

The single institutional framework

Source: CVCE. European Navigator. Raquel Valls.

Copyright: (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_single_institutional_framework-en-efe7affd-3dea-40aa-a067-c3ef601f1f4f.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



The single institutional framework

Consisting of three international integration organisations — the European Communities (the ECSC, the EEC — which became the EC after 1993 — and the EAEC or Euratom) — and two areas of intergovernmental cooperation, the European Union came into existence in 1993 as a complex political structure. Despite the broad scope of its fields of activity and the diversity of its decision-making procedures, the Union has a **single institutional framework** whose task is to manage all of its policies in a consistent manner.

The Union's institutions are, first and foremost, institutions of the Communities. Depending on the field of activity concerned — Community or intergovernmental — the same institutions have different powers and act in accordance with different decision-making procedures.

In order to convey an understanding of the institutional architecture of the European Union in a visual way, the organisation is commonly represented as a temple with **three pillars**.

The first pillar, that of the European Communities (of which there are now two, since the ECSC was wound up in 2002), is the main support for the structure. It is governed by the '**Community method**', based on a balance between the three main institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament) and decisions taken by qualified majority in the Council.

The second and third pillars, which are, respectively, that of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and that of justice and home affairs (JHA) — now police and judicial cooperation on criminal matters (PJCC) after the reform brought about by the Amsterdam Treaty — are the other supports. They are governed by the '**intergovernmental cooperation method**', based on decisions taken unanimously in the Council with contributory involvement of the other institutions.

Crowning the whole structure, the single institutional framework forms the pediment, showing that all the institutions are involved to different degrees in the functions of each pillar.