

BEUR302 The EU and its Institutions

ECTS Value 5 ECTS

Overall Objectives and Outcomes

The EU functions through an institutional framework which aims to support its values and objectives and to guard its interests, and the interests of its citizens and Member States. Additionally, this institutional framework intends to assure the coherency, continuity and effectiveness of the EU's policies and actions.

The institutional framework of the EU comprises seven institutions which are the principal actors of European integration. Together with the agencies of the EU, these institutions constitute the main bodies of the EU. The EU also incorporates a number of interinstitutional bodies which have a specialised role to play in European integration.

The roles and powers assigned to the institutions of the EU vary and, through this variance, institutional balance is achieved and maintained as long as each institution acts within the remits of power conferred upon it by the Treaties. While the Treaty of Lisbon did not fundamentally change the EU's institutional structure, it introduced a number of elements aimed at enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the EU and in rendering the institutions more consistent, effective and transparent.

The institutional triangle formed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, plays an integral part in decision-taking and policymaking within the EU. These institutions represent different interests in the EU, with the European Commission representing the interests of the EU as a whole, the European Parliament representing EU citizens and the Council of the European Union representing the governments of the individual Member States.

By the end of this module, the learner will be able to:

Competences

- a. create a presentation identifying the institutions of the EU and outlining their respective roles;
- b. collaborate with others to discuss the issue of transparency as a prerequisite of good governance;
- c. establish instances in which there is a perceived lack of transparency within the EU's institutions.

Knowledge

- a. recognise the role played by European Treaties, namely of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon.

- b. Outline the structure and function of European institutions with specific reference to the European Parliament, Commission, Council, European Central Bank, and the European Court of Justice.
- c. appreciate the importance of decentralisation and subsidiarity in the EU
- d. identification of the powers conferred to EU institutions and the institutions interact in operating those powers.

Skills

- a. demonstrate a deep understanding of the crucial role played by the Court of Justice of the EU in the development of EU law;
- b. apply his/her increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of democratic principles to critically analyse the extent to which democracy, accountability and legitimacy are practised within the EU;
- c. show that s/he can critically review various case-laws of the Court of Justice of the EU and discuss the Court's role in ensuring that in the interpretation and application of the Treaties, the law is observed.

Mode of Delivery

This module adopts a blended approach to teaching and learning. Information related to the structure and delivery of the module may be accessed through the IfE Portal. For further details, kindly refer to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Procedures found on the Institute for Education's website.

Assessment Methods

This module will be assessed through: Critical Analysis, Presentation, Forum Contribution/s

Suggested Readings

Core Reading List

1. Lelieveldt, H. and Princen, S. (2015) *The Politics of the European Union* (2nd edition). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
2. Kirk, E. (2016). *Law Express: EU Law*. UK: Pearsons.
3. Fontaine, P. (2014) *The European Union Explained: Europe in 12 Lessons*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
4. McCormick, J. (2017). *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*. UK: Red Globe Press.

Supplementary Reading List

1. Craig, P. and De Burca, G. (2011) *EU Law: Text, cases and materials* (5th edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. European Commission (2017) *Trust at Risk: Implications for EU Policies and Institutions*. Retrieved from <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e512c11b-e922-11e6-ad7c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-76211817>
3. Mayoral, J. (2011) *Democratic Improvements in the European Union under the Lisbon Treaty: Institutional changes regarding democratic government in the EU*. Retrieved from <https://www.eui.eu/Projects/EUDO-Institutions/Documents/EUDOreport922011.pdf>