Glossary of summaries

Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union (‘Council’) is one of the EU's main decision-making bodies. Its meetings are attended by ministers from the 28 EU countries, and it is the institution where these countries adopt laws and coordinate policies. The Council's headquarters are in Brussels, but some of its meetings are held in Luxembourg. Sessions of the Council (except for Foreign Affairs Council) are convened by the rotating presidency, which sets the agenda.

The Council meets in 10 configurations, bringing together the relevant ministers from EU countries: General Affairs; Foreign Affairs; Economic and Financial Affairs; Justice and Internal Affairs; Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs; Competitiveness; Transport, Telecommunications and Energy; Agriculture and Fisheries; Environment; Education, Youth and Culture. The ‘General Affairs’ Council coordinates the work of the different Council formations, with the Commission’s help.

Decisions are prepared by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the EU countries (Coreper), assisted by working groups of national government officials.

The Council, with the European Parliament, acts in a legislative and budgetary capacity. It is also the lead institution for decision-making on the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), and on the coordination of economic policies (intergovernmental approach), as well as being the holder of executive power, which it generally delegates to the Commission.

In most cases, the Council's decisions, based on proposals from the Commission, are taken jointly with the European Parliament under the ordinary legislative procedure. Depending on the subject, the Council takes decisions by simple majority, qualified majority or unanimity, although qualified majority is more widely used (agriculture, single market, environment, transport, employment, health, etc.).

See also

- Committees and working parties
Coreper
- European Council
- President of the European Council
- European Parliament
- Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- Qualified majority
- Unanimity
- Weighting of votes in the Council
- Council of the European Union website
- Summary on the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the European Union