

EU INSTITUTIONS | EUROPEAN COMMISSION



The European Commission (EC) is a key EU institution and part of the Union's "decision-making triangle," which includes the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Known as the 'Guardian of the Treaties,' the Commission focuses on broader European interests. It is based in Brussels, has offices in Luxembourg and across all EU Member States, and operates independently from them. The Commission's main roles are proposing and implementing European legislation, ensuring a balance between national and European priorities. The Schuman Declaration of 1950, which aimed at lasting peace and cooperation, significantly influenced its formation and role in European integration.

Roles of the European Commission



Guardian of the EU treaties

The European Commission (EC) ensures the enforcement of the Treaties and related secondary legislation throughout the EU. It acts impartially to uphold European interests and initiates legal actions against Member States or entities that do not comply.



Initiating European legislation

The European Commission (EC) has the unique authority to propose and draft new legislation within the EU, playing a crucial role in shaping the legislative agenda. Although other EU institutions may suggest new legislation, only the College of Commissioners can decide whether to move forward. The Commission can introduce legislative and budgetary actions, as well as limited initiatives like recommendations and opinions in specific policy areas.



Representing the EU in external relations

(with the exception of the Common Foreign and Security Policy)

The European Commission represents the EU in international policy negotiations with non-EU countries and global organizations under mandates approved by the Council of the EU. While it leads most negotiations, the High Representative oversees the Common Foreign and Security Policy.



Managing and implementing EU policies and budget

The European Commission is essential in managing the EU's finances. It proposes the annual budget, guided by the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), and monitors its expenditure. After the budget is approved, the Commission manages contributions from Member States and oversees EU funds like the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, which support various development projects. Additionally, the Commission fights fraud through the Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and ensures that funds are used transparently and responsibly.

Main internal bodies

The European Commission serves as both a supranational political body with independent policy making powers and an administrative institution that handles numerous technical tasks.

This dual functionality is reflected in its organizational structure:

The College of Commissioners is the ultimate decision-maker within the Commission. It holds legal and political responsibility for all Commission activities and decisions.

Each of the **27 Commissioners**, the President included, has a personal office (called a 'cabinet'), led by a 'Chef de Cabinet', to assist them in their duties.

The President of the Commission gives political guidance to the Commission's work and decides on its internal organization. The President also assigns each Commissioner a specific policy sector to oversee, along with authority over the corresponding administrative departments.

The **Directorates-General** (or DGs for short) and the so-called Services of the Commission are responsible for technical and administrative management of the Commission's work.





The preparation and journey of a dossier

After deciding to propose legislation in a specific policy field, the Commission starts the drafting process by issuing **green and white papers**. These documents outline the main concepts without detailing the specific contents of the upcoming legislation.

The Roadmap and Inception Impact Assessment (IIA) are key official documents in the legislative process.

The Commission performs impact assessments and regulatory scrutiny for significant EU laws or policies, while the Regulatory Scrutiny Board oversees quality control and transparency.

Once unopposed by any Directorate General, a proposal is reviewed by the responsible Commissioner's Cabinet, followed by all 27 cabinets, and then the College of Commissioners for **approval**. Depending on its political significance, the proposal is discussed during the Commissioners' weekly meetings either orally or in writing.



The Commission's legislative drafting process starts with a **'Call for Evidence'** to determine the scope of new or existing laws and policies. This includes identifying politically sensitive or significant new regulations, evaluating or critically reviewing current laws, or conducting a **"fitness check"** to assess their ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

The **"lead DG,"** a specific Directorate-General of the Commission, takes responsibility for a file and may consult other DGs for their input on the draft proposal. This coordination occurs through a process known as **'Interservice Consultation' (ISC)**.

A proposal is adopted by the College of Commissioners with an absolute majority (14 out of 27), though decisions are usually unanimous. Once approved, the proposal is **sent** to the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, and other relevant entities as required by the EU Treaties' decision-making procedures.

To remember

1. The Commission's mandate lasts for 5 years.

2. In 2009, the European Council resolved that the European Commission would continue to include **one Commissioner** from each EU Member State, matching the number of Member States.

3. The College of Commissioners is composed of **27 members**: the President of the Commission, 8 Vice-Presidents (including 3 Executive Vice-Presidents and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and 18 Commissioners, each responsible for a portfolio.

4. The European Commission, empowered by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, adopts delegated and implementing acts to specify the details and mode of implementing EU laws, under a system known as **'Comitology'**.

5. The Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) is the primary decision-making method in the European Union, applying to most policy areas unless specified otherwise by the EU Treaties. In this procedure, both the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, acting as co-legislators, can amend and have a decisive vote on the European Commission's proposals.

*While there is one Commissioner from each of the EU's Member States, they do not represent those Member States or governments. This is further reflected by the way Commissioners refer to their own country: instead of saying "my country", they say **"the country I know best"**.*

