

Glossary of Institutions, Treaties, and Procedures

- Agencies** Bodies set up by the European Union to carry out specific technical, scientific, or administrative tasks. Although some existed in the 1970s, agencies became especially popular in the 1990s as an alternative way of implementing EU policies.
- Cabinets** Personal offices of the commissioners that give political guidance and communicate with the Commission administration. Today, only three out of six members of a cabinet can be of the same nationality as the commissioner.
- Chiefs of government** The heads of state and government (prime ministers and presidents) of the member states who meet periodically as the European Council to set the direction of the European Union.
- Co-decision procedure (Ordinary Legislative Procedure)** Created by the Treaty of Maastricht, the first version of the co-decision procedure was meant to enhance the European Parliament's power by giving it veto over the Council's decisions. Because it was quite complicated, the Treaty of Amsterdam simplified this procedure ("co-decision 2") and extended its application to more policy areas in the treaty. The Treaty of Lisbon increased its application even further and renamed it the "Ordinary Legislative Procedure."
- Comitology** A process in which the Commission, before taking implementing actions, has to consult with representatives of the member states through committees. Depending on the procedures, the committees' advice can be more or less binding.
- Community Method** The European Union's generic way of decision making. This legislative procedure is initiated by a proposal for a legislative act from the Commission. After official submission, the Council and the European Parliament may jointly adopt or amend it. Legal acts are typically implemented by the European Commission, national administrations, or both.
- Consultation procedure** Initially, the predominant legislative procedure, according to which the Council asks for the Parliament's opinion on the Commission's legislative proposal before adopting or amending it. Today, it applies only to a limited number of legislative areas, such as market exemptions.
- Cooperation procedure** Created by the Single European Act, this was the predominant legislative procedure until the Treaty of Maastricht introduced "co-decision." According to this procedure, the Council had to attain unanimous agreement in order to adopt legislative proposals to which the European Parliament objects. The cooperation procedure was more and more replaced by co-decision until the Lisbon Treaty finally abolished it.
- Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER)** The Committee of Permanent Representatives comprises the member states' ambassadors to the EU and prepares the decisions of the Council of Ministers. It works in two configurations: COREPER II consists of the ambassadors and deals with political and institutional matters, whereas COREPER I consists of deputy permanent representatives and deals with technical matters. Issues on which COREPER attains a consensus are referred to the Council as A-points, which the ministers typically adopt en bloc without further discussion. Other, more controversial issues enter the Council's agenda as B-points.

- Council of Ministers** The Council of the EU comprises ministers from the member governments and meets in various issue-specific formations (e.g., Council of Ministers of the Environment). Its role in legislation is to adopt or change, jointly with the European Parliament, the Commission's legislative proposals. The position of president of the EU Council rotates among the member states every six months. Not to be confused with the European Council, which is composed of the chiefs of government and has no role in legislation.
- Enlargement** Describes the accession of new member states to the European Union. There have been seven enlargements so far: Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 1973; Greece in 1981; Spain and Portugal in 1986; Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995; Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004; Bulgaria and Romania in 2007; and Croatia in 2013.
- European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom)** Founded in 1957 alongside the EEC. Its institutions were merged with those of the European Economic Communities and the European Coal and Steel Community in 1965.
- European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)** Established by the 1951 Treaty of Paris, it centralized the governance of war-relevant sectors in order to prevent military mobilization in the future. When the Treaty of Paris expired in 2002, the European Community absorbed the European Coal and Steel Community's activities and resources.
- European Commission** The EU's principal supranational bureaucracy. It consists of a political level, composed of the Commission president and a college of commissioners, and an administrative level (the "services"), staffed with permanent civil servants and composed of various departments (the directorate generals). The Commission sets the legislative agenda by submitting proposals for legal acts. It also helps implement EU law by making secondary rules.
- European Council** The regular meetings ("summits") between the chiefs of government. It was not until the Treaty of Lisbon that the European Council was mentioned as an official institution. Although it has no official role in legislation, it is supposed to define the EU's general political direction and priorities. The Lisbon Treaty also created the position of a full-time president of the European Council, which is currently held by Herman Van Rompuy. Not to be confused with the Council of the EU, which comprises ministers and has an official role in legislation.
- European Court of Justice (ECJ)** The highest court in the European Union and part of the system of EU courts, the Court of Justice of the European Union. It is tasked with interpreting EU law and ensuring its general application across the member states. Since most EU law is to be transposed into national law, the preliminary reference procedure allows national courts to ask the ECJ to clarify the interpretation of EU law and whether it conflicts with national laws.
- European Economic Community (EEC/EC)** Established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, aimed at creating a common market among its member states. Its institutions were merged with those of the Euratom and the ECSC in 1965 (see Merger Treaty). The Maastricht Treaty renamed it the European Community. The European Union legally absorbed the EC with the Treaty of Lisbon.
- European Parliament (EP)** Starting out as a consultative assembly composed of national parliamentarians, its role in the legislative process has increased steadily over time. Since 1979, its members are directly elected every five years by universal suffrage. Its 754 seats are distributed among the member states proportional to their population. For example, German citizens are represented by ninety-nine members of the

- European Parliament. The members of the European Parliament are organized into seven parliamentary groups, including the conservative European People's Party, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, the Alliance of Liberal and Democrats, the Greens, and various Euroskeptic groups.
- European Union (EU)** Established in 1992 with the Treaty on European Union (see Treaty of Maastricht). Initially, the EU was a political umbrella for the three communities and two policies outside of these communities, namely, Justice and Home Affairs and a Common Foreign and Security Policy. The European Union legally absorbed the communities with the Treaty of Lisbon.
- Expert groups** Informal groups comprised of government experts or private experts that consult with the Commission in its preparation of legislative proposals.
- Merger Treaty** Signed in 1965, entered into force in 1967. The Merger Treaty created a single Council and Commission to serve all three European communities, namely, the European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community, and Euratom.
- Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)** On most issues, the Council may make decisions by majority voting. Each country is allocated a number of votes roughly equivalent to its population. Today, a qualified majority is reached if a majority of member states approves and this majority comprises at least 70 percent of the votes cast. The voting weights and voting threshold have changed with the accession of new member states. From 2014 on, a qualified majority vote requires approval by 55 percent of the members of the EU Council, who must represent 65 percent of EU citizens.
- Single European Act (SEA)** Signed in 1986, entered into force in 1987. It notably extended qualified majority voting in the Council to articles pertaining to the creation of the Single Market, and created the cooperation procedure that gave the European Parliament more powers.
- Treaty of Amsterdam** Signed in 1997, entered into force in 1999. Notably, it created the "Co-decision II" legislative procedure to replace the more complicated "Co-decision I" procedure.
- Treaty of Lisbon** Signed in 2007, entered into force in 2009. Notably, it increased the European Parliament's involvement in legislation by extending the "Co-decision II" procedure (renamed Ordinary Legislative Procedure). It also recognizes the European Council as an official EU institution and creates a permanent (full-time, five-year tenure) president for this institution.
- Treaty of Maastricht** Formally the Treaty on European Union, signed in 1992, entered into force in 1993. It established the European Union as the political umbrella for the European Community and two other policies, namely the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Justice and Home Affairs. Notably, it established the Economic and Monetary Union (including the euro) and created the "Co-decision I" legislative procedure, which gave the European Parliament more say in legislation.
- Treaty of Nice** Signed in 2001, entered into force in 2003. It slightly changed the composition of the Commission and redefined the voting system in the Council.
- Treaty of Rome** Signed in 1957, entered into force in 1958. It set up the European Economic Community and Euratom next to the European Coal and Steel Community.
- Trilogue** Informal meetings between the chairperson of COREPER, the European Parliament's rapporteur, and the European Commission. The purpose of these contacts is to get an agreement that both the Council and the European Parliament can accept without having to go through all stages of the legislative process.
- Working Groups** Meetings of COREPER are prepared by Council working groups composed of government experts.

