



The European Parliament



[The Parliament in Strasbourg](#)

The European Parliament started as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, being composed of the national parliamentarians of the member states. Over the years, the body has gone through many changes to become what it is today. Starting in 1979, the members are chosen directly by the European people, and since the Treaty of Lisbon the European Parliament has the same law-making powers as the Council of the EU, elects the president of the Commission, and is the guardian of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Its headquarters are in Strasbourg, but it also meets in Brussels.



Composition

The parliament is composed of 705 representatives. The number of representatives for each member state is based on the number of citizens, so more populous countries have more representatives. The Members of European Parliament, or MEPs, are directly elected for a tenure of 5 years. Each member state has its own national provisions for the election process. Representation is currently limited to a maximum of 96 seats and a minimum of 6 seats per state and the seats are distributed according to "degressive proportionality", i.e., the larger the state, the more citizens are represented per MEP.

The current President of the European Parliament is the Italian David Sassoli

Powers and functions

The 1957 Treaty of Rome made the legislative process an arrangement with two players, of which it was said 'the Commission proposes, the Council disposes'. However, in the Maastricht Treaty, the co-decision procedure was introduced for 15 areas of legislation. Since then, the European Parliament decides together with the Council of the European Union if proposals of the Commission become law. The Treaty of Lisbon expanded this procedure from the 15 areas of the Treaty of Maastricht to become all areas, putting the European Parliament on the same footing as the Council. Furthermore, the European Parliament elects the Commission and can hold a vote of no confidence in the Commission if it feels that the Commission is defunct. Importantly, it also gets to decide on the budget.

Decision making

In general, and also in questions of co-decision and enlargement, absolute majority is needed.

In votes of no confidence for the European Commission or on budget issues, a 2/3rd majority is needed.