



European Economic and Social Committee





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What is the European Union (EU)?

- 28 Member States
- More than 500 million citizens
- Current candidates for EU membership: Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey



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What are the EU's main principles?

- **Common values:** respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity (Article 2 TEU)
- **Aim:** to promote peace, the Union's values and the well-being of its people (Article 3 TEU)
- **4 freedoms: free movement of people, goods, services and capital**



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The key stages in the EU's history





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The 1950s – the beginnings Post-war reconstruction

- **1950:** Schuman Declaration on 9 May
- **1951:** foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

6 Member States: **Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands**

- **1957:** Rome Treaties – birth of the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom



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The 1960s - laying the groundwork

- **1960:** creation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)
- **1962:** launch of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- **1968:** abolition of custom duties



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The 1970s

- **1973:** 1st enlargement – **Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom** join the EEC
 - ➔ Europe now has 9 Member States
- **1979:** 1st election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage



The 1980s - consolidation

- Enlargement to Southern European countries:
Greece (1981), **Spain** and **Portugal (1986)**
→ Europe now has 12 Member States
- **1986:** The Single European Act modifying the Treaty of Rome is signed
- **1990:** after German reunification, the former East Germany becomes part of EEC



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The 1990s

- **1993:** The Single European Market (Maastricht Treaty) enters into force
- **1995:** new enlargement - **Austria, Finland and Sweden** join
 - ➔ Europe now has 15 Member States



First decade of the 21st century: The biggest enlargement

- **1 January 2002:** 12 countries introduce the euro
- **2004:** enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries - 10 new Member States join: **Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia**
 - ➔ Europe now has 25 Member States
- **2007:** **Bulgaria and Romania** join
 - ➔ Europe now has 27 Member States
- **2013:** **Croatia** joins
 - ➔ Europe now has 28 Member States



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The first decade of the 21st Century

- Need for institutional reforms
- **2005:** European Constitution rejected in France and the Netherlands
- **2007:** Adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and its entry into force on 1 December 2009



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What does the EU do for you?

A few examples

- Freedom to live, study and work in any Member State
- Youth exchange programmes: Comenius, Leonardo Da Vinci and Erasmus
- A single currency for 19 countries
- Environmental laws to combat global warming
- Equal opportunities
- Lower roaming charges
- And much more...



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The European institutions





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The European Parliament

- Shares with the Council the power to legislate (to pass laws)
- Monitors the budget of the EU (with the Council) and supervises policies of the EU institutions
- Has 751 members elected by universal suffrage
- Elections every 5 years
- President: **Martin Schulz**



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The European Council

- Provides the EU with political guidance and defines the political direction and priorities
- Consists of the heads of state or government of the Member States, together with its president and the president of the European Commission
- President: **Donald Tusk**



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The Council of the European Union

- Co-legislates with the European Parliament (amends, adopts or rejects the Commission's legislative proposals)
- Consists of ministers from the 28 Member States chosen according to the agenda
- Rotating presidency: is chaired by a different Member State every 6 months:
 - 1 January – 30 June 2017: Malta
 - 1 July – 31 December 2017: Estonia



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The European Commission

- Proposes and implements laws (right of initiative, "guardian" of the Treaties)
- 28 Commissioners (one from each Member State) including the president: **Jean-Claude Juncker** and several vice-presidents (one is the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy)



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Other EU institutions and bodies

- The Court of Justice of the European Union
- The European Central Bank
- The European Court of Auditors
- **The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**
- The European Committee of the Regions



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What is the EESC?

- An **advisory body** set up by the Treaty of Rome (1957)
- Represents **organised civil society**



European
Commission



European Parliament

European
Parliament



Council of the
European
Union



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What is organised civil society?

- People “on the ground” – represented by organisations of



- **committed to defending their interests or convictions**
(human rights, children's rights, the environment, poverty, the fight against racism and discrimination...)



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What is the role of the EESC?

- Through its consultative role vis-à-vis the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, the EESC has three main tasks:
 - to ensure that EU policies reflect the true economic, social and civic picture,
 - to build a more participatory EU, closer to its citizens, and
 - to promote EU values and civil society organisations globally.



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A bridge between the EU and organised civil society

- Brings civil society's interests to the fore
- Enables civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level



What is the structure of the EESC?

- It is an assembly of **350 members** (appointed for 5 years) from the **28 Member States** of the EU.
- The EESC has 1 president and 2 vice-presidents elected every 2 and a half years.
- It represents economic and social interest groups: **employers, workers, various interests** (NGOs, farmers, youth, consumer protection, etc.).
- It has **6 sections** and a Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (**CCMI**).
- Its opinions are debated and adopted by simple majority at its plenary sessions (+/-9 a year).



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How does the EESC work?

- The Committee can be consulted by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU or the European Commission. Its Opinion can be **mandatory, own-initiative** or **exploratory**
- To issue opinions, the sections usually set up **study groups**, each with a **rapporteur**
- Constructive debate in meetings to reach consensus
- **A vote** is taken in the **section**, then in the **plenary session**
- The **final opinion** is sent to the European institutions and published in the **Official Journal of the EU**



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Your Europe, Your Say!





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The theme of YEYS 2017 is: 60 years of the Rome Treaty

- Discussing **what works** and **what does not** in the EU
- Analysing the future **challenges and opportunities** of the European Union
- Drawing up new **proposals** regarding the future of the European Union



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Questions that could be raised at YEYS 2017

- How do you evaluate the **EU's main achievements** so far?
- How do you visualise **the Europe of tomorrow**?
- What do young people **want from the EU** in the future?
- How can young people **increase their influence** on EU decision-making?
- Do you discuss European issues with family and/or friends and in at school?
- What are the **biggest challenges** facing the EU and what are the opportunities for building a strong European Union?



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Questions that could be raised at YEYS 2017

- How could the EU have handled the **refugee crisis** better?
- In your view, what will be the consequences of the United Kingdom **leaving the European Union**?
- What should be done to **arrest the rise** of nationalism and xenophobia?
- What can the EU do to **defend Europeans** against terrorist attacks?
- Does **globalisation** make the EU more or less significant?



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Working methods

- You will work in a group.
- The main findings of the working groups will then be reported during the **final plenary of YEYS** and will become part of the day's documentation.
- Hopefully the initial steps taken during this event will be followed up across Europe and inspire other young people to take active responsibility!



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Contacts

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Welcome to Brussels!

