

European institutions

According to Article 13 of the Treaty on European Union, the institutional framework of the Union is composed of seven institutions, each of them representing different interests and having executive, legislative, judicial and other powers. Their main task is to manage all EU policies efficiently.

There are seven main bodies in the institutional framework:

- The **European Parliament** is the only EU institution elected directly. There are 751 Members who are elected every five years by voters from across the EU countries. It has three main functions: legislative power (shared with the Council), budgetary power (it votes on the annual budget of the Union) and power of control over the other EU's institutions. Its headquarters are in Strasbourg.



- The **European Council** became an institution under the Lisbon Treaty. Its main role is to provide the general political guideline for the EU's development, but it has no legislative power.
- The **Council of the European Union** (called 'the Council') is one of the EU's main decision-making institutions and is based in Brussels. It is held by ministers from all the EU countries and it is where laws and policies are issued. Its presidency rotates among the member states every six months.

- The **European Commission**, the executive branch of the European Union, proposes legislation in a wide range of policy areas (justice, home affairs) and implements decisions. It acts in the general interest of the EU with total independence from national governments.
- The **Court of Justice of the European Union** has two branches:
 - a. the **Court of Justice**, which gives preliminary rulings, hears some actions against EU institutions brought by EU countries and takes appeals from the General Court;
 - b. the **General Court**, which hears actions against EU institutions brought by citizens.
- The **European Central Bank** is the central bank of the euro area and is based in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. It forms the "Eurosystème", which conducts monetary policy in the Eurozone. Its primary objective is to maintain price stability through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM): this is part of the EU's strategy that ensures financial stability within the eurozone. Also, it gives assistance to euro area countries threatened by financial difficulties, like Italy during the Covid emergency in 2020.



European Central Bank in Frankfurt am Main

- The **Court of Auditors** is an independent institution in Luxemburg whose primary role is to check if the EU budget (formed by the EU's income and expenditure) has been implemented correctly and if the EU funds have been spent legally.



1 Complete the sentences with the missing words (max. 3 words)

1. The European Parliament is composed of 751 member who are elected by voters from all the EU countries.
2. The has its headquarters in Strasbourg.
3. The General Court can hear actions against brought by European citizens.
4. The main aim of the is to grant price stability in the eurozone.
5. The Council, which is one of the main decision-making European institutions, is based
6. The main function of the is to control how the EU funds are spent by the member states.
7. Article 13 of the Treaty on the European Union establishes that the EU framework is composed of
8. The European Commission is totally from national governments.



2 Work in pairs. In turn, ask and answer about the main information (function, structure or location) on each European institution. Follow the example.

- **A: What is the main function of the European Parliament?**
B: It has legislative, budgetary and control power over the EU institutions.



3 Fill in the gaps with the given words.

economic ■ ministers ■ Council ■ institutions ■ European ■ year ■ plans ■ countries

The European Semester

The European Semester is an annual cycle of economic policy coordination in the EU in which guidance is provided to EU **1** before they make decisions at national level. The guidance is provided in the context of the stability and growth, besides, the **2** Semester also serves to implement future strategies.

In late autumn, the European Commission publishes its annual growth survey which outlines general economic priorities for the EU for the coming **3** The annual growth survey is debated by the other **4** and is opened to the discussion leading up to the spring European Council.

In February, the Commission publishes country reports on the overall **5** and social developments in each EU country.

In April, EU countries present national **6** based on a comprehensive assessment of the economic situation in each country, the Commission then proposes country-specific policy recommendations which are discussed by the **7** and endorsed by the European Council in June, before being finally adopted by the national finance **8**

Adapted from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/european_semester.html



4 Watch the video and say if the sentences are true or false. Correct the false ones.

▶ **Council Animation decision making posted by Council of the EU**

1. The three main decision-making European institutions are the Council, the Parliament and the Court.
2. The Council and the Parliament consider, amend, negotiate and adopt EU legislation.
3. If the Council and the Parliament do not reach an agreement at first reading, they have a second reading.
4. Only the 9% of legislative procedure files have been concluded at first reading.
5. Every law issued is directly applicable.
6. The council is coordinated by the permanent representatives committee.