

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Rationale for the Day**

---



---

*A crucial element of effective Citizenship Education is Active Citizenship where we enable young people to make a positive contribution and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills so they are equipped to effect change and influence decision making, both in school & in their wider communities. We should encourage young people to consider both their role in society and their ability to take responsible action and take on the role of agents of change.*

---

The Advisory Group on Citizenship's 1998 report states that one of the main aims of Citizenship education is "for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life" (Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools para 1.5).

To enable this in schools Citizenship activities should have a controversial content, should be relevant to young people's lives and inspire them to want to engage with political, social and moral issues both in their local communities and in the wider world.

Collapsed timetable events are an exciting and valuable way to deliver Citizenship Education as they provide a whole day for pupils to really get to grips with a topic and the issues associated with it. Pupils are able to see a clear progression in their learning from the beginning of the day until the end and they provide a memorable experience where they are able to work with others they might not usually have the chance to.

---

## **Wider aims of the day:**

---

With this in mind, the wider aims of the collapsed timetable event, Crisis Point, is to provide an opportunity for young people to learn through active participation, to engage them in the broad issues of being a citizen of a member state of the European Union and to allow them to participate in an exciting event which will develop their skills of responsible action and inspire them to find out more.

Whilst taking part in the Crisis Point Citizenship event, pupils will immerse themselves through taking on various roles tasked with making decisions related to a pandemic that is sweeping Europe. They will consider the crisis from various viewpoints, whilst getting to grips with the legislative processes of the European Union.

Crisis point provides a comprehensive and engaging set of materials to be used with a whole year group from either Key Stage 3 or 4, requiring minimal logistical planning on the part of teaching staff.

---

## **Crisis Point: The Learning Objectives**

---

By the end of the game pupils will:

- Develop a knowledge & understanding of the principles of the European Union and its decision making structures
  - Have considered the diverse nature of member states of the EU
  - Explore conflict resolution & community cohesion within the context of an EU wide issue
  - Have developed skills of decision making, negotiation, presentation, team work & critical thinking
-

---

# Links to citizenship national curriculum:

---

---

## 1. Key Concepts

*There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of citizenship. Pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.*

**Crisis Point provides opportunities for pupils to develop the following Key Concepts:**

---

### 1.1 Democracy and justice

1. Weighing up what is fair and unfair in different situations, understanding that justice is fundamental to a democratic society and exploring the role of law in maintaining order and resolving conflict.
2. Considering how democracy, justice, diversity, toleration, respect and freedom are valued by people with different beliefs, backgrounds and traditions within a changing democratic society.
3. Understanding and exploring the roles of citizens and parliament in holding government and those in power to account.

---

### 1.2 Rights and responsibilities

1. Exploring different kinds of rights and obligations and how these affect both individuals and communities.
2. Understanding that individuals, organisations and governments have responsibilities to ensure that rights are balanced, supported and protected.
3. Investigating ways in which rights can compete and conflict, and understanding that hard decisions have to be made to try to balance these.

---

### 1.3 Identities and diversity: living together in the UK

1. Considering the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world.
  2. Exploring community cohesion and the different forces that bring about change in communities over time.
- 

---

## 2. Key processes

*These are the essential skills and processes in citizenship that pupils need to learn to make progress.*

**Crisis Point provides opportunities for pupils to develop the following Key Processes:**

---

### 2.1 Critical thinking and enquiry

Pupils should be able to:

1. Engage with and reflect on different ideas, opinions, beliefs and values when exploring topical and controversial issues and problems.
2. Research, plan and undertake enquiries into issues and problems using a range of information and sources.
3. Analyse and evaluate sources used, questioning different values, ideas and viewpoints and recognising bias.

---

### 2.2 Advocacy and representation

Pupils should be able to:

1. Express and explain their own opinions to others through discussions, formal debates and voting.
2. Communicate an argument, taking account of different viewpoints and drawing on what they have learnt through research, action and debate.
3. Justify their argument, giving reasons to try to persuade others to think again, change or support them.
4. Represent the views of others, with which they may or may not agree.

---

### 3. Range and content

*This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes:*

**Crisis Point provides opportunities for pupils to explore the following content:**

1. Political, legal and human rights, and responsibilities of citizens.
2. Actions that individuals, groups and organisations can take to influence decisions affecting communities and the environment.
3. Strategies for handling local and national disagreements and conflicts.
4. The changing nature of UK society, including the diversity of ideas, beliefs, cultures, identities, traditions, perspectives and values that are shared.
5. The UK's relations with the European Union and the rest of Europe.

---

### 4. Curriculum opportunities

*During the key stage pupils should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject.*

**Crisis Point provides opportunities for pupils to:**

1. Debate, in groups and whole-class discussions, topical and controversial issues, including those of concern to young people.
2. Develop citizenship knowledge and understanding while using and applying citizenship skills.
3. Work individually and in groups, taking on different roles and responsibilities.
4. Participate in both school-based and community-based citizenship activities.
5. Take into account legal, moral, economic, environmental, historical and social dimensions of different political problems and issues.
6. Take into account a range of contexts, such as school, local, regional, national, European, international and global, as relevant to different topics.
7. Use and interpret different media and ICT both as sources of information and as a means of communicating ideas.

---

## Running Crisis Point: Guidance for the Classroom Teacher

---

It is often the case that pupils have timetabled citizenship lessons that take place once a week or a fortnight. This can create challenges in terms of continuity and progression and for the non-specialist teacher, there is the added challenge of planning outside of your specialism. Full day Citizenship events can go some way to providing pupils with a real chance to get to grips with a topic, seeing it right through from beginning to end in one day.

Crisis point gives pupils an opportunity to spend a whole day exploring elements of the citizenship curriculum through participation in an interactive and meaningful event. Participants will fully immerse themselves in the events leading up to and the implications of the spread of a pandemic across the European Union. They will take on various roles throughout the day of groups who are affected by the progression of the pandemic, suggest strategies and offer legislative solutions to halt the spread of the fictitious disease.

The Crisis Point materials will take teachers step by step through the pupil's journey from being introduced to the European Union, to hearing the news of the outbreak and taking part in activities related to the tiers of decision making in European Union structures.

Your role as classroom teacher throughout the day will be to facilitate group discussion and feedback and enable pupils to reach a consensus as to where events will take them next. The exercise is designed to have a competitive element with each class eventually pitching against other classes in the hall at the end of the day, so it may help to highlight this to the students. The materials provide all the specialist knowledge required about the European Union.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION



---

## Preparatory session for Crisis Point

---

### Learning Objectives

*By the end of the session, pupils will:*

- *Have considered the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe*
  - *Have an understanding of the decision making structures and democratic institutions of the European Union*
  - *Have developed presentation & group work skills*
- 

### TEACHERS NOTE

#### The EU? What's that?

For more than half a century the countries of the European Union have been living together in peace.

There are now 492 million people in 27 Member States living in a vast area of security, stability and prosperity.

EU citizens are today free to study, work and live anywhere in the European Union. This has not always been the case. Such freedoms have been introduced by laws made at European level.

Through a process of cooperation, debate and law-making the biggest single market in the world is being created. This gives consumers wider choice, lower prices and rights which can be enforced anywhere in the EU.

Some people feel that the EU interferes with British affairs that should be none of its business. Others argue however that it makes sense to respond to political and economic problems of an international nature through co-operation at EU level.

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **(Time - 5 mins)**

---

What do pupils understand by the term European Union? What is its purpose?

Teacher uses teacher notes to provide a brief introductory explanation of the purpose of the EU.

---

## **STARTER: EUROPEAN UNION BINGO ACTIVITY**

### **(Time - 15 mins)**

---

Distribute country information cards from the “European Parliament – What’s that?” teaching resource. If you don’t have one please call 020 7227 4300 and we’ll send you one ASAP. (30 cards in total to represent one card from each member state, 27 members plus 3 applicant states, so some pupils may have to work in pairs depending on size of class).

Pupils have 5 minutes to read through the information on the back of the cards and familiarise themselves with the answers.

Distribute the European Union Bingo sheets and pupils must stand up and walk round the class to fill in the gaps using information from classmates.

---

## **MAIN ACTIVITY: GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

### **(Time - 25 mins)**

---

Pupils are split into groups and given an information sheet on various parts of the European Union structure. They must prepare a short presentation which they then present to the rest of the group in order to develop pupils’ knowledge & understanding.

Groups	The European Parliament
	The European Commission
	The Treaties
	The Eurozone
	Members of the European Parliament (MEP’s)

---

## **PLENARY: I AM THE ANSWER**

### **(Time - 5 mins)**

---

Distribute the “I am the answer” cards to every pupil.

Pupil one with the card with red writing on starts the process by asking his/her question. The pupil who thinks they have the answer to this on their card says “I am the answer”, gives the answer and then asks the question on their card and so on.....

# EUROPEAN UNION BINGO

**PHOTOCOPY 1 PER STUDENT**



*Talk to your classmates who are representing different members of the European Union to complete the information on this Bingo Card.*

<b>Find an EU member with a population over 60 million</b>	<b>Find at least 3 member states who are in the Eurozone (so their currency is the Euro)</b>	<b>Find a member state who joined the EU in 1995</b>
<b>Find the EU member state that is only 82 km long and 57 km wide</b>	<b>Find the EU member where the Olympic Games started</b>	<b>Find the EU member state that contains an independent state within it called the Vatican</b>
<b>Find the EU member state that has the Tulip as its national flower</b>	<b>Find a member state that joined the EU in 1973</b>	<b>Find the EU member state with a river associated with a well-known piece of music</b>
<b>Find 3 member states that joined the EU in 2004</b>	<b>Find the EU member state where the horror character Dracula originated from</b>	<b>Find the EU member state where the Ballpoint pen was invented</b>
<b>Find the EU member whose national dish is called Guivetch</b>	<b>Find a member state that joined the EU in 2007</b>	<b>Find 3 member states that joined the EU in 1957</b>



## EUROPEAN UNION BINGO

### ANSWER SHEET

<p><b>Find an EU member with a population over 60 million</b></p> <p>France, Germany, United Kingdom</p>	<p><b>Find at least 3 member states who are in the Eurozone (so their currency is the Euro)</b></p> <p>Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Slovakia, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia, Greece</p>	<p><b>Find a member state who joined the EU in 1995</b></p> <p>Austria, Finland, Sweden</p>
<p><b>Find the EU member state that is only 82 km long and 57 km wide</b></p> <p>Luxembourg</p>	<p><b>Find the EU member where the Olympic Games started</b></p> <p>Greece</p>	<p><b>Find the EU member state that contains an independent state within it called the Vatican</b></p> <p>Italy</p>
<p><b>Find the EU member state that has the Tulip as its national flower</b></p> <p>Netherlands</p>	<p><b>Find a member state that joined the EU in 1973</b></p> <p>Denmark, Ireland, UK</p>	<p><b>Find the EU member state with a river associated with a well-known piece of music</b></p> <p>Austria - Danube</p>
<p><b>Find 3 member states that joined the EU in 2004</b></p> <p>Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Rep, Czech Rep, Slovenia</p>	<p><b>Find the EU member state where the horror character Dracula originated from</b></p> <p>Romania</p>	<p><b>Find the EU member state where the Ballpoint pen was invented</b></p> <p>Hungary</p>
<p><b>Find the EU member whose national dish is called Guivetch</b></p> <p>Bulgaria</p>	<p><b>Find a member state that joined the EU in 2007</b></p> <p>Bulgaria, Romania</p>	<p><b>Find 3 member states that joined the EU in 1957</b></p> <p>Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg</p>

I AM THE ANSWER

**THIS IS THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHO ARE CURRENTLY MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**27**

**THE TREATY OF ROME WAS SIGNED TO ESTABLISH THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY IN WHICH YEAR?**

**1957**

**GOODS, PEOPLE, SERVICES AND CAPITAL CAN MOVE FREELY AROUND THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION SO EU CITIZENS CAN LIVE & WORK IN ANY EU COUNTRY. THIS IS KNOWN AS THE...**

**SINGLE MARKET**

**THERE ARE 3 MAIN DECISION-MAKING INSTITUTIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. ONE OF THESE REPRESENTS THE EU'S CITIZENS AND IS DIRECTLY ELECTED BY THEM. THIS IS...**

**THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**THIS IS THE NUMBER OF STARS ON THE EUROPEAN UNION FLAG.**

**12**

**THIS IS THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION WHO HAVE ADOPTED THE EURO AS THEIR CURRENCY AND SO ARE IN THE EURO-ZONE**

**16**

**THIS IS HOW OFTEN  
ELECTIONS FOR THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
TAKE PLACE**

**I AM THE ANSWER**

**EVERY 5  
YEARS**

**IN WHICH TWO CITIES  
DOES THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT MEET?**

**BRUSSELS AND  
STRASBOURG**

**THIS IS THE EU INSTITUTION  
THAT PROPOSES NEW LAWS  
OR LEGISLATION**

**THE  
EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION**

**THESE ARE THE TWO  
EUROPEAN UNION  
INSTITUTIONS THAT PASS  
THE LAWS PROPOSED BY THE  
EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**THE COUNCIL OF THE  
EU AND THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT**

**THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO  
REPRESENT EU CITIZENS IN  
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**MEPs**

**IN WHICH YEAR  
DID THE UK JOIN  
THE EU?**

**1973**

# **COLLAPSED TIMETABLE**

## **NOTES FOR THE CO-ORDINATOR**

---



Notes for the Co-ordinator of the Crisis Point Collapsed Timetable event:

### **PREPARATION CHECK LIST:**

- Download materials or contact the UK office of the European Parliament on 020 7227 4300 to request a copy of the boxed set
- Provide citizenship classes with the materials to run the preparatory session in advance of the collapsed timetable event
- Ensure Crisis Point materials are reproduced for each class taking part
- Book the Hall for sessions 1 & 5
- Ensure a laptop, sound system and projector are available for sessions 1 & 5 in the hall
- Book classrooms for sessions 2, 3 and 4
- Arrange for staff to work with a class / tutor group for the duration of the day
- Arrange cover for staff working on Crisis Point
- Provide presentation materials for each class – Flipchart paper, coloured pens, paper, scissors, glue etc. Powerpoint may be used for final pitches if access/equipment is available
- Invite Head teacher / SMT to attend the first and / or final presentation in session 5



- Session 1 is the introduction to the day. Give a brief outline, explaining that they will have to make some important decisions to help manage the outbreak. Show the Breaking News Video. Then they will divide into classes and go to the classrooms to take part. They will be back in the hall at the end of the day to pitch their ideas to each other with the winner being shown on the Outcome Simulator
- Session 5 is the Press Conference where each class will pitch its winning idea to the rest of the year. Allow each pitch team 5 mins to present and then 5 mins for the Press and Citizens to ask questions. If Powerpoint is being used make sure the equipment is available. Once all the pitches have been heard, as a year, take a vote on the winner. Then use the Outcome Simulator to input the winning pitch to show the outcome. Have they saved the citizens of Europe or have they helped to spread the outbreak?
- Further material on the EU is available on the European Union website for students to learn more if they wish. Please visit [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm).

# STRUCTURE OF THE DAY

Session	0	1	2	3	4	5
Stage in Crisis Point	Introductory & Preparatory Session	An Introduction to the Day	Stage 1 Citizen Opinion	Stage 2 The European Commission proposes	Stage 3 The European Parliament decides	Stage 4 Press Conference
Wider question for the session	What do we know about the European Union?	What's the problem? Crisis Point begins. Show the Breaking News video.	What does this mean for the citizens of the European Union?	What is Europe's best course of action to combat the crisis?	What law should we bring in to control the crisis?	Final plan - each class pitches their law. Use the Outcome Simulator to show results.
Location	Classroom (On a day before the whole day event)	The Assembly Hall (Or anywhere suitable to hold the whole year).	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	The Hall
Numbers of pupils (Nos. are approx. & will work with more or less)	30 - 32	Whole year group	30 - 32	30 - 32	30 - 32	Whole year group
Time	1 lesson	Approx 30 mins	1 hour 15 mins	1 hour 20 mins	1 hour 25 mins	Approx 30 mins
Equipment needed	Session Material (downloadable, or by calling 020 7227 4300) & "The EP: What's That?" pack. (Available by request from 020 7227 4300)	Breaking News Video (downloadable or by calling 020 7227 4300) DVD player/Laptop. Projector & screen. Speakers may be needed. SMT/Head/Co-ordinator can use the Intro & Prep session notes to help introduce the day.	Stage 1 pack. (downloadable from <a href="http://www.europarl.org.uk/resource/static/files/crisispoint/crisispoint_1.pdf">http://www.europarl.org.uk/resource/static/files/crisispoint_1.pdf</a> or by calling 020 7227 4300)	Stage 2 pack. (downloadable from <a href="http://www.europarl.org.uk/resource/static/files/crisispoint/crisispoint_2.pdf">http://www.europarl.org.uk/resource/static/files/crisispoint_2.pdf</a> or by calling 020 7227 4300) DVD player or laptop to play the Commission video.	Stage 3 pack. (downloadable or by calling 020 7227 4300) DVD player or laptop to play the Parliament video.	Outcome Simulator. (downloadable or by calling 020 7227 4300)



# MAIN ACTIVITY INFORMATION SHEET

## Group Presentations

Your task is to put together a brief presentation in the style of a **news bulletin** to share with your audience the following information:

- What does your part of the EU do?
- Why are they important to the smooth running of the EU?
- How can you get involved with this part of the EU?

## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament is elected by the citizens of the European Union to represent their interests and speak up for them in the EU. Its members have been directly elected by the Citizens of the EU.

The European Parliament works in Brussels (Belgium) and Strasbourg (France). Meetings of the whole parliament (called plenary meetings) take place in Strasbourg every month and less frequently in Brussels.

Every EU citizen is entitled to vote in the European Parliament elections and they can also stand as a candidate to become a Member of the European Parliament or MEP. This means that the European Parliament represents nearly 500 million citizens of the EU in discussions with other EU institutions.

Elections for the European Parliament are held every 5 years. The last election took place in June 2009.

What does the EP do?

Parliament has 3 main roles:

1. Passing European laws (jointly with the Council of Ministers (i.e. national governments). This could be about issues such as the economy, agriculture, the environment or whether new countries should be allowed to join the EU
2. To supervise the other EU institutions & to check up on the work they do.
3. The power of the purse. Parliament (jointly with the Council of Ministers) has control of the EU budget & spending

The European Parliament is important to you because it is the organisation that represents the full range of views of the people of Europe, whatever those views may be.

This means that if there were an issue that a citizen of the EU had an opinion on, it would be the role of their member of parliament in the European Parliament to represent this view



# MAIN ACTIVITY INFORMATION SHEET

## Group Presentations

Your task is to put together a brief presentation in the style of a **news bulletin** to share with your audience the following information:

- *What does your part of the EU do?*
- *Why are they important to the smooth running of the EU?*
- *How can you get involved with this part of the EU?*

## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The job of the European Commission is to represent the interests of the EU as a whole. It is independent of the governments of the member states.

The European Commission puts together proposals for new laws which it presents to the European Parliament which, together with the Council of Ministers, passes laws.

It spends EU money and helps to manage day to day business.

A really vital role of the European Commission is to represent the European Union in the rest of the world. This means it can negotiate agreements between the EU and other countries, for example agreements on international trade.

The European Parliament has the power to sack the European Commission, if it thinks it is necessary.

A new Commission is appointed every 5 years within 6 months of the European Parliament elections.

The President of the Commission is chosen by a majority of the member states and then has to be approved by the European Parliament.

The European Commission is very influential in making new laws for the EU. It proposes new laws to deal with problems that can not be sorted out through existing laws and then publishes 'Green' and 'White' papers which outline the laws to parliament.

Usually the public is consulted on these papers so they can express an opinion about a new law which could affect their lives.



# MAIN ACTIVITY INFORMATION SHEET

## Group Presentations

Your task is to put together a brief presentation in the style of a **news bulletin** to share with your audience the following information:

- What does your part of the EU do?
- Why are they important to the smooth running of the EU?
- How can you get involved with this part of the EU?

## THE EUROZONE

What is the Eurozone?

The Eurozone is a currency union of 16 European Union (EU) states which have adopted the euro as their sole legal tender, in other words, their currency.

Monetary policy of the zone is the responsibility of the European Central Bank. This means the bank can control the supply of money and interest rates for all the countries that are in the Eurozone.

The countries in the European Union that have currently adopted the Euro as their currency are Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain

Some people feel strongly that the UK should join the Euro while others feel this is a bad idea.

Arguments against joining the Euro include:

- Interest rates would be set by the European Central Bank instead of the Bank of England and the interests of the whole of the EU would be considered rather than just the UK.
- The economies in the Eurozone are too different from each other to make the Euro work properly meaning worse unemployment during recessions and worse inflation during booms.
- The pound is a both symbolic and real part of Great Britain's identity and independence.

Arguments for joining the Euro include:

- It could make travelling and doing business deals with other Eurozone countries easier.
- There would be greater economic stability as there would be no rises and falls in the exchange rate against the Euro.
- Joining the Euro would deepen the UK's economic and political relationships with other Eurozone and EU countries.



# MAIN ACTIVITY INFORMATION SHEET

## Group Presentations

Your task is to put together a brief presentation in the style of a **news bulletin** to share with your audience the following information:

- What does your part of the EU do?
- Why are they important to the smooth running of the EU?
- How can you get involved with this part of the EU?

## THE TREATIES

The European Union was set up and is based entirely on a series of treaties. The treaties signed by all the member states set out what the EU can do.

The EU can only do something if it has been given the power to do it by the treaties.

The Treaty which set up the European Economic Community (which later became known as the European Union) was signed in Rome in 1957. It is often referred to as the Treaty of Rome.

Under the Treaty of Rome six countries (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) joined forces to pool the management of resources such as coal, steel and nuclear energy and to set up a single market for trading goods freely.

The European Union is founded on four treaties.

The treaties are the basis for everything the EU does.

They have been amended each time new member states have joined.

What is a treaty?

A treaty is an agreement under international law entered into by sovereign states and international organisations. A treaty may also be known as an international agreement or protocol.

Treaties can be compared to contracts. Countries agree to sign up to them but if they break the terms of the treaty, then they have to answer to having broken international law.

The latest treaty to be signed by the governments of the members of the European Union is called the Treaty of Lisbon.

This treaty contains, among other things, an agreement on the creation of a new position of "EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs" whose job is to be a single voice on Europe's foreign policy. It also includes a new Human Rights charter and gives the European Parliament more powers over laws and a bigger say over who runs the EU.



# MAIN ACTIVITY INFORMATION SHEET

## Group Presentations

Your task is to put together a brief presentation in the style of a **news bulletin** to share with your audience the following information:

- What does your part of the EU do?
- Why are they important to the smooth running of the EU?
- How can you get involved with this part of the EU?

## THE ROLE OF MEPs

The role of a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) is similar to the role of a Member of Parliament in the UK Parliament based in Westminster in London.

Except of course that MEPs represent their constituents in a Parliament made up of MEPs from all the countries of the EU and dealing with problems that concern everyone in Europe.

Their work is based in Brussels and Strasbourg.

MEPs have the power to approve, amend or reject nearly all EU legislation. They hold the European Commission to account and can force it to resign.

The MEPs divide their working time between their regional constituencies in the UK and committee and political group meetings in Brussels. For one week in every month they are in Strasbourg where all MEPs come together in full session to debate and vote on legislation.

Most of the 73 MEPs from the UK sit in multinational political groupings in the European Parliament (for example, the Socialists and Democrats Group, the Liberal and Democratic Group or the European Conservatives and Reformists Group) alongside members from other countries who hold broadly similar views.

As with a national MP, you can ask your MEP for advice and help on issues which are affected by the EU. The MEPs may then take up the cause, if they can do something about the problem.

Just as in national parliaments, MEPs debate and argue for and against proposals and laws that the European Parliament is asked to agree to.

MEPs certainly do not all agree with each other and hold a very wide range of views on the EU and all the issues the EU deals with.