

# EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Who is doing  
what in the  
EUROPEAN  
UNION?



defines the common objectives of the EU



**COUNCIL of the EUROPEAN UNION**  
(COUNCIL OF MINISTERS)

represents  
LUXEMBOURG

adopts



**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

agrees with the composition



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Suggests

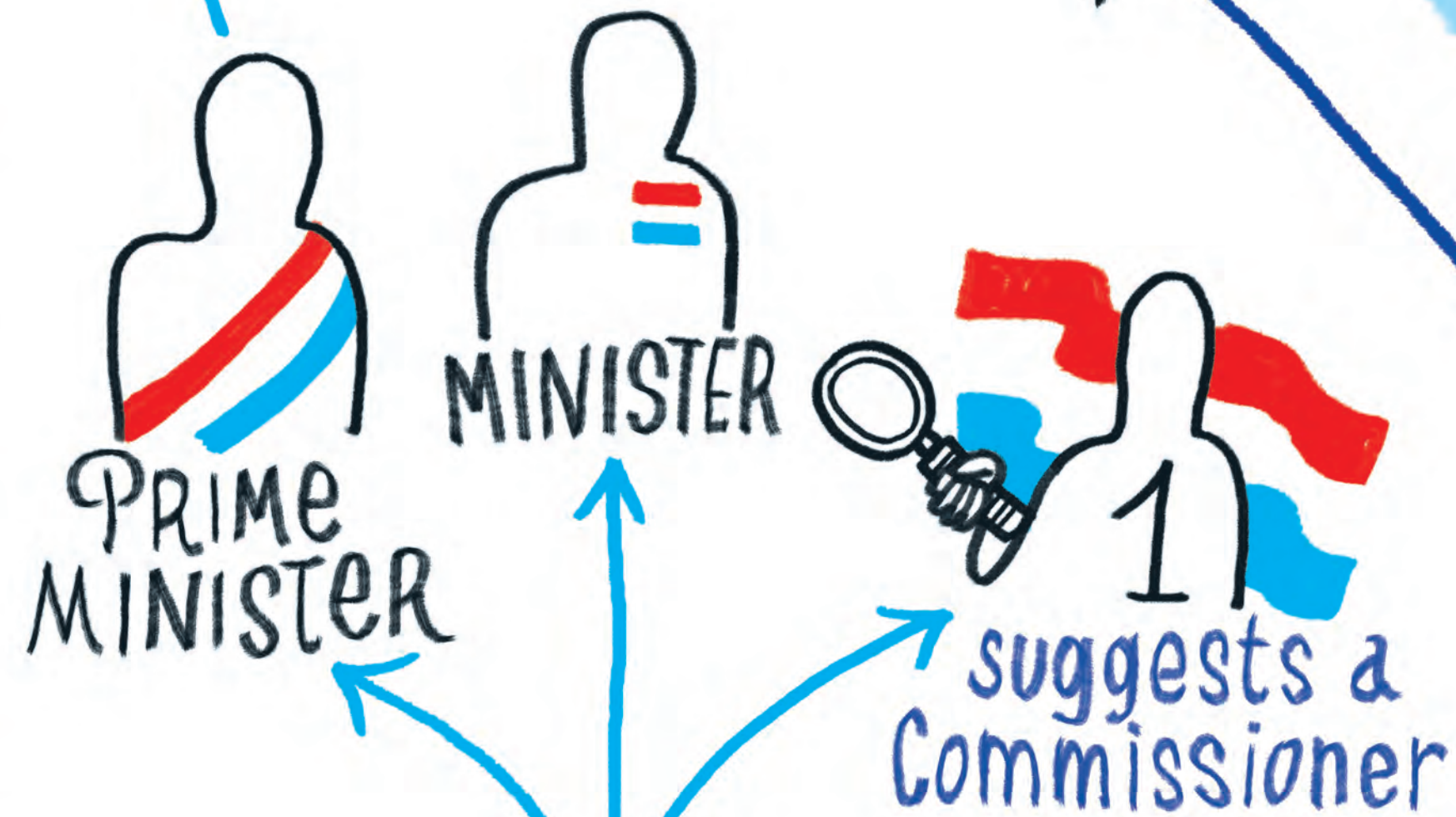
votes



**EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE**

ensures  
compliance with  
EU Laws

vote



**GOVERNMENT**



**CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**  
(PARLIAMENT)

vote

**EU 'LAWS'**

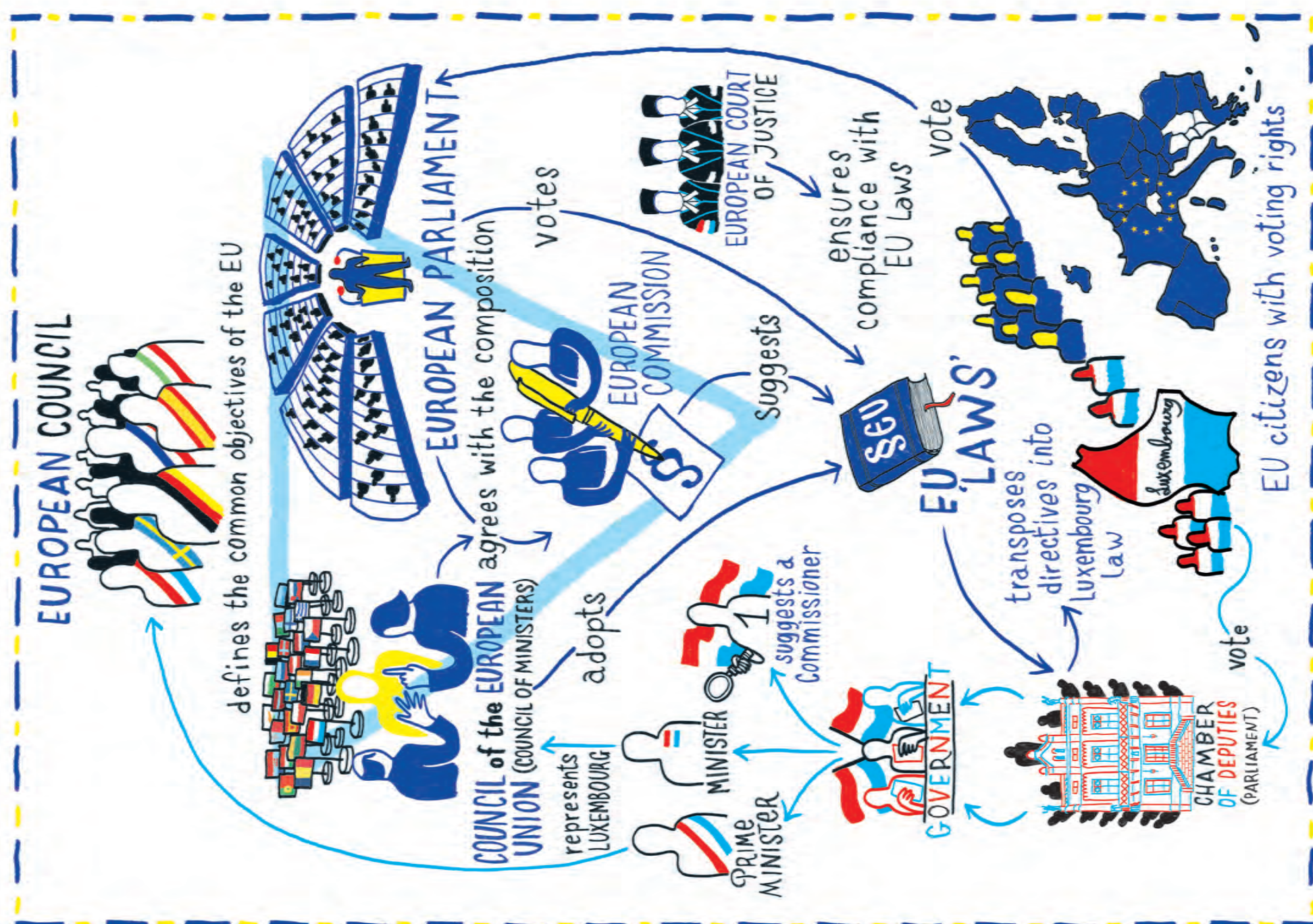
transposes  
directives into  
Luxembourg  
law



EU citizens with voting rights







## WHO IS DOING WHAT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

The history of the European Union begins in 1952 with the European Coal and Steel Community, which had its headquarters in Luxembourg. In the decades that followed, this initial union was further expanded by a large number of treaties. New Member States join the EU over the years and work together in more and more policy areas (economy, foreign trade, currency, etc.).

The European Union (EU) is a supranational organisation. This means that its Member States voluntarily transfer part of their sovereignty to the EU. They accept this restriction because they hope to gain greater economic and political advantages through the close co-operation within this association of states.

The accusation is often levelled that the EU does not work democratically and transparently. Instead, negotiations are allegedly conducted behind closed doors. This is largely true for the European Council and the Council of Ministers. However, the individual ministers and heads of government are in principle controlled by their national parliaments and democratically legitimised.

The interaction between the various actors (democratically elected

governments, the directly elected European Parliament, the European Commission) has brought about this **distinct, unique kind of European democracy**.

The following illustration shows how the various EU institutions work together, how decisions are made and new European rules adopted.

Not all institutions and supervisory bodies are listed, such as the European Central Bank or the European Court of Auditors. Consultation bodies are also missing, such as the Committee of the Regions (local representatives) or the Economic and Social Committee (representatives from civil society and business). Interest groups are also trying to influence the legislative process. The media in the respective Member States provide information about political events and comment on them. If they have their own political agenda, they can influence citizens and the political mood in the country.

In addition to voting in the European Parliament, there are other ways for EU citizens to get involved, e.g. by submitting petitions to the European Parliament or sending concrete legislative changes to the Commission (citizens' initiative).



### THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- represents the citizens of the European Union. The number of MEPs per Member State is determined according to the population's size (Luxembourg, for example, has six MEPs).
- adopts new EU laws together with the Council of Ministers. In the European Parliament, much of the work takes place in specialised committees (commissions).
- is responsible for the political control of the European Commission.
- meets in Brussels (Belgium) and Strasbourg (France). The administrative centre is located in Luxembourg.



### THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES/PARLIAMENT

- is the Luxembourg Parliament and represents the citizens of Luxembourg.
- votes on national proposals for legislation (and therefore also the implementation of EU directives).
- controls the Luxembourg government.



### THE LUXEMBOURG GOVERNMENT

- consists of ministers and state secretaries.
- is formed on the basis of the majority in parliament.
- prepares draft legislation (and proposals for the implementation of EU directives).
- implements the laws in force, i.e. the Member States ensure that the objectives defined in the law are implemented.



### THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

- brings together the Member States' heads of state/government, the presidents of the European Commission and the European Council four times a year at the so-called 'summits'.
- provides important impetus for the development of the EU.
- defines the general objectives and the principles of the common foreign and security policy.
- takes decisions on issues that could not be resolved by the Council of Ministers.
- elects the President of the European Council, who represents the EU externally.



### THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (COUNCIL OF MINISTERS)

- brings together all the specialised ministers of the Member States (e.g. foreign, economic or agricultural ministers). A different Member State takes over the presidency every six months.
- seeks common positions on all EU issues.
- decides on projects that affect many European countries.
- ensures the implementation of the common foreign and security policy.
- adopts new EU laws, together with the European Parliament.



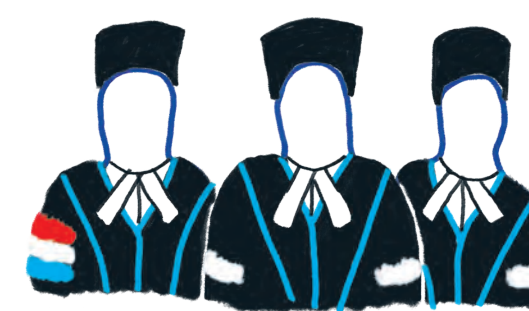
### THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- is made up of one Commissioner from each Member State. The candidates are suggested by the governments and approved by the European Parliament. Within the Commission, the Commissioners do not represent the interests of their home country, but pursue the overarching interests of the Union.
- has a president. He/she is elected by the European Parliament upon suggestion of the European Council. The result of the European elections must be taken into account.
- has the right of initiative: the Commission proposes new European laws to the Council of Ministers.
- ensures that EU laws are implemented.
- monitors if EU laws are complied with by the Member States.
- manages the EU budget.
- is located in Brussels (Belgium).



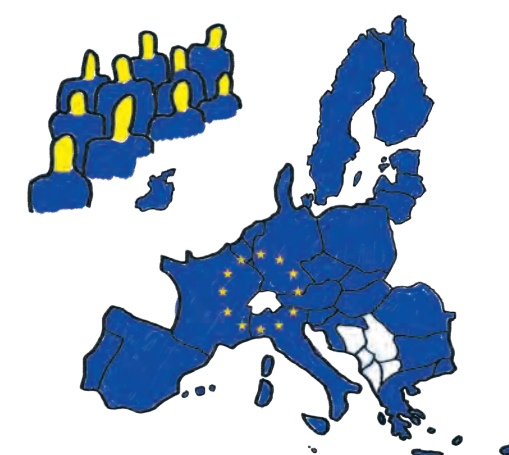
### EU 'LAWS'

Three institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers) are responsible for legislation in the European Union. This is why they are also referred to as the 'institutional triangle'. New EU laws are suggested by the Commission. The European Parliament can then make amendments before voting on the text together with the Council of Ministers. Usually, a compromise is reached in the end, as the Parliament and Council must jointly approve the final text. A distinction is mainly made between regulations (which are directly effective in all EU countries) and directives (which have to be transposed by national parliaments into national law). The national parliaments therefore have a certain amount of leeway with directives, but not with regulations.



### THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE (CJEU)

- is the highest court of the European Union. Each Member State appoints one judge.
- has its seat in Luxembourg.
- deals with actions brought by the Commission against the Member States in the event of a breach of contract, e.g. if a Member State fails to fulfil its environmental obligations.
- decides on issues concerning the interpretation of European law that have been submitted to it by national courts. Under certain conditions, companies or individual citizens may also file an action.
- examines if new decisions taken by EU states are compatible with EU laws.



### EU CITIZENS WITH VOTING RIGHTS

- may vote and stand as a candidate in the European elections in their place of residence. For example, a Spanish citizen in Luxembourg can vote for the six Luxembourgish MEPs, stand for election and also be elected. However, he/she is then no longer allowed to take part in the European elections in Spain.
- In the elections for the Luxembourg Parliament, only citizens with Luxembourg nationality may vote and be elected.