

A ROUGH GUIDE TO EU DECISION MAKING

European Council

This is made up of the 27 leaders of EU Member States, including the **British Prime Minister**, plus the European Council President, and the President of the Commission. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (**British Commissioner Catherine Ashton**) takes part in its work. It defines the general political direction and priorities of the EU.

European Commission

Every country that is a Member of the EU (Member State) nominates a European Commissioner. The British Commissioner is **Catherine Ashton**, who is also a Vice President of the European Commission as well as being High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Together, the 27 European Commissioners and their officials represent and uphold the interests of the EU as a whole. In general, the Commission proposes new laws **but the Council and the European Parliament** decide on them. It also ensures that EU laws and Treaties are adhered to.

Council

This consists of Government Ministers from each Member State who represent national interests. **Different Government Ministers attend Council meetings depending on what is on the agenda** – for example, fisheries ministers attend Council when fisheries policy is being discussed. In some fields (in particular foreign policy), the Council decides alone. Otherwise, the Council and European Parliament jointly exercise legislative functions.

UK Parliament

Parliament scrutinises Government policy and activity on EU issues principally through committees in both Houses. The European Scrutiny Committee in the House of Commons is chaired by Bill Cash MP. The EU Select Committee in the House of Lords is chaired by Lord Roper.

Devolved administrations

The Government engages with the devolved administrations where policy touches on areas of devolved competence.

European Parliament

The European Parliament currently has 736 Members (or MEPs), who are elected every five years by voters in each of the 27 Member States. The **UK currently has 72 MEPs**. The European Parliament is co-legislator with the Council on most EU legislation. It is consulted or kept informed where the Council legislates alone. Parliament's assent is required for certain decisions e.g. EU enlargement.

EU LAW

UK Parliament as well as devolved parliaments and assemblies implement EU law

Court of Justice of the EU

Like the European Commission, **each Member State including the UK nominates one judge** to sit in the Court of Justice. The Court of Justice ensures that EU law is interpreted consistently across the EU, reviews the legality of EU acts, and rules on infringements of EU law.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is a **separate organisation and not a part of the European Union**. The Council of Europe was formed in 1949 and currently has 47 member countries. The **European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)** were both set up by the countries involved with the Council of Europe in 1959.