

European and International Institutions and Organs

1. European institutions

The statutes and general objectives of the Community institutions are defined in the Treaties. Some new treaties are regularly signed to enlarge the competences of the institutions. Five institutions exist: the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the Court of justice of the European Communities and the Court of Auditors. The other organisms are not considered as institutions but as complementary organs. They are independent or annexed.

a) The European Commission

The European Commission has three responsibilities:

- It is the Guardian of the Treaties: it ensures the implementation of the Treaties and of the community legislation.
 - It has an initiative function: it proposes texts to the Parliament and the Council, which will then adopt them and edit a European law or implement financing programmes.
 - It has an execution and management function: it manages the budget, the community funds and the common Structural Funds.
- Finally it negotiates treaties for the Community.

b) The European Parliament

It is constituted of European Members of Parliament who are directly elected in each Member State.

The Parliament holds a three-fold action:

- It is one of the European decision makers; it carries Community acts - Legislative Power.
- Its Budgetary Power allows it to define the definitive budget. It is enabled to reject it.
- It also holds a Political control of the institutions: it can ask the Commission to submit a proposal to the Council or ask written or oral questions to the institutions.

c) The Council of the European Union

It is also called "Council" or "Council of Ministers" and it is constituted of fifteen ministers, who represent the policy of their government. For instance, the Agriculture Council will gather 15 Ministers in charge of Agriculture.

It carries regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations or advice.

d) The Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC)

The Court of Justice ensures the strict observance of the Community law.

In the context of a national-wide trial, a judge may refer to the Court to answer to a Community question.

e) *The Court of Auditors*

It is an independent institution that monitors the financial management of the Union, its institutions, the organisations or recipients of European financial supports.

f) *A particular case: the European Council*

The European Council has a vague and rather undefined statute. It is not a European institution. It gathers the President or/and the Prime Minister of the Member States of the European Union in a Summit at least twice a year. Together, they define the priorities and the calendar of the Community construction.

2. The other Community organs

a) *The Economic and Social Committee (ESC)*

It gathers the representatives of the organised civil society of the Member States and the groups of social and economic interests (employers, workers and activity groups regarding all sectors of activity) to enable them to express and defend their opinions within the institutions. The Commission must consult it before acts related to the internal market, education, consumers' safety, environment, regional development or social affairs are adopted. However, it can decide to issue opinion for the institutions to defend the living conditions of the citizens.

b) *The Committee of the Regions*

It is a consultative organ, which represents the local and regional authorities. The European Commission or the Council and the Parliament must consult it when the matter may have regional or local repercussions. It may emit opinions.

c) *The European Investment Bank (EIB)*

The EIB group is the financial organisation of the European Union. The Group consists of the EIB itself, which allocates direct or indirect global loans and of the EIF (European Investment Fund) that supports the innovative companies through activities of capital venture or guarantees. They act in order to foster the implementation of fundamental and priority objectives in the European Union.

d) *The European Central Bank (ECB)*

The ECB manages the introduction of the single currency and defines the monetary policy of the countries belonging to the Euro-zone. Its fundamental mission is to monitor and master inflation within the Union, but it also controls the reserves and leads the change operations.

e) *The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)*

The EBRD fosters the transition towards open market-oriented economies in the Central and Eastern European countries and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It grants loans and brings guarantees to the projects that aim at modernising infrastructures in those countries.

3. The international organisations

a) *The Council of Europe*

The Council of Europe gathers 43 Member States. Created in 1949, its first goal was to strengthen the unity of the continent, to protect the dignity of the European citizens and to "create a union getting always tighter between its members."

Important notice: this independent international organisation must not be confused with the Council of the European Union and the European Council.

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

It gathers 35 Member States. The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) is the oldest international financial institution in Europe and the only one with an exclusively social vocation.

It is placed under the supreme authority of the Council of Europe. It nevertheless has a financial autonomy. The Bank participates to the financing of social projects, responds to emergency situations and contributes to improving living conditions and social cohesion in the less advantaged regions of Europe.

b) *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*

Created in 1948, (under the name of EOCD, European Organisation for Co-operation and Development), it was an American proposal, which objective was to distribute the Marshall Plan funds after the war to reconstruct Europe.

After this period, it became the OECD. It counts 30 Member States and includes several countries external to Europe such as the United States, Canada, Japan and Australia.

Currently, it is an organisation of co-operation for economic development.

c) *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*

This partnership gathering all North American and European democracies ensures their common security thanks to a political and military alliance. It also facilitates the co-operation in other fields, such as science and environment, emergency civil plans, and support in case of catastrophe.

NATO contributes to political stability, economic development and long-term security in the Member States. It is ready to contribute to an efficient prevention of conflicts and to commit itself to the crisis management.