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How the EU takes decisions

As you can imagine, it takes a lot of effort by a lot of people to organise the EU and make everything work. Who does what?

The European Commission

In Brussels, 27 women and men (one from each EU country) meet every Wednesday to discuss what needs to be done next. These people are chosen by the government of their country but approved by the European Parliament.

They are called 'commissioners', and together they make up the European Commission. Their job is to think about what would be best for the EU as a whole, and to propose new laws for the EU as a whole. In their work they are helped by experts, lawyers, secretaries, translators and so on.



Once they have agreed what law to propose, they send their proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

Mr Barroso, from Portugal, is President of the European Commission until 2009



The European Parliament

The European Parliament represents all the people in the EU. It holds a big meeting every month, in Strasbourg, to discuss the new laws being proposed by the European Commission. If the Parliament doesn't like a proposal, it can ask the Commission to change it until Parliament is satisfied that this is a good law.

There are 785 members of the European Parliament (MEPs). They are chosen, every five years, in an election when all the adult citizens of the EU get the chance to vote. By choosing our MEP, and by talking to him or her, we can have a say in what the EU decides to do.





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The Council of the European Union



MEPs are not the only people who decide on new EU laws. They also have to be discussed by government ministers from all the EU countries. When the ministers meet together they are called 'the Council of the European Union'.

Ministers from all EU governments meet to pass EU laws

After discussing a proposal, the Council votes on it. There are rules about how many votes each country has, and how many are needed to pass a law. In some cases, the rule says the Council has to be in complete agreement. Once the Council and the Parliament have passed a new law, EU governments have to make sure it is respected in their countries.

The Court of Justice

If a country doesn't apply the law properly, the European Commission will warn it, and may complain about it to the European Court of Justice, in Luxembourg. The Court's job is to make sure that EU laws are respected, and are applied in the same way everywhere. It has one judge from each EU country.



There are other groups of people (committees of experts and so on) involved in taking these decisions, because it's important to get them right.



If you want to know more about these people and what they do, try reading the booklet 'How the European Union works', online at : http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/eu_glance/68/index_en.htm. It's meant for adults, but it's not very hard to read.

**Test yourself
now !**



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