

GLOSSARY

EUROPEAN UNION TERMS

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Introduction

This Glossary has been produced for the benefit of Members of Eurodiaconia working with European policy issues. The glossary aims at giving knowledge about some terms used in the EU Institutions but is not exclusive. The source of information from this glossary has been collected from the European Commission glossary, for more information see: [Europa - Glossary](#)

Coreper

The Permanent Representatives Committee or "Coreper" (Article 207 of the Treaty establishing the European Community) is responsible for preparing the work of the Council of the European Union. It consists of the Member States' ambassadors to the European Union ("Permanent Representatives") and is chaired by the Member State which holds the Council Presidency.

Coreper occupies a pivotal position in the Community decision-making system, in which it is both a forum for dialogue (among the Permanent Representatives and between them and their respective national capitals) and a means of political control (guidance and supervision of the work of the expert groups).

It thus carries out preliminary scrutiny of the dossiers on the Council agenda (proposals and drafts for acts tabled by the Commission). It seeks to reach agreement at its own level on each dossier, failing which it may suggest guidelines, options or suggested solutions to the Council.

The agendas for Council meetings reflect the progress made in Coreper. They consist of A items, to be approved without discussion following agreement within Coreper, and B items, for discussion.

Coreper works in two configurations:

- Coreper I, consisting of the deputy permanent representatives, deals with technical matters;
- Coreper II, consisting of the ambassadors, deals with political, commercial, economic or institutional matters.

Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union ("Council of Ministers" or "Council") is the Union's main decision-making body. Its meetings are attended by Member State ministers, and it is thus the institution which represents the Member States. The Council's headquarters are in Brussels, but some of its meetings are held in Luxembourg. Sessions of the Council are convened by the Presidency, which sets the agenda.

The Council meets in different configurations (nine in all), bringing together the competent Member State ministers: General Affairs and External Relations; Economic and Financial Affairs; Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs; Competitiveness; Cooperation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA); Transport, Telecommunications and Energy; Agriculture and Fisheries; Environment; Education, Youth and Culture.

Each country of the European Union presides over the Council for six months, by rotation. Since January 2007 a new system for holding the Council Presidency has been in force. For each 18-month period, the three Presidencies which will be in office during that time prepare a draft common programme.

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

The Council, together 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 co-decision procedure. Depending on the subject, the Council takes decisions by simple majority, qualified majority or unanimity, although the qualified majority is more widely used (agriculture, single market, environment, transport, employment, health, etc.).

Court of Justice of the European Communities

The Court of Justice ensures compliance with the law in the interpretation and application of the founding Treaties. It is composed of the same number of judges as there are Member States (Article 221) and therefore at present has 27 judges. Partial replacement takes place every three years. The judges select one their number as President of the Court, for a renewable three-year term. The judges are assisted by eight advocates-general who are appointed for six years by agreement among the Member States.

The Court may sit in chambers (3-5 judges), as a Grand Chamber (13 judges) or as a Full Court.

The ECJ was created by the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. It has two principal functions:

- to check whether instruments of the European institutions and of governments are compatible with the Treaties (infringement proceedings, proceedings for failure to act, actions for annulment);
- to give rulings, at the request of a national court, on the interpretation or the validity of provisions contained in Community law (references for a preliminary ruling).

The overloading of the ECJ and the increasing length of time taken to deal with cases led to the creation of the Court of First Instance (CFI) in 1989. The CFI represents a second tier of judicial authority and has relieved the ECJ of some of its workload. Similarly, the Treaty of Nice made it possible to set up specialised judicial panels, such as the European Civil Service Tribunal, which has been operational since 2005.

With a view to simplifying and rationalising the operation of the Court, its Statute can now be amended by the Council, acting unanimously at the request of the Court or the Commission.

Similarly, approval of the Court's Rules of Procedure by the Council is now done by qualified majority.

European Commission

The European Commission is a politically independent collegial institution which embodies and defends the general interests of the European Union. Its virtually exclusive right of initiative in the field of legislation makes it the driving force of European integration. It prepares and then implements the legislative instruments adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in connection with Community policies.

The Commission also has powers of implementation, management and control. It is responsible for planning and implementing common policies, executing the budget and managing Community programmes. As "guardian of the Treaties", it also ensures that European law is applied.

The Commission is appointed for a five-year term by the Council acting by qualified majority in agreement with the Member States. It is subject to a vote of appointment by the European Parliament, to which it is answerable. The Commissioners are assisted by an administration made up of Directorates-General and specialised departments whose staff are divided mainly between Brussels and Luxembourg.

Since its inception the Commission has always been made up of two nationals from each of the Member States with larger populations and one national from each of the others. However, the Treaty of Nice limited the number of Members of the Commission to one per Member State. The Constitution, which is in the process of ratification, provides for a Commission in which only two thirds of the Member States would be represented after 2014. The Members will then be selected in accordance with a rotation system based on the principle of equality.

European Community

The European Community (EC) is a founding element of the European integration process.

It was established (as the European Economic Community) by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, with the principal objective of creating a common market without internal borders.

The establishment of the European Union (EU) in 1992 did not cause the European Economic Community to disappear. It remains part of the EU under the designation "European Community".

Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the EC defines its task as promoting throughout the Community:

- a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities;
- a high level of employment and of social protection, and equality between men and women;
- sustainable, non-inflationary growth;

- a high degree of competitiveness and convergence of economic performance;
- a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, economic and social cohesion, and solidarity among the Member States.

To achieve these goals, the EC has devised a set of sectoral policies, focusing on the fields of transport, competition, fisheries and agriculture, asylum and immigration, energy and the environment.

These policies are implemented under the decision-making procedure laid down by the Treaty establishing the EC, with particular emphasis on co-decision. The decision-making mechanism governing these policies is based on a specific model known as the "Community method".

European Council

The European Council is the term used to describe the regular meetings of the Heads of State or Government of the European Union Member States. Its role is to provide the European Union with the necessary impetus for its development and to define the general political guidelines (Article 4 of the Treaty on European Union). It does not enact legislation and is not an institution.

It meets at least twice per year (in practice, twice per presidency) and the President of the European Commission attends as a full member. An extraordinary meeting can be held whenever necessary. It is chaired by the Member State holding the six-month presidency of the Union. Decisions are taken by consensus following negotiation between the Member States, which begins before the summit. The outcome of the European Council deliberations is recorded in the conclusions published at the end of the meeting.

The European Council was set up by the communiqué issued at the close of the December 1974 Paris Summit and first met in 1975. Before that time, from 1961 to 1974, the practice had been to hold European summit conferences. The Single European Act (1986) gave a legal basis to its existence and the Treaty on European Union (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992) specified its functions.

Under the terms of a declaration attached to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference preparatory to the Treaty of Nice, all meetings of the European Council have been held in Brussels since the Union attained a membership of 18 (May 2004).

European Court of Auditors

The European Court of Auditors, based in Luxembourg, is composed of one national from each Member State. Its members are appointed for six years (renewable) by a qualified majority of the Council of the European Union after consulting the European Parliament. The Court of Auditors acts in complete independence.

The Court checks the revenue and expenditure of the European Union (and anybody created by the Community) for legality and regularity and ensures that its financial management is sound. It also supplies the European Parliament and the Council with a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. It draws up an annual report published in the Official Journal at the end of each budgetary year. Under the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Court of Auditors also has the power to report any irregularities to the European Parliament and the Council, and its audit responsibilities have been extended to Community funds managed by outside bodies and by the European Investment Bank. However, it does not have the power to impose penalties. Under the Treaty of Nice, the Court is also able to establish internal chambers to adopt certain categories of report or opinion.

The Court of Auditors was established in 1975 and began work in 1977, and has been a European institution since the Treaty on European Union in 1992. It is governed by Articles 246 to 248 of the EC Treaty.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is the assembly of the representatives of the 492 million Union citizens. Since 1979 they have been elected by direct universal suffrage and today total 785, distributed between Member States by reference to their population.

The European Parliament's main functions are as follows:

- legislative power: in most cases Parliament shares the legislative power with the Council, in particular through the co-decision procedure;
- budgetary power: Parliament shares budgetary powers with the Council in voting on the annual budget, rendering it enforceable through the President of Parliament's signature, and overseeing its implementation;
- power of control over the Union's institutions, in particular the Commission. Parliament can give or withhold approval for the designation of Commissioners and has the power to dismiss the Commission as a body by passing a motion of censure. It also exercises a power of control over the Union's activities through the written and oral questions it can put to the Commission and the Council. And it can set up temporary committees and committees of inquiry whose remit is not necessarily confined to the activities of Community institutions but can extend to action taken by the Member States in implementing Community policies.

The Treaty of Amsterdam (in force since 1999) boosted Parliament's powers by considerably extending the co-decision procedure. The Treaty of Nice, which entered into force in 2003, also enhanced Parliament's role as co-legislator by extending the co-decision procedure and granted Parliament a right to bring actions before the Court of Justice of the European Communities.

European Union

The European Union (EU) was established by the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht, 1992).

The project of creating a Union has a long history, and was first mooted at the European summit of 1972.

The Union is both a political project and a form of legal organisation.

It is a political project in that the Union's task is "to organise, in a manner demonstrating consistency and solidarity, relations between the Member States and between their peoples" (Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union).

To achieve this, the Union is set a number of objectives:

- To promote economic and social progress, sustainable development, an area without internal frontiers and economic and monetary union. These objectives match the aims pursued by the EU's sectoral policies.
- To assert its identity on the international scene. This aim is linked with implementation of the common foreign and security policy.
- To strengthen the protection of rights through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union. Union citizenship, which is created by the Treaty of Maastricht, is a special relationship between the EU and the nationals of the Member States.
- To create an area of freedom, security and justice. As its name suggests, this area is intended to promote greater freedom, security and justice for the citizen.
- To build on the *acquis communautaire* -- the corpus of rules established by and in the context of the Union.

The Union is founded on values: respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. It has its own symbols: a flag (twelve stars on a blue background), an anthem (Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy"), a motto ("United in diversity"), a currency (the euro) and a Europe day (9 May).

The Union is a form of legal organisation consisting of three pillars:

- the first corresponding to the European Community;
- the second comprising the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European security and defence policy (ESDP);
- the third consisting of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

It has a single institutional framework for the three pillars (essentially consisting of the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council of the Union and the European Commission). This ensures coherence and consistency in the Union's action across the pillars.

The Treaties do not officially confer legal personality on the Union but there is a consensus among the political players that this should be done.

Green Paper

Green Papers are documents published by the European Commission to stimulate discussion on given topics at European level. They invite the relevant parties (bodies or individuals) to participate in a consultation process and debate on the basis of the proposals they put forward. Green Papers may give rise to legislative developments that are then outlined in White Papers.

Green Papers on entrepreneurship in Europe (2003), on demographic change and a new solidarity between the generations (2005) or, more recently on a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy (2006) are examples of topics discussed.

Lisbon Strategy

During the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon (March 2000), the Heads of State or Government launched a "Lisbon Strategy" aimed at making the European Union (EU) the most competitive economy in the world and achieving full employment by 2010. This strategy, developed at subsequent meetings of the European Council, rests on three pillars:

- An economic pillar preparing the ground for the transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy.
- A social pillar designed to modernise the European social model by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion.
- An environmental pillar draws attention to the fact that economic growth must be decoupled from the use of natural resources.

A list of targets has been drawn up with a view to attaining the goals set in 2000. Given that the policies in question fall almost exclusively within the sphere of competence of the Member States, an open method of coordination (OMC) entailing the development of national action plans has been introduced.

The mid-term review held in 2005, for which a report was prepared under the guidance of Wim Kok, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, showed that the indicators used in the OMC had caused the objectives to become muddled and that the results achieved had been unconvincing.

For this reason, the Council has approved a new partnership aimed at focusing efforts on the achievement of stronger, lasting growth and the creation of more and better jobs. As far as implementation is concerned, the coordination process has been simplified. The integrated guidelines for growth and employment will henceforth be presented jointly with the guidelines for macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, over a three-year period. They serve as a basis both for the Community Lisbon Programme and for the National Reform Programmes. This simplification in programming makes it possible to monitor implementation more closely by using one single progress report.

Non-discrimination principle

The aim of this principle is to ensure equality of treatment for individuals irrespective of nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Article 12 of the EC Treaty outlaws any discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Under the Treaty of Amsterdam a new Article 13 has been written into the EC Treaty to reinforce the guarantee of non-discrimination laid down in the Treaties and extend it to the other cases cited above.

Ombudsman

The position of Ombudsman was established by the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht, 1992) to ensure sound administration and administrative transparency at EU institutional level.

The Ombudsman is appointed by the European Parliament after each election for the duration of Parliament's term of office (five years).

He is empowered to receive complaints from any citizen of the Union or any natural or legal person residing in a Member State concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of the Community institutions or bodies (with the exception of the Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance). For example, complaints may be based on lack or denial of access to information, on unjustified administrative delay, on unfairness or discrimination, or on lack of transparency.

The Ombudsman can open an investigation on his own initiative or following a complaint. Complaints can be submitted to the Ombudsman directly or through a Member of the European Parliament.

Where the Ombudsman establishes an instance of maladministration he refers the matter to the institution concerned, conducts an investigation, seeks a solution to redress the problem and, if necessary, submits draft recommendations to which the institution is required to reply in the form of a detailed opinion within three months. If the institution concerned does not agree to the proposed recommendations, the Ombudsman may in no case mandate a solution. However, he will be able to submit a special report on the question to the European Parliament so that it can take the appropriate measures.

Every year, the Ombudsman gives the European Parliament a report on all his investigations.

Open Method of Coordination

The open method of coordination (OMC), created as part of employment policy and the Luxembourg process, has been defined as an instrument of the Lisbon strategy (2000).

The OMC provides a new framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the Member States are evaluated by one another (peer pressure),

with the Commission's role being limited to surveillance. The European Parliament and the Court of Justice play virtually no part in the OMC process.

The open method of coordination takes place in areas which fall within the competence of the Member States, such as employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth and training.

It is based principally on:

- jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council);
- jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, indicators, guidelines);
- benchmarking, i.e. comparison of the Member States' performance and exchange of best practices (monitored by the Commission).

Depending on the areas concerned, the OMC involves so-called "soft law" measures which are binding on the Member States in varying degrees but which never take the form of directives, regulations or decisions. Thus, in the context of the Lisbon strategy, the OMC requires the Member States to draw up national reform plans and to forward them to the Commission. However, youth policy does not entail the setting of targets, and it is up to the Member States to decide on objectives without the need for any European-level coordination of national action plans.

Pillars of the European Union

The concept of "pillars" is generally used in connection with the Treaty on European Union. Three pillars form the basic structure of the European Union, namely:

- the Community pillar, corresponding to the three Communities: the European Community, the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the former European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (first pillar);
- the pillar devoted to the common foreign and security policy, which comes under Title V of the EU Treaty (second pillar);
- the pillar devoted to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which comes under Title VI of the EU Treaty (third pillar).

The Treaty of Amsterdam transferred some of the fields covered by the third pillar to the first pillar (free movement of persons).

The three pillars function on the basis of different decision-making procedures: the Community procedure for the first pillar, and the intergovernmental procedure for the other two. In the case of the first pillar, only the Commission can submit proposals to the Council and Parliament, and a qualified majority is sufficient for a Council act to be adopted. In the case of the second and third pillars, this right of initiative is shared between the Commission and the Member States, and unanimity in the Council is generally necessary.

Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union is organized on the basis of a half-yearly rotation system, under which each Member State holds the Presidency for a period of six months. The order of rotation is fixed by the Council of the European Union, acting unanimously.

Proportionality Principle

Like the principle of subsidiarity, the principle of proportionality regulates the exercise of powers by the European Union, seeking to set within specified bounds the action taken by the institutions of the Union. Under this rule, the institutions' involvement must be limited to what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties. In other words, the extent of the action must be in keeping with the aim pursued.

This means that when various forms of intervention are available to the Union, it must, where the effect is the same, opt for the approach which leaves the greatest freedom to the Member States and individuals.

The principle of proportionality is clearly laid down in primary law under Article 5, third paragraph, of the Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC). A Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, annexed to the TEC by the Treaty of Amsterdam, sets out the criteria for applying both these principles.

Qualified majority

A qualified majority (QM) is the number of votes required in the Council for a decision to be adopted when issues are being debated on the basis of Article 205(2) of the EC Treaty.

Following the 2000 Inter Governmental Conference and the Nice Treaty, the number of votes allocated to each Member State has been re-weighted, in particular for those States with larger populations, so that the legitimacy of the Council's decisions can be safeguarded in terms of their demographic representativeness. After 1 January 2007, following enlargement of the Union, the QM went up to 255 votes out of a total of 345, representing a majority of the Member States. Moreover, a Member State may request verification that the QM represents at least 62% of the total population of the Union. If this is not the case, the decision is not adopted.

As the various institutional reforms have taken effect, QM voting (QMV) has replaced unanimous voting, which is less effective for developing an operational Community policy (veto risk).

Social Policy Agenda

Its purpose is to help the European social model modernize to accommodate the massive changes in European economy and society. The Social Policy Agenda contributes to the Union's

overall aim of strengthening economic performance, creating more and better jobs and making the most of the opportunities offered by the knowledge-based society.

Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy

The Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund are the financial instruments of European Union (EU) regional policy, which is intended to narrow the development disparities among regions and Member States. The Funds participate fully, therefore, in pursuing the goal of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

For the period 2007-2013, the budget allocated to regional policy amounts to around € 348 billion, comprising € 278 billion for the Structural Funds and € 70 billion for the Cohesion Fund. This represents 35% of the Community budget and is the second largest budget item.

There are two Structural Funds:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is currently the largest. Since 1975 it has provided support for the creation of infrastructure and productive job-creating investment, mainly for businesses;
- the European Social Fund (ESF), set up in 1958, contributes to the integration into working life of the unemployed and disadvantaged sections of the population, mainly by funding training measures.

In order to speed up economic, social and territorial convergence, the European Union set up a Cohesion Fund in 1994. It is intended for countries whose per capita GDP is below 90% of the Community average. The purpose of the Cohesion Fund is to grant financing to environment and transport infrastructure projects. However, aid under the Cohesion Fund is subject to certain conditions. If the public deficit of a beneficiary Member State exceeds 3% of national GDP (EMU convergence criteria), no new project will be approved until the deficit has been brought under control.

These Funds will be used to finance regional policy between 2007 and 2013 in the framework of the three new objectives, namely:

- the "convergence" objective to accelerate the convergence of the least developed EU Member States and regions by improving growth and employment conditions. This objective is financed by the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund. It represents 81.5% of the total resources allocated. The co-financing ceilings for public expenditure amount to 75% for the ERDF and the ESF and 85% for the Cohesion Fund;
- the "regional competitiveness and employment" objective to anticipate economic and social change, promote innovation, entrepreneurship, environmental protection and the development of labour markets which include regions not covered by the Convergence objective. It is financed by the ERDF and the ESF and accounts for 16% of the total allocated resources. Measures under this objective can receive co-financing of up to 50% of public expenditure;
- the "European territorial cooperation" objective to strengthen cooperation at cross-border, transnational and interregional levels in the fields of urban, rural and coastal

development, and foster the development of economic relations and networking between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This objective is financed by the ERDF and represents 2.5% of the total allocated resources. Measures under the Territorial Cooperation objective can receive co-financing of up to 75% of public expenditure.

Structural Fund and Cohesion Fund support for the three objectives always involves co-financing. The rates of co-financing may be reduced in accordance with the "polluter pays" principle or where a project generates income. All projects must of course comply with EU legislation, particularly with regard to competition, the environment and public procurement.

Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity is defined in Article 5 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. It is intended to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made as to whether action at Community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. Specifically, it is the principle whereby the Union does not take action (except in the areas which fall within its exclusive competence) unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level. It is closely bound up with the principles of proportionality and necessity, which require that any action by the Union should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaty.

The Edinburgh European Council of December 1992 issued a declaration on the principle of subsidiarity, which lays down the rules for its application. The Treaty of Amsterdam took up the approach that follows from this declaration in a Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality annexed to the EC Treaty. Two of the things this Protocol introduces are the systematic analysis of the impact of legislative proposals on the principle of subsidiarity and the use, where possible, of less binding Community measures.

Treaties

The creation of the first "Community", the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was the starting point for over 50 years of European treaty-making. Between 1951 (ECSC Treaty) and 2001 (Treaty of Nice), no fewer than 16 treaties were signed. This series of treaties did far more than simply amend the original text: new treaties were born and gradually extended the family.

The principal treaties are as follows:

- Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), signed in Paris in 1951. This treaty expired on 23 July 2002.
- Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC), signed in Rome in 1957.
- Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), signed in Rome in 1957.

- Single European Act (SEA), signed in Luxembourg in 1986.
- Treaty on European Union (TEU), signed in Maastricht in 1992.
- Treaty of Amsterdam, signed on 2 October 1997.
- Treaty of Nice, signed on 26 February 2001.

All these treaties have been amended on a number of occasions, in particular at the time of accession of new Member States in 1973 (Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom), in 1981 (Greece), in 1986 (Spain and Portugal), in 1995 (Austria, Finland and Sweden), in 2004 (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania).

A draft European constitutional treaty was signed in October 2004. Intended to repeal and replace by a single instrument all the existing treaties with the exception of the Euratom Treaty, it consolidated 50 years of European treaties. To enter into force, the Treaty establishing a Constitution had to be ratified by all the Member States in accordance with their constitutional rules, i.e. either parliamentary ratification or referendum. Following the difficulties in ratifying the Treaty in some Member States, the Heads of State and Government decided, at the European Council meeting on 16 and 17 June 2005, to launch a “period of reflection” on the future of Europe.

At the European Council meeting on 21 and 22 June 2007, European leaders reached a compromise and agreed to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference to finalise and adopt not a constitution but a “reform treaty” for the European Union. If ratified, this treaty could enter into force in June 2009, ahead of the next elections to the European Parliament.

Troïka

The "Troïka" represents the European Union in external relations that fall within the scope of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP).

Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Troïka has brought together:

- the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union;
- the Secretary-General/High Representative for the common foreign and security policy;
- the European Commissioner in charge of external relations and European neighbourhood policy.

The Presidency can also be assisted, where necessary, by the representatives of the future Presidency (Article 18 of the Treaty on European Union).

Unanimity

The term "unanimity" means the requirement for all Member States meeting within the Council to be in agreement before a proposal can be adopted.

Since the Single European Act, it has applied to fewer and fewer areas. In the context of the first pillar, voting by qualified majority is now the rule. The second and third pillars, however,

still operate largely according to the intergovernmental method and the unanimity requirement, although the Treaty of Nice introduced qualified majority voting in certain areas.

White Paper

Commission White Papers are documents containing proposals for Community action in a specific area. In some cases they follow a Green Paper published to launch a consultation process at European level. When a White Paper is favourably received by the Council, it can lead to an action programme for the Union in the area concerned.

Examples are the White Papers on Completion of the Internal Market (1985), on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment (1993) and on European Governance (2001). More recently, the White Paper on Services of General Interest (2004) and that on a European Communication Policy (2006) have also moulded the development of Community policies.