

The Council of  
Ministers, COREPER  
and the European  
Council

# General Informations

- Meeting of the ministers of the Member States - each country's minister for the subject in question (foreign affairs, finance, social affairs, transport, agriculture, etc.)
- Configuration is depending on the issue on the agenda
- Presidency of the council is rotating every six months
- Work of the Council is prepared by the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER - Comité des Représentants permanents)
- The work of COREPER is prepared by around 250 committees and working groups consisting of delegates from the Member States

# Number of Votes for each Member State

Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom: .....	29
Spain and Poland: .....	27
Romania: .....	14
Netherlands: .....	13
Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Portugal: ...	12
Austria, Bulgaria and Sweden: .....	10
Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia and Finland: .....	7
Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovenia: .....	4
Malta: .....	3
Total: .....	345

A minimum of 255 votes out of 345 (73.9 %) is required to reach a qualified majority

In addition:

- a majority of member states must approve the decision
- any member state may ask for confirmation that the votes in favour represent at least 62 % of the EU's total population

# General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC)

- The General Affairs Council is one of the oldest configurations of the Council (together with the Agriculture Council and the Ecofin Council)
- Since June 2002 it is meeting as the “General Affairs and External Relations Council”
- Separate meetings on General Affairs and on External Relations are possible
- Meeting: once a month.
- Meetings bring together the Foreign Ministers of Member States and Ministers responsible for European Affairs, Defence, Development or Trade additional are others participating depending on the issues on agenda

# ECOFIN Council

- composed of the Economics and Finance Ministers of the Member States, as well as Budget Ministers when budgetary issues are discussed
- Meeting: once a month.
- covers EU policy in economic policy coordination, economic surveillance, monitoring of Member States' budgetary policy and public finances, the euro (legal, practical and international aspects), financial markets and capital movements and economic relations with third countries
- Decisions: mainly by qualified majority, in consultation or codecision with the European Parliament
- Exception: fiscal matters (unanimity)
- Together with EP: every year preparation of the budget of the European Union
- Eurogroup (Euro members) meets the day before the Ecofin

# Justice and Home Affairs Council

- Justice ministers and Interior ministers
- Meeting: once every two months
- Issues: development and implementation of cooperation and common policies related to the creation of an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
- Mode of most decisions: unanimity with consultation of EP
- Exceptions: visas issues and judicial cooperation - by qualified majority
- Denmark, the United Kingdom and Ireland do not participate fully - UK & Irl are not members of the Schengen agreement and therefore do not vote on it in the Council

# Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

- Composed by the Ministers for the different issues
- Meeting: four times a year
- Task of the European Community: Raising the standard of living and quality of life of its citizens through high-quality jobs, high levels of social protection, health protection and protection of consumers' interests, and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all its citizens.
- Decisions: by qualified majority, together with the EP (codecision)
- Exception: social security - unanimity
- Employment and social protection policies remain the responsibility of the Member States - Community's contribution: setting common objectives for all
- Exchange of ideas and experiences

# Competitiveness Council

- Created in 2002 by merging of Internal Market, Industry and Research
- serves the coherent and coordinated handling of all matters related to the EU's competitiveness
- Composition depending on the agenda: European Affairs Ministers, Industry Ministers, Research Ministers, etc.
- Meeting: five or six times a year
- legislative proposals in different fields of activity: qualified majority, mostly in codecision with EP
- Main Branches: Internal Market, Industry, Research

# Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

- Ministers according to the issues on the agenda: Transport, Telecommunications, Energy
- Meeting: every two months
- Systems that are viable in economic, social and environmental dimension and backbone the smooth functioning of the internal market
- Actions:
  - ▶ trans-European transport, energy and telecommunications networks
  - ▶ European GPS known as GALILEO, the European satellite navigation system which is designed for civilian purposes

# Agriculture and Fisheries Council

- Composition: Ministers for Agriculture and Fisheries; European Commissioners responsible for agriculture and rural development, fisheries and maritime affairs, as well as consumer health and protection
- Meeting: once a month
- Management of the CAP and its budget:
  - ▶ the agricultural markets (1st pillar) bringing together all the Common Market Organisations (CMOs)
  - ▶ rural development (2nd pillar)
- Preparation: 12 working units and 45 subdivisions according to products (e.g. Working Party on Arable Crops (Rice)) or areas (e.g. Working Party on Horizontal Agricultural Questions, Agrimonetary Questions)  
Consultation by Coreper (fisheries, food safety, budget) or by the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) (agricultural markets, rural development)

# Environment Council

- Environment ministers of the member states
- Meeting: four times a year
- Decision by qualified majority in codecision with the EP
- Task of the European Community: fostering the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities and to ensure a high level of environmental quality.
- To achieve this, it aims to preserve the quality of the environment, human health, the rational use of natural resources and the promotion of these matters at international level

# Education, Youth and Culture Council

- All Ministers for education, culture, youth and communication
- Meeting: three to four times a year
- Decision: qualified majority in Codecision with the EP
- Exception: cultural affairs - unanimity
- Complementation of member states policies by:
  - ▶ development of teaching of languages
  - ▶ knowledge of European culture and history
  - ▶ safeguard European heritage
  - ▶ encourage mobility of students and teachers
  - ▶ mutual recognition of graduations
  - ▶ cooperation between school, university and training bodies
  - ▶ vocational training aiming on integrating citizens into the labour market

# European Council

- Meetings: four times a year
- Chaired by the president or prime minister of the country holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union at the time
- Besides the heads of state and government the President of the European Commission is a full member.
- Since the Treaty of Maastricht, the European Council officially became an initiator of the Union's major policies
- The European Council is the body to settle difficult issues the Coreper and the ministers did not reach an agreement
- Key body for guidelines and principles in the common foreign and security policy (CFSP)