

51. European Union – “United in diversity”



“The countries that make up the EU (member states) remain independent sovereign nations but they pool their sovereignty in order to gain a strength and world influence none of them could have on their own.”

The EU is a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not a State intended to replace existing States, nor is it just an organization for international cooperation. The EU is, in fact, unique. Its member states have set up common institutions to which they delegate some of their sovereignty so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level.

History

- WWII => Europeans were determined to prevent such killing and destruction ever happening again.
- firstly, the cooperation was between 6 countries and mainly about trade and the economy
- nowadays the EU comprises 25 countries and 450 million people and it deals with a wide range of issues of direct importance for our everyday life.

Europe = continent with many different traditions and languages but also with *shared values* (democracy, freedom and social justice) => cooperation among the peoples of Europe, promoting unity while preserving diversity and ensuring that decisions are taken as close as possible to the citizens.

Why did countries of Europe join together?

Pooling sovereignty = the member states delegate some of their decision-making powers to shared institutions they have created, so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level.

The EU's decision-making process involves three main institutions:

- **European Parliament (EP)**, which represents the EU's citizens and is directly elected by them
- **Council of the European Union**, which represents the individual member states
- **European Commission**, which seeks to uphold the interests of the Union as a whole

= institutional triangle produces the policies and laws that are applied throughout the EU. In principle, it is the Commission that proposes new laws, but it is the Parliament and Council that adopt them.

- Court of Justice upholds the rule of European law
- Court of Auditors checks the financing of the Union's activities

The powers and responsibilities of these institutions are laid down in the **Treaties**, which are the foundation of everything the EU does. The Treaties are agreed by the presidents and/or prime ministers of all the EU countries, and ratified by their parliaments.

Members of the EU and the EU enlargement history:

1952: B, F, NL, LUX, D, I

1973: DK, IRL, UK

1981: GR

1986: P, E

1995: FIN, A, S

2004: CZ, CY, ET, LV, LT, H, Malta, PL, SK, SLO

More info at: europa.eu.int

Keywords

decision-making power/process, EP, Council of the EU, EC, the Treaty