



The European Union: History and Institutions

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European Union (EU) -- Member states and candidates for accession



	Member States
	(Potential) Candidate States

Croatia became an EU member state on July 1, 2013

History of the EU

- European integration: Initiated in Western Europe in aftermath of World War II; context marked by political and economic reconstruction, beginning of Cold War
- Three Communities created in 1950s: European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and European Economic Community (EEC), with six member states
- Two trajectories of development: (1) Accession of more member states (“widening”), and (2) transfer of further powers to European institutions, coupled with shift to supranational decision making (“deepening”)

“Widening” integration

Original members:
Germany, France,
Italy, Benelux



1973:
UK, Ireland,
Denmark



1981:
Greece



1986:
Portugal,
Spain



1990:
East
Germany



1995:
Austria, Sweden,
Finland



2004:
CEE countries,
Cyprus, Malta



2007:
Bulgaria,
Romania



2013:
Croatia

“Deepening” integration

- 1963/64: Court of Justice strengthens Community law against member states
- 1985: Single European Act abolishes member-state veto in many policy areas, strengthens European Parliament
- 1991: Maastricht Treaty lays groundwork for the Euro; European Union established in addition to Communities
- 1997/2000: Amsterdam and Nice Treaties reform EU institutions prior to enlargement
- 2007: Lisbon Treaty simplifies institutional structure, gives EU unified legal personality → in force since 2009
- Since 2010: Euro crisis leads to greater coordination of member state fiscal policies

EU institutions

Institution	Governance role	Composition
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative, executive objectives	Member state leaders (intergovernmental)
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, some legislative functions	EU bureaucrats (supranational)
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Member state ministers (intergovernmental)
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Elected MEPs (supranational)
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	EU judges (supranational)
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory (monetary policy)	Central bankers (supranational)

European Council

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory	Supranational



- Summits of heads of state or government from all member states, permanent president (Herman Van Rompuy)
- Discusses pressing issues; defines policy objectives; decides on institutional reform and key personnel
- Decisions usually consensual

European Commission

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory	Supranational



- One Commissioner per member state, responsible for specific portfolio, headed by president (José Manuel Barroso)
- Initiates EU legislation; manages EU programs and finances; monitors implementation of EU law; some regulatory functions
- Most decisions consensual

Council of Ministers

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory	Supranational



- One minister per member state; composition varies by policy field; presidency rotates between member states every six months
- Must pass all binding EU laws; monitors Commission; some executive powers
- Decides unanimously or per qualified majority (QMV)

European Parliament

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory	Supranational



- 766 elected members, organized in trans-national party groups, chaired by president (Martin Schulz)
- Must pass EU laws in most policy areas (together with Council); scrutiny of Commission
- Usually decides by simple majority

Court of Justice

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory	Supranational



- 27 judges, appointed by member states, chaired by president (Vassilios Skouris)
- Makes decisions on interpretation of EU law; cases often brought by national courts
- Most decisions made in chambers of 3 or 5 judges

European Central Bank

Institution	Governance role	Character
European Council (Brussels)	Defines legislative and executive objectives	Intergovernmental
European Commission (Brussels)	Executive, legislative, regulatory	Supranational
Council of Ministers (Brussels)	Legislative, some executive functions	Intergovernmental
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Legislative	Supranational
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	Judiciary	Supranational
European Central Bank (Frankfurt)	Regulatory (monetary policy)	Supranational



- Executive Board composed of President (Mario Draghi) and five other members; Governing Council composed of central bank governors of Euro states
- Governing Council makes decisions on monetary policy for all Euro states
- ECB will be tasked with bank supervision from 2014
- Most decisions consensual

EU governance -- Key characteristics

- Legislation: EU is an active producer of legislation, which is binding on the member states and trumps national law
- Implementation: EU laws are generally implemented by the member states, under the supervision of Commission
- Adjudication: Court of Justice is an activist court, often pushing integration further
- Democracy: European Parliament is directly elected, but most citizens have little knowledge of – or interest in – EU politics