

Chapter 3. History and Powers of the EU. EU Bodies and Institutions

3.1 A Brief Account of the History of the European Union

Since most of our international students come from non-EU countries, it is expedient to provide a brief outline of the history of European integration which started in the 1950s as an integration stressing economic cooperation. The Maastricht Treaty which came into force in 1993 coined the term of the European Union and extended the field of action of what used to be the European Communities into political cooperation.

The European integration started after the Second World War in the early 1950s in a specific sector of mutual cooperation in the field of the heavy industry, in particular by the establishment of the **European Coal and Steel Community** (ECSC) in 1951. The Treaty establishing the ECSC (also referred to as the Paris Treaty, since it was signed in Paris) comes into force on 23 July 1952. This community, unlike the two others which followed suit, was founded for a limited period of 50 years. Its activities were later absorbed the European Community. There were six founding members of the ECSC, in particular, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The political idea behind setting up this community consisted in taking an international control over Germany's heavy industry to make sure it would not use its carbon resources for rearming and triggering another war.

Two more communities were set up in 1957 by the same group of countries indicated above. The Treaty establishing the **European Economic Community** (EEC) and the Treaty establishing the **European Atomic Energy Community** (Euratom) were signed in Rome (hence they are also referred to as the Treaties of Rome). The Rome Treaties came into force on 1 January 1958. These treaties were revised later to take account of the current economic and political development on a number of occasions (the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty of Nice, the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Treaty of Lisbon, to name the most essential reforms of the founding documents).

In July **1968** customs duties between the member states on industrial goods were completely abolished, 18 months ahead of schedule, and a common external tariff is introduced. This is called the **customs union** which means that no single Member State may establish its own tariffs with respect to goods coming from the third countries (non-EU Member States are referred to as third countries). However, nowadays, the EU customs union also includes some states which are not members of the EU (such as San Marino and Andorra).

The very **first enlargement** takes place in **1973** when **Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom** join the European Communities, bringing their membership to nine. Norway stays out, following a referendum in which a majority of people voted against membership.

The **first direct elections to the European Parliament** are held in **1979**. Prior to that date, Member States selected some of their national deputies to represent them before the European Parliament. Nowadays, it is no longer possible to combine the mandate of the Member of European Parliament (MEP) with that of a national deputy.

In **1981** another **enlargement** of the European Communities takes place when **Greece** joins the club, bringing the number of members to ten. In **1986** **Spain** and **Portugal** follow suit, which raises the number of the member of the European Communities to 12.

In December 1991 a major review of the founding treaties was signed in **Maastricht**, laying the foundation for a **common foreign and security policy**, closer cooperation on **justice and home affairs** and the **creation of an economic and monetary union**, including a single currency. What used to be limited to purely economic cooperation has now clear elements of political cooperation as well. It is precisely the Maastricht Treaty which **introduces the concept of the European Union**. Under the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union consists of three pillars. The first pillar is integrated by the three communities set up in the 1950s, where decisions are taken mostly by qualified majority. The second pillar lays down the principles of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the third pillar launches cooperation in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) area. In the second and third pillar measures require unanimity of Member States in order to be adopted.

In **1995** **Austria, Finland and Sweden** join the EU, bringing its membership to 15. Norway stays out once again following a referendum in which a majority of people voted against membership.

In 1999, the third state of the European monetary union (EMU) starts. 11 EU countries adopt the euro, which is launched on the financial markets as ECU, replacing their currencies for non-cash transactions. The European Central Bank based in Frankfurt, Germany takes on responsibility for monetary policy. The 11 countries are joined by Greece in 2001. In 2002 Euro notes and coins are introduced in the 12 euro-area countries.

The **biggest EU enlargement** takes place in **May 2004**, when Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join the European Union bringing its membership to 25. Bulgaria and Romania follow track in **2007**.

The last extensive reform of the founding treaties was adopted in **Lisbon** in 2007 and came into force in **December 2009**. The current legal regime of the EU is now embodied in the TEU (Treaty on the European Union corresponding to its mission statement) and the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which specifies the steps how to achieve the objectives envisaged in the TEU).

The last country to join the European Union was **Croatia** in July **2013**, setting the number of EU member states at 28.

The Lisbon Treaty lays down for the first time in the history of the European Communities and the European Union a clause authorizing a member to leave the block if it wishes to do so. Following this express authorization in the treaty, **a referendum to leave the EU was held in the United Kingdom in 2016**. Slightly more than 50 per of the British population decided in favor of leaving the EU (this is referred to as the BREXIT). The procedure to disassociate from the EU will take a couple of years. Since the UK is not part of the Eurozone, nor is it part of the Schengen Area the negotiations should be easier than in case of more integrated EU Member

States. At the time of writing there was no agreement on the conditions on which the UK would leave the EU and which would govern the future relationship between the EU and the UK. The “divorce“ procedure was triggered in March 2017 and the negotiations of the „divorce from the EU“ should take 2 years to complete, but it is more than clear that there is too little time to agree on everything before this period expired in March 2019. It cannot be discarded that no agreement on the conditions of UK’s leaving the EU will be reached.

3.2 Objectives of the European Union

Following the Treaty of Maastricht, the objectives of the European Union are no longer limited to the economic cooperation between the EU Member States, but have become much wider, as summarized by Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty establishing the European Union which read as follows:

Article 2 TEU

*The Union is founded on the values of **respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights**, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which **pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail**.*

Article 3 TEU

*1. The Union’s aim is to **promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples**.*

3.3 Division of Powers between the European Union and its Member States

In order to achieve its objectives, the European Union requires its Member States to delegate their powers to a supranational level and in some instances to abstain from regulating certain fields of competence. Before joining the European Union, the Czech Republic had to change its constitution in order to provide for the said delegation of powers to the level of the European Union. There are basically two sets of competences exercised by the European Union: first, it is the **exclusive powers of the EU**, where the EU Member States may no longer legislate, and second, it is the **shared powers between the EU and its Member States**, where the EU Member States may still adopt legislation in areas where no legislation was adopted at EU level.

Article 3 of the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union lays down an **exhaustive list of exclusive powers** of the EU which include the following five areas:

- (a) The customs union;
- (b) the establishing of the competition rules necessary for the functioning of the internal market;
- (c) the monetary policy for the Member States whose currency is the euro;
- (d) the conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy; and
- (e) the common commercial policy.

An indicative list of the **shared powers** between the EU and the Member States is included in Article 4 of the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union. The shared powers apply to the following principal areas:

- (a) internal market;
- (b) social policy, for the aspects defined in this Treaty;
- (c) economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- (d) agriculture and fisheries, excluding the conservation of marine biological resources;
- (e) environment;
- (f) consumer protection;
- (g) transport;
- (h) trans-European networks;
- (i) energy;
- (j) area of freedom, security and justice;
- (k) common safety concerns in public health matters, for the aspects defined in this Treaty.

Some of these competences may require further explanation since they may sound generic in nature but may not disclose precisely their meaning in practice. Let us start with the **internal market**, which includes the four freedoms: the free movement of people, goods, services and capital where no discrimination based on nationality is acceptable. EU nations have to be granted **national treatment** in these areas. This means that they have to be treated equally as if they were nationals of the Member States where they wish to exercise their rights resulting from the internal market.

With respect to the **social policy** mentioned in the list of the shared powers, only a limited scope of action falls within the remit of the EU. All the social security benefits (such as the unemployment benefit or the old age pension) continue to be governed and paid out from national budgets and the EU does not intervene in stipulating the rates of these benefits. On the contrary, the action of the EU in the area of social policy is to promote the free movement of people by harmonizing (rather than unifying) certain rules that would encourage people to move across the borders, especially in order to work in a different EU Member State. To that end, the Treaty on Functioning of the EU requires the social security agencies of the Member States to recognize the number of years worked in another EU Member State (or a Member State of the European Economic Area including Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) as if work was done within the territory of the Member State of its origin for the purpose of calculating the duration of active working life. Otherwise, migrating workers would face the risk of not having worked a sufficient number of years in any Member State for an old age pension to be granted. The old age pension of migrant workers is paid partially by the different states where the migrant worker used to work. For instance, if an employee spent 20 years working in Slovakia and 20 years

working in the Czech Republic, 50 per cent of their old age pension will be paid by Slovakia and 50 per cent of their old age pension will be paid by the Czech Republic.

The policy of **economic, social and territorial cohesion** aims at reducing economic differences between different regions of Europe. The poorer the region, the higher the benefits it may receive from EU structural funds to improve its infrastructure by building roads, educational facilities, and/or sports facilities (such as cycling routes). Even though, the cohesion policy has not managed to eliminate economic differences between all regions of Europe it has managed to reduce them to a significant extent.

The field of the **common agricultural and common fisheries policies** continues to trigger heated debates when it comes to deciding on the EU budget. In its early times, the common agricultural policy, also well-known under its acronym of CAP, used to consume over 50 per cent of the entire EU budget. Nowadays, its “consumption rate” has dropped to about 40 per cent of the EU budget. The CAP should be supporting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged in agriculture and regional development, however, in practice, the EU funds have been misused by big players who pretended to be small farmers. The aim of the CAP is to subsidize European farmers in order to make their produce competitive in world markets.

Finally, the concept of the **area of freedom, security and justice** should be addressed. It includes

- Policies on border checks, asylum and immigration;
- Judicial cooperation in civil matters;
- Judicial cooperation in criminal matters; and
- Police cooperation

When the European Commission proposes legislation covered by EU’s exclusive competence it does not need to justify its proposal with respect to the sovereign powers of EU Member States. On the contrary, when proposing legislation in the area of shared competences, the European Commission has to justify why an action at EU level is better suited for the purpose. This is called the principle of subsidiarity, which means that the EU can only take action if an action taken at a lower level (for instance at the level of Member State or a region of a Member State) would be ineffective. For instance, if the European Commission intends to set up a supranational legal form of a business company (for instance an EU wide joint stock company) it can take action, since the jurisdiction of a single member state is limited to the territory of that Member State and cannot bind another Member State.

The principle of subsidiarity is defined in the Treaty as follows:

*Under the **principle of subsidiarity**, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.*

To sum up the principle of subsidiarity, action should be taken at the lowest possible level, where it is still effective.

Another principle governing the exercise of shared powers by the EU is the principle of proportionality which should leave as much room for maneuver to EU Member States as possible. For instance, directives should be preferred to regulations, as directives leave some level playing field to EU Member States unlike regulations. For the same reason, Framework directives should be preferred to detailed directives.

The treaty defines the principle of proportionality as follows:

*Under the **principle of proportionality**, the content and form of Union action shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties.*

3.4 EU bodies and institutions

The main EU institutions are listed in Article 13 TEU as follows:

- the European Parliament,
- the European Council,
- the Council,
- the European Commission,
- the Court of Justice of the European Union,
- the European Central Bank,
- the Court of Auditors.

For the purpose of this introductory course, only the European Parliament, the Council of the EU (also referred to as the Council of ministers), the European Commission, the European Council and the Court of Justice of the European Union will be discussed further. **Each of the institutions represents a different interest.** Whereas the European Parliament should represent the interests of EU citizens as the only directly elected institution, the Council of Ministers represents the national interests of the individual EU Member States and the European Commission represents the supranational interest of the international organization striving for an ever closer European Union.

3.4.1 The European Parliament

The European Parliament exercised jointly with the Council of Ministers legislative and budgetary functions. It also exercise political control with respect to the European Commission and elects the President of the Commission.

The European Parliament is composed of representatives of the Union's citizens. The Representation of citizens based on the **principle of degressive proportionality**, which means that small EU Member States are overrepresented while big EU Member States are underrepresented.

The members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected for a term of five years by direct universal suffrage in a free and secret ballot. MEPs can be reelected.

The European Parliament has three working places (Strasbourg, where plenary sessions are held 12 times a year for one week; Brussels where committee meetings and mini-sessions are held, and Luxembourg which houses the Parliament's secretariat). The official seat of the European Parliament is in Strasbourg.

Similarly to the composition of national parliaments, the European Parliament divides its work into 22 standing committees as follows:

1. *Foreign Affairs (AFET)*
2. *Human Rights (DROI)*
3. *Security and Defense (SEDE)*
4. *Development (DEVE)*
5. *International Trade (INTA)*
6. *Budgets (BUDG)*
7. *Budgetary Control (CONT)*
8. *Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)*
9. *Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)*
10. *Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)*
11. *Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)*
12. *Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)*
13. *Transport and Tourism (TRAN)*
14. *Regional Development (REGI)*
15. *Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)*
16. *Fisheries (PECH)*
17. *Culture and Education (CULT)*
18. *Legal Affairs (JURI)*
19. *Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)*
20. *Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)*
21. *Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)*
22. *Petitions (PETI)*

Even though the European Parliament should represent the interests of EU citizens, the only committee out of the 22 listed above which has a direct contact with EU citizens is the Petitions Committee.

Each MEP serves as a member of at least one committee and a substitute of another committee. In the European Parliament its members do not sit next to each other based on their nationality. Their seats are assigned based on their political affiliation. Traditionally, the European Peoples Party has been the strongest one in the past elections having the highest number of seats, followed by the European Socialist Party. The other parties represented in the current period of office of the European parliament (2015-2019) include

ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists Group),
ALDE (Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe),
GUE/NGL (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left),
Greens/EFA (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance),
EFDD (Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group), and
ENF (Europe of Nations and Freedom).

MEPs without a specific political affiliation are considered to be independent and labeled as "Non-attached members".

The **powers of the European Parliament** include adopting both legislative resolutions (by means of co-deciding together with the Council of Ministers) and non-binding political resolutions adopted on European Parliament's own initiative, for instance on the violation of human rights in a third country. Also, the European Parliament participates in adopting the budget and adopting discharge for the implementation of the budget. Apart from appointing the European Commission it appoints the European Ombudsman.

To be **able to vote on a proposal**, at least 1/3 of the Members of European Parliament (MEPs) have to be present. However, the EP may vote on a proposal with any number of MEPs present (that is even less than 1/3), unless a MEP asks for the verification of the 1/3 threshold.

The **speaking time** in the EP is limited due to a high number of MEPs to one minute during plenary session. However, MEPs are not limited in time when discussing reports during committee meetings.

Interpreting of plenary sessions is done into all EU official languages. The plenary sessions of the EP can be followed online on the official webpage of the European Parliament.

To have a more precise idea about the type of resolutions discussed by the European Parliament during its plenary sessions, the following box gives an example of selected items included in its agenda for its Tuesday meeting in Strasbourg on 11 September 2018:

<p>09:00 - 11:30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Debate with the Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, on the Future of Europe</i> <p>12:00 - 12:30 <i>Formal sitting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Address by Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic</i> <p>12:30 - 14:30 <i>VOTES followed by explanations of votes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ***I (A8-0253/2018 - 150) SIEKIERSKI AGRI <i>Equivalence of field inspections</i> • * (A8-0260/2018 - 150) VANDENKENDELAERE ECON <i>Common system of value added tax as regards the special scheme for small enterprises</i> • * (A8-0271/2018 - 150) ŠKRIPEK LIBE <i>Implementing decision on subjecting the new psychoactive substances cyclopropylfentanyl and methoxyacetylfentanyl to control measures</i> • (A8-0272/2018 - 150) LEWANDOWSKI BUDG <i>Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide assistance to Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania and Poland</i> • (A8-0273/2018 - 150) MUREŞAN BUDG <i>Draft Amending Budget No 4/2018: mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide assistance to Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania and Poland</i> </p></p></p>	<p>15:00 - 24:00 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A8-0250/2018) SARGENTINI LIBE <i>The situation in Hungary</i> • ***I (A8-0245/2018) VOSS JURI <i>Copyright in the Digital Single Market</i> • <i>Statement by the VPC/HR - Autonomous weapon systems</i> • (A8-0251/2018 - 150) BROK AFET <i>State of EU-US relations</i> • <i>Statement by the VPC/HR* - The emergency situation in Libya and the Mediterranean</i> • <i>Statement by the VPC/HR - The threat of demolition of Khan al-Ahmar and other Bedouin villages</i> <p><i>Vote: Thursday</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A8-0252/2018) BELDER AFET <i>State of EU-China relations</i> • ***I (A8-0394/2017) DELVAUX, LÓPEZ AGUILAR ECON/LIBE <i>Controls on cash entering or leaving the Union</i> <p><i>*The abbreviation "VPC/HR" stands for the Vice-President of the Council/High Representative of the European Union</i></p> </p></p>
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Source: European Parliament, Agenda for the sittings of 10-13 September (Strasbourg)

3.4.2 The Council and the European Council

The Council of the EU (formerly known as the Council of Ministers) exercises jointly with the European Parliament legislative and budgetary functions. It also carries out policy-making and coordinating functions, especially with respect to the commercial policies of the EU Member States.

The Council consists of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, who may commit the government of the Member State in question and cast its vote. Depending on the agenda to be discussed, the Council can meet in 10 different configurations listed below:

1. Agriculture and fisheries
2. Competitiveness
3. Economic and financial affairs
4. Environment
5. Employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs
6. Education, youth, culture and sport
7. Foreign affairs
8. General affairs
9. Justice and home affairs
10. Transport, telecommunications and energy

When adopting legislation, Council acts by a qualified majority as a rule. There is a blocking minority consisting of 4 Member States which have to represent at least 35 of the population of the EU.

Qualified majority consists of two majorities: at least 55 % of the members of the Council, representing Member States covering at least 65 % of the population of the Union.

Some exceptional topics require unanimity in the Council, e.g. taxation, but qualified majority voting (QMV) is a rule. If a regulation or a directive is adopted by QMV against the will of a Member State or if a Member State abstained from the vote, such a regulation or directive will be still binding on that Member State which was outvoted.

The Council is based in Brussels. When deciding in its legislative function, its meetings are public. Otherwise (especially when deliberating on issues linked to the Common Foreign and Security Policy) it meets in private in order not to compromise the outcome of the negotiations.

The Council publishes the results of vote on legislative documents on its web page.

The meetings of the Council are prepared by COREPER which stands for the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Each Member State has a permanent representation (mission) in Brussels before the EU. The members of COREPER come from these permanent missions. Usually, they are career diplomats working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their home country who have been seconded to Brussels for 3 or 4 years.

The **Council of Ministers** as a legislative body needs to be distinguished from a younger institution first established in the 1970s, the European Council, which is a non-legislative body exercising a political function.

The European Council shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political directions and priorities thereof. The Commission can act based on the political proposals adopted by the European Council by proposing a regulation, a directive or a soft-law instrument.

The European Council consists of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States, together with its President and the President of the Commission. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy also takes part in its work. The Czech Republic is represented by the Prime Minister as it is a Parliamentary Democracy. Other Member States, such as France, are represented by their President, as France is a Presidential Democracy. The nature of the national representative attending the meeting of the European Council is based on the national constitutional habits.

3.4.3 The European Commission

The Commission shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end. It shall ensure the application of the Treaties, and of measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them. It shall oversee the application of Union law [therefore it is called the **Guardian of the Treaties**] under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union [by means of launching an infringement procedure against the Member State breaching EU Law]. It shall execute the budget and manage programs. Also, the Commission shall exercise coordinating, executive and management functions. With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, and other cases provided for in the Treaties, it shall ensure the Union's external representation. For instance, the Commission **negotiates commercial treaties** with third countries.

The Commission holds a **monopoly on legislative initiative**. Union legislative acts may only be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal. Only the Commission may propose regulations, directives, and generally binding decisions.

The Commission's term of office is five years. The term of office of Commissioners is renewable if they receive the necessary political support by the government nominating them and obtain the necessary support by the European Parliament following a hearing before the competent Parliamentary committee.

The members of the Commission shall be chosen on the ground of their general competence and European commitment from persons whose independence is beyond doubt.

The Commission manages Directorates General (DGs) instead of ministries. Most DGs are located in Brussels, some of them are in Luxembourg. The Commission meets behind closed doors.

The number of Commissioners is equal to the number of Member States. However, the distribution of the different portfolios is very uneven. Whereas some commissioners administer significant amounts of EU budget, the roles of others are less prominent.

3.4.4 The Court of Justice of the European Union

The **Court of Justice of the European Union** is based in Luxembourg. It includes the Court of Justice and the General Court. It ensures the correct interpretation and application of EU law.

The Court of Justice consists of one judge from each Member State. The Court of Justice is assisted by Advocates-General who do not represent any of the parties to the dispute, but provide an impartial and independent assessment of the situation to compensate for the impossibility to lodge an appeal against the decision of this highest EU court instance. To speed up the decision making process, the Court of Justice usually decides in chambers. In cases of significant importance judgments are adopted by a grand chamber.

The General Court includes one or two judges per Member State. There are no Advocates-General working for the General Court as it is possible to lodge an appeal against the judgment of the General Court to the Court of Justice.

The internal working language of the Court of Justice of the EU is French. However, the language of procedure in case of preliminary references is the language in which the file was submitted to the court by the national judge. Before a judgment is delivered in public it has to be translated into all EU official languages.

Judges serving for the Court of Justice of the EU are nominated by the Member States. In case they meet the necessary qualification criteria (excellent command of French and previous experience of working as a judge), they are appointed for a renewable term of six years of office.

3.5 The Lobbyists

The founding treaties of the EU do not mention the world lobbyist. Yet, interest representatives play an important part in the decision making process within the EU, trying to influence legislative proposals and amendments to the legislative proposals. If lobbyists wish to contact high EU officials within the European Commission and the European Parliament, they have to sign up to the Transparency Register kept by the European Commission. In this register, lobbyists are obliged to disclose the policy areas in which they operate, the number of employees working for them and the annual volume of money earmarked for their lobbying activities. So far, the inscription in the Transparency Register has proceeded on a voluntary basis, but there is an ever rising trend towards more transparency of the legislative process, so we are likely to witness compulsory inscription into the Transparency Register in the future. The independence of the EU legislative process has been impeded on a number of occasions, when former high level EU officials and former Commissioners have moved from their posts in the EU institutions into the lobbying sector. This procedure is called the “revolving door“, as those who were the regulators turned into those who are regulated but use the network of contacts they have established while being regulators in high legislative positions.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has surveyed the history of the EU, the main EU bodies and institutions and their mutual interactions. Each of the institutions serves a different interest. While the European Parliament represents the interests of citizens, the European Commission the interest of the entire international organization, the Council of Ministers the national interests of the Member States, the unofficial activity of lobbyists favors the interests of corporations which try to influence EU legislation in such a way as to benefit from it. Apart from the institutions participating in the legislative process, also the role and the composition of the Court of Justice of the EU were discussed. More details on the activity of the Court of Justice of the EU will be provided in the next chapter dealing with EU Law.

3.7 Self-assessment questions

1. How did the Maastricht Treaty extend the scope of activities of the European Communities?
2. Which Treaty constitutes the last reform of the founding treaties?
3. What does the abbreviation “Brexit” mean?
4. Give an example of 3 exclusive and 3 shared powers of the EU.
5. Explain the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality?
6. What are the different interests represented by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission?
7. Which committee of the European Parliament is the only one having a direct contact with EU citizens?
8. What does the principle of degressive proportionality mean with respect to the composition of the European Parliament?
9. What are the powers of European Parliament, the Council and the Commission?
10. How is qualified majority composed in the Council?
11. What is the difference between the Council and the European Council?
12. What is the role of Advocates-General within the Court of Justice?
13. What is the internal working language of the Court of Justice of the EU?
14. What is the Transparency Register?
15. What does “revolving door” mean?

3.8 Further reading/listening

Craig, P.; de Búrca, G., Text, Cases and Materials, 5th ed., Oxford: OUP, 2011, pp. 31-57 and pp. 78-84.

An Online resource published by the European Union:

http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/key_dates/

Institutional video explaining the Council configurations:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/>

Video on the activities of lobbyists within the EU institutions, called “The Brussels Business“:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4C5SgeVK-Q>