



European  
Commission

# Role of the European Commission in the EU



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Commission

*Ms Tamsin Rose*

*Speaker on behalf of the  
European Commission*

# The roots of the EU project



In the aftermath of World War II, a new vision was proposed to ensure peace and prosperity.

9 May 1950 — French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presents a plan for deeper cooperation.

18 April 1951 - Based on his plan, six countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) sign the Treaty of Paris to create the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

# First European Community



The Treaty aims through a **common market** (free movement) for coal and steel, to support economic expansion, growth of employment and a rising standard of living.

Other aims are a growth in international trade and modernisation of production.

The Treaty introduced the **free movement of products** without customs duties or taxes. It prohibited discriminatory measures or practices, subsidies, aids granted by States or special charges imposed by States and restrictive practices.

# The institutional landscape



The ECSC Treaty created key institutions

- A **High Authority** – which later became the Commission
- An **Assembly** – which later became the Parliament
- A **Council of Ministers** representing Member States
- A **Court of Justice.**

# The High Authority



An **independent executive** tasked with delivering the objectives of the Treaty and **acting in the general interest of the Community.**

Individual members appointed for six years, **acting as a 'College'.**

A **supranational body with power of decision.** It could also issue recommendations and issue opinions.

# Building on success



5 March 1957, the six countries sign the Treaty of Rome, creating the European Economic Community (EEC), or 'common market' allowing free movement of **capital, people, goods and services** across borders.

It introduced a common market, a customs union and common policies.

Introduces the idea of an "***ever closer union***"

# An expanding club



Joining the six founding countries....

1973 United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland

1981 Greece (democracy restored in 1974)

1986 Spain & Portugal (democracy restored 1976)

1995 Finland, Sweden and Austria

2004 Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia,  
Slovakia, Czech Republic, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia

2007 Romania, Bulgaria

2013 Croatia

Iceland? Turkey? Macedonia (FYROM)? Serbia?

Kosovo? Montenegro?

# EUROPE...



28 countries and still expanding. Half of these have become democracies or independent states during the last 35 years.

508 million citizens, 24 official languages, great diversity of cultures, traditions, landscapes and lifestyles.

Committed to peaceful, gradual integration and cooperation. Finding common solutions to challenges.

Key values are peace, human rights, consensus, social democracy, freedoms of the internal market.







# The College of Commissioners

- *One Commissioner per Member State, appointed by their government, accepted by the President of the Commission*
- *Each Commissioner has a private office (cabinet) with a team drawn from 3 different Member States*
- *The College meets weekly on Wednesday morning, adopt decisions jointly and are jointly responsible for them*
- *Heads of Cabinet meet weekly on Mondays to prepare the Commissioners meeting*



# Selecting the Commission President

*The President of the Commission and Commissioners can serve **an unlimited number of terms** in office.*

*The President **is proposed by the European Council** on the basis of Qualified Majority Voting but has to **receive the backing of the Parliament**.*

*The Treaty of Lisbon refers to the President as 'elected' by the Parliament. For the 2014 European Parliament elections, European political groups are proposing their candidates for EC President.*

*How about the first-ever woman Commission President...?*



# Once the Commission President is in place...

*He or she works with the Heads of State to decide on portfolios for the Commissioners proposed by Member States.*

*Each proposed Commissioner faces a hearing in the European Parliament which takes a vote on the whole college of Commissioners.*

*These 'hearings' are not just symbolic – in 2004 two proposed Commissioners were rejected and in 2009 another two were rejected. The Member States concerned had to propose new Commissioners.*



# Commission Directorates-Generals

*Directorates-Generals are like a Department or Ministry at national level.*

*Previously the DGs were numbered, e.g; DG V but are now called by acronyms... do you know what these are?*

*DG CONNECT, DG RTD, DG EMPL, DG SANCO, DG CLIMA,  
DG JUST, DG HOME, DG DIGIT, DG ELARG, DG TRADE,  
DG SG, DG ECFIN, DG ENTR*

# The Commission has 32,666 staff (2013 figures)

- *Two thirds of them **work in Brussels***
- *Biggest Directorate-General is DEVCO, (11 % of staff), 7 % work in translation and 5 % in Research. DG CLIMA only has 0.5 % of staff.*
- **Nationalities:** Belgians (17%), Italians (11%), French (10%), Germans (almost 7%), UK (almost 4 %). Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg 0.5% or less
- **Gender:** 55 % of them are women
- **Ages:** Mostly 35-49. 3.2 % are under 30 and < 5 % are aged 60 +



# Commission – more than a civil service

*In addition to the tradition role of a civil service, the Commission has the **exclusive right to initiate legislation**.*

*This means that it drafts and proposes new laws in areas where it has competence under the EU Treaties.*

*For example, REACH Regulation on **R**egistration, **E**valuation, **A**uthorisation and Restriction of **C**hemicals that entered into force on 1st June 2007.*



# However, the Commission cannot pass the laws it proposes

*In this sense, it is 'more than a civil service but less than a legislature'*

*The Commission's draft laws are revised and adopted by the Parliament and the Council through 'Co-Decision'*

*National parliaments also scrutinise new draft legislation – with an eye to '**subsidiarity**' and '**proportionality**' – as do the consultative committees (Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions)*



## The Commission may also propose new laws on the basis of a request from citizens

*The **European Citizens' Initiative** is a new tool for participatory democracy in the EU. Introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, it requires a million signatures in 7 Member States.*

*An ECI must be in an area within the Commission's competence. So far several ECI proposals have been accepted.*

*In May 2013 the first ECI successfully reached the minimum requirements. More than 1.8 million people have signed up to **ensure that all Europeans have a right to clean, safe water and sanitation.** <http://www.right2water.eu/>*





# A law is passed in Brussels – this is not the end of the story

*EU laws – whether a Regulation or Directive - are binding upon all Member States.*

**Regulations** are very specific on what must be done and Member States are required to enact this

**Directives** set out what results have to be achieved, but Member States choose how to achieve them, notifying the Commission of their national implementing measures. This is called 'transposing EU law'

*Sometimes Directives evolve into Regulations if greater harmonisation is needed (Data Protection laws)*

## Some of the most important work is done in the area of the single market

*DG Trade, DG Internal Market and Services, DG Comp*

*Managing the largest trade bloc in the world requires constant intervention and – paradoxically - maintaining a deregulated market requires a lot of regulation*

*Such as action against states that inhibit competition (e.g; by illegal subsidies to 'national champions') and firms that act in an uncompetitive manner.*

*Consumers have benefited from this action – e.g; compensation for cancellations of flights, reduced roaming charges for mobile phones*



# An example of the Commission's role vis-a-vis Member States

*EU sets rules concerning TACs - Total Allowable Catches  
Part of the Common Fisheries Policy administered by DG MARE (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) which consults experts and interest groups, proposes legislation including limits on catches and then passes it to the Council and Parliament for inevitable modification.*

*If a country does not comply with what finally becomes law the Commission can ask the Court of Justice for sanctions.*

*In July 2005 France was fined 20 million euros for catching fish that were too small and a further 60 million every 6 months until it complied...*



# Guardian of the Treaties

## *Policing the business community in the internal market*

*In 2007, Commission imposed its largest ever fines for cartel violations. Four companies were fined **€992 million** for operating cartels for the installation and maintenance of lifts and escalators in Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.*

*In March 2013, Microsoft was fined **€561 million** for failing to comply with its commitments to offer users a browser choice screen enabling them to easily choose their preferred web browser*

# The two largest budget items

*DG Agriculture and Rural Development (formerly DG Agriculture), manages the Common Agriculture Policy (**CAP**) and now focuses more on general issues of rural life, including the quality of food produced, farming methods and 'greening' the countryside (e.g; forestation, hedges). The other 'big spender' through **Structural Funds** is DG REGIO, allocating funds for poorer regions of the EU, but with an emphasis on infrastructure development, promoting innovation, employment and growth.*

*Together these account for two-thirds of the EU budget and are financially directly managed by Member States.*



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# Administering the EU budget (1.23 % of GNI)

