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## **Composition and structure of the Council of the European Union**

### **Introduction**

Council of the European Union? Council? European Council? Council of Europe? Council of Europe?  
Are they all the same? NO

The European Council is the reference to the quarterly summits at which EU leaders set the broad outlines of European policies.)

On the other hand, the Council of Europe is an international organisation outside the EU.

There is only one left, the Council. Here, yes, this is the informal name for the Council of the European Union.

Our institution has also undergone name changes, since in the early days, with the European Coal and Steel Community, it was called the Council of Ministers.

Its seat is in Brussels and it is one of the seven EU institutions, in this case an intergovernmental one.



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What does this mean? It represents the will and interests of the governments of the member states. The Council has political, regulatory and budgetary decision-making powers, but these are shared with the European Parliament (in what is known as co-decision).

### **The composition of the Council**

The composition of the Council reflects its functions.

As we said, its general function is to represent the will and interests of the governments of the Member States, which means that the Council is made up of representation from each EU state.

Among its more specific functions was that of adopting European legislation and coordinating EU policies, and for this reason, or for this purpose, it is organised into what are known as formations.

In short, the Council is made up of ministers from each EU country, depending on the issue to be addressed, so not only are there no permanent members of the EU Council, but it is not a permanent body, but it is assisted by other bodies for continuity, such as COREPER.

There is, however, a Presidency. Who holds it? Council meetings are chaired by the relevant minister of the country currently holding the rotating

EU Presidency (this rotation takes place every 6 months). With one exception:

- The Foreign Affairs Council has a permanent President----- the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

## **Council formations**

And what can we say about the formations?

The 10 formations depend on the issue at hand, but the Council remains a single body (with no hierarchy between the different formations). Even if there is no hierarchy between the formations, Coordination takes place through the General Affairs formation.

And what are the formations today? Well:

Agriculture and Fisheries

Competitiveness

Economic and Financial Affairs (or Econfin)

Environment, Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Foreign Affairs: specific mandate

General Affairs: institutional, administrative and horizontal affairs

Justice and Home Affairs

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

## **Meetings and voting**

Who may attend Council meetings? Representatives of the ministries of each Member State (ministers or secretaries of state) with the power to make commitments and vote for the State may attend meetings.

European Commissioners in the areas concerned may also attend. And, especially if it is the European Central Bank that has initiated the procedure, its representatives may also attend.

And, for any vote to be taken, a majority of its members must be present.

There are Public Sessions of the Council. These are devoted to debating or voting on a proposed legislative act. The first deliberation on important non-legislative proposals is also public.

Alongside these, there are also regular public debates on important issues affecting the interests of the EU and its citizens.

The debate on the 18-month work programme of the General Affairs Council and the priorities of the other Council formations is also public.

Finally, the debate on the Commission's five-year work programme is also public.

## Conclusion

In summary, the Council of the Union reflects in its organisation and structure its main functions. To be the intergovernmental body in which the interests of governments are reflected.



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