

The Council of the Union

We have decided to linger on the European Council, one of the main European institutions.

*The **Council of the European Union** is the institution in the legislature of the European Union (EU) representing the governments of the member states, the other legislative body being the European Parliament. The Council is composed of twenty-seven national ministers (one per state). The exact membership depends upon the topic.*

The Presidency of the Council rotates every six months between the governments of EU member states, with the relevant minister of the respective country holding the Presidency at any given time, ensuring the smooth running of the meetings and setting the daily agenda. Its decisions are made by qualified majority voting in some areas, unanimity in others. Usually on the topics it operates unanimously, it needs only to consult the Parliament.

The Council has six key responsibilities:

-European laws: The Council exercises legislative power with the European Parliament for a wide range of Community issues.

- To coordinate economic policies of the member states.

-To conclude international agreements between the EU and one or more States or international organizations.

-To approve the EU budget with the European Parliament;

-To develop the Common Foreign and Security Policy, based on guidelines set by the European Council

-To coordinate police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

*Most of these responsibilities relate to the **“Community” domain** – i.e. Areas of action where the member states have decided to pool their sovereignty and delegate decision-making powers to the European Union.*

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