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The role of the Council and the European Council in decision making

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The European Union



The European Union

28 Member States

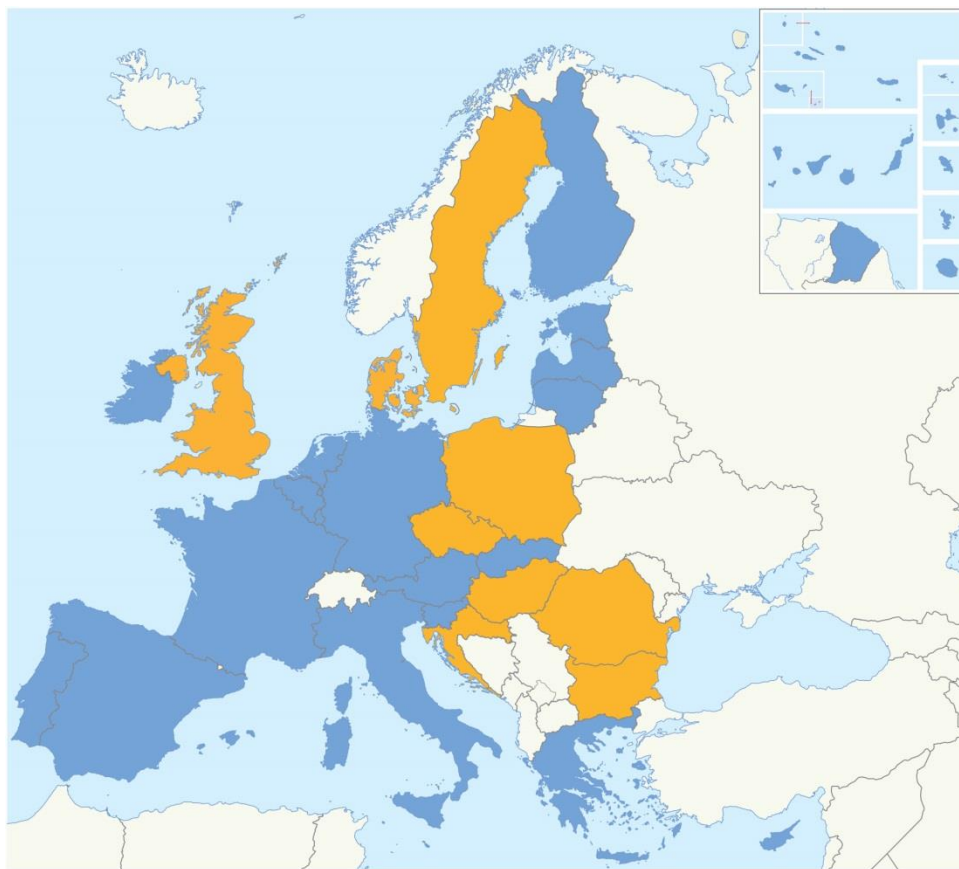
Over 500 million citizens
Speaking 24 official
languages



EU Enlargement



Countries using the Euro (2019)



■ EU countries using the euro
■ EU countries not using the euro

Currently 19 EURO-Member States

Have not yet joined the EURO zone but are candidates for accession at a later stage: BG, PL, RO, HR, SE, CZ, HU

Treaty based right not to join the EURO zone (opt out): UK, DK



Council buildings



Institutions of the European Union

Seven Institutions

European Parliament

European Council

Council of the European Union

European Commission

Court of Justice of the European
Union

European Central Bank

Court of Auditors

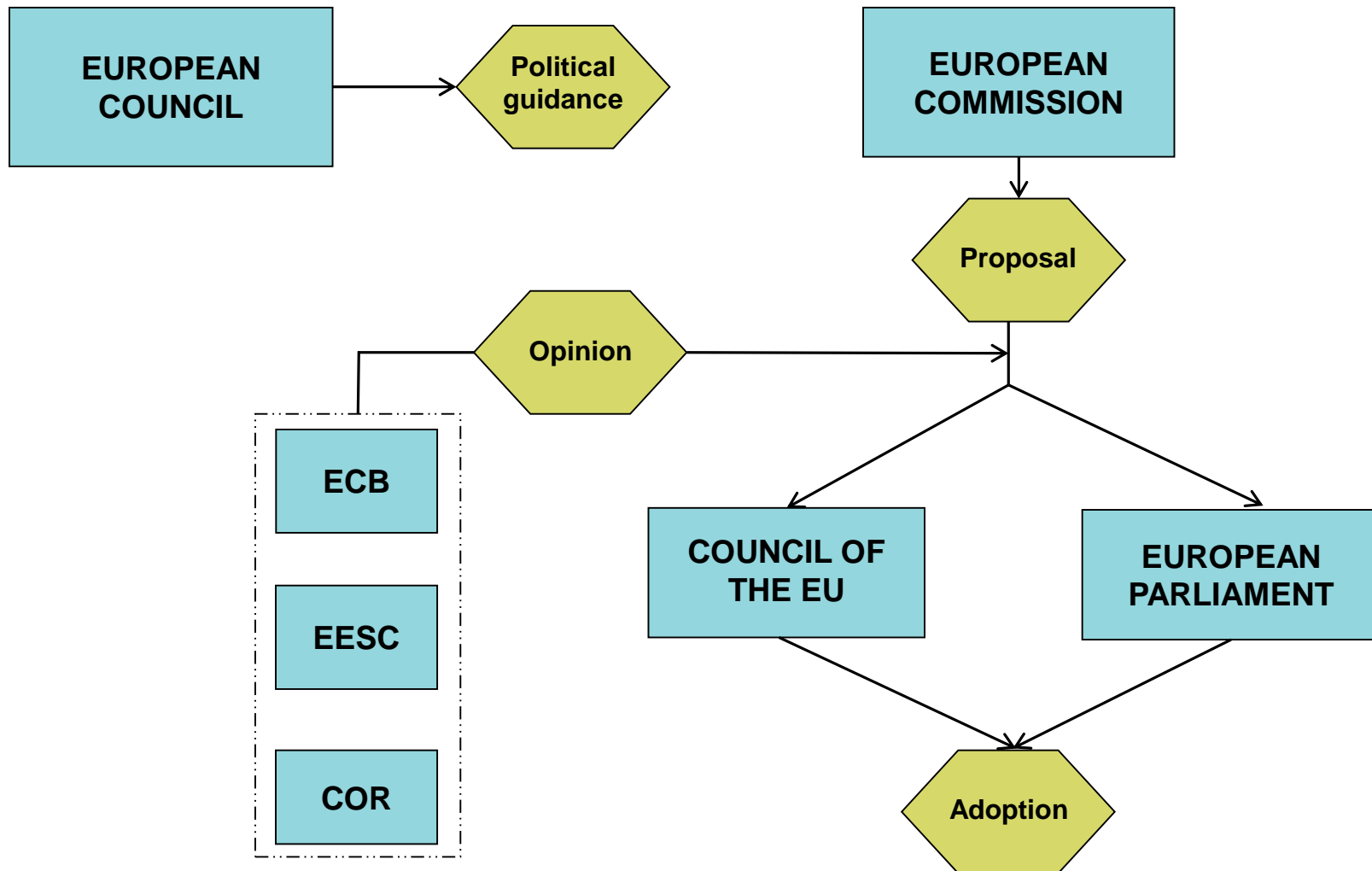
Two advisory bodies

Economic and Social
Committee

Committee of the Regions



Institutions of the European Union



The European Council

28 Heads of State or Government

The **President** of the European
Council

The **President** of the European
Commission

Meeting twice every 6 months and
whenever required (*Special European
Councils*)

Role of the European Council

- Defines overall **political direction** and **priorities**
- **Mostly decides by consensus**, but by qualified majority for a limited number of decisions e.g. in:
 - *Electing* its President
 - *Appointing* the High Representative
 - *Establishing* the list of Council configurations
- Exercises **no legislative functions**



The President of the European Council



- **Elected** for 2.5 years, renewable once
- **Chairs** European Council meetings
- **Ensures** preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council
- **Facilitates** cohesion and consensus
- **Reports** to the EP after each meeting
- **Ensures** external representation of the EU

Political crisis management

The European Council was (and is still) confronted with several major challenges over the last years:

- **Financial and economic crisis**
- **Foreign policy challenges (Russia/Ukraine conflict)**
- **Migration**
- **Security (terrorist attacks)**
- **EU-US relationship**
- **BREXIT**
- **What's next?**



Appointments in 2019

President of the European Council (*the second mandate of Donald Tusk ends on 30 November 2019*): Special European Council meeting on 30 June 2019 to deal with this question

President of the European Parliament (*vote in the EP plenary session in July 2019*)

President of the European Commission: *elected by the EP, based on a proposal from the European Council, the appointment should take place in June 2019, the EP vote in July*: Special European Council meeting on 30 June 2019 to deal with this question

Members of the European Commission (*after COM President is elected*)

High Representative (*decision only after a new COM President is elected*)

President of the European Central Bank (*the mandate of the current ECB President Mario Draghi ends on 31 October 2019*)



A new strategic agenda 2019-2024

- On 20/21 June 2019 the European Council agreed on a strategic agenda for the next five years
- It is intended to **guide the work of the EU Institutions** in the next 5 years
- It provides an **overall framework and direction** on how the EU should respond to the main political challenges, shape the future world, promote the interests of our citizens, businesses and societies, and safeguard our way of life
- It focuses on **four main priorities**:
 - *protecting citizens and freedoms*
 - *developing a strong and vibrant economic base*
 - *building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe*
 - *promoting European interests and values on the global stage.*
- Lastly, it sets out **how to deliver** on those priorities.



The Council of the EU

**National Ministers
meet in
10 different configurations**



The Council of the EU

Role of the Council of the EU

- Negotiate and adopt **EU laws**,
in most cases with the European Parliament
- Coordinate **member states' policies**
 - *economic and fiscal policies*
 - *education, culture, youth and sport*
 - *employment policy*
- Develop the EU's **common foreign and security policy**
Guidelines set by the European Council
- Conclude **international agreements**
- Adopt the **EU budget**, *with the European Parliament*



Council configurations

One Council, Ten Council configurations

- **General Affairs**

- *ensures consistency of work*

- **Foreign Affairs**

- *Elaborates Union's external action based on orientations given by the European Council*

- *Ensures the consistency of the Union's external action*

- **Economic and Financial Affairs**

- **Justice and Home Affairs**

- **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs**

- **Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)**

- **Transport, Telecommunications and Energy**

- **Agriculture and Fisheries**

- **Environment**

- **Education, Youth, Culture and Sport**

Supported by COREPER II

Supported by COREPER I



Structure of the Council

MINISTERS

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

WHO? Ambassadors and their deputies

ROLE?

1. Reach agreement on more sensitive political issues
2. Prepare the work of the Council

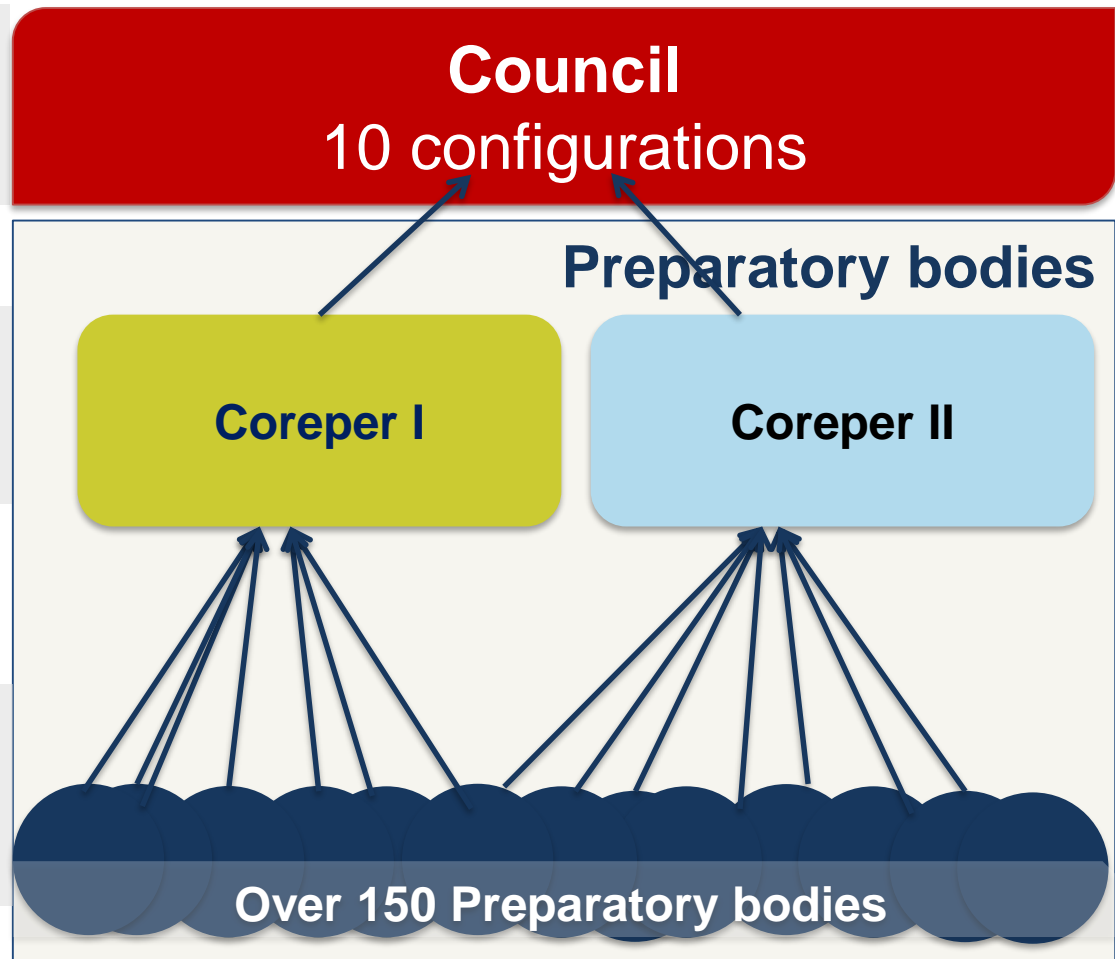
WORKING

PARTIES/ COMMITTEES

WHO? Delegates and national experts from Member States

ROLE?

1. Discuss & reach agreement on more technical aspects of draft legislation
2. Prepare the work of the COREPER



Ordinary Legislative Procedure

Article 294 - TFEU

The Commission proposes draft legislative text

First reading: European Parliament (EP) adopts its position

Council **approves** the position:
Act adopted in the wording of the EP

Council **does not approve:**
it informs EP of its position
(amendments only by unanimity)



Second Reading

Within 3 months - EP informs Council of its position - *approval/ rejection/ amendments*

Within 3 further months - If Council does not approve the amendments by Qualified Majority: **Conciliation Committee** convened within 6 weeks

No approval of a joint text:
the joint act is **not adopted**

Approval by the Conciliation Committee:
third reading begins



Parliament and Council – *acting by QM* - have **6 weeks** to adopt the act.



Voting rules

Voting system - Consilium

Qualified majority, the default voting rule

- system of double majority

- 55% of Member States (16 out of 28)
- At least 65% of total EU population
- Blocking minority: at least 4 Member States

Unanimity, some examples:

- Enlargement of the EU
- Taxation
- Common foreign and security policy
- Multiannual financial framework

Simple majority mostly for procedural decisions



Council Voting Calculator App



Rotating Presidency of the Council

**Each Member State in turn every
6 months**

18-months rolling programme of **three**
successive presidencies

currently: **RO, FI, CR** until 30 June 2020
followed by **DE, PT, SI**



Role of the Rotating Presidency

Three Core Functions:

- Organises, prioritises and plans
- Negotiates
- Communicates

Chairs:

- Council configurations *except Foreign Affairs*
- COREPER I and II
- Committees and working groups with some exceptions

Framed by plans, rules & previous actions

General Secretariat of the Council

The General Secretariat employs over 2800 staff

Over **6,000** meetings organised every year

Several EU summits per year

International Summits

Close cooperation between the EU Presidency and the Council Secretariat: we provide support and advice concerning

- a) logistics, organization and management of political processes;
- b) strategic advice on substance and political questions

Assistance to

- **European Council** members and President
- **Council of the EU** members and Presidency

760
Translators and Lawyer-linguists

24
Official Languages

220+ staff supporting the presidency on **political issues**
750 + staff in **legal service, political services, General and Institutional Policies Directorates**

- Communications
- Press Releases
- Draft records of proceedings
- **2016:** 1259 Acts published in the Official Journal

Provides institutional memory and ensures continuity

