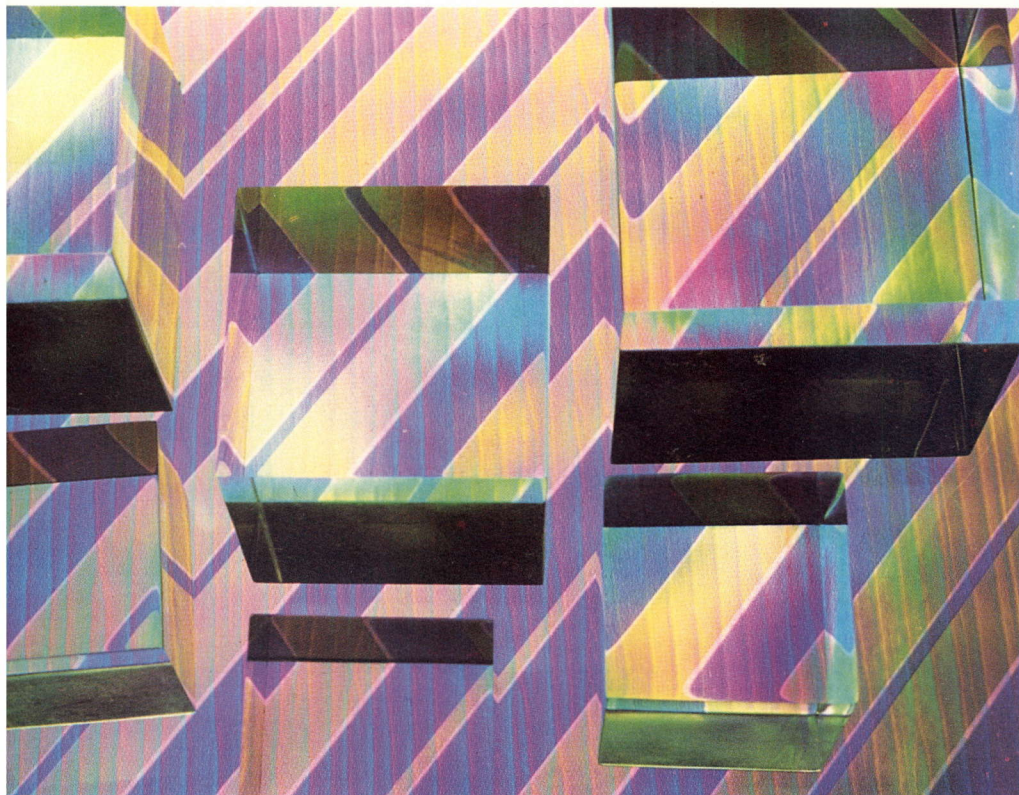
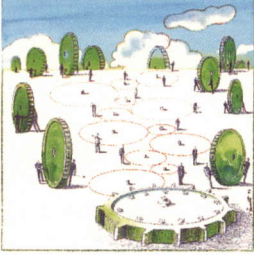




THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



Europe
on the move



The European Community comprises 12 Member States, united in an effort to safeguard peace and promote economic and social progress. It began with the Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 1951), which was soon joined by an Economic Community and an Atomic Energy Community (Treaties of Rome, 1957). Under the Single European Act (1986) the Community undertook to abolish its internal borders. The Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992 and incorporating selective opt-outs for Denmark and the United Kingdom, created a European Union combining a Community moving towards economic and monetary union with intergovernmental cooperation in certain areas.

The Community is managed by common institutions: a democratically elected Parliament, a Council representing the Member States and composed of government ministers or, more rarely, heads of State or government, a Commission which acts as guardian of the Treaties and has the power to initiate and implement legislation, a Court of Justice which ensures that Community law is observed and a Court of Auditors which monitors the financial management of the Community. In addition, there are a number of advisory bodies which represent economic, social and regional interests. As part of the preparations for enlargement, the Member States have decided to review the Community's operational procedures in 1996.

Administered by common institutions, the Community is subject to democratic control on two fronts: by the directly elected European Parliament and by the national parliaments which monitor their governments' activities.

Driving force and watchdog, the European Parliament also enjoys significant budgetary powers and is becoming increasingly involved in the adoption of European laws.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

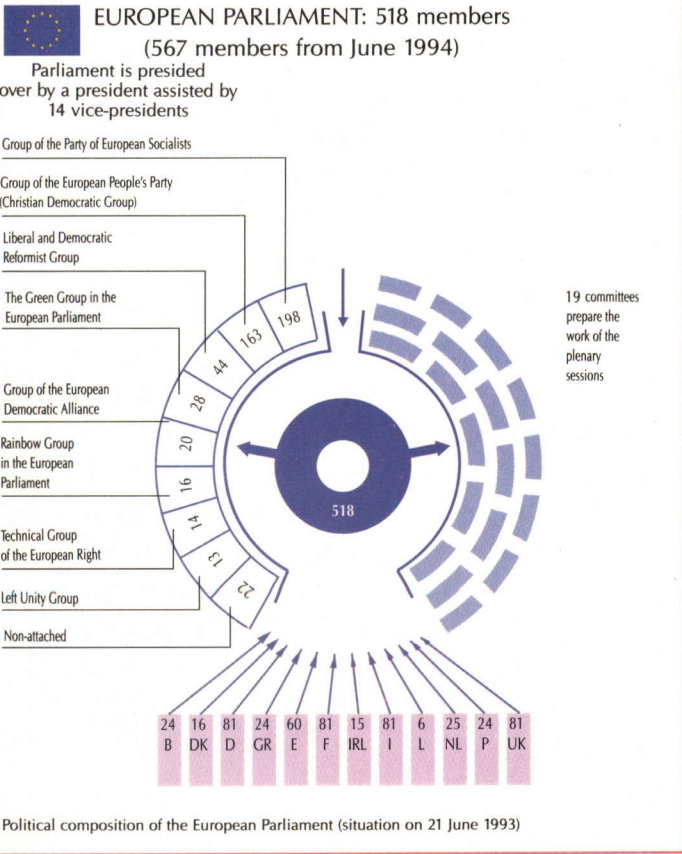
Elected by direct universal suffrage since 1979, the European Parliament will comprise 567 members as from the June 1994 elections: Germany will elect 99 members, France, Italy and the United Kingdom 87 each, Spain 64, the Netherlands 31, Belgium, Greece and Portugal 25 each, Denmark 16, Ireland 15 and Luxembourg 6. Parliament has its seat in Strasbourg although committee meetings and some part-sessions are held in Brussels. Its Secretariat is based in Luxembourg (3 500 officials plus the staff of political groups).

The European Parliament is composed of political groups organized at Community level. Representing 347 million people, Parliament's main role is as a political driving force, generating various initiatives for the development of Community policies. It is also a supervisory body with the power to dismiss the Commission by a two-thirds majority. Parliament votes on the Commission's programme and monitors day-to-day management of Community policies, especially by oral and written questions to the Commission and the Council. More than 3 500 written questions were tabled in 1992. Parliament can set up committees of inquiry and it also examines petitions addressed to it by Community citizens. The Treaty on European Union gives it the right to appoint an ombudsman to deal with complaints concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of the Community institutions or bodies.

Furthermore, the Treaty on European Union provides for Parliament's involvement in the appointment of the Commission. Together the Council and Parliament form the budgetary authority with Parliament playing an important role in the adoption of the Community budget, which exceeded ECU 59 billion in 1992 (ECU 1 = about UKL 0.77, IRL 0.82 or USD 1.15 at exchange rates current on 30 September 1993).

On 'compulsory' expenditure — mainly on agriculture — the Council has the final word. On 'non-compulsory' expenditure — around 44% of total expenditure in 1992 — Parliament has the final say. At the end of the budget procedure, Parliament may adopt or reject the budget which must be signed by the President; it subsequently monitors implementation.

Under the Treaties of Rome Community legislation is formulated by a three-way process: the Commission proposes and the Council decides after consulting Parliament.



The 1986 Single European Act increased Parliament's powers with regard to Community legislation by introducing a cooperation procedure which called for two readings of Community proposals by Parliament and the Council with the active participation of the Commission. The 1992 Treaty on European Union takes a further step towards recognition of the legislative powers of Parliament. It introduces a new co-decision procedure in a number of important areas which gives Parliament, in conjunction with the Council, the power to adopt regulations and directives on an equal footing.

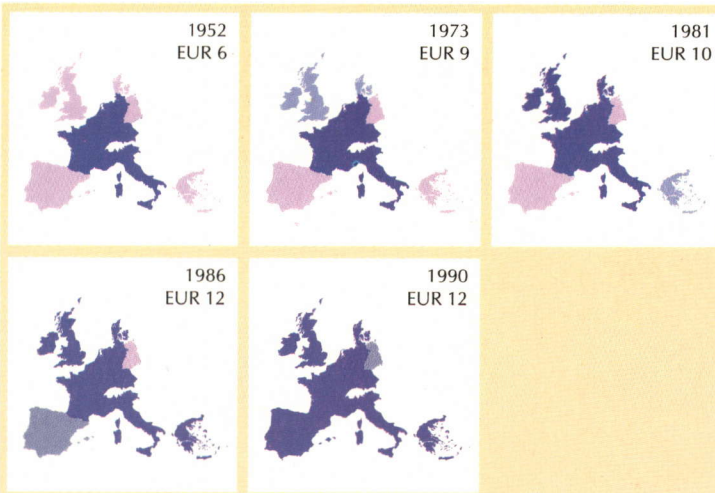
This procedure applies to the single market, research and the new areas covered by the Treaty on European Union, namely trans-European networks, consumer protection, education, culture and health. By contrast Parliament only has a consultative role in relation to agricultural prices.



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Finally, for certain decisions of major importance (international agreements, accession of new members, etc.), the Council can act only with Parliament's assent.

The Chamber of the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, seat of the European Parliament.



Founded by six countries — Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands — the Community enlarged with the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1973, followed by Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1990, the Community welcomed the new Länder of eastern Germany. Negotiations are now under way for the next round of enlargement.

The Heads of State or Government of the Twelve at the Copenhagen European Council on 21 and 22 June 1993.



THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Established in 1974, the European Council is made up of the Heads of Government (or in France's case, the Head of State) and the President of the Commission assisted by the Foreign Ministers and a Member of the Commission. The European Council, which meets twice a year in theory, acts as a guide and a driving force. The Treaty on European Union gives it certain operational responsibilities in relation to foreign and security policy and economic and monetary union.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Council comprises Ministers from each Member State. Meetings are attended by different Ministers according to the agenda: for instance, Agriculture Ministers discuss farm prices, while employment matters are dealt with by

Labour and Economic Affairs Ministers. Foreign Ministers are responsible for the Community's external relations and other general matters affecting the Community. The seat of the Council is in Brussels, though certain meetings take place in Luxembourg. Each Member State acts as President of the Council for six months in rotation. The Council is assisted by the Permanent Representatives Committee or Coreper, which organizes numerous preparatory meetings of officials from the Member States. The General Secretariat of the Council employs 2 100 staff.

The Council has a dual role. In the first place it adopts the main decisions on Community policies on the basis of proposals put forward by the Commission. In certain cases the Treaties require a unanimous decision, but in others, particularly with regard to the single market and economic and monetary union, the Treaty of Rome and more recently the Single European Act and the Treaty on European Union provide for a qualified majority, i.e. 54 out of a

Composed of Ministers from each of the Member States, the Council adopts European laws and directs intergovernmental cooperation.



A Council meeting in Brussels.

total of 76 votes. France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom have 10 votes each, Spain has 8 votes, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and Portugal have 5 each, Denmark and Ireland 3 each and Luxembourg 2. Unanimity is still required, however, where the Council wishes to deviate from the Commissions's proposals.

In the second place the Council is responsible for the intergovernmental cooperation introduced by the Treaty on European Union. This relates to the common foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs where most decisions require unanimity.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission has 17 members: two each from France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom and one from each of the other Community countries. From 1995, the Commission's term of office will be raised from 4 to 5 years, bringing it into line with the European Parliament. Parliament will be consulted before the Member States appoint the President of the Commission and the full Commission will have to be approved by Parliament before being appointed by mutual agreement by the governments of the Member States.

In carrying out their duties, Members of the Commission are obliged to be completely independent of their national governments and act only in the interests of the Community; only Parliament has the right to pass a motion of censure. Each Member of the Commission has special responsibility for one or more policy areas, but decisions are taken on the basis of collective responsibility.

The Commission is first and foremost the guardian of the Treaties. It is an impartial body which sees to it that Treaty

provisions and Community decisions are correctly applied. It can initiate infringement proceedings against any Member State and may, if necessary, refer matters to the Court of Justice. It can also impose fines on individuals or companies, notably when they act in breach of the Community's competition rules.

The Commission is also the catalyst of the Community. It has the sole right of initiative in the field of Community legislation, and it can exert its influence at every stage of the process preceding the adoption of a new 'European law'. In the area of intergovernmental cooperation, the Commission has the same rights as the individual Member States with regard to the submission of proposals.

Finally, the Commission is the Community's executive body. This involves issuing rules for the implementation of certain Treaty Articles and administering budget appropriations earmarked for Community operations. The bulk of these fall within one or other of the major Funds: the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the

The European Commission is the guardian of the Treaties; it is responsible for proposing and implementing European laws.

The Commission of the European Communities with its President, Jacques Delors.



Cohesion Fund. In carrying out its executive duties, the Commission is often required to seek the opinion of committees of officials from the Member States.

In 1992 the Commission sent 651 proposals and 272 communications, memoranda and reports to the Council. These documents are the product of intensive consultation with political, administrative, economic and social circles.

The Commission has an administrative staff based mainly in Brussels (where it has its headquarters) and, to a lesser extent, Luxembourg. It comprises approximately 17 000 officials divided between some 30 Directorates-General and similar departments. The operating expenditure of the Commission and the other institutions accounts for no more than 4.7% of the total Community budget.



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THE COURT OF JUSTICE AND THE COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE

The Court of Justice comprises 13 judges assisted by 6 advocates-general. A Court of First Instance comprising 12 judges was set up in 1989. The members of these Courts, which sit in Luxembourg, are appointed for 6 years by agreement between the governments of the Member States. Their independence is guaranteed. The Court's role is to ensure that the European Treaties are interpreted and implemented in accordance with Community law. The Court passes judgment, at the request of a Community institution, a Member State or an individual directly concerned, on any legal instrument enacted by European or national institutions which is alleged to be incompatible with Community law.

The Court also passes judgment, at the request of a national court, on the interpretation or validity of points of Community law. If a legal action produces a disputed point of this kind, a national court may seek a ruling from the European Court; it must do so if there is no higher court of appeal in the Member State concerned, in which case the judgment of the Court is binding. The Court of First Instance deals with most of the actions brought by individuals; an appeal may be brought in the Court of Justice.

Formal sitting to mark the 40th anniversary of the Court of Justice in Luxembourg on 4 December 1992.

The Court of Justice ensures that the Treaties and other Community provisions are interpreted and implemented in accordance with Community law.

Between 1952 and 1992, more than 5 400 actions were brought before the Court (not including complaints lodged by European Community officials under their Staff Regulations). The Court of Justice helps to create a body of Community law which applies to all in the same manner: Community institutions, Member States and individual citizens are obliged to comply with the Court's judgments; judgments of the Court overrule those of national courts; furthermore, the Court is now empowered to fine a Member State which does not comply with its judgments.

THE COURT OF AUDITORS

All the Community's financial activities are monitored by the Court of Auditors, which consists of 12 members appointed by a unanimous decision of the Council after consultation of Parliament. The Court of Auditors has extensive powers to check the reliability of the accounts, ensuring that all Community revenue has been collected and expenditure incurred in a lawful and regular manner and that financial management is sound. It has its seat in Luxembourg and reports to the other institutions, to which it may address opinions and observations.

Home of the Court of Auditors in Luxembourg.



THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE ECSC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Economic and Social Committee comprises 189 members who represent employers, employees and numerous other groups such as farmers and consumers. It sits in Brussels and must be consulted before the adoption of a significant number of decisions; it may also deliver opinions on its own initiative. It delivered 168 opinions in 1992. Matters relating to coal and steel are referred to another organ, the ECSC Consultative Committee, which is made up of 96 representatives of producers, workers, consumers and traders.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Newly established by the Treaty on European Union, this Committee sits in Brussels and also comprises 189 members, representing local and regional authorities. It must be consulted before the adoption of decisions affecting regional interests and it may also deliver opinions on its own initiative.



A meeting of the
Economic and Social
Committee.

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THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

Based in Luxembourg, the European Investment Bank raises funds on the capital markets to finance investments which contribute to the development of the Community; it also grants loans to a number of Third World countries and to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In 1992 the EIB made loans totalling ECU 17 billion from its own resources.

THE EUROPEAN MONETARY INSTITUTE AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

In 1997 if possible, and otherwise no later than 1999, a European System of Central Banks and a European Central Bank responsible for issuing and administering a single currency, the ecu, will be set up under the Treaty on European Union in the context of economic and monetary union. A European Monetary Institute will prepare the ground from 1994.

Further reading:

Emile Noël: 'Working together — The institutions of the European Community' published by the European Commission as part of the *European Documentation* series (new edition in preparation).



EN



This booklet appears in all the official Community languages — Spanish, Danish, German, Greek, English, French, Italian, Dutch and Portuguese.

Commission of the European Communities

Directorate-General for Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture

Editor: Publications Unit, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels

Manuscript completed in November 1993

Cover page design: Scarcerieau

Photos: CEC

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Printed in the United Kingdom

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Office for Official Publications
of the European Communities
L-2985 Luxembourg

ISSN 0379-3133

Catalogue number: CC-80-93-460-EN-C