

POWERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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The European Parliament shares **legislative power equally with the Council of the European Union**. This means it is empowered to adopt European laws (directives, regulations etc.). It can accept, amend or reject the content of European legislation.

The ordinary legislative procedure (**co-decision**) puts Parliament on an equal footing with the Council. The co- decision procedure was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty on European Union (1992), and extended further.

The so called **consultation procedure** applies to the sensitive cases of taxation, industrial policy, agricultural policy. In some cases that consultation is obligatory, being required by the legal base, and the proposal cannot acquire the force of law unless Parliament has delivered an opinion. In this case the Council is not empowered to take a decision alone.

Parliament has a **power of political initiative**. It can ask the Commission to present legislative proposals for laws to the Council. The EP examines the Commission's annual programme of work and says which laws it would like to see introduced.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union together constitute **the Union's budgetary authority**. The procedure of examining, then adopting, the budget takes place between June and late December.

In the case of compulsory expenditure (e.g. agricultural expenditure and expenditure linked to international agreements) it is the Council that has the last word. In the case of non-compulsory expenditure (other expenditure) Parliament decides in close collaboration with the Council.

The European Parliament and the Council must adhere to the annual spending limits laid down in the multiannual financial perspective. The budget is adopted for one year (the budget year begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December. It cannot be implemented until it has been signed by the President of the European Parliament.

The European Parliament has **major supervisory powers** over the activities of the European Union. Every European citizen has the right to petition Parliament to ask for problems to be remedied in areas within the sphere of activity of the European Union. Parliament has also appointed an Ombudsman, who deals with complaints by individuals against Community institutions or bodies with a view to reaching an amicable solution.

The European Parliament also has the power to set up a committee of inquiry to look into violations or wrong application of Community law by Member States. Parliament has right of recourse before the Court of Justice of the European Communities.

The European Parliament has powers of **control in the economic and monetary domain**. The President, the Vice-President and the members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank cannot be appointed by the Council until the European Parliament has given its assent. The President of the ECB presents its annual report to the European Parliament in plenary session.

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The President of the Commission is appointed by a majority vote in the Council. Parliament approves or rejects the proposed appointment. Then, in accord with the President appointed, the Member States appoint the Commissioners. The College of Commissioners must then be endorsed as a whole by Parliament.

The **EP has the power to censure the Commission**. It can force the College of Commissioners as a whole to resign.

The European Council made up of the Heads of State and Government, meets a maximum of four times a year. Each summit begins with a declaration by the President of the European Parliament, setting out the institution's key positions on the subjects to be addressed by the Heads of State and Government. At the end of each summit the President of the **European Council presents a report to Parliament** on its outcome and launches a debate with the Members of the European Parliament.

For a full description of the powers and procedures of the powers of the EP [click here](#).