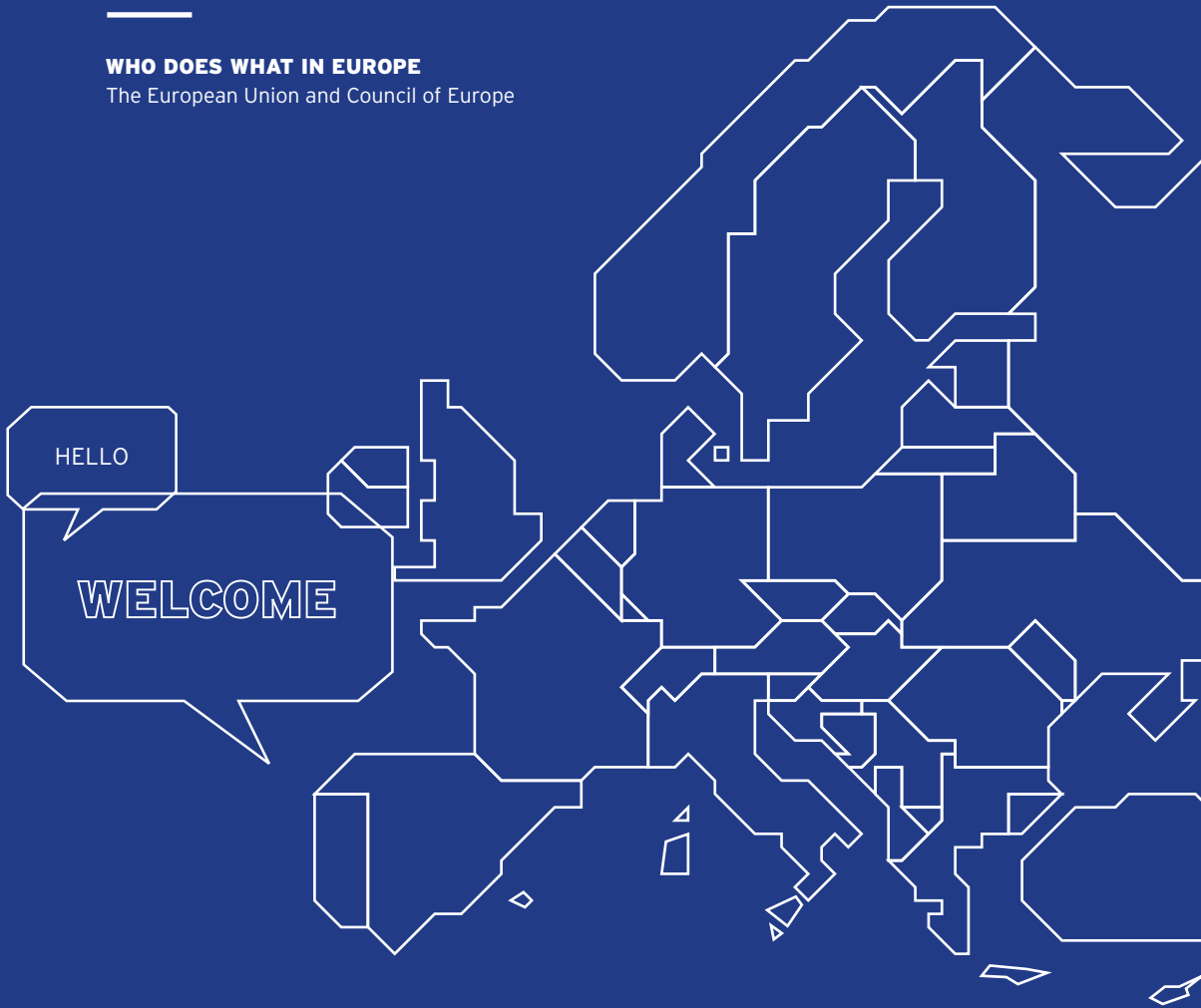


RICHARD STOCK

WELCOME TO EUROPE

WHO DOES WHAT IN EUROPE

The European Union and Council of Europe



A European Initiative by:

Europäische Akademie Nordrhein-Westfalen - Bonn
Centre européen Robert Schuman, Scy-Chazelles - Metz

WELCOME TO EUROPE

Who does what in Europe

Publisher:

Europäische Akademie Nordrhein-Westfalen (EA NRW), Bonn
Weberstraße 118, D53113 Bonn
info@eanrw.eu
www.eanrw.eu

Centre européen Robert Schuman (CERS), Scy-Chazelles - Metz
8, rue Robert Schuman, F57160 Scy-Chazelles
centre-robert-schuman@wanadoo.fr
www.centre-robert-schuman.org

Design:

agentur-rubbeldiekatz GmbH
Breite Straße 38, 53111 Bonn

Printing and Binding:

Ledschbor Print. Media GmbH
Herseler Straße 11, 50389 Wesseling

Illustrations:

Richard Stock
agentur-rubbeldiekatz GmbH
Breite Straße 38, 53111 Bonn

1st Edition, 2016

© Richard Stock, EA NRW & CERS, 2016



RICHARD STOCK

WELCOME TO EUROPE

WHO DOES WHAT IN EUROPE

The European Union and Council of Europe

A European Initiative by

Europäische Akademie Nordrhein-Westfalen - Bonn

Centre européen Robert Schuman, Scy-Chazelles - Metz

Interesting facts on the topic:**Who does what in Europe -
and, above all, why?**

This brochure is a practical guide designed to provide you with an overview of how Europe works.

The decision-making process in Europe takes place in a number of European institutions that you have probably already heard of, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union. Before explaining who decides on what in Europe, the brochure will first present the principles and values that constitute the background for these decisions.

Richard Stock

Richard Stock, Director General of the Centre européen Robert Schuman in Metz (Scy-Chazelles) and international lecturer on European issues, is the Chairman of the Europäische Akademie NRW in Bonn and the European Network for Education and Training (EUNET). He was previously a Professor at the École nationale d'administration (ENA) and a lecturer in various universities.

PREFACE

Our message is to all refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, students from outside Europe and other migrants: Welcome to Europe

You have not only arrived in Germany, France or another European country, but also in the European Union and a member country of the Council of Europe.

Your arrival reminds us of the dream of a peaceful and brotherly Europe that has been forgotten by so many of us.

In order to understand the culture and workings of the society that is hosting you, you must be aware of the values that your host country and other European nations share in the heart of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

It is for this reason that the European Academy North Rhine-Westphalia (Europäische Akademie Nordrhein-Westfalen) in Bonn, Germany, and the Robert Schuman European Centre (Centre européen Robert Schuman) in Metz, Scy-Chazelles, France, have decided to publish this brochure. It presents the most important European institutions, as well as the values and principles, that these institutions base their actions upon.

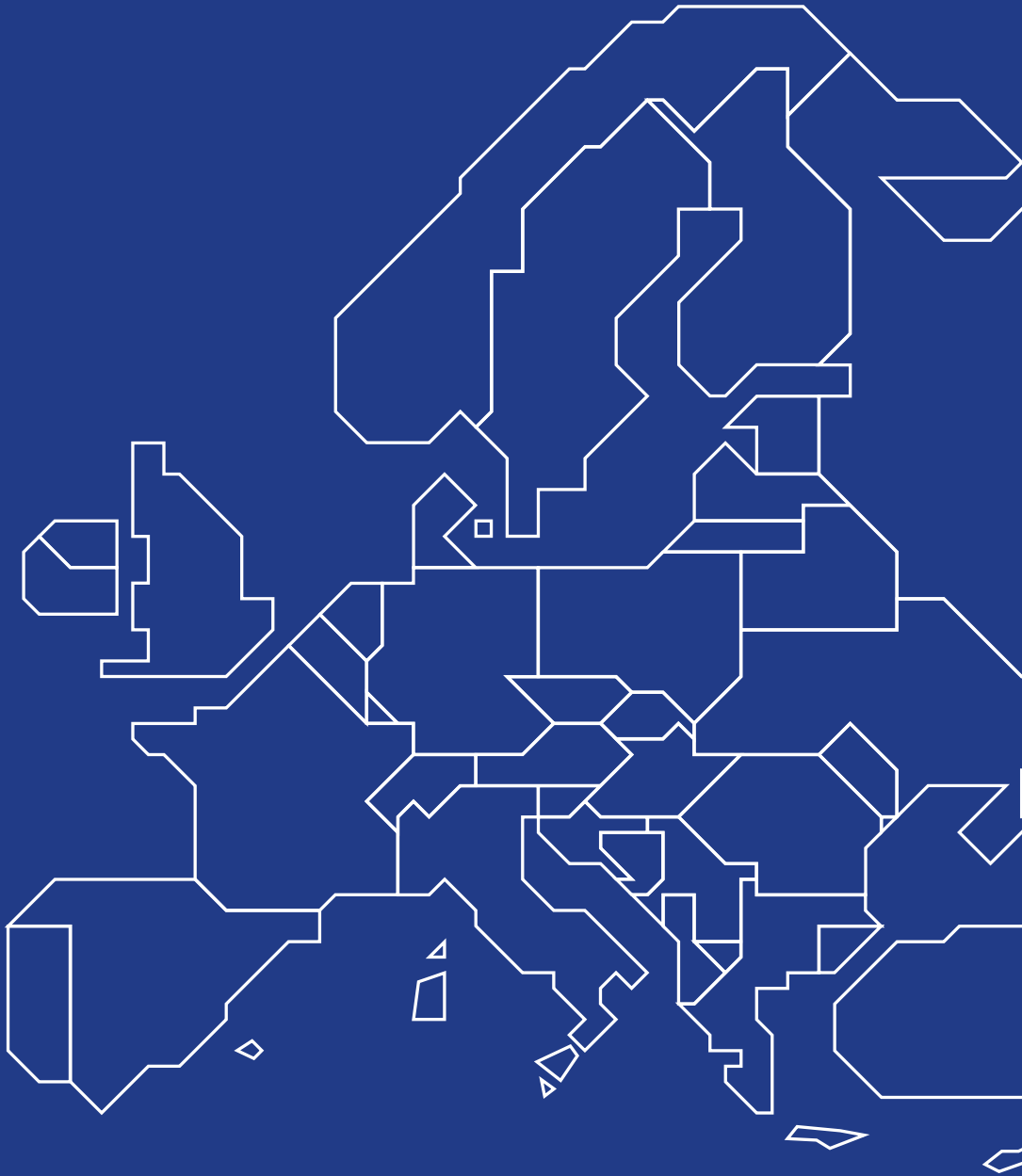
We hope that this brochure will allow you to be better informed when Europeans want to discuss the various European institutions with you, but also provide you a better overview of who does what, why and how, in the name of Europe.



Hanns Christhard Eichhorst
Director of Europäischen Akademie NRW



Richard Stock
Directeur général du Centre européen Robert Schuman



WELCOME TO EUROPE

5	Preface
8	1.0. The European Idea and European Values
13	2.0. Who Does What in Europe?
14	2.1. The European Union
14	Which countries are members and which are applying for accession?
16	Who makes the decisions?
16	What types of laws exist?
17	Areas of responsibility of the Union and member countries
18	Concrete examples of resolutions at the European level
20	The European Union: a democracy on all levels
22	Legislative bodies: the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers
25	The executive arm: the European Commission
26	The arbitrator: the Court of Justice of the European Union
26	The strategist: the European Council
28	2.2. The Council of Europe

1.0. THE EUROPEAN IDEA AND EUROPEAN VALUES

After the Second World War, the European idea was initially about securing peace and freedom by reconciling the people of Europe. Gradually, however, the values shared by European states also became enshrined in the various legislative texts and agreements.

The indivisible, universal values of Europe that are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities, can be found in almost every European state. These rights can be invoked by the citizens of Europe if they are of the opinion that a regulation or a judgment is incompatible with it.

The enshrinement of these values and principles was preceded by a long process of development, from which societies characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and gender equality have emerged.

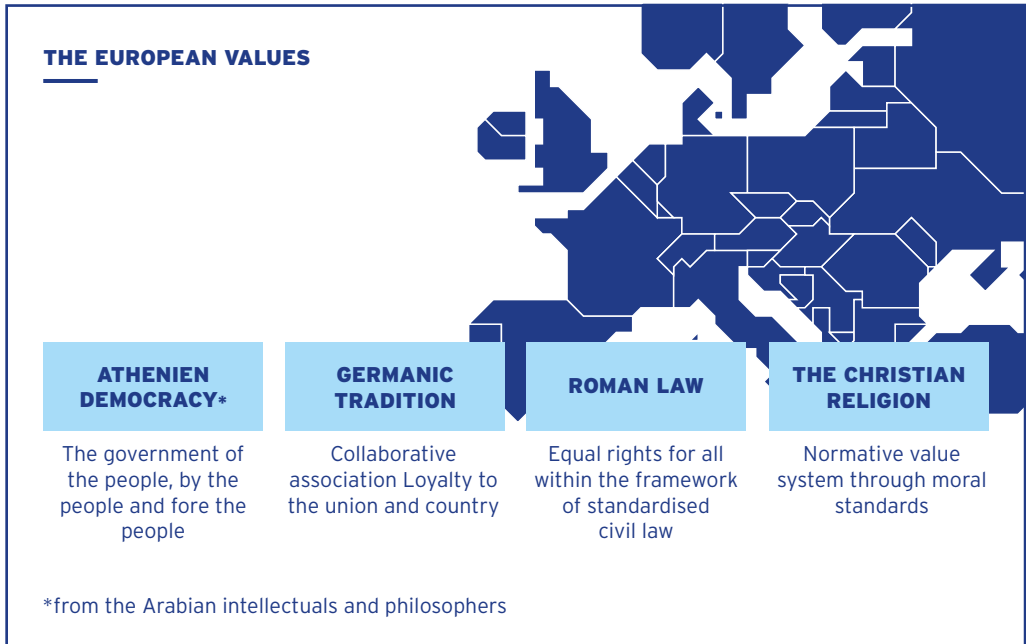
These common principles are partly attributable to the common heritage of the European states, which can be found, above all, in the philosophers of Ancient Greece, Germanic and Scandinavian traditions, the civil law of the Roman Empire and, ultimately, the teachings of the Christian Church and the Age of Enlightenment. During the 20th century, this heritage was also complemented by social aspects.

The above-mentioned principles have since become an integrated part of Europe's identity. In addition, the full respect of these principles is one of the conditions for the membership of states in various European organisations.

The year 507 BC is considered the year that the **Athenian democracy**, i.e. the political order, was born; it gradually established itself in Ancient Athens and is considered the precursor of modern democracy. It did not result from popular uprisings, but rather the political commitment of citizens, who had dedicated themselves to the unity of the city. The basic principles that applied then (literally: "government by, and for, the people") remain unchanged to this day.

The **Germanic influence** on the other hand is clearly visible in the areas of exercising power and the role of women. Kings, warlords and priests only possessed consensus-based power under certain conditions and the next instance was the assembly composed of free citizens, which adopted resolutions based on the principle of unanimity. Such a group was very solidary and bore a common responsibility, particularly with regard to jurisdiction. Germanic and Scandinavian law was characterized above all by the principle of collegiality in the decision-making process and fidelity to the community. Germanic law on the other hand created better conditions for the economic independence of (free) woman than Roman law, which resulted, for example, in her being able to inherit from her parents or husband.

The most important goal in **Roman law** was the creation of a fair society throughout the empire, in which every individual could freely reap the fruits of their labour, as long as the person was a man and the head of a family, because only (free) men, enjoyed a legal status. Another feature of the Roman system was the unrestricted right to personal prop-



erty, which is to be understood as the primacy of the individual over the community. The reason that Roman law was able to prevail so successfully throughout Europe, lay less in its inherent characteristics, such as inequality, cruelty and violence, and more in the admirable precision of this legal system.

The **Judaeo-Christian influence** can be seen in a normative system of values and morals characterised by obligations and duties. It led to the essential teachings of the Christian faith, which are, to care for others, strangers and the weakest of society, and encourages each and every individual, religious or not, to show more humanity and continue a tradition of integration that is defined by 2,000 years of Christian and European history.

Throughout the course of the 18th century, an aspiring intellectual generation questioned the existing order step by step: the absolute monarchy, the three-class system (nobles, clergy and commoners) and the power of the Church. The **contribution of Enlightenment** can be summed up in seven major concepts: critical thinking, voluntarism, freedom, equality, tolerance, democracy and human universality.

The **Charter of Fundamental Rights**, which has been legally binding since 1 December 2009, stipulates the fundamental rights that must be observed by the European Union and its member states in the implementation of Community law.

One prominent feature of the Charter, in addition to the enshrining of civil and political rights, is the strengthening of economic and social rights. The main part of the Charter is divided as follows:

DIGNITY

Chapter I guarantees the right to dignity, life and integrity of the person and prohibits torture and slavery.

FREEDOMS

Chapter II covers the right to liberty and respect for private and family life, the right to marry and found a family, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of assembly. **In addition, this chapter also affirms the right to education and work, as well as the right to property and asylum.**

EQUALITY

Chapter III affirms the principle of equality before the law and non-discrimination, as well as the respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. **This chapter also affirms the special protection of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.**

SOLIDARITY

Chapter IV **regulates the protection of employees' rights, particularly the right to collective bargaining and action, and fair and reasonable conditions. This chapter also recognises additional rights and further principles, particularly the right to social security and the right to health care, as well as the principles of environmental and consumer protection.**

CITIZENS' RIGHTS

Chapter V lists the civil rights that apply in the European Union: **the active and passive right to vote at elections to the European Parliament and municipal elections, the right to good administration, the right to petition, the right to access documents, the right to diplomatic protection and the freedom of movement and residence.**

JUSTICE

Chapter VI affirms the right to effective remedy and a fair trial, the right of defence, the principles of legality and proportionality of criminal offences and penalties, and the right to not be tried or punished twice in criminal cases for the same criminal offence.

The Charter is an important addition to the European Convention on Human Rights drafted in 1950 and forms a unit with the latter. It is for this reason that both texts should be consulted together, in order to gain a complete picture of the laws and principles that apply in the European Union.

This was a brief summary of the cultural, religious and humanistic heritage of Europe, from which the inviolable and inalienable human rights to liberty, democracy, equality and rule of law have evolved as universal values.

THE MOST IMPORTANT REFERENCE TEXTS:

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (STRASBOURG):

- European Convention on Human Rights
- European Social Charter
- European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level
- Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

EUROPEAN UNION (BRUSSELS):

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union



2.0. WHO DOES WHAT IN EUROPE?

Although the Council of Europe and the European Union are based on the same fundamental values, which are human rights, democracy and the rule of law, they nevertheless represent two separate institutions, which complement each other as best possible in the fulfilment of their respective duties.

The majority of the **European Union's** institutions are based in Brussels. Across its institutions, the Union sees itself as an institution of "integration".

The 28 EU states (510 million inhabitants) have granted the European Union a certain jurisdiction that focuses primarily on the economic sphere. In addition, the European Union regularly invokes the standards of the Council of Europe in its relations

with its neighbouring countries, the majority of which are also members of the Council of Europe.

The **Council of Europe**, which is based in Strasbourg, is the oldest European institution and best described by the term "cooperation".

The governments of the entire European continent (47 member states and 820 million inhabitants) meet in the Council of Europe to define a common basis of legal standards in the widest range of fields. The Council of Europe subsequently verifies to what extent the individual countries have applied the standards to which they have committed themselves.

2.1. THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union (EU) is the voluntary political, economic and social union of European states with the aim to preserve peace in Europe and promote economic and social progress.

2.1.1. WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS AND WHICH ARE APPLYING FOR ACCESSION?

As of 1st July 2013, the EU counts 28 member countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

On 23rd June 2016, the citizens of the United Kingdom were called upon to decide on the withdrawal of their country from the European Union. The majority thereby voted in favour of their withdrawal (“**Brexit**” for BRITish EXIT). According to Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), a member state with the intention

to withdraw from the Union must notify the European Council, in order for the negotiation of the details to commence.

Albania, Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey are official candidate countries for accession to the European Union. Iceland had previously submitted an application for EU membership, which has since been withdrawn.

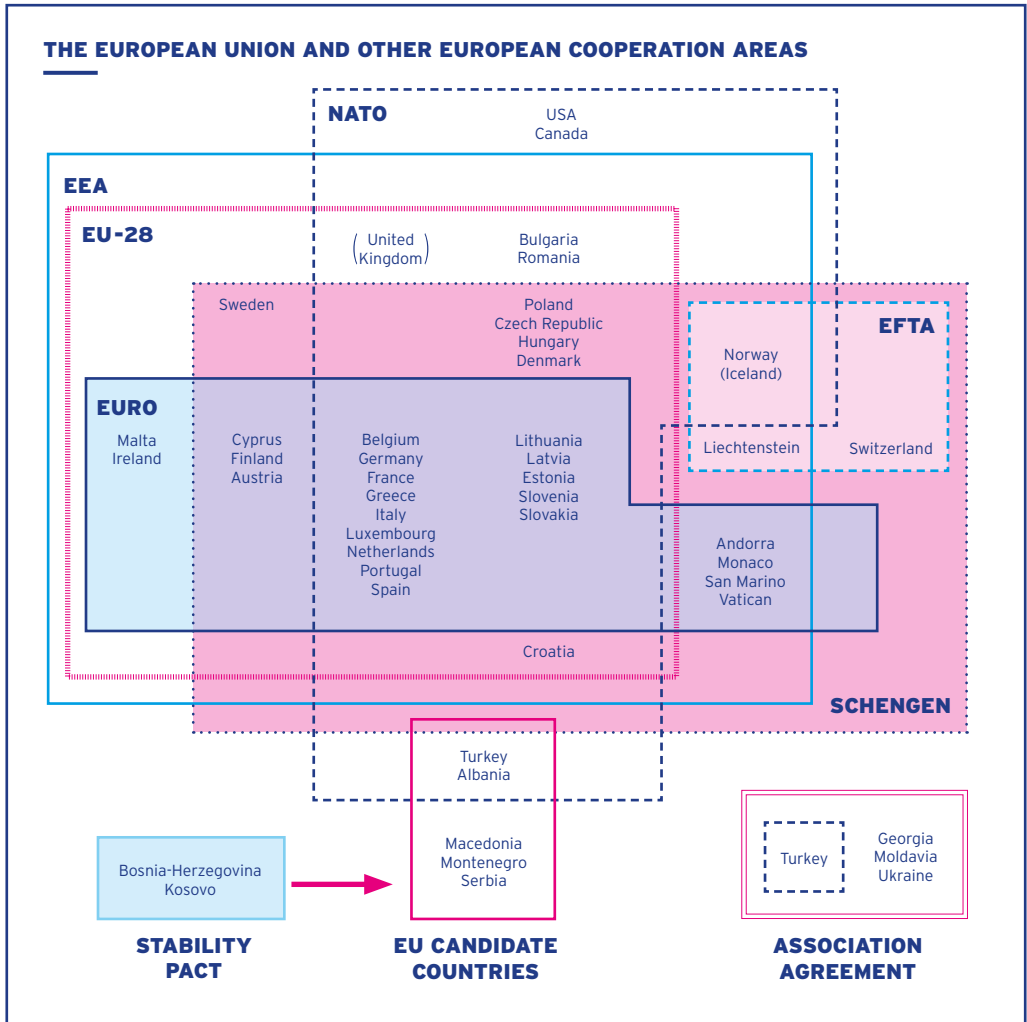
Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo have been granted the status of potential candidates for accession to the European Union.

The EU constitutes the summit of the process that began with the Schuman Declaration in 1950. The

then French foreign minister Robert Schuman made Franco-German reconciliation possible and paved the way for the creation of today’s European Union.

The European Union is regulated by two treaties that complement each other: the Treaty of Lisbon (effective 2009) amends the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The EU is neither a federation or confederation, nor an international organisation. It is a unique organisation with influential institutions that have been granted jurisdiction over certain spheres by its member states.



NATO – North Atlantic Alliance: the collective defence system of Europe, USA and Canada.

EEA – European Economic Area: the union of member countries of the EU and EFTA (European Free Trade Association).

Schengen Area: The Schengen Area comprises the territories of 26 European states and functions as a single state in terms of international travel and border controls, which have been eliminated for travellers at the internal frontiers. The

Eurozone consists of those countries which have adopted the euro as their common currency.

The **Stability Pact** for South Eastern Europe is based on the process of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and has the accession of the countries of the Balkan Peninsula to the European Union as its goal.

Association Agreements are concluded with countries that would like to establish close economic ties in the form of a trade agreement with the European Union.

2.1.2. WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?

Several European institutions are involved in the decision-making process at EU level, first and foremost:

- the European Parliament and Council of Ministers, which pass the laws of the Union together
- the European Commission, which proposes legislature and implements the laws after they have been passed
- the European Council (respectively, the summit meetings of the heads of state and government of the member states of the European Union), which defines the EU framework conditions

2.1.3. WHAT TYPES OF LAWS EXIST?

There are several types of laws, not all of which are applied in the same form:

- EU Regulations are immediately enforceable as law in all member states and legally binding. Although they are not implemented in national law, they may effect legislative changes at national level if the existing body of laws is not compatible with the new European regulations.
- EU Directives, which may refer to all or only certain member states, pursue the realisation of a specific common goal. If the intended outcome is defined in the directive, each member state is free to decide, which means it employs to achieve the goal. Directives must be implemented as national law in order to come into effect.

2.1.4. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNION AND MEMBER COUNTRIES

The treaties state precisely in which areas the EU is authorised to pass laws:

- In the case of topics which fall in its **exclusive jurisdiction**, laws at EU level are passed by the European legislator (please refer to §21.7). The areas in question are customs, competition regulations and monetary policy in the Eurozone, conservation of marine resources and a common trade policy.
- In other areas, **responsibility is shared** by the Union and member states. If a law is passed at EU level, it takes precedence over the national regulations. If, on the contrary, the Union does not pass a law in the area in question, the member states are free to regulate the respective issue legally at national level. This shared responsibility is practiced in many areas, for example, the internal market, agriculture, the environment, consumer protection and transport.
- In all other areas of activity, the laws remain the exclusive responsibility of the individual member states and their regional and local authorities. Nevertheless, the Union still **provides member states with its support** in the areas of aerospace, education, culture, tourism, scientific research, humanitarian aid programmes, etc.

2.1.5. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF RESOLUTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Although the European Union has made it its core mission from its early beginnings to preserve peace in Europe (since decades within the Union) and promote economic and social progress, it also makes itself apparent through concrete resolutions that determine the everyday lives of European citizens and that are considered major achievements of European integration by the majority.

Below are a few examples (of many).

UNION CITIZENSHIP

Union citizenship grants European citizens a range of rights, for example, the right to freedom of movement and residence in other EU member countries, the right to consular protection outside the European Union and the active and passive right to vote at elections to the European Parliament and municipal elections in their country of residence.

CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

This mechanism allows citizens to propose legislation to the European Commission in its area of jurisdiction. Such citizens' initiatives, which must refer to an area within EU jurisdiction and be submitted by at least one million citizens, who are nationals of at least one quarter of the member states.

SCHENGEN AREA

The Schengen Agreement ensures the free movement of persons by eliminating border controls at the internal frontiers between Schengen members and implementing

common regulations for border controls with non-Schengen countries. The Schengen Area currently counts 22 member states of the European Union, as well as four further states: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Ireland, the United Kingdom and Cyprus decided to maintain their border controls. Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are not yet Schengen states.

SINGLE EMERGENCY NUMBER

The telephone number 112 was introduced as the single emergency number in the European Union and works in all member states. The toll-free number can be called from mobile or landline networks from any country in the European Union in case of emergencies (accidents, explosions, fires, attacks, etc.).

OVERBOOKING = REFUND

Flight passengers who are denied boarding (overbooking) are guaranteed minimum rights by the European Union. The amount of

compensation ranges between 250 and 600 euros depending on the route.

WORKING ABROAD

The free movement of workers means that any EU citizen can apply for any position advertised in the European Union. They can travel to any other member country, stay there to find a job and enter employment.

UNRESTRICTED PURCHASES

European consumers are offered a sheer endless range of goods and services on the EU internal market. As the range of products available can vary significantly between the individual member states, the introduction of the euro was a welcome relief for many with regards to business transactions and trade. Any individual is allowed to purchase goods for personal consumption from another EU member state without any quantity or value restrictions. Exceptions however exist, for example, with regard to firearms, alcohol, tobacco, art and other similar objects.

SAFE PURCHASES

In the case of certain goods, e.g. construction products, lifts or specific toys, the affixation of the CE marking is mandatory when first placing the product on the market. This marking confirms that a product conforms to the current European standards and safety requirements.

MEDICAL CARE IN OTHER EU COUNTRIES

According to a European directive, patients have the right to seek medical treatment in another member state and to be reimbursed the costs in their own country.

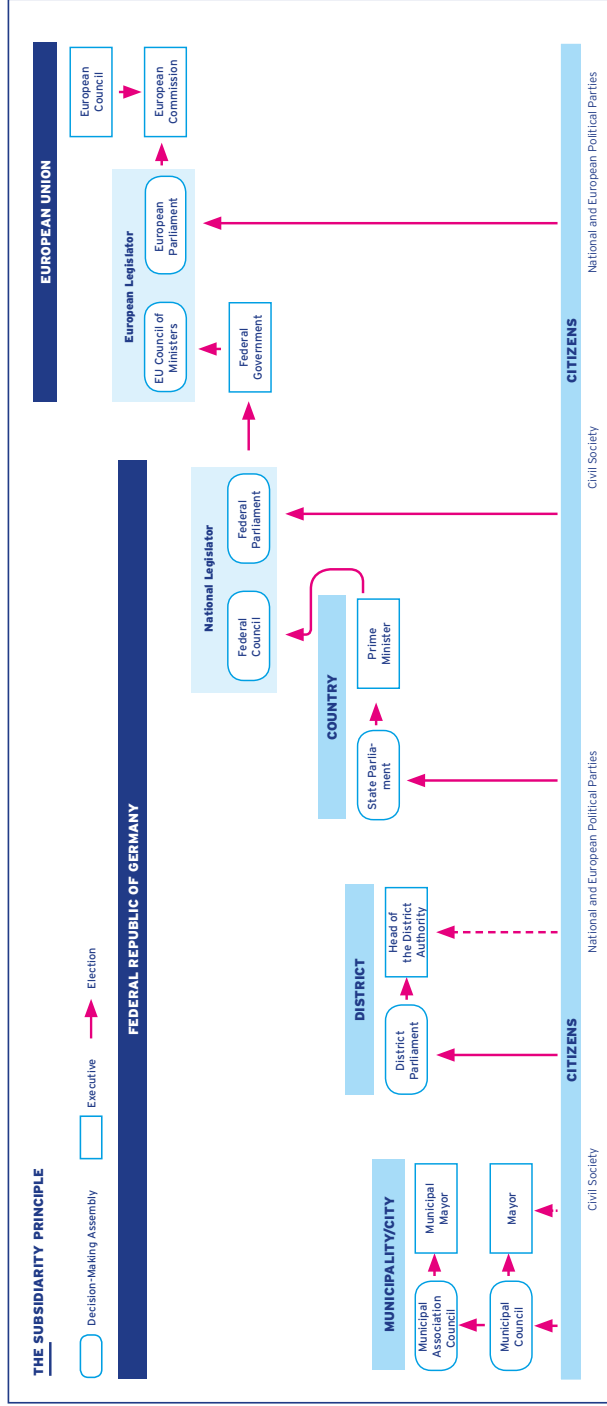
2.1.6. THE EUROPEAN UNION: A DEMOCRACY AT ALL LEVELS

The **subsidiarity principle** applies for the Union. This means that the next higher instance of a decision-making authority is only activated if it can implement a measure that is more effective than the instance currently deal-

ing with the matter. It is for this reason that the European Commission also sends legislative proposals that it submitted to the Union legislator to the national parliament to scrutinise subsidiarity. Each

national parliament then has the right to issue a reasoned opinion should the legislative proposal in question not be compatible with the subsidiarity principle in its opinion.

The figure above illustrates the **democratic continuity** – starting from the municipal level (municipality or city), to the districts and states, and up to the national states and the European Union as the highest instance. All decision-making assemblies are elected by the citizens directly or indirectly (in the case of the Federal Council at national level and the Council of Ministers at European level). The actions of all executive bodies are subject to revision by an assembly elected in a general direct election.



2.1.7. LEGISLATIVE BODIES: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The European legislature consists of two chambers:

1. the European Parliament (lower chamber)
2. the chamber of the member states that meets within the framework of the Council of Ministers (upper chamber)

THE VOICE OF THE CITIZENS: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The democratic legitimacy of European law is secured by the general, direct elections of the European Parliament. The members of the European Parliament are elected directly by the citizens of the European Union to represent their interests. The elections take place every five years and all European citizens above the age of 18, or 16 in Austria, (i.e. about

380 million voters) are asked to vote, irrespective of their country of residence.

The apportionment of seats in the European Parliament is based on the size of the population of each country within the EU. There are up to 751 parliamentarians in the European Parliament (while the most populous country can

currently be represented by a maximum of 96 delegates, the least populous country has six representatives).

Although most of the Members of the European Parliament belong to national political parties in their countries of origin, they join a political group in the European Parliament.

WHAT DOES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DO?

The European Parliament has four key functions:

- It is the legislative body together with the Council of Ministers.
- It ratifies international agreements that are concluded between the EU and one or more states and/or one or more international organisations.
- It exercises democratic scrutiny over all EU institutions, particularly the European Commission. It grants or denies approval for the appointment of the President and members of the Commission, and also has the power to dismiss the Commission as a body by passing a motion of censure.
- The European Parliament is responsible for the budget, together with the Council of Ministers, i.e. it is involved in the decision-making process on EU spending. It approves or rejects the budget after the budgetary procedure.

The European Parliament adopts its resolutions by an absolute majority.
It meets in Strasbourg (plenary sessions) and Brussels (working sessions).

THE VOICE OF THE MEMBER STATES: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Council of Ministers is composed of ministers from the EU member states, which adopts EU laws within this framework. All of the ministers in the Council of Ministers are authorised to act on behalf of their respective governments. Furthermore, they must report to the elected instances of their countries on the decisions

made in the Council of Ministers. This ensures the democratic legitimacy of the decisions made by the Council of Ministers.

The resolutions of the Council are adopted with a vote. The decisions of the Council are passed by a qualified majority, except in cases where a unanimous vote is

required. Such a qualified majority requires a double majority, i.e.:

- at least 55% of the member states (16/28),
- representing at least 65% of the overall EU population, i.e. currently 329 million of the 506 million citizens.

This procedure allows the EU to maintain its legitimacy as a un-

ion of peoples and states, and the European legislative process becomes more transparent and effective.

The rotating half-yearly presidency of the Council of Min-

isters (not to be confused with the presidency of the European Council) means that each member state chairs the Council in turn for a period of six months. The country that holds the presidency in the Council of Ministers

is responsible for the organisation and chairing of the individual meetings. The permanent chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Council is the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DO?

In addition to its role as legislative body, together with the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers also represents an important pole for the decisions that are to be made in the European Union. As such, it assembles the pertinent ministers (i.e. the responsible ministers of each national government), in order to probe, discuss, modify and ultimately coordinate the political priorities of the member states, or to define the foreign policy of the Union.

The Council of Ministers has five core responsibilities:

- It adopts EU laws – in most areas, it is the legislative body, together with the European Parliament.
- The coordination of the member states' political priorities, particularly with regard to economic aspects.
- It develops the EU's common foreign and security policy, based on the guidelines of the European Council.
- It concludes international agreements between the EU and one or more states and/or one or more international organisations.
- It adopts the EU annual budget, together with the European Parliament.

2.1.8. THE EXECUTIVE ARM: THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission is a politically independent body and represents and defends the interests of the Union as a whole. It is in many respects the engine of the European institutional system: It proposes new laws, political strategies and work programmes and is responsible for the implementation of the decisions adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The term “Commission” refers both to the “Commissioners”, i.e. the entire staff of men and women appointed by the member countries, as

well as the Parliament it forms and the European administrative apparatus and its staff.

Although the commissioners have previously held political office in their respective countries, many of them as ministers, they are however obliged to represent the interests of the entire Union in their function as members of the Commission. They are therefore generally not allowed to accept any instructions from the governments in their countries of origin. Neither the Commission

President, nor the Commissioners, may occupy a national office at the same time.

The Commission has several Vice-Presidents, including the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is therefore both in the Council of Ministers and the Commission.

In political terms, the Commission answers to the European Parliament, which also has the power to dismiss the Commission as a body by passing a motion of censure.

WHAT DOES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DO?

The European Commission has four key functions:

- It tables laws for adoption by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers.
- It is responsible for the administration and implementation of the EU's political strategies and budget.
- It ensures that European law is enforced, together with the Court of Justice.
- It represents the European Union at international level.

The staff of the Commission comprises about 33,000 citizens from all EU countries. The figure may seem high, but it is significantly lower than the numbers employed on average by the national authorities in the countries of Europe.

2.1.9. THE ARBITRATOR: THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Court of Justice of the European Union (the Court of Justice) ensures that EU law is interpreted and applied in the same way in all member states. For this reason, it reviews the legality of the measures implemented by the European institutions and ascertains that the member states comply with their obligations. At the request of national courts, it

also interprets Community law. In addition, the Court of Justice is also responsible for the settlement of legal disputes that arise between countries of the European Union, European institutions, companies and private individuals. The thousands of submitted cases are dealt with two courts: whereas the European Court of Justice deals with interpretation

requests submitted by the national courts, the General Court of the European Union rules on actions for annulment brought by natural or legal persons and certain cases brought by member states.

2.1.10. THE STRATEGIST: THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The EU summit meetings of the European Council offer the heads of state and governments of all countries in the European Union the necessary platform to enter political dialogue at the highest level. The leading representatives decide there – by consensus – on the general political guidelines and priorities of the Union, and provide it with the impetus necessary for its development. The European Council is chaired by its President, who is supported by the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The European Council meets at least four times a year to define the general political guidelines and priorities of the EU. In addition, it also has the function of an “economic government” for the Eurozone. Additional summits (i.e. extraordinary or informal) can be convened in the case of urgent economic or foreign policy issues that require a decision at the highest level.

The President of the European Council functions as the representative of the Union outside Europe. He or she represents the interests of the Union in this respect together with the EU High

Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The President is elected by a qualified majority of the European Council itself for a once-renewable two-and-a-half-year term. The presidency of the European Council is a full-time position, meaning that the President can no longer hold office at national level.

2.2. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe today counts almost all European countries, including countries to the east of Europe, whose territory is only partially located in Europe (except Belarus), meaning that it unites 820 million citizens from 47 member countries.

The primary objective of the Council of Europe is the promotion of human rights.

It formulated the European Convention on Human Rights and created the European Court of Human Rights to enforce the convention (please refer to Infobox 2). It later also established the European Cultural Convention and the European Social Charter.

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The **European Convention on Human Rights** is an international treaty by which all the member states of the Council of Europe grant not only their own citizens, but all persons staying in their countries, both fundamental rights, as well as civil and political rights.

The following rights, in particular, are ensured by the Convention:

- the right to live
- the right to a fair trial
- the right to respect for private and family life
- the right to freedom of expression
- the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- the right to respect of property

In particular, the following are forbidden by the Convention:

- torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- slavery and forced labour
- death penalty
- arbitrary or illegal detention
- discrimination

Since 1993, the Council of Europe contributes to protect the rights and cultural identity of minorities and combat all forms of intolerance.

Its greatest accomplishments include:

- **Strengthening human rights**
- **Abolition of the death penalty**
- **Non-discrimination and combating racism**
- **Defence of freedom of expression**
- **Gender equality**
- **Protection of children's rights**
- **Protection of cultural diversity**
- **Election monitoring**
- **Awareness for human rights and democracy**
- **Quality of medicinal products and medical care**

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The **European Court of Human Rights** is an international court of justice that hears complaints of both individuals and states, within the framework of violations of the civil and political rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Court is based in Strasbourg and applications can be submitted by citizens directly. The Court has rendered over 10,000 judgments to date, which were binding for the states in question, meaning that the national parliaments had to amend their legislation and governments adapt their administrative processes. The jurisprudence of the Court has given the Convention a dynamic and effective instrument to face new challenges and strengthen the rule of law and democracy in Europe.

47 MEMBER STATES

ALBANIA	ESTONIA	LITHUANIA	RUSSIAN FEDERATION
ANDORRA	FINLAND	LUXEMBOURG	SAN MARINO
ARMENIA	FRANCE	MACEDONIA	SERBIA
AUSTRIA	GEORGIA	MALTA	SLOVAK REPUBLIC
AZERBAIJAN	GERMANY	MOLDOVA	SLOVENIA
BELGIUM	GREECE	MONACO	SPAIN
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	HUNGARY	MONTENEGRO	SWEDEN
BULGARIA	ICELAND	THE NETHERLANDS	SWITZERLAND
CROATIA	IRELAND	NORWAY	TURKEY
CYPRUS	ITALY	POLAND	UKRAINE
CZECH REPUBLIC	LATVIA	PORTUGAL	UNITED KINGDOM
DENMARK	LIECHTENSTEIN	ROMANIA	



NOT TO BE CONFUSED:

The European Court of Human Rights is not...

- the **Court of Justice of the European Union (in Luxembourg)**, which ensures compliance with the law and the interpretation and application of the treaties of the European Union.
- the **International Court of Justice**, which is the primary judicial branch of the United Nations in The Hague (Netherlands). Its function is to apply international law in the settlement of legal disputes submitted to it by states and provides advisory opinions on legal issues.
- the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**, which is also based in The Hague (Netherlands), investigates, prosecutes, and when necessary, sentences persons who have been accused of the most serious crimes of concern to the International Community as a whole: genocides, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Court was the first permanent international criminal court and established by the Rome Statute.

The European Convention on Human Rights is not...

- the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights**, which was adopted by the United Nations to strengthen the protection of human rights.
- the **Charter of Fundamental Rights**, in which the European Union has enshrined human rights and fundamental rights.



The **Europäische Akademie Nordrhein-Westfalen** in Bonn is an independent, non-profit political education institution for youths and adults. It annually organises about 60 several-day events, for roughly 2,000 people, on political issues, primarily European politics. Its aim is to inform the participants so that they may better assess political decision-making processes and join the political debate. Only an informed person can partake in the process of democratic political decision-making.

The events organised by the European Academy on European politics are usually on-site seminars that take place mainly in Brussels and Strasbourg.



The **Centre européen Robert Schuman (CERS)** is an independent, non-profit organisation. It has developed a range of educational materials and tools which serve to educate European citizens on the history of European integration, the achievements of the European Union and the issues and difficulties facing Europe and its future. Through the European and intercultural educational service of the Robert Schuman House in Metz (Scy-Chazelles), a museum and a European Heritage site dedicated to the Father of the European Union, CERS proposes about 15 educational workshops, annually educating roughly 4,000 youths on European issues. In addition, the Centre also provides education and training for teachers on European studies (about 1,500 participants per year).

