

Key European Entities



What is the European Union (EU)?

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union, established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993

- **Membership:** 27 EU member states
- **Goal:** To promote peace, its values, and the well-being of its citizens, offering freedom, security, and justice without internal borders
- **Distinctive Feature:** A single market allowing free movement of goods, services, capital, and people
- **Structure:** A hybrid system of supranational and intergovernmental decision-making processes (Source)



What is the Council of Europe?

Often confused with the Council of the EU and the European Council (both EU institutions), the Council of Europe is not part of the EU. The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 and its headquarters is located in Strasbourg, France

- **Membership:** 46 member states
- **Goal:** To promote and protect human rights and to enforce the European Convention on Human Rights
- **Structure:** Composed of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Court of Human Rights (Source)



What is the Eurozone?

Introduced in 1999, the Eurozone was created to unify EU economies by adopting the Euro as a common currency, with notes and coins in circulation by 2002

- **Membership:** 20 EU member states
- **Goal:** To eliminate currency exchange risks and support seamless trade and economic integration within EU members
- **Structure:** Centralized monetary policy by the European Central Bank (ECB) for price stability, while fiscal policies, such as taxation, remain under national control (Source)



What is the Schengen Area?

The Schengen Area was established in 1985 to eliminate internal border checks, easing travel and trade within Europe while maintaining shared external border controls

- **Membership:** 29 European countries
- **Distinctive Feature:** While it includes most EU countries, it also has non-EU members like Norway and Switzerland (Source)

Schengen Area Countries

- Iceland
- Norway
- Liechtenstein
- Switzerland

EU Countries - Eurozone

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

EU Countries (non-Euro)

- Bulgaria
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Hungary
- Poland
- Romania
- Sweden

Council of Europe Countries

- Albania
- Andorra
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Georgia
- Moldova
- Monaco
- Montenegro
- North Macedonia
- San Marino
- Serbia
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

Key EU Institutions

Council of the European Union

Key Responsibilities:

- Acts as a co-legislator with Parliament to negotiate and adopt EU legislation and budget proposals from the Commission
- Develops the EU's foreign and security policy and concludes international agreements on behalf of the EU
- The Council helps coordinate EU countries' policies and the European Council meetings

Composition:

- Government ministers from each EU country
- Six-month rotating presidency led by a member state (2024: Belgium & Hungary; 2025: Poland & Denmark) (Source)



European Commission

Brussels, Belgium | The EU's Executive Body

Key Responsibilities:

- Proposes new laws and policies, monitors their implementation, and manages the EU budget
- The Commission is organized into policy departments, called Directorates-General (DGs), which develop, implement, and manage EU policy, law, and program funding

Composition:

- 27 Commissioners (5 year terms), 1 per each member state:
 - 1 President (nominated by the European Council and approved by the EP); 8 Vice-Presidents among which is the High Representative; 18 Commissioners (nominated by member states, selected by Commission President, approved by the EP, appointed by the European Council) (Source)



European Parliament (EP)

Brussels, Belgium & Strasbourg, France | The EU's Legislative Body

Key Responsibilities:

- Act as a co-legislator with the Council to negotiate and adopt EU legislation and budget proposals from the Commission
- Holds democratic scrutiny of all EU institutions
- Approves EU budget spending, and discusses monetary policy with the ECB

Composition:

- 720 MEPs (Members of the European Parliament)
 - Number of MEPs is based on countries' population
 - Elected by popular vote for 5-year terms (Source)



"The Council"

Brussels, Belgium

The Council refers to two different EU institutions: the European Council, and the Council of the EU. They have very different roles and membership, although they have similar names and share the same staff (Source)

European Council

Key Responsibilities:

- The European Council is the EU's highest political authority, defining the Union's political direction and priorities. It also plays a critical role in managing unforeseen crises, such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic

Composition:

- Heads of state and government of the 27 EU member states
- President of the EU Commission & High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy (High Representative)
- President of the European Council (elected by members of the European Council for 2.5 year terms) (Source)



European Central Bank (ECB)

Frankfurt, Germany

Key Responsibilities:

- The ECB manages the euro and implements the EU economic and monetary policies

Composition:

- ECB Executive Board (President, Vice-President, 4 other members, appointed by the European Council for 8 year terms)
- Governors of national central banks from all eurozone countries (Source)



Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU)

Luxembourg | The EU's Judiciary Body

Key Responsibilities:

- Ensures compliance with EU law and proper interpretation, application, and fulfillment of the Treaties the EU is part of
- Assesses the legality of EU institution acts and interprets EU law upon national courts' requests

Composition:

- Court of Justice (ECJ) - 27 Judges and 11 Advocates General appointed by member states for 6 year terms
 - Deals with national courts (Source)
- The General Court (GC) - 54 judges also serving 6 year terms
 - Deals with individuals, companies, and governments, mainly in competition law, state aid, trade, agriculture, and trademarks (Source)
- Presidents of both courts are elected for three-year terms