TEACHER'S PACK

EU DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Have Your Say with the European Citizens' Initiative

European Citizens' Initiative

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Introduction

The aim of this Toolkit is to introduce students to the topic of democratic participation in the European Union and equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to exercise their rights as EU citizens. As part of this exploration, the module focuses on the European Citizens' Initiative. By the end of the course, students will have a clear idea of the purpose of the initiative, how it works, how it fits within the broader context of democracy in the European Union, and how they can use it to bring about change in their world.

What is the European Citizens' Initiative?

The European Citizens' Initiative allows EU citizens to influence EU policies by putting on the European agenda the issues that matter most to them. A citizens' initiative brings together people from different EU countries to collect signatures and call on the European Commission to propose laws in areas where the Commission has powers to act. It is a bottom-up way of starting a political debate and raising awareness of common causes which unite people across borders. The tool was launched in 2012, and is now bearing fruit, with several initiatives leading to concrete legal proposals by the European Commission.

Why should students learn about democratic participation in the EU with a focus on the European Citizens' Initiative?

In a healthy and thriving democracy, citizens can freely express their views. They can effectively exercise their voting rights, participate in the public debate, and thus determine their future. These hard-won rights form the bedrock of any democracy and lie at the heart of the European Union.

Democracy is one of the core values on which the European Union is built. However, democracy cannot be taken for granted. It must be actively nurtured; citizens must actively participate in the democratic processes available to them. In order to do this, they must understand these processes. While most students will be aware that there are elections for members of the European Parliament, it is important that they also know they can bring about change regarding issues they feel passionate about through other tools as well such as the European Citizens' Initiative, a key EU right introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

The European Citizens' Initiative is collaborative in nature, as it requires citizens to work not just with like-minded individuals in their own country, but to find support across several Member States. Therefore, learning about the European Citizens' Initiative is also a lesson in cooperation, organisation, persuasion, and persistence.

What is in the Toolkit?

The Toolkit consists of four thematic units, each with a different focus, moving from more general information about the European Union to specific information and activities related to the European Citizens' Initiative, as follows:

1) A Brief Introduction to the European Union
2) Democracy in the European Union
3) The European Citizens' Initiative
4) Develop and Promote a European Citizens' Initiative

The Toolkit provides the following materials:

- A Teacher's Pack for the teacher, including instructions for each lesson, an answer key, and extra information and links for further research.
- A Student's Pack to be used for classwork and homework in the form of both revision and further research. Links are provided to relevant internet sites available in all official EU languages.
- PowerPoint presentations for use in class including text and video (optional).
- Links to video files. All videos used in the module are available in all official EU languages.
- A factsheet for further exploration of the history of the European Union.
- A factsheet on the EU areas of action.
- An exit quiz.

How should the Toolkit be taught?

The Toolkit is designed to be used flexibly. Although it is arranged in four thematic units, you should feel free to adapt the material to your teaching context (class size, equipment, hours available, etc.). Please note that the extra information sections in the Lesson Plan are for reference only. Research activities can be given for homework or done in the lesson if time and equipment allow.

If time is limited, the basic information can be covered in four lessons. If more time is available, there are many areas that can be explored and discussed in more depth or provide the basis for project work. An optional project-based activity can be found at the end of each unit.

What methodological approaches are used in the Toolkit?

The material is designed to use several approaches to teaching/learning:

- Direct presentation
- Group discussion
- Group work
- Project work
- Individual study
- Research work
- Problem solving
- Role play
- Filming

However, you should feel free to use any other approaches that you feel will help students understand and retain the information covered in the units.

Terminology

Although every effort has been made to keep the use of specialised terminology to a minimum, certain concepts have to be introduced in order to be discussed. Help with terms used by the European Union can be found here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary.html. Please note that you can select your preferred official language.

UNIT 1: A brief introduction to the EU

LESSON PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the values of the EU
- Introduce the Schengen Area and the European Single Market
- Identify EU areas of action

STUDENTS WILL LEARN:

- How the EU affects their lives in general terms
- That the EU has specific areas of competence that impact their everyday lives

STUDENTS WILL PRACTICE:

- Research skills
- Using the Europa website
- Discussion/sharing information

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Unit 1 PowerPoint (optional)
- Videos 1-3

Lesson Steps

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE EU?

1) Write the letters 'EU' on the board. Students are asked to come up with words or short phrases that they associate with the EU. Write them on the board to form a word cloud. This could also be done with an app like Mentimeter (optional).

2) Encourage the class to spend a few minutes reflecting on what they have come up with, e.g. is the feel generally positive/negative? What do students associate the EU with?

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE EU

3) Play Video 1 (**PowerPoint slide 2**). The video shows major achievements of the European Union. Ask students if they recognise/can work any of them out.

> Examples: Solidarity Corps (young people helping communities); refugees; democracy; solidarity (Charlie Hebdo); Nobel Peace Prize; creation of the European Union; reunification of Germany; Rome Treaty (1957) establishing the European Economic Community.

4) Explain that the European Union was built on a series of treaties that all member countries adhere to. They define the objectives and values all members endorsed, as well as the areas in which the European Union can act. Refer students to p26 in their **Student's Pack**. This will be useful for students' homework or can be used as the topic of a separate lesson if wished.

EU VALUES

5) Play Video 2 (**PowerPoint slide 3**). The video outlines the six values of the European Union.

> 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'
>
> Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty

6) Show **PowerPoint slide 4**. If not using PowerPoint, refer students to their **Student's Pack** p1.

7) Explain that the EU has six core values that underpin all EU policy and actions.

8) Use the six values on the PowerPoint or write the following on the board:
   a) Human dignity
   b) Freedom
   c) Democracy
   d) Equality
   e) Rule of law
   f) Human rights

Refer the class to p1 of their **Student's Pack**. Then, divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to rank the values in order of importance to them. They should be able to justify their opinion and define the value. Use the notes below to help. Please note that there is no 'correct' order.

THE CORE VALUES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

HUMAN DIGNITY

The concept of human dignity is the belief that all people hold a special value that is tied solely to their humanity. It has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abilities, or any other factor other than them being human.

Human dignity justifies human rights. When people are divided and given a value based on characteristics like class, gender, religion, and so on, it creates unequal societies where discrimination runs rampant. People assigned a higher value get preferential treatment. Anyone who does not fit into the privileged category may be abandoned or oppressed.

FREEDOM

Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union. Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression, and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

DEMOCRACY

The EU functions on representative and participatory democracy. Being a European citizen means enjoying political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections for the European Parliament. EU citizens have the right to stand as candidate and to vote in their country of residence, or in their country of origin. Citizens can also directly affect EU policy through tools like the European Citizens' Initiative.

EQUALITY

Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

RULE OF LAW

The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice which judgements have to be respected by all.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and the right to get access to justice.

9) Groups are invited to share their top choices and reasoning with the class. Allow each group to briefly present their ideas and then give a couple more minutes for group discussion.

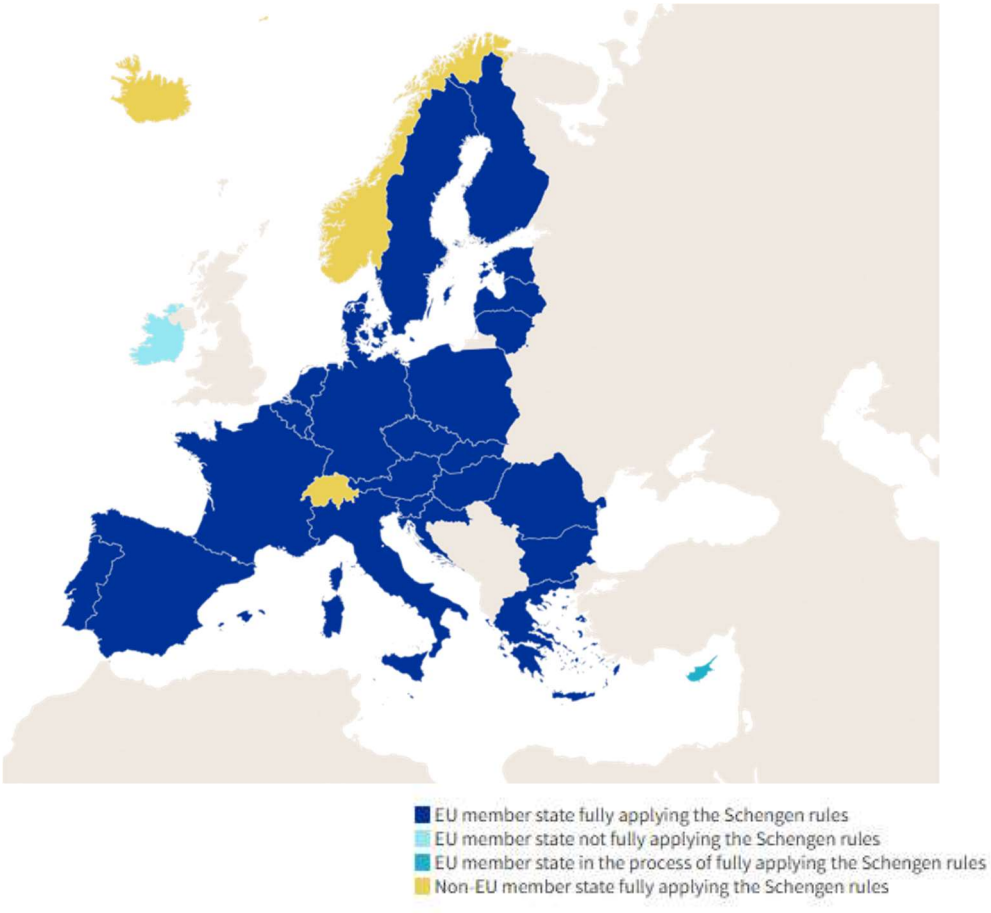
THE SCHENGEN AREA

10) Ask students which (if any) Member States of the European Union they have visited, then ask if any of them have visited countries outside the Union. Ask students to compare these experiences. Encourage students to think in terms of ease of border crossing, length of stay, visa requirements, etc.

The border-free Schengen Area guarantees free movement to more than 400 million EU citizens, along with non-EU nationals living in the EU or visiting the EU as tourists, exchange students or for business purposes (anyone legally present in the EU).

11) Show **PowerPoint slide 5**. If not using the PowerPoint, write 'Schengen Area' on the board.

12) Ask students to write down all the Schengen countries they can think of in their **Student's Pack** (p2). Then, show **PowerPoint slide 6**. If not using the PowerPoint, read the answers from the information box.



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Members of the Schengen Area (June 2025):

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Cyprus is still (as of June 2025) a candidate member. The Republic of Ireland opted out of the agreement.

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area_en

THE SINGLE MARKET AND CUSTOMS UNION

13) Play Video 3 (**PowerPoint slide 7**). The video provides an explanation of the advantages of the single market.

14) Go to **PowerPoint slide 8** or write on the board: Goods, Capital, Services, People. Explain that there is free movement for all of these within the single market.

15) Divide the class into four groups and assign one freedom to each group. Give the groups a few minutes to think about the advantages of these freedoms from the point of view of a) business and b) EU citizens. Ask them to think of ways they have benefitted personally.

Free movement of goods

The free movement of goods means that there are no customs duties and quantitative restrictions between Member States. This means suppliers are free to sell their goods across the EU with no limitations, enabling them to expand their business. Consumers are free to buy from the whole of the Union and look for the best deal.

Standardisation across the Union means that consumers can be sure that a product bought from any Member State is made to the same minimum standards, in terms of issues like performance and safety. Their consumer rights are also protected, wherever they buy from in the EU.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/38/free-movement-of-goods

Free movement of capital

The free movement of capital enables citizens to do many operations abroad, such as opening bank accounts, buying shares in non-domestic companies, investing where the best return is and purchasing property.

European companies are able to invest in and own other European companies and take an active part in their management. They can also raise money, for example loans, where it is cheapest.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/financial-markets/capital-movements_en

Free movement of services

Professionals and companies are free to provide their services anywhere within the Union, either temporarily or permanently. In order for this to happen, the EU has been working on making it easier for qualifications to be recognised across the Union.

As an example, government tenders for services (with some exceptions) are now advertised across the EU, allowing companies/consortiums anywhere within the EU to submit an offer. This allows the potential for income for the companies and the governments to select the most beneficial offer from a broader range.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/40/freedom-of-establishment-and-freedom-to-provide-services

Free movement of people

EU citizens have the right to move to any EU country to live, work, study, look for a job or retire. They can stay in another EU country for up to 3 months without registering there but they may need to report their presence. The only requirement is to hold a valid national identity card or passport. If they stay longer than 3 months, they need to register their residence. Freedom of movement for workers entails the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment. Moreover, this article stipulates that an EU worker has the right to accept a job offer made, to move freely within the country, to stay for the purpose of employment and to stay on afterwards under certain conditions.

https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/residence-rights/index_en.htm#eu-citizen
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/41/free-movement-of-workers

AREAS OF ACTION

16) Show **PowerPoint slide 9** or refer students to the factsheet in the **Student's Pack** p30.

The European Union can only act in those areas where Member States have authorised it to do so, via the EU treaties.

17) Ask the students to answer in their **Student's Pack** (p3) which area of action the following fall under:

1. You get at least a two-year guarantee when you buy a new laptop. (Consumer protection)
2. If your flight is cancelled or delayed for a long time, you get compensation. (Transport)
3. Your qualifications in one EU country are recognised in another. (Single Market)
4. The minimum amount of 20 days off each year for a full-time employee. (Employment and social affairs)
5. The maximum number of cod fishermen are allowed to catch. (Fisheries)
6. The amount of energy (gas/electricity) that needs to come from renewable energy sources, like solar and wind energy. (Energy)
7. The maximum amount of fine particles that are permitted to be in the air. (Environment).

The treaties specify who can pass laws in what areas: the EU, national governments, or both. Explain that the EU has various levels of competence:

The EU has three levels of competence **(PowerPoint slide 9)**:

a) Exclusive competence, where the Union alone can legislate, and Member States only implement. (e.g., Customs Union, competition rules for the single market, monetary policy for the Eurozone countries)
b) Shared competence, where the Member States can legislate and adopt legally binding measures if the Union has not done so. (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, environment, consumer protection, transport, energy etc.)
c) Supporting competence, where the EU adopts measures to support or complement Member States' policies. (e.g., protection and improvement of human health, industry, culture, tourism, education, vocational training, youth and sport, civil protection, administrative cooperation) (**PowerPoint Slide 10**)

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/division-of-competences-within-the-european-union.html

ENDING THE LESSON

18) Ensure that students understand what they have to do for homework in their **Student's Pack** (pp. 5-7).

19) To finish the session, ask students to reflect and then briefly discuss information that they learned for the first time during the lesson.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

For the next lesson, ask students to keep a note of things they come across in their daily lives that have been influenced by EU legislation. Students share what they find at the beginning of the next unit.

Answer key for Unit 1 Lesson Review

Ex. 1) 1b, 2d, 3c, 4a, 5e
Ex. 2) I. b, II. e, III. c, IV. d, V. a
Ex. 3) Students' own answers:
dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights.

Ex. 4)
a) F (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Iceland)
b) T
c) F (You will still need ID at airports, to register in a hotel, etc. Many countries also require that people carry some form of ID)
d) F (Bulgaria and Romania are full Schengen members since January 2025)
e) F (There are also no immigration checks between Spain and France. But even if they went to France through a non-EU country the friend will have a Schengen visa, which is valid for France).

Ex. 5)
a) Capital/people
b) Services/capital
c) Goods/capital
d) Goods/capital
e) People

Ex. 6) Students' own answers.

Ex. 7)
a) Shared
b) Supporting
c) Exclusive

UNIT 2: Democracy in the EU

LESSON PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:	STUDENTS WILL LEARN:
• Introduce the idea of participatory democracy • Introduce the main legislative bodies of the EU • Explain how EU laws are made • Introduce the idea of the European Citizens' Initiative	• The main institutions of the EU • How the EU legislates • How they can affect EU policies
STUDENTS WILL PRACTICE:	**MATERIALS REQUIRED:**
• Research skills • Using the Europa website • Discussing/sharing information	• Unit 2 PowerPoint (if using) • Videos 4-6

Lesson Steps

1) Check homework from the previous lesson, including insights from the optional activity if done.

INTRODUCTION

2) Write the word 'Democracy' on the board. Ask students what they understand by the term. Allow students to discuss what they know about the democratic institutions in their country.

3) Show **PowerPoint slide 2**. Explain that, in today's lesson, you are going to talk about two different types of democracy: representative democracy and participatory democracy.

> **Representative democracy** is the form of government in which people **elect** their representatives (e.g., members of parliament) whom they **authorise** to propose and pass legislation on their behalf.
>
> **Participatory democracy** refers to mechanisms through which citizens are **involved in public decision-making** processes, thus complementing representative democracy.

THE DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF THE EU

4) Show **PowerPoint slide 3**. Explain the EU has three main institutions responsible for proposing and passing legislation: the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU.

5) Show **PowerPoint slide 4**. Introduce the European Commission.

What Does the European Commission Do?

Proposes new laws

The European Commission is the sole EU institution that has the right to table laws for adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU that:

- protect the interests of the EU and its citizens on issues that can't be dealt with effectively at national level
- get technical details right by consulting experts and the public

Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding

- sets EU spending priorities, together with the Council and Parliament
- draws up annual budgets for approval by the Parliament and Council
- supervises how the money is spent, under scrutiny by the Court of Auditors

Enforces EU law

- together with the Court of Justice, ensures that EU law is properly applied in all the member countries

Represents the EU internationally

- speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies, in particular in areas of trade policy and humanitarian aid
- negotiates international agreements for the EU

Composition

Political leadership is provided by a team of 27 Commissioners (one from each EU country) – led by the Commission President, who decides who is responsible for which policy area. The President is nominated by the European Council (representing the Heads of State or government from each EU country) taking account of the results of the European Parliament elections. He/she is then approved by the European Parliament. The other members are nominated by their countries and go through an approval procedure involving the new President, the European Parliament and the European Council.

https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-commission_en

6) Show **PowerPoint slide 5**. Introduce the Council of the European Union.

What does the Council of the EU do?

Negotiates and adopts EU laws
The Council is an essential EU decision-maker.
It negotiates and adopts legislative acts in most cases together with the European Parliament. It is made up of ministers from all EU countries.

Coordinates Member States' policies

The Council is responsible for coordinating member states' policies in specific fields, such as:

- economic and fiscal policies
- education, culture, youth, and sport
- employment policy

Develops the EU's common foreign and security policy
The Council defines and implements EU foreign and security policy based on guidelines set by the European Council. This also includes the EU's development and humanitarian aid, defence, and trade.

Concludes international agreements
The Council provides the mandate to the Commission to negotiate agreements on behalf of the EU between the EU and non-EU countries and international organisations. At the end of negotiations, the Council decides on the signature and conclusion of the agreement.

Adopts the EU budget

The Council adopts the EU budget together with the Parliament.

The budget period covers a calendar year. It is usually adopted in December and starts running on 1 January the following year.

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/

7) Play Video 4 (**PowerPoint slide 6**) about EU elections. Ask students if they know who their MEPs are. When were the last elections? When will the next elections be? Do they think it is important to vote in elections? Why/why not?

8) Show **PowerPoint slide 7**. Introduce the European Parliament.

What does the European Parliament do?

Legislates

- Passing EU laws, together with the Council of the EU, based on European Commission proposals
- Deciding on international agreements
- Deciding on enlargements
- Reviewing the Commission's work programme and asking it to propose legislation

Supervises

- Democratic scrutiny of all EU institutions [use simple language here for students to better understand]
- Electing the Commission President and approving the Commission as a body. Possibility of voting a motion of censure, obliging the Commission to resign
- Granting discharge, i.e., approving the way EU budgets have been spent
- Examining citizens' petitions and setting up inquiries
- Discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank
- Questioning Commission and Council
- Election observations

Prepares budget

- Adopting the EU budget, together with the Council
- Approving the EU's long-term budget, the 'Multiannual Financial Framework'

Composition

Elections are held every 5 years. The number of MEPs for each country is roughly proportionate to its population: no country can have fewer than 6 or more than 96 MEPs and the total number cannot exceed 750 (plus the President). In the 2024-2029 mandate, the number of MEPs is 719 plus the President. MEPs are grouped by political affiliation, not by nationality. The President represents the Parliament to other EU institutions and the outside world and gives the final go-ahead to the EU budget.

https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/european-parliament_en

THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS

9) Ask students to explain how laws are passed in their country. If necessary, explain.

10) Play Video 5 (**PowerPoint slide 8**), which explains how laws are passed in the EU. Explain that the way that the EU arrives at decisions ensures that the views and needs of all parties involved are taken into consideration: the EU as a body, individual Member States, and the citizens of those states.

11) Show **PowerPoint slide 9**. Use the flow chart to check that students have understood the basics of the decision-making process.

The Law-Making Process

NB this is a simplified description.

1. The European Commission proposes laws and policies on its own initiative. It can also respond to invitations to do so from:

- the European Council (heads of state or government of each EU country)
- the Council of the European Union (government ministers from each EU country)
- the European Parliament (directly elected by EU citizens)
- Citizens themselves, following a successful European Citizens' Initiative

2. The Commission goes into consultation with stakeholders and citizens, and then sends its proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.
3. A round of amendments/counter amendments may then follow.
4. If the European Parliament and the Council of the EU finally agree, the proposal is adopted.

Some acts (regulations and decisions) become automatically binding throughout the EU on the date they take effect. Others (directives) must be incorporated into national law by EU countries. The Commission monitors whether EU laws are applied correctly and on time and takes action if not. In this role, the Commission is referred to as the 'guardian of the treaties'.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process_en

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/powers-and-procedures/legislative-powers

INTRODUCING THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

12) Play Video 6 (**PowerPoint slide 10**), which introduces the European Citizens Initiative. Explain to the students that the European Citizens' Initiative is a way for everyday citizens to influence EU policy – a form of participatory democracy.

For more information on the European Citizens' Initiative, please use the link below (the information is available in all EU languages):

https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu

ENDING THE LESSON

13) Check that students understand what they are required to do for the next lesson in the **Student's Pack** (pp.13-15).

14) Before leaving, students are asked to get into pairs and think of three questions to ask their partner about the content of the lesson. They ask each other and answer.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Students create a short survey for their schoolmates to find out how much they know about the way the European Union operates and what it is responsible for. They analyse and discuss the results in class.

Answer key for Unit 2 Lesson Review

Ex. 1) a. Cm Cn b. P c. Cm d. Cn e. P Cn f. Cm g. P h. P Cn

Ex. 2) a. 3 b. 1 c. 4 d. 6 e. 2 f. 5

Ex. 3) a. F (only the Commission) b. F (Parliament and the Council) c. T d. T e. F (only on areas of action where it has competence)

UNIT 3: The European Citizens' Initiative

LESSON PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:	STUDENTS WILL LEARN:
• Introduce the European Citizens' Initiative • Encourage students to think of issues that are important to them and that would be relevant at EU level	• What the European Citizens Initiative is • The rules of running a European Citizens Initiative • What makes a successful campaign
STUDENTS WILL PRACTICE:	**MATERIALS REQUIRED:**
• Planning • Cooperating as a team • Brainstorming • Navigating the ECI and Europa websites	• Unit 3 PowerPoint (if using) • Videos 6 and 7

Lesson Steps

1) Check homework from the previous lesson, including results from the optional activity if done.

2) Students should have prepared to answer the following questions:
   a) How much attention do you pay to the workings of the European Union? Do you follow them on social media/on the news?
   b) Do you find the way that decisions are made by the European Union is democratic?
   c) Are there ways you think the European Union could be made more democratic?

Allow time for discussion and gather insights from optional activity, if undertaken.

THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE – THE STEPS

3) With the **Student's Pack** closed, ask students what they remember about the ECI from the previous lesson. Then, play Video 6 again (**PowerPoint slide 2**).

Main Steps

1. Find another six people from another six EU countries, who are eligible to vote in European elections, to form a team with you.
2. Define your objective and ask the Commission to register the initiative.
3. After a positive decision, the initiative is published on the website.
4. Collect 1 million signatures from at least 7 EU countries within 12 months (online or on paper).
5. Get the statements of support verified by national authorities.
6. Submit your initiative to the Commission.
7. Meeting with the Commission.
8. Public hearing at the European Parliament.
9. Response from the European Commission.
10. Follow-up by the Commission on proposed actions, if applicable.

More details can be found here: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu

4) Ask what steps have to be followed to create an initiative. Allow responses, then show **PowerPoint slide 3** or ask students to open their **Student's Pack** on p16.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE?

5) As part of their homework, students were asked to prepare the following: *Go to https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/. Find an initiative that you would be prepared to support. For the next lesson, be prepared to explain why you would support this initiative?* Ask all students (or select several) to share what they decided with the class.

6) Ask the class if they would be prepared to support all of the initiatives mentioned. Are there any they could not support? Why?

7) Ask the class what makes a good ECI. Ask them to think, in general terms, of what the elements of a successful ECI would be.

Suggested answers:

- It must be something that affects/is an issue in the majority of EU countries.
- It must have broad appeal.
- It must be something that can be legislated for (rather than just a moral issue).
- Specific action should be requested (not just 'something should be done').
- There should be a clear connection between what is being asked of the Commission and the solution to the issue.

8) Play video 7 (**PowerPoint slide 4**).

9) Show **PowerPoint slide 5** or ask students to go to p30 in the **Student's Pack**. Divide class into groups of three or four. Explain that initiatives must fall within one of the EU's areas of action for which the Commission can table a proposal for a legal act. Ask each group to come up with one idea for an initiative that would be within one of the areas of action. Give time for discussion and then for each group to feed back.

Examples of EU areas of action: Agriculture and animal rights, Environment and climate, Food safety, Healthcare, Consumer protection, Culture and media, Education, youth and sports, Energy, Non-discrimination, Humanitarian aid, Transport.

Check also:
https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/faq-eu-competences-and-commission-powers_en

To be sure whether the Commission can propose a legal act, you should look for explicit mentions in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, see the following examples:

CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

PART THREE
UNION POLICIES AND INTERNAL ACTIONS

TITLE XX
ENVIRONMENT

Article 192

(ex Article 175 TEC)

1. The European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, shall decide what action is to be taken by the Union in order to achieve the objectives referred to in Article 191.

EUR-Lex - 12012E192 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

12008E078

Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - PART THREE: UNION POLICIES AND INTERNAL ACTIONS - TITLE V: AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE - Chapter 2: Policies on border checks, asylum and immigration - Article 78 (ex Articles 63, points 1 and 2, and 64(2) TEC)

Official Journal 115 , 09/05/2008 P. 0076 - 0077

Article 78
(ex Articles 63, points 1 and 2, and 64(2) TEC)

2. In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament.

EUR-Lex - 12008E078 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2016:202:FULL&from=en#page=17

10) Put the ideas on the board and ask students to vote for one idea that they all (or the majority of them) would support.

11) Ask students to go back to their groups. Bearing in mind the ECI procedure, ask students to consider how they would proceed with this campaign, focusing on (**PowerPoint slide 6**):

- What would you call the campaign?
- What would you do to find partners in six other EU countries?
- What might you need to spend money on?
- How would you raise funds for your campaign?
- How would you 'sell' your idea to get signatures?
- How would you attract media attention?

Students can make notes in the **Student's Pack**

12) Bring the group back together and get students' feedback.

ENDING THE LESSON

13) Check students know what they need to do for homework (pp. 18-19 in the Student's Pack).

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Students create a suggestion box or conduct on online poll to find out what issues other students in their school are concerned about at European level.

UNIT 4: Develop and promote a European Citizens' Initiative

LESSON PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:	STUDENTS WILL LEARN:
• To have students create their own campaign • To explore communication skills	• The basics of successful communication • Audience awareness • What makes a successful campaign
STUDENTS WILL PRACTICE:	**MATERIALS REQUIRED:**
• Planning • Role play • Cooperating as a team • Brainstorming • Targeting a campaign	• Unit 4 PowerPoint (if using)

Lesson Steps

CHECK HOMEWORK

1) Students were asked to examine a campaign that they felt they could support. Go to **PowerPoint slide 2** or write the following headings on the board: Text, Pictures/video, Graphics, Partners, Other. Ask the students to briefly describe successful aspects of the campaign they had chosen and place them under these headings.

2) Allow time to discuss why students think these campaigns were successful generally.

Think about issues like

- Broad appeal
- Practicality
- Social/political/economic concerns
- EU areas of action.

To see successful campaigns:
https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/find-initiative_en?STATUS[0]=ANSWERED

To see campaigns waiting for an answer:
https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/find-initiative_en?CATEGORY%5B0%5D=any&STATUS%5B0%5D=SUBMITTED&SECTION=ALL

3) Students were asked to think about the campaign they voted on in Unit 3 and how they would make this specific campaign successful through action taken both online and offline. Allow some time to discuss their ideas as a class.

Students should think about:

- How they would find people in other countries.
- What they might have to spend money on.
- How they would raise money.
- What channels they would use to reach out to people.
- Who they would reach out to.

APPROACHES TO PERSUASION

4) Go to **PowerPoint slide 3** or ask students to go to p20 in their **Student's Pack**. Explain that in order for a campaign to be successful in getting support, we have to persuade people that our idea is a good one. We can use these four approaches (or a mix of them) to help us frame our argument. Which one do students think they would respond most positively to?

Logic: Does the idea make sense? Is there a direct connection between the action called for and, for example, improvements in society/the economy/daily life/health?

Feelings: Is the issue something people are afraid of? How much better will they feel if the issue is resolved? How will they feel if it is not resolved/if they do nothing? Is the issue something people can empathise with? Is it something that inspires hope?

Ethics: Is there a moral issue here? Is the issue morally wrong? Should we be resolving the issue simply because it is the right thing to do (although there may be a cost)?

Credibility: Are there reliable sources that back up our suggestion (science, research, etc.)? Are there individuals/groups we admire or respect (and who have shown themselves to be knowledgeable) who have taken a similar position or are involved in action?

5) Ask students for four or more possible initiatives (these can be ones they came up with in the last lesson or new ones they have found) and write them on the board.

PRACTISING PERSUASION

6) Divide the class into pairs, one will be A the other B.

7) Ask students to imagine that they are campaigning for support for an initiative outside a supermarket. Student A has to pick one that they think could best be supported by using logic. It is important to stress that students do not have to really agree with the point they are defending.

8) Give Student A a few minutes to convince Student B why they should support the initiative. Student B then has to provide counter arguments; Student A does not have to respond.

9) The students now swap roles and Student B has to pick another initiative and defend it using emotional arguments (feelings). Student A has to respond.

10) Keep alternating roles to cover ethics and credibility in the same way.

11) Ask the class to reflect on whether their approach was the best one for the initiative selected. How successful do they think they were? Did the counter arguments identify a weakness in the supporting arguments?

RESPONDING TO COUNTER ARGUMENTS

12) Remind students that for a campaign to be successful, they should consider using more than one approach (logic, feelings, credibility, ethics). They should also consider possible counter arguments and try and answer them before they are raised.

13) Go to **PowerPoint slide 4** or write the following on the board: 'We should ban the use of pesticides in agriculture'.

14) Students remain in their pairs or swap partners. Tell the students they are both playing students of their own age. Using any of the approaches above that they feel appropriate, student A should support this statement. Student B should try and find counter arguments.

15) Students now switch roles, but this time B (arguing for the statement) is a student, and A (raising counter arguments) is a farmer.

16) Ask students to reflect on the counter arguments raised. Did they change when the opposing student was playing a farmer?

FINDING COMMON GROUND

17) Point out to students that if they want a campaign to have the widest possible positive support, they have to convince different groups of people who may have different concerns.

Finding common ground and understanding the different perspectives of the various parties involved is key when making EU laws. This will also apply to the idea for law that citizens initiated using the ECI. If a European citizens' initiative is successful in collecting 1 million signatures, and the Commission decides to put forward a legal proposal, the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council, will have to reach a compromise. Before proposing legislation, the Commission will have to consider the views of all the parties that will be affected; the Members of the Parliament will consider the effect on the people and businesses in their constituencies; and in the Council, the representatives of each EU country will look at the issue from an individual national level, as some countries may be more or differently affected than others. All these bodies will have to negotiate and compromise if the initiative is to become a law.

18) Go to **PowerPoint slide 5** or write the following on the board: student, parent, businessperson, politician.

19) Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the titles above as a 'persona' that represents a group of people. Ask students to go to p21 in their **Student's Pack** and make notes about what this persona worries about and what makes them feel secure.

20) Give the students a few minutes to discuss in their groups and then feed back to the class on what they wrote. Other students should be encouraged to add to the lists if they have other ideas.

21) Ask each group to choose an initiative to promote to their persona. What media should they use? What approach(es) would be best?

ENDING THE LESSON

22) Explain to students that, for their final assignment, they are going to create a video to promote an initiative they would like to see become EU law. The rules are as follows.

- They should work in groups of three or four.
- They should decide on an issue they think would make a good initiative. They can use one that was discussed in class or choose another one.
- They should make a video supporting their proposal, which should be no more than three minutes long.
- They can play characters in the video.
- If they wish, they can incorporate music and/or graphics into their video.
- They should make sure that they have permission to film locations or other people.
- There should be a list of credits stating who has been responsible for which part of the project.

Give students a little time to arrange themselves into groups and decide on an initiative.

If there is time, the videos can be screened in the next lesson. If not, videos can be uploaded on a collaborative platform the school is using. Students should be encouraged to provide positive feedback based on the issues that have been discussed during these lessons. If desired, students can vote for the best video (they may not vote for their own).

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Selected students imagine that they are at a hearing at the European Parliament to present their initiative. Other students are members of the European Parliament from different countries and political parties/preferences. They may ask questions and then decide if they would be in favour of the initiative.

A recording of a real hearing can be found below. The language can be changed by clicking on the 'note' symbol:

https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/agri-envi-committee-meeting_20230124-1430-COMMITTEE-ENVI-AGRI

Exit Quiz

1. How many EU citizens are needed to launch a European Citizens' Initiative?
    a. 3 EU citizens
    b. 5 EU citizens living in any Member State
    c. 7 EU citizens living in 7 different Member States
    d. There is no minimum requirement

2. Can you launch a European citizens' initiative on any topic that is important for you and on which you want the European Commission to take action?
    a. Yes, any topic is possible
    b. No, there are limitations

3. Who can support a European Citizens' Initiative?
    a. EU citizens from the age of 18.
    b. EU citizens old enough to vote in European Parliament elections – or aged at least 16 in some countries.
    c. People living in the EU, whatever their nationality.

4. True or False: One million supporters from an EU country are sufficient for a citizens' initiative to be valid?
    a. True
    b. False

5. True or False: The European Commission is obliged to adopt legislation as a result of a valid citizens' initiative?
    a. True
    b. False

6. Which of the following EU institutions is responsible for registering a citizens' initiative?
    a. The European Parliament
    b. The European Council
    c. The European Commission

7. Which one of the following treaties established the European Citizens' Initiative?
    a. The Maastricht Treaty (1992)
    b. The Lisbon Treaty (2007)
    c. The Treaty of Rome (1957)

8. The European Citizens' Initiative is what form of democracy?
    a. Participatory
    b. Representative

9. How long does an initiative have to collect the required number of signatures?
    a. 12 months
    b. 2 years
    c. There is no limit

10. True or False: People can only support an initiative online.
    a. True
    b. False

Exit Quiz Answer Key

1. C.

2. B. No, there are limitations. To launch an initiative, it has to be first registered by the European Commission. The Commission can only register initiatives that ask it to act on topics where it has the power to propose legislation. So, if the topic of a new initiative does not fall into one of the fields where the Commission can propose legislation, it cannot be registered. If an initiative goes against EU values, the Commission will also refuse it.

3. B.

4. B. False. The citizens' initiative must reach 1 million signatures and pre-set thresholds in at least seven EU Member States to be valid.

5. B. False. After the meeting of the initiative organisers with the European Commission and a public hearing at the European Parliament, the Commission is required to spell out what action it will propose in response to a valid citizens' initiative (if any), and its reasons for taking (or not taking) action. This response will be in the form of a communication formally adopted by the Commissioners and published in all official EU languages.

6. C.

7. B.

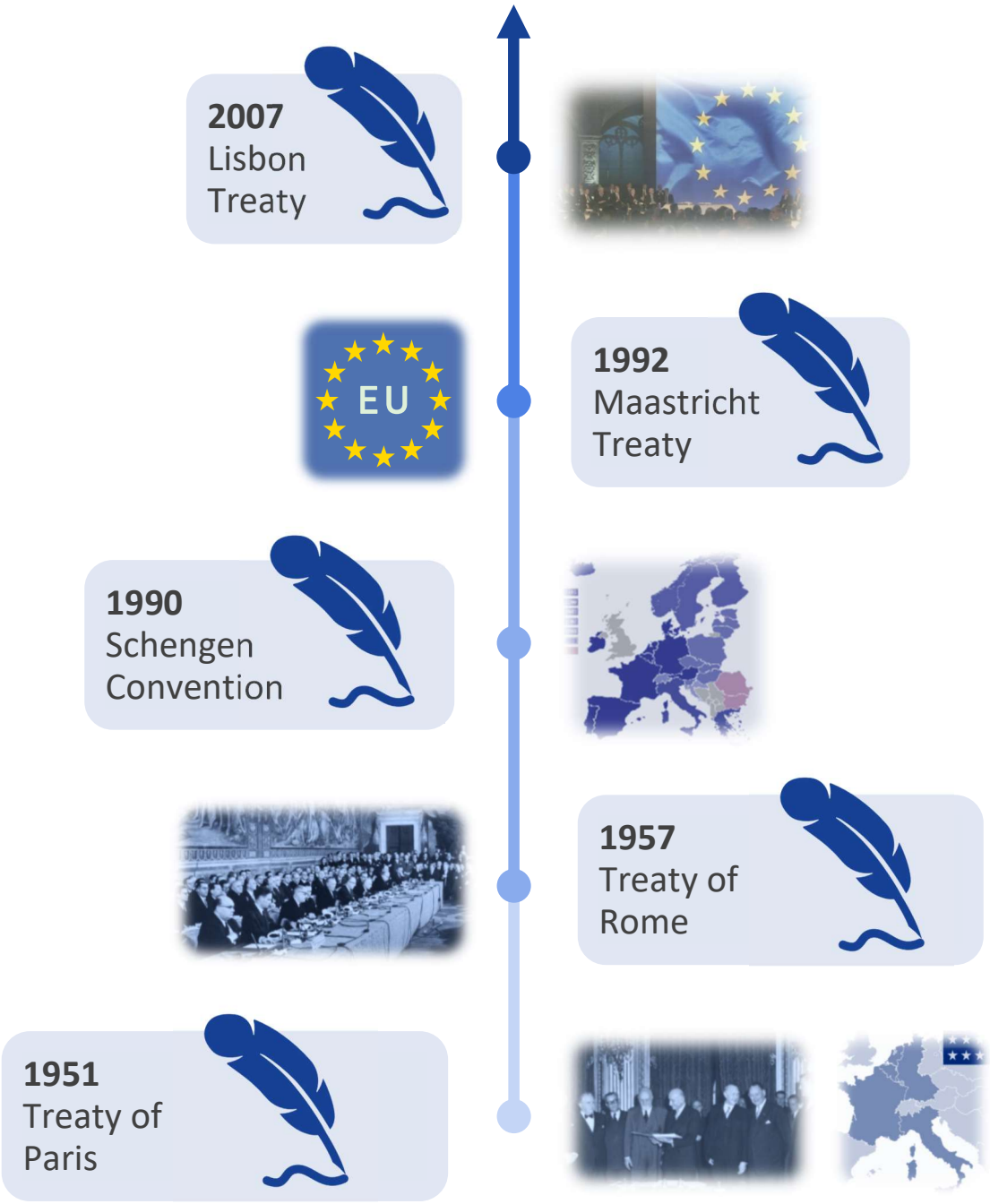
8. A. Voting for MEPs to represent our interests is a form of representative democracy.

9. A.

10. B. People can also sign support forms on paper.

EUROPEAN UNION TREATIES FACTSHEET

Main EU Treaties



https://european-union.europa.eu/select-language?destination=/node/53

The following treaties represent five important milestones in the history of the European Union. If you would like more information, please follow the links after each info box. Remember, you can change the language in all cases.

TREATY OF PARIS 1951

The European Union began its life in the 1950s, after the end of World War II. The aim was to prevent another war on the European continent. The Treaty of Paris was the first step towards European integration. It set up the European Coal and Steel Community, which brought together six European countries (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) between which trade in coal and steel could take place with no barriers. The main purpose of the European Coal and Steel Community was to integrate the economies of participating European nations to make conflict less likely and also to make it obvious if one member was using steel to build up weapons in preparation for a possible war.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0022

TREATY OF ROME 1957

This treaty set up the European Economic Community (EEC) which brought together six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) to work towards integration and economic growth, through trade.

It created a common market based on the free movement of goods, people, services, and capital. It also created a customs union, removing tariffs internally and setting common tariffs for goods coming from outside.

Many of the EU institutions we know today were set up by this treaty:

- The Council of Ministers
- The Commission
- The Parliamentary Assembly (European Parliament)
- The Court of Justice
- The Economic and Social Committee

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0023

SCHENGEN CONVENTION 1990

The Schengen Convention established an area of free movement with no border controls between the signatories. It has since been incorporated into EU law and is now a declared aim of the European Union.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/schengen-agreement-and-convention.html

MAASTRICHT TREATY 1992

This is the treaty that established the European Union. Among many other things, it introduced the idea of the 'European Citizen', which allows citizens of any EU country to live and work in any other Member State. It also provided them with other rights and protections.

Another important part of the treaty was that it established the idea of a common currency and coordination of economic policies, leading to the creation of the euro and the European Central Bank.

The treaty centralised many responsibilities that had previously been the responsibility of national governments to bring about further harmonisation across the European Union. It also made some changes to the power structure within the EU institutions.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0026

THE LISBON TREATY 2007

This treaty built on and amended the treaties in force at that time. It gave the European Union a legal personality, which meant it could now sign treaties or join organisations as a single body. It made the Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding and gave it the same legal value as the treaties. It also clarified matters of EU competence.

Very importantly, the treaty ensured that there should be more democracy, by increasing the power of the European Parliament.

It also provided a mechanism for ordinary citizens to have a direct effect on EU policy and law. This was where the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) was introduced.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/the-treaty-of-lisbon.html

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon

Read more about the treaties currently in force on EUR-lex:

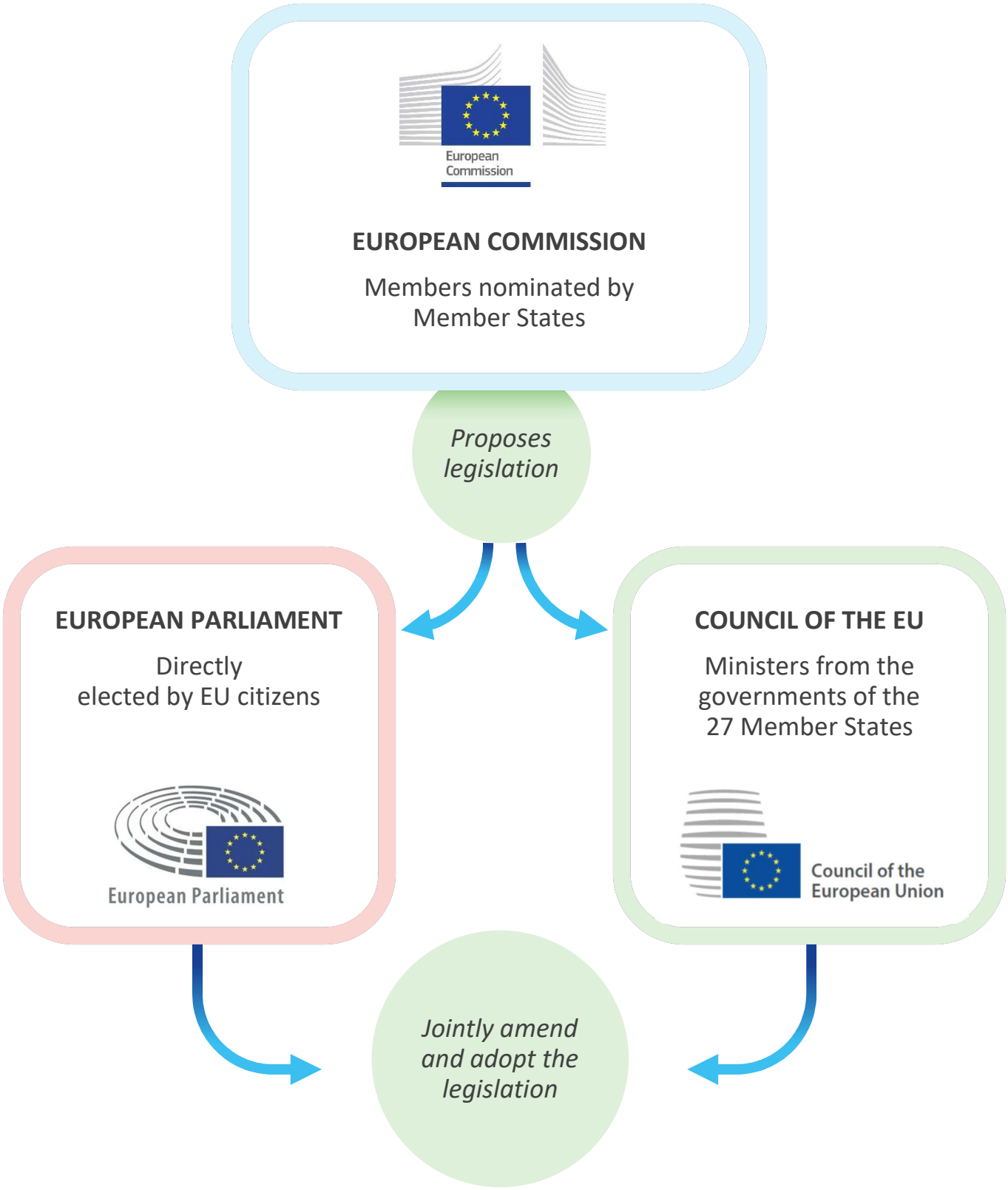
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/collection/eu-law/treaties/treaties-force.html

EU AREAS OF ACTION (a selection)

Exclusive Competence	Shared Competence	Supporting Competence
Customs Union	Single Market	Public health
Competition rules	Employment and social affairs	Industry
Monetary policy	Agriculture	Culture
Trade	Fisheries	Tourism
Marine plants and animals	Environment	Education and training, youth, and sport
	Consumer protection	Civil protection
	Transport	Administrative cooperation
	Trans-European networks	
	Energy	
	Justice	
	Fundamental rights	
	Migration and home affairs	
	Public health	
	Research and space	
	Development cooperation and humanitarian aid	

Find out more:
https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/faq-eu-competences-and-commission-powers_en#

THE EU LAW-MAKING PROCESS



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European Citizens' Initiative