



Module Content Outline

Module: EUROPEAN UNIONS' (EU) SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONS

PART A

Overall Summary of the Module:

This module aims to introduce the readers to the European Unions' System of Governance and main institutions by providing a general overview of their basic functions and processes. In addition, the module targets to provide the basic knowledge in regards to some key facts about the European Union. The provision with the knowledge and skills necessary for the understanding of the EU System of Governance and Institutions will facilitate migrants' integration in the EU societies directly and indirectly, a fact which serves the wider goal of the project. This module is the equivalent of 1 European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) credits and corresponds to level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

PART B

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

1. Have a basic understanding of the **European Unions' System of Governance**
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the main operations and roles of the **European Commission, European Council** and the **Council of the European Union**
3. Illustrate understanding how **the European Parliament** is composed and how it works
4. Appreciate the importance of the **Court of Justice of the European Union** in the functioning of the judicial system of the EU
5. Gain understanding of other **EU institutions**
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the **key facts / Information** about European Union



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PART C

Units in the Module:

Unit 1: EU's System of Governance

Unit 2: EU Institutions

Unit 3: Key Facts about EU

Unit 1: EU's System of Governance

C1. Overview:

The scope of this unit is to review the European Unions' System of Governance. In other words, it aims to explain in a simple manner how the European Union works and operates.

C2. Learning Outcomes

- Know the very basics facts about the EU
- Know the main institutions of the EU
- Understand the basic decision-making processes of the European Union

C3. Content

The EU treaties

Every action taken in the European Union is based on treaties that have been initially negotiated and agreed by all the EU Member States and then approved by their parliaments or by referendum.

The last treaty which was signed was the *Treaty of Lisbon* on 13 December 2007 and came into force in 2009 and aimed to give more power the Parliament and thus the people.

Who takes the decisions?

Decision-making at EU level involves various European institutions, in particular:

- European Parliament
- European Council



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- Council
- European Commission

How is legislation passed?

- For a particular topic that is deemed to require new legislation, the European Commission calls for views on the topic from the various actors such as governments, the business sector and civil society organisations.
- The collected opinions are presented as proposal to the European Council and Parliament.
- The Council and the Parliament read and discuss the proposal.
- In case of agreement, the agreed text is sent to the Parliament and the Council for a final review in order to be adopted as law.

Who is consulted, who can object?

There are a number of advisory bodies which are consulted in the legislation procedure, beyond the Commission–Council–Parliament. These bodies are:

- European Economic and Social Committee (civil society groups e.g. employers, trade unions and social interest groups)
- Committee of the Regions (local and regional government representatives)
- European Central Bank (economic or financial issues)

Citizens' participation / European Citizens' Initiative

The European Citizens' Initiative is a mechanism which aims to increase the direct participation of citizens to the EU procedures. According to this initiative, one (1) million EU citizens from at least one quarter of the EU Member States (at least 7) may request from the Commission to bring forward a legislative proposal on a specific issue. This initiative gives voice directly to the people, but at the same time it safeguards that not a single country with a large population can promote a specific issue/agenda at the expense of other parts of the EU population.

National oversight

National parliaments obtain draft legislative acts at the same time as the European Parliament and the Council and they can give their opinion on them, raise concerns and provide overall feedback.



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Economic coordination

All EU countries are part of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which means that they coordinate their economic policymaking and treat most of the economic decisions in common. The goal of the EMU is to help converge the member states' (and some non-member states') economies. Of course, there are issues that are more limited to the EU members states of the Eurozone, meaning that some member states are not directly involved as they have not adopted the Euro.

The EU and foreign relations

The external relations of the EU are under the responsibility of the European External Action Service (EEAS) which serves as the diplomatic service of the Union, under the High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy. The aim of this service is to develop a more common European foreign and security policy. It is a difficult task, but great progress has been achieved over the past years.

C.4 Key Words

Decision Making, Legislation, Citizens' participation, National oversight, Economic coordination, Foreign Relations

PART D

Further Reading

Websites/ Freely available papers (N/A words)

Official website of the European Union: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

Europe: From WWII To Today's European Union:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRwZyDTdCAc>

Countries of European Union. Interesting facts about Europe
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATrhvt8cW98>

EU at a glance: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/eu-at-a-glance>



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Learning materials : https://europa.eu/learning-corner/learning-materials_en?keyword=&topic=All&age_group%5B%5D=84&=Envoyer

PART E

Unit Completion

1. The Lisbon Treaty came into effect in:

- a. 2004
- b. 2006
- c. 2008
- d. **2009**

2. The decision-making at EU level involves only two European institutions:

- a. True
- b. False**

Explanation: The decision-making at EU level involves various European institutions, such as the Commission, the Parliament and the Council as well as several others depending on the issue at hand.

3. During the legislation procedure the Commission-Council-Parliament triangle is fully responsible for undertaking the decisions

- a. True
- b. False**

Explanation: There are a number of advisory bodies that must be consulted when proposed legislation involves their area of interest, beyond the Commission-Council-Parliament.

4. A European citizens' initiative is an invitation to European Parliament to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate.

- a. True
- b. False**



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Explanation: According to this initiative, one (1) million EU citizens may request from the European Commission to bring forward a legislative proposal on a specific issue.

5. The foreign relations with countries outside of the EU are under the responsibility of the President of the European Parliament

- a. True
- b. False

Explanation: Relations with countries outside of the EU are under the responsibility of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is appointed by the European Council, and also holds the post of European Commission Vice-President.

PART F

Suggest 2 Activities to test and/or reflect on the information presented by this module

- Visit the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZW1MLajwUE> and watch the video *European Citizens' Initiative: what is it?* Think possible topics that you could propose.
- Watch the documentary: *'From fireside chats to key decision-maker'*
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/history/?filters=1734>
This documentary traces the history of the European Council from its foundation down to the present day. It shows important milestones from the last decades that have shaped the way EU leaders make decisions. The story is told through the eyes of those who witnessed the European Council's transformation to the decision-making center that it is today.



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Unit 2: EU Institutions

C1. Overview:

The scope of this unit is to give a general overview of the EU's main institutions such as the European Commission / European Council / European Parliament and the Council of the European Union

C2. Learning Outcomes

Illustrate understanding of the role and basic functions and processes of the main European Institutions

C3. Content

The institutions of the European Union are the seven principal decision-making bodies of the European Union (EU).

European Commission

- The European Commission (EC) is the 'government of the EU', responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU.
- Members: 27 Commissioners, 1 from each EU country
- Think of it like the ministerial council of a country, where each minister (commissioner) is responsible for a specific issue – e.g. humanitarian issues, health, etc.
- The Commissioners do **not** represent the interests of their respective countries, but rather the overall interests of the EU.



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European Council

- The European Council defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. The European Council is not a permanent institution but rather a meeting convening at least four times per year – but the President can call for additional meetings to address urgent issues.
- Members: Heads of state or government of EU countries.

Council of the European Union

- The Council gathers all the government ministers from each EU country in order to meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies. Together with the European Parliament, the Council is the main decision-making body of the EU. Each EU country holds the presidency of the council on a 6-month rotating basis. Should not to be confused with: European Council / Council of Europe (not an EU body at all).
- Members: Government ministers from each EU country, according to the policy area to be discussed. For instance, for defense issues, the Ministers of Defense issues will meet; for issues of Foreign Affairs, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and so on.

European Parliament

- The European Parliament is the EU's law-making body with legislative, supervisory, and budgetary responsibilities. It is directly elected by EU voters every 5 years. The last elections were in May 2019.
- Members: 705 MEPs (Members of the European Parliament)
- The Parliament is considered to be the most democratic body of the EU as the MEP (members of the European Parliament) are voted directly by the people and are not appointed either by the Heads of states or by EU officials.

Other Institutions

Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)

- The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) interprets EU law to make sure it is applied in the same way in all EU countries, and settles legal disputes between national governments and EU institutions.
- Members: 1 judge from each EU country, plus 11 advocates general



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European Central Bank (ECB)

- The European Central Bank (ECB) manages the Euro and frames and implements EU economic & monetary policy. Its main aim is to maintain stability and supports economic growth and job creations.
- Members: ECB President and Vice-President and governors of national central banks from all EU countries

European Court of Auditors (ECA)

- The European Court of Auditors (ECA) role is to check EU funds are collected and used correctly, and help improve EU financial management.
- Members: 1 from each EU country

C.4 Key Words

European Commission, European Council, European Parliament, Council of the European Union, Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), European Central Bank (ECB), European Court of Auditors (ECA)

PART D

Further Reading

Websites/ Freely available papers

Official website of the European Union: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

Europe: From WWII To Today's European Union: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRw>

Countries of European Union. Interesting facts about Europe <https://www.youtube.com/>

EU at a glance: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/eu-at-a-gl>

The Council (of the European Union) explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jZ>

The European Parliament explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8h2cwPKJR18>



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EU & Me: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6fcdb304-b/en/format-PDF/source-94593416>

Resources for teachers: <https://europa.eu/european-union/documents-publications/tea>

How the European Union works:

https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/singapore/documents/more_info/eu_publications

PART E Unit Completion

1. The European Parliament is directly elected by EU voters every 3 years.

- a. True
- b. False**

Explanation: The European Parliament is directly elected by EU voters every 5 years.

2. The Commissioners do not represent the interests of their respective countries

- a. True**
- b. False

Explanation: The Commissioners represent only the overall interests of the EU.

3. Which of the seven main EU institutions is not permanent?

- a. European Court of Auditors
- b. European Council**
- c. Council of the European Union
- d. European Commission

Explanation: The European Council is not a permanent institution but rather a meeting convening at least four times per year.



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4. Currently the European Parliament has 751 MEPs?

- a. True
- b. False

Explanation: Since 1 July 2014 there have been 751 MEPs in the European Parliament, as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty. The number decreased to 705 after UK's withdrawal from the Union in 2020.

5. Is Council of Europe a European Union institution / agency?

- a. True
- b. False

Explanation: The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 27 of which are members of the European Union. It is not an EU institution.

PART F

Suggest 2 Activities to test and/or reflect on the information presented by this module

- **Visit the website:** *EU institutions and bodies in brief* https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies_en and explore the information it provides about each European institution. Think how each institution influence our today's live.
- **Matching Quiz:** Match the pictures with the European Institutions

European Commission, European Parliament, European Council



Unit 3: Key Facts about EU

C1. Overview:

The scope of this unit is to provide the basic knowledge in regards to some key facts about the European Union

C2. Learning Outcomes



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Demonstrate substantial knowledge of the key facts in regards to the European Union

C3. Content

Joining the EU

Any country that satisfies the conditions for membership can apply to join the EU. These conditions are known as the 'Copenhagen criteria' and include a free-market economy, a stable democracy and the rule of law, and the acceptance of all EU legislation.

Candidate countries

The below countries are in the process of integrating EU legislation into national law:

Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey

Potential candidates

Potential candidate countries do not yet fulfil the requirements for EU membership:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo

The 27 member countries of the EU

The Union currently counts 27 EU countries after the UK left in 2020.

01/01/1958: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands

01/01/1973 : Denmark

Ireland, United Kingdom

01/01/1981: Greece

01/01/1986: Portugal, Spain

01/01/1995: Austria, Finland, Sweden

01/05/2004: Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia



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01/01/2007: Bulgaria, Romania

01/07/2013: Croatia

Euro

The euro (€) is the official currency of 19 out of 27 EU countries. These countries are collectively known as the Eurozone.

Which countries use the euro?

19 of the EU countries have replaced their national currencies with the single currency – the euro.

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain

Eurozone's newest member is Lithuania which adopted the Euro in January 1st 2015

Non-euro area member countries

Below are countries where the euro has still not been adopted, but who will join once they have met the necessary conditions.

Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden

Living in the EU

The EU covers over 4 million km² and has 446 million inhabitants - the world's third largest population after China and India (after BREXIT). By surface area, France is the biggest EU country and Malta the smallest.

Members of the Schengen border-free area

The Schengen is an area without internal borders within which citizens, many non-EU nationals, business people and tourists can freely circulate without being subjected to border checks. Since 1985, it has gradually grown and encompasses today almost all EU countries and a few associated non-EU countries.

List of countries in Schengen area

Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland



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EU budget

The EU budget is funded from sources including a percentage of each member country's gross national income. It is spent on efforts as diverse as raising the standard of living in poorer regions and ensuring food safety.

EU languages

The EU has 24 official languages. These are:

1. Bulgarian
2. Croatian
3. Czech
4. Danish
5. Dutch
6. English
7. Estonian
8. Finnish
9. French
10. German
11. Greek
12. Hungarian
13. Irish
14. Italian
15. Latvian
16. Lithuanian
17. Maltese
18. Polish
19. Portuguese
20. Romanian
21. Slovak
22. Slovenian
23. Spanish
24. Swedish

Europe Day

Europe Day held on May 9 every year celebrates peace and unity in Europe. The date marks the anniversary of the historical 'Schuman declaration'. At a speech in



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Paris in 1950, Robert Schuman, the then French foreign minister, set out his idea for a new form of political cooperation in Europe, which would make war between Europe's nations unthinkable.

EU symbols

The EU is recognisable by several symbols, the most well-known being the circle of yellow stars on a blue background.

The European anthem

The melody used to symbolize the EU comes from the Ninth Symphony composed in 1823 by Ludwig Van Beethoven, when he set music to the "Ode to Joy", Friedrich von Schiller's lyrical verse from 1785.

The EU motto

"United in diversity", the motto of the European Union, first came into use in 2000.

The European flag

- The European flag symbolises both the European Union and, more broadly, the identity and unity of Europe.
- It features a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background. They stand for the ideals of unity, solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe.
- The 12 stars on the flag do **not** represent the number of states at any given time. Rather the number 12 connotes unity and completeness – e.g. 12 months in a year, 12 hours, etc.

C.4 Key Words

Joining the EU, Member countries of the EU, Countries using the euro, Schengen border-free area, EU budget, EU languages, EU symbols, European anthem, EU motto, European flag, Europe Day



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PART D

Further Reading

Websites/ Freely available papers

Official website of the European Union: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

Europe: From WWII To Today's European Union: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRw>

Countries of European Union. Interesting facts about Europe <https://www.youtube.com/>

EU at a glance: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/eu-at-a-glance>

Learning materials : https://europa.eu/learning-corner/learning-materials_en?keyword=&

The Council (of the European Union) explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jZ>

The European Parliament explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8h2cwPKJR18>

EU & Me: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6fcdb304-b4e1-4904-9000-000119000000/en/format-PDF/source-94593416>

Resources for teachers: <https://europa.eu/european-union/documents-publications/teachers>

How the European Union works:

https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/singapore/documents/more_info/eu_publications

What is the European Union? | BBC Newsbeat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8G>

PART E Unit Completion

1) Which of the following is not part of the Schengen Zone?

- a) Spain
- b) Cyprus
- c) Iceland
- d) Germany



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Explanation: The Schengen Area encompasses most EU States and some non-EU member states. EU states that are not part of the Schengen are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom

2) The number of official EU languages are 27:

- a. True
- b. False**

Explanation: The EU has 24 official languages.

3) How many member states are using use euro as their official currency?

- a. 19**
- b. 27
- c. 28
- d. 12

Explanation: The euro (€) is the official currency of 19 out of 27 EU countries. These countries are collectively known as the Eurozone.

4) Which of the following is the newest EU member state?

- a. Slovakia
- b. Croatia**
- c. Latvia
- d. Lithuania

Explanation: Croatia is the second former-Yugoslav country to join the EU after Slovenia which joined in 2013. It is also the first new EU member state since Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.



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5) Every time we have a new member - state in the EU, it is added a new star to the European flag

- a. True
- b. False

Explanation: The number of stars has nothing to do with the number of member countries, though the circle is a symbol of unity.

PART F

- - **Visit the link:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jo_KoBiBG0 Listen the European Union Anthem
- **Matching Quiz:** Match the countries with the date of their accession to the EU (draw a line →)

Cyprus	1995
Greece	2004
Austria	1981
Croatia	2013
Portugal	1986