



An Introduction to the European Union

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European Union: Member states and candidates for accession



Member States



(Potential) Candidate States

History of European integration

- Origins of European integration: Integration initiatives launched in Western Europe in aftermath of World War II; period marked by political and economic reconstruction, beginning of Cold War
- Institutional foundations of today's European Union: 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"); (2) transfer of powers to European institutions, shift from intergovernmental 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 creates European Union; lay groundwork for Euro; pushes integration beyond economics (foreign policy, home affairs)
- 1997/2000: Amsterdam and Nice Treaties reform EU institutions prior to enlargement; incorporate Schengen agreement into EU treaties
- 2007: Lisbon Treaty simplifies institutional structure, gives EU unified legal personality → in force since 2009
- Since 2010: Succession of crises (Eurozone crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit) and rise of Euroscepticism

EU governance: Core characteristics

More than International Organization, Less than State:

EU is combination of intergovernmentalism (member-state control) and supranationalism (pan-European mandate)

Multilevel governance:

EU makes binding laws in wide range of areas, but mainly framework laws specified by member states; member states charged with policy implementation, but monitored by EU

Precarious legitimacy:

More democratic mechanisms than in any other International Organizations, but limited citizen interest/participation and increasing Euroscepticism

Core EU institutions: A first overview

Institution	Composition	Governance role
European Council (Brussels)	Member state leaders (intergovernmental)	Defines legislative, executive objectives
European Commission (Brussels)	EU bureaucrats (supranational)	Executive, some legislative functions
Council of the European Union (Brussels)	Member state ministers (intergovernmental)	Legislative, some executive functions
European Parliament (Strasbourg, Brussels)	Elected MEPs (supranational)	Legislative
Court of Justice (Luxembourg)	EU judges (supranational)	Judiciary

European Council



- Summits of heads of state or government from all member states, permanent president (Donald Tusk)
- Discusses pressing issues; defines policy objectives; decides on institutional reform and key personnel
- Usually meets 5-10 times per year, makes decisions by consensus (few exceptions)

European Commission



- One Commissioner per member state, responsible for specific portfolio, headed by president (Jean-Claude Juncker)
- Monitors implementation of EU law; manages EU programs and finances; initiates EU legislation; some front-line regulatory functions
- Seeks to speak with one voice (internal divisions usually not reported to the outside)

Council of the European Union



- One minister per member state; composition varies by policy field; presidency rotates between member states every six months (currently: Slovakia)
- Must pass all binding EU laws; monitors Commission; executive role through national bureaucracies
- Decides unanimously or per qualified majority (QMV)
- Also called “Council of Ministers” or just “Council”

European Parliament

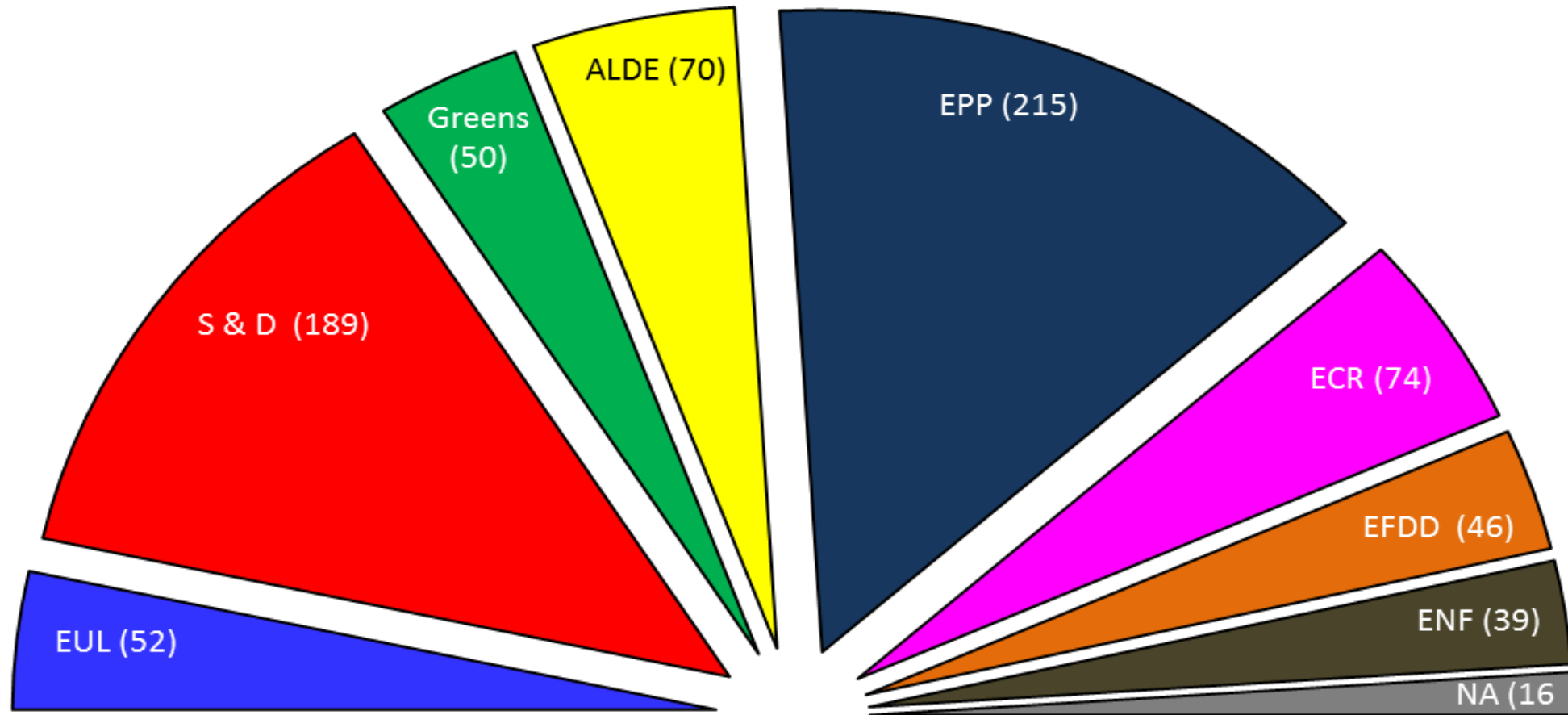


- 751 elected members, organized in trans-national party groups, chaired by president (Martin Schulz)
- Must pass EU laws in most policy areas (together with Council); scrutiny of Commission
- Usually decides by simple majority

Party Groups in the European Parliament

- European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)
- Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)
- European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)
- Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
- European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)
- Greens / European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)
- Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)
- Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)

Composition of the European Parliament



Court of Justice



- 28 judges, appointed by member states, chaired by president (Koen Lenaerts)
- Makes decisions on interpretation of EU law; most cases brought by national courts, EU institutions, or companies directly affected by EU decisions
- Most decisions made in chambers of 3 or 5 judges

Core EU institutions: Another look

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