

INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

What are the main institutions of the EU?

European Parliament

The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by universal suffrage every five years and represent the citizens of the EU. The Parliament, together with the Council of the European Union, is the main legislative body of the EU.

The European Parliament performs three main functions:

- to discuss and approve European laws together with the Council;
- to control the other EU institutions, especially the Commission, to ensure that they act democratically;
- to discuss and adopt the EU budget together with the Council.

The European Parliament is located in: Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg and Strasbourg (France).

Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the "General Secretariat").

The meetings of the whole Parliament, known as "plenary sessions", take place in Strasbourg and Brussels. Also the meetings of the committees are held in Brussels.

European Council

It is composed of the Heads of State or Government of the member countries, the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council itself, who presides over its meetings. It meets about four times a year to discuss and define the general political directions and priorities of the EU. It also deals with complex or sensitive issues that can be settled at the level of intergovernmental cooperation.

Council of the European Union

It is the institution within which the ministers of all EU countries meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. It has no permanent members. In each meeting, every country is represented by the minister responsible for the subject matter discussed on that occasion. For example, the Minister of Finance is present when economic and financial issues are discussed. That meeting is called Ecofin Council.

It shall not be confused with:

- *the European Council*: see above
- *the Council of Europe*: it is not an institution of the EU.

European Commission

It is one of the main institutions of the European Union. The Commission represents and defends the interests of the EU as a whole. It prepares proposals for new European laws. It carries out daily activity for the implementation of EU policies and the allocation of funds. It proposes legislative acts to the Parliament and the Council; manages the EU budget and allocates funding; ensures the application of EU law (jointly with the Court of Justice); represents the EU at an international level, for example in negotiations with third countries to conclude agreements.

The 28 Commissioners, one for each EU country, represent the political leadership of the Commission during the five-year term. The President gives each Commissioner responsibility for specific policy areas.

The current President of the European Commission is Jean-Claude Juncker.

Court of Justice

The Court of Justice interprets EU law so that it is applied in the same way in all EU countries. It also deals with adjudicating disputes between member States' governments and EU institutions. Also private individuals, businesses or organisations may bring a case to the Court if they deem that an EU institution has infringed their rights.

The Court of Justice consists of one judge from each member State.

The Court has nine advocates-general who are tasked to submit reasoned opinions on the cases submitted to the Court. They shall accomplish this task publicly and impartially.

The judges and advocates-general are appointed for a renewable period of six years and are designated by mutual agreement by the governments of the member States.

European Central Bank

The European Central Bank (ECB), based in Frankfurt, Germany, manages the euro, i.e. the EU single currency, and guarantees price stability in the EU.

The ECB also contributes to defining and implementing the economic and monetary policy of the EU.

Its main objectives are the following:

- to maintain price stability (by keeping inflation in check), especially in the euro area;
- to maintain the stability of the financial system, making sure that financial markets and institutions are properly controlled.

Court of Auditors

The European Court of Auditors is tasked to audit EU finances. Its role is to improve the financial management of the EU and to report on the use of public funds. It was established in 1975 and is based in Luxembourg.

What are the EU bodies with which San Marino will be required to communicate in case of entry into force of an Association Agreement?

The Republic of San Marino will have relations mainly with the European Commission.