



National Assembly for **Wales**
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol **Cymru**

EU institutions and policy-making procedures

This paper gives an overview of the institutions and advisory bodies of the European Union (EU) and their role in the policy-making process, and an introduction to the types of document and legislative proposal issued by the institutions.

This is a description of the EU at the present time. The Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, which is currently subject to referenda in EU Member States, will change the way the EU operates.

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EU institutions and policy-making procedures

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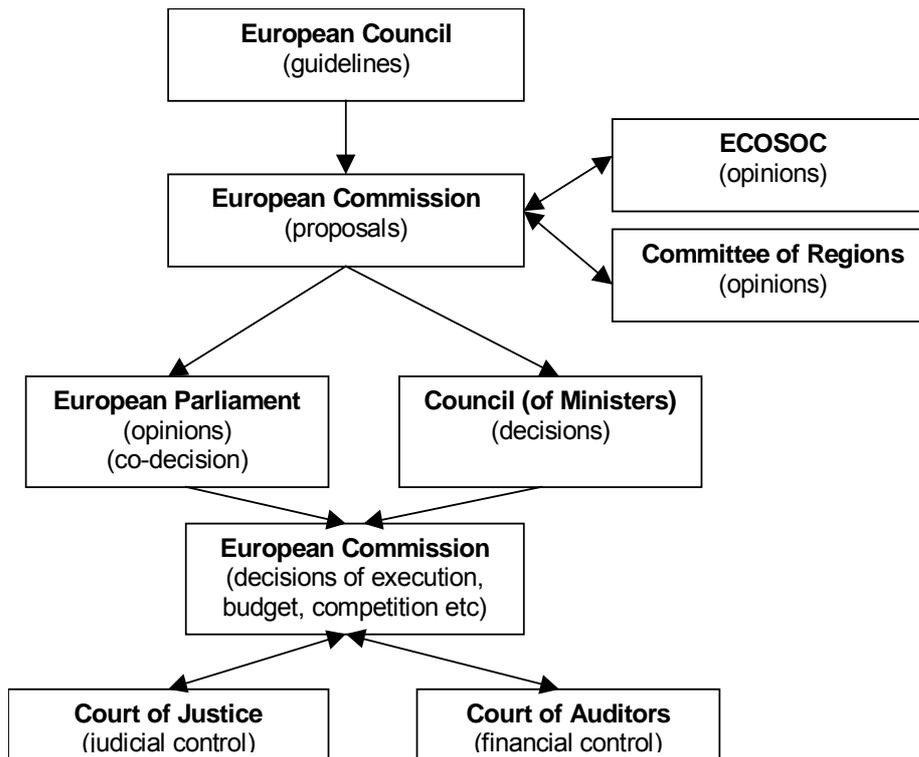
Cynulliad National
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EU institutions and policy-making procedures

1 EU institutions and advisory bodies

Diagram 1 (below) gives a basic overview of how the European institutions inter-relate:

Diagram 1: EU institutions and advisory bodies



1.1 The European Commission

The European Commission¹ has the 'sole right of initiative' in the EU, meaning that it is the only institution with the power to initiate legislation. Commission proposals are presented to the Council of the European Union and/or the European Parliament.

The Commission also issues most EU legislation, and 'polices' how this legislation is implemented across the 25 EU Member States. It manages the EU's budget and runs the Structural Fund programmes, and is also the EU's representative in external negotiations.

The Commission is run by the College of Commissioners, which is headed by the President and serves five-year terms. Each Commissioner has a portfolio and is responsible for one of the Commission's directorates.

Commissioners act on behalf of the EU as a whole rather than in the interests of their Member State. The UK nominated Commissioner is Peter Mandelson, Commissioner for External Trade.

¹ The website of the European Commission http://europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm

The European Commission has 37 departments known as Directorates General (DGs), each headed by a Director General and under the overall responsibility of a Commissioner.

At the beginning of each term in office, the Commission puts forward proposals for its strategic objectives for the approval of the Council and the European Parliament. In the spring of each year, the Commission publishes its annual policy statement for the following calendar year. This allows the other institutions and outside bodies to discuss and influence the programme. The Commission's annual legislative and work programme is normally issued in the autumn (in 2005, because of the change of Commission, it was published in February) and is a fairly detailed list of intended proposals, indicating the lead Directorate General and expected date of publication. During the year, the college meets weekly on a Wednesday morning, to take decisions and to adopt their policy or legislative proposals.

The Commission for the 2004-09 period took office on 22 November 2004, for a five-year period. A list of the new Commissioners and their portfolios is attached as Annex A.

1.2 Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union² is responsible for adopting EU law, and is the main decision-making body of the EU. It monitors and ensures co-ordination of Member States' broad economic policies, signs international agreements for the EU and drafts the EU's budget.

The Council is composed of ministerial representatives from each of the Member States. Regional Ministers, including Ministers of the devolved administrations in the UK, are also authorised to represent their Member State in the Council. If the Council meets to discuss specialist issues, e.g. the environment, Member States are represented by the Minister responsible for that area and the meetings would be referred to as, for example, the Environment Council.

Votes in the Council are weighted according to the population of the Member States. The UK, France, Germany and Italy have 29 each, while at the other end of the scale, Malta has three.

The Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), which consists of the Heads of each Member State's permanent national delegations to the EU, assists the Council with its work. COREPER is helped by expert working groups comprising seconded national experts, or desk officers from the Permanent Representations.

The Member States of the EU hold the Council Presidency on a six-monthly rotating basis. Luxembourg holds the Presidency until 31 July 2005, when it will pass to the United Kingdom for the second half of 2005.

Each country has its own permanent representation team in Brussels. Sir John Grant, KCMG, is head of the UK Permanent Representation, also known as UKRep³. It is responsible for negotiating and lobbying on behalf of the UK government.

The Welsh Assembly Government also has a Brussels office⁴, which is affiliated to UKRep (this arrangement gives the Assembly access to working groups and

² Website of the Council of the European Union <http://ue.eu.int/showPage.ASP?lang=en>

³ UKRep website <http://www.ukrep.be>

⁴ Assembly Government Brussels Office <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieurope/content/brussels-e.htm>

documentation that would not otherwise be available). The Brussels office currently consists of 8 staff, providing information and advice on EU policy areas of direct interest to the Assembly Government.

1.3 European Parliament

The European Parliament's⁵ main roles are amending and approving legislative proposals together with the Council, adoption of the European Community budget and scrutiny of the work of the Council and the Commission. The Parliament has to approve Member States' choice of President of the Commission and his Commissioners. The Parliament recently demonstrated the extent of its power over the make-up of the Commission as it forced Italy to change its nominated Commissioner and President Barroso to re-shuffle portfolios in November 2004. The European Parliamentary committees can question Commissioners, and MEPs can submit written questions to the Commission.

The European Parliament's influence depends on the extent of its involvement in the legislative process, which varies according to policy area. Its powers have been enhanced with each revision of the Treaty. By now, the majority of legislative decisions are subject to the co-decision procedure (see section 2.2), whereby the European Parliament has almost equal power with the Council of Ministers. In other policy areas, its influence is very limited. For example, consumer protection legislation is subject to co-decision, while agricultural prices review only requires the Council to consult the European Parliament before taking its decision.

The budgetary process allows the Parliament to have the final say on non-compulsory expenditure (which includes the structural funds, research, energy, transport and the environment) but not on compulsory expenditure (such as the Common Agricultural Policy). At the end of the process, however, the Parliament has a power of veto over the whole budget.

There are 732 MEPs and they are elected for five-year terms. The UK has 78, of which four represent Wales (see Annex B for details). MEPs may sit in one of seven Europe-wide political groups, which are more likely to determine the way they vote than any national line (again see Annex B). The European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (PPE/ED), have the greatest number of seats (268); however, the President, Josep Borrell Fontelles, is from the socialist group (PSE).

1.4 Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions⁶ (CoR) comprises representatives of regional and local bodies in the Member States. It has an advisory role, and must be consulted by the Council or the Commission on policies that have a clear local and regional government impact. However, the CoR has no power to bind the Council or the Commission, or to legislate.

Welsh nominations to the Committee of the Regions are formally made by the Assembly's First Minister to the UK government's Foreign Secretary. They are then forwarded to the Council of Ministers for approval. Rosemary Butler AM is one of Wales' two full members on the CoR. The WLGA also has a full member, and has recently chosen Cllr W.J. Williams (Leader of Isle of Anglesey County Council) to take the place of the late Cllr Brian Smith (Torfaen County Borough Council). Janet Davies AM and Jonathan Huish (Deputy Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council) are alternate members.

⁵ Website of the European Parliament http://www.europarl.eu.int/home/default_en.htm

⁶ Website of the Committee of the Regions <http://www.cor.eu.int/en/index.htm>

The CoR works through political and national delegations. The Local Government International Bureau is the secretariat to the UK delegation. There are four political groups: European People's Party (EPP – conservatives); Party of the European Socialists (PES – labour); Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE – liberal democrats); Union for Europe of the Nations – European Alliance (UEN-EA – Plaid Cymru).

1.5 Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC⁷ was established to involve economic and social interest groups in the EU decision-making process. It has 317 members, who are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable four-year term of office.

ECOSOC forms opinions, which can be requested from the Commission, the Council or the European Parliament, or developed on its own initiative. Although ECOSOC is consulted on all legislative proposals, its opinions, like those of the CoR, are not binding on the Commission.

1.6 Court of Auditors

The role of the Court of Auditors⁸ is to scrutinise whether all revenue due has been received, to examine whether all expenditure has been lawfully incurred, and to determine whether there has been proper financial management. Although the Court of Auditors has autonomy in these functions, it does not have the power of enforcement in its areas of control, and also does not have investigative power to examine suspected irregularities. It can however publicise its findings.

The Council, following consultation with the European Parliament, appoints members to the Court of Auditors on six-year terms.

2 The policy-making process

There are three main types of legislative procedure in the EU. Which one is used depends on the nature of the proposal. A brief overview of each type of proposal is given in Section 3. Regulations and directives, which are instruments with general application, are subject to the following:

- ◆ Consultation,
- ◆ Co-decision, or
- ◆ Assent procedure

However, for individually binding decisions and non-mandatory instruments, a simplified procedure is used.

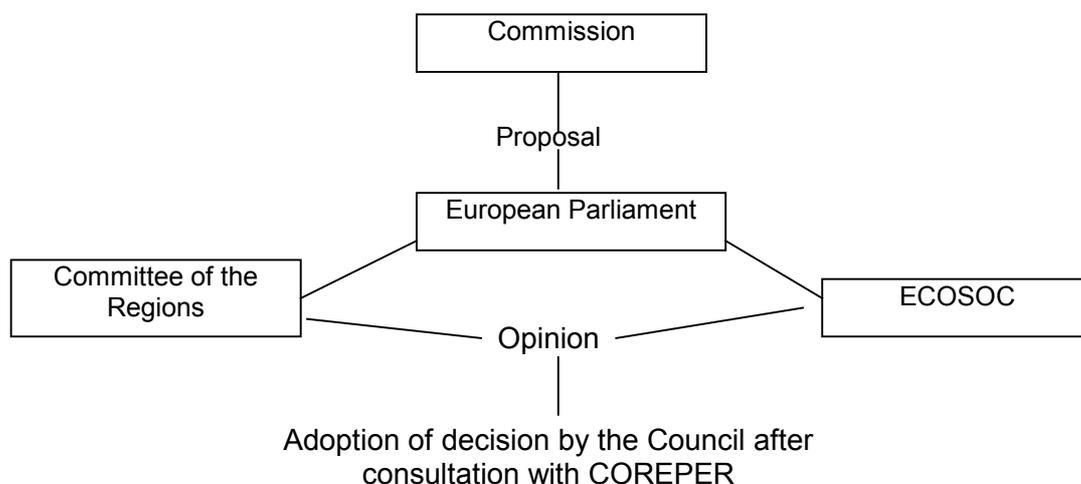
⁷ ECOSOC website <http://www.esc.eu.int/pages/en/home.asp>

⁸ Court of Auditors website http://www.eca.eu.int/index_en.htm

2.1 Consultation procedure

This gives the European Parliament the right to submit a non-binding opinion before the Council adopts a Commission proposal. Diagram 2 (over the page) shows how the consultation procedure works.

Diagram 2: Consultation procedure



Once the Commission has adopted the proposal, it is sent to the Council (and the Member States). The Council then submits the proposal to the Parliament for formal consultation. The President of the Parliament sends the proposal to a parliamentary co-ordination committee for consideration, with the outcome of this consideration debated in a plenary session of the Parliament. The Council does not, however, have to accommodate the Parliament's opinion or any suggested amendments.

The proposal returns to the Council for further debate, where it is discussed by COREPER (the collective Member States' Permanent Representatives). The proposal could be referred back to the Commission with a request for amendments, or it could be re-scheduled for further debate by the Council. Once the final text is agreed, it is signed by the President of the Council and published in all the official languages of the EU.

The areas covered by the Consultation Procedure are:

- ◆ revision of the Treaties;
- ◆ EU citizenship;
- ◆ police and judicial co-operation in criminal matters;
- ◆ visas, asylum, immigration and other policies associated with the free movement of persons;
- ◆ discrimination on the grounds of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or political conviction, disability, age or sexual orientation;

- ◆ “Enhanced Co-operation” – i.e. the arrangement allowing a group of Member States to work together in a particular field even if the others do not wish to join in yet;
- ◆ agriculture;
- ◆ competition rules;
- ◆ transport (where it is likely to have a significant impact on certain regions);
- ◆ economic policy;
- ◆ tax arrangements.

2.2 Co-decision procedure

Diagram 3⁹ (over the page) gives an overview of the co-decision procedure.

The co-decision procedure goes further than the co-operation procedure, by requiring the Council to adopt its common position by reaching agreement with the Parliament. It therefore confers a significant amount of power on the European Parliament, making it an equally important player in the process. The co-decision procedure can be used to adopt regulations or directives.

Co-decision normally involves two readings at the European Parliament. If the Council still cannot reach an agreement with the Parliament by this stage, the two institutions have six weeks to reach an agreement on the proposal in what is known as a conciliation committee.

At the first reading, the Commission sends its legislative proposal to the Council, the Parliament, the Member States and other relevant committees wishing to be consulted. If the Parliament does not propose amendments which the Council or Commission disagrees with, the proposal can be adopted at this stage. If not, the Council adopts a common position and returns it to the Parliament for the second reading.

At the second reading, the Parliament can:

- ◆ Reject the common position by an absolute majority of MEPs. If this is the case, the process ends at this stage;
- ◆ Agree to the common position with no amendment or provide no response within the three-month period. In this case, the proposal is adopted;
- ◆ Amend the Council's common position. The Council can then accept the amended position in full. However, if the Council accepts some of the amendments and rejects others, it can convene a Conciliation Committee within six weeks, to find a compromise that will gain the support of the necessary majority in Council and Parliament. If the Conciliation Committee succeeds at this stage and accepts a joint proposal, there will be a third reading. If the conciliation fails the process ends here.

At a third reading, the Parliament and Council are required to confirm their acceptance of the second reading compromise within six weeks. Whether or not the Commission accepts the new compromise proposal, the Council can usually adopt the instrument by a

⁹ Scottish Parliament Information Centre, RN 01/085, *An Introduction to EU Policy-Making Structures and Procedures*.

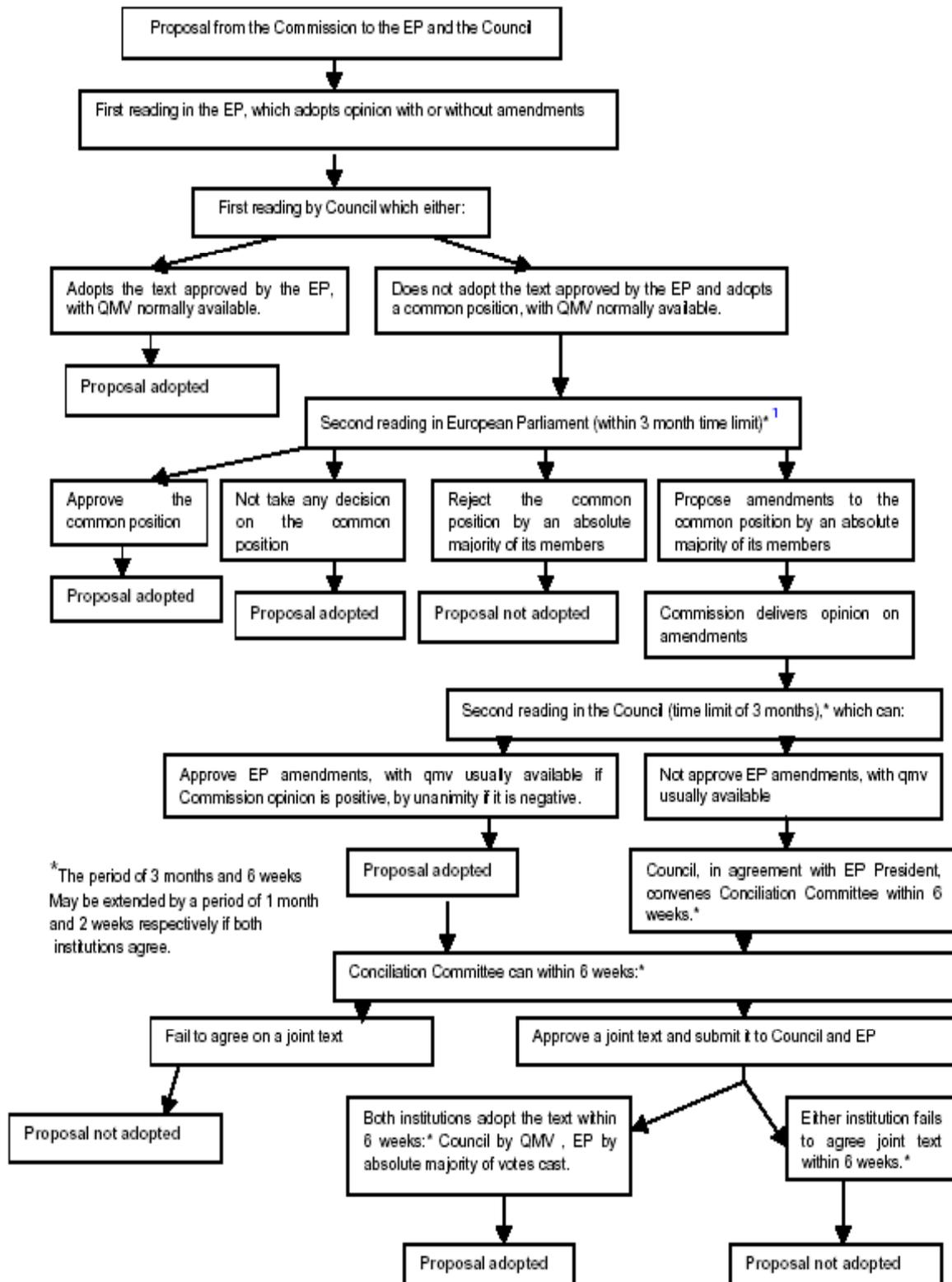
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qualified majority and the Parliament can adopt the instrument by an absolute majority of the votes cast. If both votes accept the instrument, it is deemed to have been adopted by Parliament and the Council.

Diagram 3: Co-decision procedure



Note: This diagram refers to QMV (qualified majority voting). A qualified majority is deemed to have been achieved when two conditions are fulfilled: the decision receives a set number of votes (which changes as new countries join) and is agreed by a majority of Member States.

The European Parliament therefore has significant influence in those areas subject to co-decision. This process is now used in the following policy areas (broadly grouped according to National Assembly for Wales' Ministerial portfolios):

Culture, Welsh language and sport

- ◆ culture;

Economic development and transport:

- ◆ the internal market;
- ◆ transport;
- ◆ employment;
- ◆ implementing decisions regarding the European Regional Development Fund;
- ◆ the right of establishment;
- ◆ the free movement of workers;
- ◆ research;
- ◆ trans-European networks;

Education and Lifelong Learning

- ◆ education;
- ◆ vocational training;

Environment, Planning and Countryside

- ◆ the environment;

Health and Social Services

- ◆ health;
- ◆ consumer protection;
- ◆ social security for migrant workers;
- ◆ the right to move and reside;

Social Justice and Regeneration

- ◆ the fight against social exclusion;
- ◆ implementing decisions regarding the European Social Fund;

Equality of Opportunity

- ◆ equal opportunities and equal treatment;

Others:

- ◆ customs co-operation;
- ◆ transparency;
- ◆ preventing and combating fraud;
- ◆ statistics;
- ◆ setting up a data protection advisory body.

2.3 Assent procedure

This is only used for 'special legislation', such as EU enlargement, the general Structural Funds regulations, the tasks of the European Central Bank as well as sanctions against Member States. The details of the procedure usually depend on the individual case, but in general, the Council has to obtain the European Parliament's assent before certain important decisions are taken. The procedure is the same as in the case of consultation, except that Parliament cannot amend a proposal – it must accept or reject it. Acceptance (assent) requires an absolute majority of the votes cast.

2.4 Co-operation procedure

The co-operation procedure is very similar to the consultation procedure, but involves the Parliament playing a more active role. In short, the co-operation procedure adds a second reading by the Council and the Parliament.

The co-operation procedure is used only in a limited number of cases.

More information on the co-operation procedure can be found on the EU's website¹⁰.

2.5 Open method of co-ordination

While the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) is not a formal decision-making procedure, it is an increasingly important mode of governance in the EU. It was formally introduced by the Lisbon European Council in 2000, and provides a way for EU Member States to converge towards common objectives in certain areas where the EU has no legislative authority. In contrast to the other decision-making methods, OMC aims at co-ordination rather than harmonisation of national policies. Participation is voluntary and does not need to involve all Member States; there are no sanctions for those who choose not to participate.

The OMC process involves¹¹:

- ◆ Fixing guidelines for the EU, with specific timetables for achieving the objectives;
- ◆ Where needed, establishing appropriate indicators and benchmarks to compare best practice;
- ◆ Translating EU guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets;
- ◆ Monitoring, evaluation and peer review.

The application of OMC has been extended to the following areas:

- ◆ Broad Economic Policy Guidelines;
- ◆ European Employment Strategy;
- ◆ Social protection;
- ◆ Education and training;
- ◆ Enterprise policy;
- ◆ Innovation policy and research;
- ◆ Structural economic reform;
- ◆ Immigration and asylum;
- ◆ Pensions.

¹⁰ Official website of the European Union <http://www.europa.eu.int>

¹¹ OMC processes can vary according to the policy area.

OMC will also be extended to cover health care and long term care from 2006¹².

Under the OMC, Member States draw up national action plans and timetables for meeting them. These are monitored by the Commission in annual reports that are agreed by the Council.

3 Types of EU legislative proposals and other documents

This section gives an overview of the types of legislative proposal and other documents produced by the institutions of the EU¹³. The first section looks at types of legislative proposals which constitute European law, and the second looks at non-legislative documents.

3.1 Legislative proposals

3.1.1 Directives

Directives are binding on the Member States as regards the objective to be achieved, but national authorities have a certain amount of freedom to decide how the Directive should be implemented domestically¹⁴. This enables Member States to take account of domestic circumstances when implementing Community rules.

Directives are adopted by the EU according to the relevant decision-making process, and are then transposed into national law:

- ◆ The Community lays down (in the Directive) the objective that is to be achieved by any or all Member States. (It is possible that the Directive's objectives can be spelt out in such detailed terms as to leave the Member States with little room for flexibility in national implementation).
- ◆ The Directive is transposed into legal or administrative provisions in the Member States. Although the Member States can choose the form and methods they use to transpose their obligations, Community criteria are used to assess whether they have done so in accordance with Community law. A lead UK Government department will co-ordinate the process of transposition with other interested departments, as well as with the devolved administrations. Each of these should all have been involved in the negotiating process before the Directive was agreed.
- ◆ In some cases, the Welsh Assembly Government may wait for the lead UK Government department to produce transposing regulations and then make minor amendments so that they are applicable to Wales. However, in other cases, where the legislation is of greater significance to Wales, the Assembly Government may be actively involved in agreeing instructions for lawyers, agreeing draft Statutory Instruments (SIs) and ensuring that distinct Welsh priorities are included. If the Assembly does not have the specific powers to make regulations to implement all of the requirements of a Directive under existing primary legislation, then it can be

¹² More information on how OMC will be introduced in the area of health and long term care can be found in a briefing paper produced by the European Public Health Alliance, at: <http://www.epha.org/a/1488>

¹³ Detailed information on how Assembly Members and Committees can influence each type of proposal/document can be found in Research Paper 05/015, available in the Members' Library or on the Members' Research Service internet site: <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubmrs/index-e.htm>

¹⁴ Member States have to comply with the requirements of a directive by the date specified on it.

designated (under Section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972) to bring forward regulations to implement European obligations in a given field.

For example, Commission Directive 2002/67/EC of 18 July 2002 on the labelling of foodstuffs containing quinine, and of foodstuffs containing caffeine¹⁵, was transposed into legislation in Wales under the *Food (Provisions relating to Labelling) (Wales) Regulations 2004 No. 249 (W.26)*¹⁶.

Directives are addressed to the Member State, and do not directly confer or impose obligations on Community citizens. If a citizen feels that the way in which a Directive has been implemented by the Member State means that he/she has missed out on certain rights conferred by it, he/she is able to take their case to the national court.

Directives are initiated by the Commission, but adopted by the Council (or jointly with the Parliament).

3.1.2 Regulations

Regulations allow the Community to have the greatest direct effect on national legal systems. They have the following characteristics:

- ◆ They lay down the same law throughout the Community and apply in full in all Member States. Member States cannot apply just part of a Regulation, or set up national law in such a way as to preclude its application.
- ◆ Regulations are directly applicable and so do not have to be transposed into national law, but instead confer rights or impose duties on the EC citizens in the same way as national law. Every Member State is bound directly by Community law and has to comply with it in the same way as national law.

Regulations apply from the date of their coming into force.

Most of the legislation relating to agricultural subsidies is made via Regulations, such as the Sheepmeat and Goatmeat Regulations, and the Structural and Social Measures. Also, most of the recent legislation related to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) is via Regulation to ensure that there is equality of effect across the EU, as is the recent legislation surrounding chemical registration and control.

Regulations are initiated by the Commission, but proposed by the Council (sometimes jointly with the Parliament).

3.1.3 Decisions

These are used to require a Member State or an individual to perform or refrain from an action, or to confer rights or impose obligations on them.

The basic characteristics of a Decision are:

- ◆ It can be distinguished from a Regulation because of its individual application. The person(s) to whom it is addressed must be named in it, and are the only ones bound by it.

¹⁵ Commission Directive 2002/67/EC http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/l_191/l_19120020719en00200021.pdf

¹⁶ *Food (Provisions relating to Labelling) (Wales) Regulations 2004 No. 249 (W.26)* <http://www.wales-legislation.hms.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2004/20040249e.htm>

- ◆ It is different from a Directive in that it is binding in its entirety, whereas a Directive just sets out objectives to be attained.
- ◆ It is directly applicable to those to whom it is addressed.

Decisions are used in instances such as the granting or refusal of State aid, the annulment of agreements or arrangements contrary to fair competition, and the imposition of fines or coercive measures.

Decisions are issued by the Council.

3.2 Non-legislative documents

3.2.1 Green Papers

These are discussion papers, issued for consultation. They are produced by the Commission on a specific policy area. Green Papers offer the most obvious opportunity for comment by Member States and devolved administrations, at an early stage in policy formulation, where there is greatest scope for influencing the Commission's thinking. In some cases they can provide an impetus for subsequent legislation. Green Papers always give a deadline for consultation responses, and make it clear to whom the response should be addressed.

Green Papers are issued by the Commission.

3.2.2 White Papers

White Papers are issued by the Commission. They normally follow on from a Green Paper consultation and lay out what action the Commission now intends to undertake in that specific policy area. They are used as vehicles for the development of the policy area.

Although policy proposals are more fully developed by White Paper stage, they still provide an opportunity for interested parties to influence the Commission's implementation.

3.2.3 Conclusions and Resolutions

There are two main methods the Council uses to signal a political commitment, without the need for binding legislation: Conclusions and Resolutions. They are generally proposed by the Presidency, which is more straightforward than being proposed by the Commission.

Presidency conclusions are produced on the authority of the Presidency only, while Council conclusions generally need the agreement of all Member States.

Resolutions have slightly less force, and suggest a political desire to act in a given area. They are also not binding.

An example of a recent draft Resolution is the Draft Resolution on Common Objectives for a Greater Understanding and Knowledge of Youth¹⁷, which was deposited with the UK Parliament on 15 October 2004.

3.2.4 *Others*

The Commission produces **communications**, which can be reports or overviews of an area that may lay out policy options for the future or action plans. They are issued to the relevant other institutions. Communications sometimes have **working papers** attached to them.

Recommendations are not binding, but Member States are advised to comply with them. A recent example is the Commission Recommendation on the 2004 update of the Broad Guidelines of the Economic Policies of the Member States and the Community (for the 2003-2005 period).

Opinions assess a current situation or certain facts in the Community or the Member States. They can be adopted by the Commission, the Parliament or the Council.

The Commission also issues **reports**, such as the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, which outline progress and activities in a particular area and may include the Commission's plans for change. Statistical reports giving information across Member States or regions are common.

4 Membership of external organisations

The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government are members of a number of European and international organisations, some are fairly focused on EU policy, while others have a broader remit. Overviews of the key organisations' membership, objectives and achievements are provided below.

4.1 *Organisations which relate to EU policy*

4.1.1 *CALRE*

The National Assembly for Wales is a member of the Conference of Presidents of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) and is represented on it by the Presiding Officer. CALRE was founded in 1997 and brings together the 'chairmen' of the legislative federal state parliaments of Europe – i.e. the parliamentary leaders of a sector or region, not of a national parliament. Only regions within European Union Member States may become part of CALRE, and the extent to which they have done so varies considerably according to the degree of regionalism in each state.

CALRE aims to prevent a democratic deficit where the regions are concerned, to act as a stimulus in the organisation of parliamentary control on European Affairs, to be the voice of European regional parliamentarianism in Europe, and to be a forum for the exchange of information between CALRE members and between the national parliaments and the European Parliament.

¹⁷ <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemeuropeancomm2/content/euleg041011/12564-04.pdf>

The members of CALRE are:

- ◆ The parliaments of the Spanish autonomous communities;
- ◆ The Italian regional councils;
- ◆ The assemblies of the Belgian regions and communities;
- ◆ The parliaments of both the Austrian and German Länder;
- ◆ The autonomous parliament of Åland (Finland);
- ◆ The regional assemblies of the Azores and Madeira (Portugal); and
- ◆ The devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

4.1.2 *REGLEG*

On the other hand, the Welsh Assembly Government is a member of REGLEG, or Regions with Legislative Power. It is a “co-operative venture of regions” focused on achieving an active role for legislative regions in the EU, according to their competences and responsibilities.

Every member of REGLEG is a country or region exercising a degree of democratic autonomy within its member state, and controlling some aspect of legislation. There are currently 72 regions with legislative power in the EU.

REGLEG covers small autonomous regions like the Åland Islands of Finland or the Azores in Portugal, through to the larger regions of Germany, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Italy and the UK. The Welsh Assembly Government joined REGLEG in 2001, and the First Minister has been attending the conferences since that time. The Assembly Government is also represented on the steering group at official level.

4.1.3 *CPMR*

The Welsh Assembly Government is also a member of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). It was founded in 1973 by around 30 peripheral maritime regions who were concerned that the growth of the EU would render them more remote from the centre of power.

The CPMR has three overall aims:

- ◆ To exploit the member regions' assets (sea and coastline);
- ◆ To increase awareness of regional disparities and potential competitiveness in the EU; and
- ◆ To ensure greater involvement of the regional level in European integration.

The CPMR aims to foster the development of co-operation between European regions (inter-regional co-operation) and with regions from non-EU states (external co-operations). It promotes the model of sustainable development and the maritime dimension of Europe through various EU sectoral policies, such as the Structural Funds.

The National Assembly for Wales has been a member of the CPMR since July 2001. In the 1999-2003 administration, the First Minister was nominated by the CPMR as spokesperson on EU regional development policy. The CPMR is financed by its members.

4.1.4 Other European / EU Associations

The other main European Associations that represent regional and local government, are:

- ◆ CEMR: the Council of European Municipalities and the Regions, which represents national associations of local and regional authorities, including the Welsh Local Government Association.
- ◆ AER: Assembly of European Region. It represents its member regions which are not necessarily constitutional regions, for example, West Midlands, Fife and Devon are amongst its UK members. It currently has 250 member Regions from 30 countries and 12 member interregional organisations, such as the Working Community of the Western Alps and the Association of European Border Regions (see below).
- ◆ Eurocities: a network of the major European cities. Cardiff is a member.
- ◆ AEBR: Association of European Border Regions.
- ◆ COSAC is a co-operation between committees of the national parliaments dealing with European affairs as well as representatives from the European Parliament. COSAC meetings normally take place in the capital of the country holding the EU-presidency. Following the Amsterdam Treaty which was adopted in 1999, COSAC is allowed to address to the EU institutions any "contributions" which it deems necessary.
- ◆ As its partners, the Committee of the Regions has been co-operating systematically with all the above Associations of regional and local government, including CALRE, CPMR and REGLEG since 2002. It has drawn up a number of Joint Action Plans with individual associations which provide a framework for shared objectives and activities.

4.2 Other European and International Organisations

4.2.1 CLRAE

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) was created by the Council of Europe in 1994. It is a consultative body, taking over from the former Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in the representation of those authorities on the Council. CLRAE's main aim is to uphold and promote the political, administrative and financial autonomy of European local and regional authorities. It is also responsible for monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government in each of the Member States.

CLRAE's role is to:

- ◆ Provide a forum where directly elected local and regional representatives can meet and discuss problems, pool experience and express their views to government;

- ◆ Advise the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on all aspects of local and regional policy;
- ◆ Co-operate with national and international organisations representing local and regional government;
- ◆ Organise hearings and conferences to reach as wide a public as possible in the interests of inclusive democracy;
- ◆ Prepare country-by-country reports on the state of local and regional democracy in all of the Member and Applicant States, in particular on how the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are upheld.

CLRAE is divided into two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities, and the Chamber of Regions. The work of CLRAE is organised into four statutory committees, dealing with institutional issues, culture and education, sustainable development and social inclusion.

All Member and applicant states are members of CLRAE. The number of seats each will have varies between 2 and 18, depending on the size of the state. There are 313 members in total (and an equal number of substitutes), who meet in plenary session once a year. The UK has 18 representatives across both chambers; for Wales, Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey AM is a substitute member on the Chamber of Regions, and Cllr. Alan Lloyd is a full member on the Chamber of Local Authorities (as well as being the leader of the CLRAE UK delegation).

4.2.2 The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

The CPA is a charity, registered under the laws of the UK, with the aim of “promoting knowledge and understanding of the legislative, economic, social and cultural systems within a parliamentary democratic framework”. The CPA is the only means of regular consultation among members of the Commonwealth parliaments.

The CPA consists of autonomous Branches, each headed by an executive committee formed in legislatures in Commonwealth countries subscribing to parliamentary democracy. It is funded principally through annual subscriptions paid by the members. The plenary conferences of the CPA are held by rotation in different countries. The most recent conference was held in Canada in August 2004 (the UK last hosted this conference in 2000). In addition, the CPA British and Mediterranean Region also hold an annual conference at which the plenary and workshop agendas focus on matters of regional interest; the CPA Wales Branch hosted this event in 2002. The CPA Wales Branch also regularly hosts visits and delegations from other Commonwealth countries and states. In 2003, the CPA Wales Branch hosted a conference on Voter Participation, which was attended by delegates from 20 Commonwealth countries.

All Assembly Members are members of the CPA Wales Branch.

4.2.3 The British-Irish Interparliamentary Body

The British-Irish Interparliamentary Body (BIIPB) was established in 1990 at the request of Members of the Oireachtas in Dublin, and the UK Parliament. It consists of 25 Members from each sovereign parliament, five each from the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly, and one each from the High Court of Tynewald and the States of Guernsey and Jersey. There are also 20

associate members from each of the sovereign parliaments, four each from the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly, and one each from the Tynewald and each of the Channel Island states. These may replace full members at plenary sessions or committee meetings.

The work of the BIIPB is carried out through four committees:

- ◆ Committee A – the Committee on Sovereign Matters (membership restricted to members of the sovereign parliaments);
- ◆ Committee B – the European Affairs Committee;
- ◆ Committee C – the Economic Committee;
- ◆ Committee D – the Environmental and Social Committee.

The work of the BIIPB focuses on non-legislative, parliamentary activities:

- ◆ The four Committees conduct inquiries on matters of common concern. They meet regularly throughout the year and take oral and written evidence from interested parties on which to base their reports. Committees travel around the UK and Ireland, as well as Northern Ireland, and to Brussels to take evidence relating to their work;
- ◆ There are two plenary sessions each year, alternating between the two countries and usually held at venues other than Dublin and London. The BIIPB normally debates matters of political and general concern, reports from its Committees and Government responses, and has a question period with a Minister from the host country;
- ◆ Committee members can also form sub-groups to focus on particular areas. An example of this is the sub-group formed in December 2004, chaired by Mike German AM, to investigate European funding opportunities for cross-border working. This sub-group is due to present its report in spring 2005.

A European Commissioners 2004-09

Commissioner	Nationality	Portfolio
José Manuel Barroso	Portugese	President
Margot Wallström	Swedish	Vice-President Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy
Günter Verheugen	German	Vice-President Enterprise and Industry
Jacques Barrot	French	Vice-President Transport
Siim Kallas	Estonian	Vice-President Administrative Affairs, Audit and Anti-Fraud
Franco Frattini	Italian	Vice-President Justice, Freedom and Security
Viviane Reding	Luxembourg	Information Society and Media
Stavros Dimas	Greek	Environment
Joaquín Almunia	Spanish	Economic and Monetary Affairs
Danuta Hübner	Polish	Regional Policy
Joe Borg	Maltese	Fisheries and Maritime Affairs
Dalia Grybauskaitė	Lithuanian	Financial Programming and Budget
Janez Potočnik	Slovenian	Science and Research
Ján Figel	Slovakian	Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism
Markos Kyprianou	Cypriot	Health and Consumer Protection
Olli Rehn	Finnish	Enlargement
Louis Michel	Belgian	Development and Humanitarian Aid
László Kovács	Hungarian	Taxation and Customs Union
Neelie Kroes	Dutch	Competition
Mariann Fischer Boel	Danish	Agriculture and Rural Development

Members' Research Service: Research Paper
Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau: Papur Ymchwil



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Benita Ferrero-Waldner	Austrian	External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy
Charlie McCreevy	Irish	Internal Market and Services
Vladimir Špidla	Czech	Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Peter Mandelson	British	Trade
Andris Piebalgs	Latvian	Energy



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Committee on Regional Development, Substitute
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Substitute
Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council, Member
Delegation for relations with the Gulf States, including Yemen, Substitute

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Conference of Delegation Chairmen, Member
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs, Substitute
Delegation for relations with the United States, Chairman
Delegation for relations with Japan, Substitute

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Conference of Delegation Chairmen, Member
Committee on Development, Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs, Substitute
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Committee on Budgetary Control, Substitute
Committee on Regional Development, Substitute
Delegation to the EU-Bulgaria Joint Parliamentary Committee, Member
Delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, Member
Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Substitute

Europe's Political Groups

- ◆ EPP/ED – European People's Party and European Democrats
includes British Conservatives, Ulster Unionist
- ◆ PES – Party of European Socialists
Includes British Labour Party
- ◆ ALDE – Alliance of European Liberal Democrats
includes British Liberal Democrats
- ◆ Greens/EFA – Greens/European Free Alliance
includes Plaid Cymru, British Greens, Scottish National Party
- ◆ Confederal Group of the European United Left / Nordic Green Left
includes Sinn Féin
- ◆ UEN – Union for Europe of the Nations Group
no UK members
- ◆ Independence /Democracy Group
includes UK Independence Party
- ◆ NI – Not attached
includes one Democratic Unionist MEP, one independent and one Veritas