôtre
F-67006 Strasbourg
T: +33 (0)3 88 17 40 01
F: +33 (0)3 88 25 65 01

Luxembourg:
Centre Européen
Plateau de Kirchberg
L-2929 Luxembourg
T: +352 430 01
F: +352 437 009
E-mail: firstname.lastname@europarl.europa.eu

Liaison Office in Washington, DC

600 - 2175 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
T: +1 202 862 4734
F: +33 (0)3 88 25 65 01

Email: epwashington@ep.europa.eu

The European Parliament has information offices in each of the Member States.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/information_offices.html

Council of the European Union
Justus Lipsius Building
Rue de la loi 175
B-1048 Brussels
T: +32 (0)2 285 61 11
F: +32 (0)2 285 73 81
E-mail: firstname.lastname@consilium.europa.eu
http://www.consilium.europa.eu

European Council
Justus Lipsius Building
Rue de la loi 175
B-1048 Brussels
T: +32 (0)2 281 61 11
F: +32 (0)2 281 69 34
E-mail: firstname.lastname@consilium.europa.eu
http://www.european-council.europa.eu

The European External Action Service
E-mail: firstname.lastname@eeas.europa.eu
http://www.eeas.europa.eu/

Member State abbreviations

Flag	Member State	Abbreviation
	Austria	AT
	Belgium	BE
	Bulgaria	BG
	Croatia	HR
	Cyprus	CY
	Czech Republic	CZ
	Denmark	DK
	Estonia	EE
	Finland	FI
	France	FR
	Germany	DE
	Greece	EL
	Hungary	HU
	Ireland	IE
	Italy	IT
	Latvia	LV
	Lithuania	LT
	Luxembourg	LU
	Malta	MT
	Netherlands	NL
	Poland	PL
	Portugal	PT
	Romania	RO
	Slovakia	SK
	Slovenia	SI
	Spain	ES
	Sweden	SE
	United Kingdom	UK

AmCham EU

AmChams in the Member States

AmCham EU

Avenue des Arts 53
1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 513 68 92
Fax: +32 (0)2 513 79 28
info@amchameu.eu
www.amchameu.eu
Susan Danger, Managing Director

AmCham Austria

Porzellangasse 39/7
1090 Wien
Tel: +43 (0)1 319 57 51
Fax: +43 (0)1 319 51 51
office@amcham.at
www.amcham.at
Daniela Homan, Executive Director

AmCham Belgium

Rue du Trône 60
1050 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 513 67 70
Fax: +32 (0)2 513 35 90
gchamber@amcham.be
www.amcham.be
Marcel Claes, Chief Executive

AmCham Bulgaria

Mladost 4 Area
Business Park Sofia, Building 2, Floor 6
1766 Sofia
Tel: +359 2 9742 743
Fax: +359 2 9742 741
amcham@amcham.bg
www.amcham.bg
Valentin Georgiev, Executive Director

AmCham Croatia

Strojarska cesta 22
10000 Zagreb
Tel: +385 1 4836 777
Fax: +385 1 4836 776
info@amcham.hr
www.amcham.hr
Andrea Doko Jelušić, Executive Director

AmCham Cyprus

PO Box 21455
1509 Nicosia
Tel. +357 22889830
Fax: +357 22668630
info@amchamcyprus.com.cy
www.amchamcyprus.com.cy
Miltiades Miltiadou Chartis, President

AmCham Czech Republic

Dušní 10
110 00 Praha 1
Tel: +420 222 329 430
Fax: +420 222 329 433
amcham@amcham.cz
www.amcham.cz
Weston Stacey, Executive Director

AmCham Denmark

Christians Brygge 26
1559 Copenhagen
Tel: +45 33 932 932
Fax: +45 33 932 938
mail@amcham.dk
www.amcham.dk
Stephen Brugger, Executive Director

AmCham Estonia

Harju 6
Tallinn Business Center
10130 Tallinn
Tel: +372 631 0522
Fax: +372 631 0521
amcham@amcham.ee
www.amcham.ee
Daria Sivovol, Executive Director

AmCham Finland

Eteläranta 6 A 8
00130 Helsinki, Finland
Tel: +358 40 4664576
info@amcham.fi
www.amcham.fi
Kristiina Helenius, Chief Executive Officer

AmCham France

77, rue de Miromesnil
75008 Paris
Tel: +33 (0) 1 5643 4567
Fax: +33 (0) 1 5643 4560
amchamfrance@amchamfrance.org
www.amchamfrance.org
Caroline Ryan, Managing Director

AmCham Germany

Börsenplatz 7-11
60313 Frankfurt am Main
Tel: +49 69 929104 - 0
Fax: +49 69 929104 - 11
info@amcham.de
www.amcham.de
Andreas L.J. Povel, General Manager

AmCham Greece

109-111 Messoghion Avenue
115 26 Athens
Tel: +30 210 699 3559
Fax: +30 210 698 5686
info@amcham.gr
www.amcham.gr
Elias Spirtounias, Executive Director

AmCham Hungary

Szent István tér 11.
1051 Budapest V
Tel: +36 1 266 9880
Fax: +36 1 266 9888
info@amcham.hu
www.amcham.hu
Irisz Lippai-Nagy, Chief Executive Officer

AmCham Ireland

6 Wilton Place
Dublin 2
Tel: +353 1 6616201
Fax: +353 1 6616217
info@amcham.ie
www.amcham.ie
Mark Redmond, Chief Executive Officer

AmCham Italy

Via Cantù 1
20123 Milano
Tel: +39 02 86 90 661
Fax: +39 02 39 29 6752
amcham@amcham.it
www.amcham.it
Simone Crolla, Managing Director

AmCham Latvia

Torna iela 4, IIa-A, Room 301
LV-1050
Tel: +371 6721 2204
Fax: +371 6732 3521
amcham@amcham.lv
www.amcham.lv
Liga Smildzina-Bertulsone, Board Member and
Executive Director

AmCham Lithuania

Konstitucijos Avenue 26, Forum Palace
LT-08105 Vilnius
Tel: + 370 5 261 1181
info@amcham.lt
www.amcham.lt
Živilė Sabaliauskaitė, Executive Director

AmCham Luxembourg

6, Rue Antoine de Saint-Exupery
BP 542
1432 Luxembourg
Tel: +352 43 17 56
Fax: +352 26 09 47 04
info@amcham.lu
www.amcham.lu
Paul-Michael Schonenberg, Chairman and CEO

AmCham Malta

Exchange Buildings
Republic Street
Valletta VLT05
Tel: +356 21245223
Fax: +356 21245223
secretary@amcham-malta.org
www.amcham-malta.org
Pierre Attard, President

AmCham
The Netherlands

Vijzelstraat 68-78
1017 HL Amsterdam
Tel: +31 20 7951840
Fax: +31 20 7951850
office@amcham.nl
www.amcham.nl
Patrick Mikkelsen, Executive Director

AmCham Poland

ul. Emilii Plater 53, 00-113
Warszawa
Tel: +48 (22) 520 59 99
Fax: +48 (22) 520 59 98
office@amcham.pl
www.amcham.pl
Dorota Dabrowski, Managing Director

AmCham Portugal

Rua D. Estefânia nº 155-5º Esq
1000-154 Lisboa
Tel: +351 213 572 561
Fax: +351 213 572 580
amchamportugal@mail.telepac.pt
www.amcham.org.pt
Graça Didier, General Administrator

AmCham Romania

11 Ion Campineanu St.
Union International Center, 5th Floor
Bucharest – 010031
Tel: + 40 21 312 48 34
Fax: + 40 21 312 48 51
amcham@amcham.ro
www.amcham.ro
Anca Harasim, Executive Director

AmCham Slovakia

Hodžovo námestie 2
811 06 Bratislava
Tel: +421 2 5464 0534
Fax: +421 2 5464 0535
office@amcham.sk
Web: www.amcham.sk
Jake Slegers, Executive Director

AmCham Slovenia

Dunajska 156
1000 Ljubljana
Tel: +386 8 205 13 50
office@amcham.si
www.amcham.si
Ajša Vodnik, Executive Director

AmCham Spain

Pº de la Castellana 259C, 18ª
Torre de Cristal
28046 Madrid
Tel: +34 91 110 05 05
amcham@amchamspain.com
www.amchamspain.com
Aida Casamitjana, Executive Director

AmCham Sweden

Jakobs torg 3
SE-111 52 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 506 126 10
info@amchamswe.se
www.amchamswe.se
Peter R. Dahlen, Managing Director

BritishAmerican
Business

75 Brook Street
London W1K 4AD
Tel: +44 (0)20 7290 9888
Fax: +44 (0)20 7491 9172
ukinfo@babinc.org
www.babinc.org
Jeffries Briginshaw, Managing Director

AmCham EU member companies

3M • ABBVIE • ACCENTURE • ACN • ADM • ADOBE SYSTEMS • AFORE CONSULTING SPRL • ALBEMARLE EUROPE SPRL • ALCOA EUROPE • AMERICAN AIRLINES • AMERICAN EXPRESS • AMGEN • AMWAY • APPLE • APPLIED MATERIALS • ARNOLD & PORTER LLP • AT&T INC. • AVON PRODUCTS • BAKER BOTTS LLP • BANK OF AMERICA/MERRILL LYNCH • BARCLAYS • BAXTER WORLD TRADE CORPORATION • BDO INTERNATIONAL • BELL HELICOPTER • BIOGEN IDEC • BRISTOL-MYERS SQUIBB COMPANY • BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO • BRUNSWICK GROUP LLP • BURSON-MARSTELLER • CA TECHNOLOGIES • CARGILL EUROPE • CATERPILLAR • CHEVRON CORPORATION • CHUBB INSURANCE COMPANY OF EUROPE SE • CICERO CONSULTING • CISCO • CITI • CLEARY GOTTLIEB STEEN & HAMILTON LLP • CNH INDUSTRIAL • COGNIZANT • COVINGTON & BURLING LLP • CROWELL & MORING LLP • DAIMLER • DELL • DELTA AIR LINES • DIAGEO • DLA PIPER UK LLP • DOW • DOW CORNING • DUNDEE PRECIOUS METALS INC. • DUPONT DE NEMOURS INTERNATIONAL S.A. • ELI LILLY & COMPANY • EPPA SA/NV • EXXONMOBIL PETROLEUM & CHEMICAL • EY • FACEBOOK • FEDEX EXPRESS • FIDELITY INVESTMENTS • FIRST SOLAR • FLEISHMANHILLARD • FOLEY & LARDNER LLP • FORD MOTOR COMPANY • FRESHFIELDS BRUCKHAUS DERINGER LLP • FTI CONSULTING • GE • GENERAL MOTORS EUROPE • GLAXOSMITHKLINE • GOLDMAN SACHS INTERNATIONAL • GOODYEAR DUNLOP • GOOGLE • GOWAN GROUP • HASBRO EUROPE • HERBALIFE INTERNATIONAL INC. • HEWLETT-PACKARD • HILL+KNOWLTON STRATEGIES • HOGAN LOVELLS • HONEYWELL • HUME BROPHY • IBM • INTEL CORPORATION • INTERNATIONAL PAPER • JOHN DEERE GMBH & CO. KG. • JOHNSON & JOHNSON • JOHNSON CONTROLS • JPMORGAN • KELLER AND HECKMAN LLP • KREAB GAVIN ANDERSON • LATHAM & WATKINS LLP • LEVI STRAUSS & CO. • LIBERTY GLOBAL EUROPE • LINKLATERS LLP • LVMH • LYONDELLBASELL • MARS • MARY KAY INC. • MASTERCARD EUROPE • MATTEL EUROPE • MAYER BROWN EUROPE-BRUSSELS LLP • MCDONALD'S EUROPE • MCKINSEY & COMPANY • MEADWESTVACO CORPORATION • METLIFE • MICHELIN NORTH AMERICA INC. • MICROSOFT • MONSANTO • MORGAN STANLEY INT. • MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS, LLP • MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS • MSD • MWH GLOBAL • NIKE EMEA • NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT LLP • O'MELVENY & MYERS LLP • ORACLE • PARTYLITE • PFIZER • PHILIP MORRIS INTERNATIONAL • PROCTER & GAMBLE • QUALCOMM • QUINN EMANUEL URQUHART & SULLIVAN LLP • REED ELSEVIER • ROCK CREEK GLOBAL ADVISORS LLC • S.W.I.F.T. SCRL • SAS • SHEPPARD MULLIN RICHTER & HAMPTON LLP • SHIRE • SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP • SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM • SKY ITALIA • STANDARD & POOR'S • STANLEY BLACK & DECKER • STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP • SYMANTEC • SYNGENTA • TE CONNECTIVITY • TENNECO • THE AES CORPORATION • THE BOEING COMPANY • THE CARLYLE GROUP • THE CHARLES SCHWAB CORPORATION • THE COCA-COLA COMPANY • THE NIELSEN COMPANY • THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY • THOMSON REUTERS • TIME WARNER • TYCO • UL • UNITED TECHNOLOGIES CORPORATION • UPS • VAN BAEL & BELLIS • VERIZON • W.L. GORE & ASSOCIATES • WEBER SHANDWICK • WHITE & CASE LLP • WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE & DORR LLP • WRAGGE & CO LLP • YAHOO!

AmCham EU