

EU Institutions

28 Countries, 24 Official Languages

- ▶ Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish

EU Institutions

- ▶ The European Council
 - ▶ Sets the agenda
 - ▶ Meets 4 times annually at the “European Summit”
 - ▶ Made up of the heads of states of the member countries
 - ▶ Convenes on broad political priorities and major initiatives

EU Institutions: 3 + 2

- ▶ The “Institutional Triangle”: The Commission, The Council of the European Union (the Council), The Parliament
- ▶ The Other Two: The Court of Justice, The Central Bank

The European Parliament

- ▶ The only directly-elected body of the EU
- ▶ ToL set MEPs at 754
- ▶ an electorate of almost 1/2 billion people.
- ▶ Elected once every five years
- ▶ Directly elected since 1979 (contrast Council of Europe)
- ▶ Turnout for elections usually very low

EU Parliament

- ▶ Scrutinizes EU institutions, especially the Commission
- ▶ Works closely with the Council:
 - ▶ Debating and passing European laws
 - ▶ Debating and adopting the budget

Council of the European Union

- ▶ Located in Brussels
- ▶ Presidency of Council of Ministers rotates every six months to a different head of state
- ▶ President sets agenda, represents EU internationally, represents (sometimes with President of Commission) EU at internationally meetings

Council of the European Union

- ▶ Also called the Council of Ministers, or The Council
- ▶ Represents the interests of the member states
- ▶ Not the same as the “European Council”

The Council

- ▶ Passes laws
- ▶ Coordinates economic policies of member states
- ▶ Signs agreements
- ▶ Approves the annual budget
- ▶ Develops foreign & defense policies
- ▶ Coordinates cooperation

EU Commission

- ▶ Acts as “Guardian of the Treaties”
- ▶ Consists of 27 Commissioners, one for each member state of the EU
- ▶ Commissioners supported by 26,000 bureaucrats, divided into departments called Directorates-General

EU Commission

- ▶ “The Commission” means both the 27 Commissioners and the vast bureaucracy that supports them
- ▶ The Commission is supposed to represent the interests of the EU, not the interests of the member states. They are not supposed to receive “instructions” from their home country

EU Commission

- ▶ Commission headed by a President and a Vice-President
- ▶ Responsible for day-to-day operation of the EU
- ▶ Proposes new laws to the Parliament and the Council
- ▶ Manages the budget
- ▶ Enforces EU law (with the ECJ)
- ▶ Negotiates agreements

The European Court of Justice

- ▶ Determines if EU laws are consistent with EU Treaties
- ▶ Determines if national laws are consistent with EU laws
- ▶ EU law takes precedence, but only in areas of EU “competence,” that is, where the countries have given power to the EU

ECJ rules on:

- ▶ Claims by the EU Commission that a member state has not implemented a legal requirement
- ▶ Claims by a member states that the EU Commission has exceeded its authority
- ▶ Responds to inquiries from national courts about the meaning or validity of a particular piece of EU law.

The ECJ

- ▶ Power of Court seems to be growing; this reflected in tension between Court and member states
- ▶ On the other hand, Court of Justice has strengthened courts in member nations by giving it new jurisdiction
- ▶ Under new constitution, ECJ power would grow significantly

European Central Bank (ECB)

- ▶ Manages the euro
- ▶ Safeguards price stability in the EU
- ▶ Frames & implements the EU's economic & monetary policy
- ▶ Completely independent

The European Food Safety Authority

- ▶ Created in 2001 in reaction to a number of public health and food safety crises
- ▶ Responsible for food safety risk assessment, not for risk management