

## The EU institutions and European Political Cooperation

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Beginning in the early 1970s, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the EEC began to encounter more and more obstacles to Community policy that could be overcome only by bringing their political influence to bear. The first global oil crisis, the end of the Bretton Woods International Monetary System and, at Community level, the accession of three new Member States, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, as well as the tensions created by the agricultural and budgetary crises, were all factors that led the Member States to seek political power and a common foreign policy. They therefore decided to hold regular meetings and created, over time, the European Council, a new European decision-making body. This European Council was not provided for in the basic treaties, but, from 1975, it replaced the European summit conferences. It met at least twice a year and began to lay down the broad guidelines of Community policy.

While keen to ensure public support for European unification, Member States' leaders also wanted their citizens to feel that they belonged to, and identified with, a single Community. They therefore devised practical measures to reinforce the sense of a European identity and citizenship.