

Your EP phrasebook...





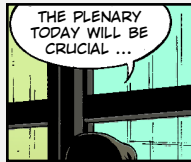
Strasbourg

Strasbourg is the seat of the **European Parliament**.



The European Union

The European Union is an ever closer union between the nations of Europe. Its Member States fly their flags in Strasbourg. The fifteen Member States – soon to be more – adopt common policies and measures, because they can achieve better results together than they could individually.



Plenary

The **European Parliament** meets 'in plenary sitting' when it holds its part-sessions – 12 week-long part-sessions in Strasbourg and a number of shorter ones in Brussels. All Members of the European Parliament are expected to attend. When a parliamentary standing **committee** meets, on the other hand, usually only the members of that committee attend.



'If I don't manage to win Parliament over we shall have missed a wonderful opportunity to use our environmental powers...'

The European Parliament, which MEP Irina Vega here refers to as 'Parliament', is elected every five years by the citizens (over 18 years) of the Member States of the **European Union**. At present the European Parliament has 626 Members.

The **Council of Ministers** and the **European Parliament** now adopt European environmental and other 'laws' together. The **directive** on water policy was the first piece of legislation where the European Parliament used 'codecision' in the area of the environment.



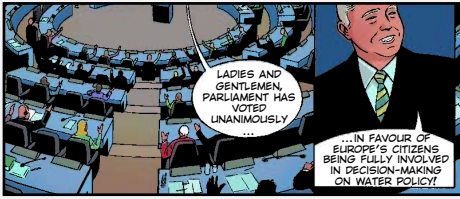
Alex

Members of the European Parliament have parliamentary assistants. Alex is Irina Vega's assistant.



Political group

Like political parties in national parliaments, political groups play a major role in the **European Parliament's** policy decisions. The vast majority of Members of the European Parliament belong to a political group, the others being referred to as 'non-attached' Members. The political groups in the **European Parliament** are made up of Members from different Member States.



'Ladies and gentlemen...'

While the **European Parliament** is elected for five years, its President is elected by the Members for two and half years, i.e. half a parliamentary term. The President of the **European Parliament** oversees all **Parliament's** activities, chairs its sittings and represents it in all its external relations.



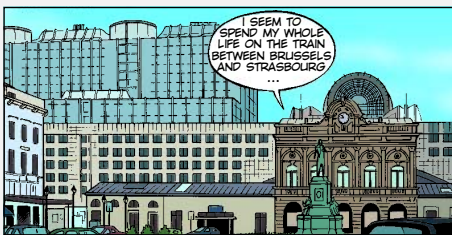
Common position

The legislative text on which the Council of Ministers agrees after the **European Parliament** has adopted its position at first reading is called a 'common position'.



'Bruxelles-Gare du Luxembourg'

The Gare du Luxembourg is next to the **European Parliament** buildings in Brussels.



'I seem to spend my whole life on the train between Brussels and Strasbourg...'

Members of the **European Parliament** work in both Strasbourg, where most parliamentary sittings are held, and Brussels, where the standing **committees** and **political groups** hold their meetings and a few additional part-sessions take place. The secretariat of the **European Parliament** is located in a third city, Luxembourg. A number of officials and the staff of the political groups are located in Brussels.



Info Point

There are many **European Union** 'Info Points' in the Member States, as well as in the applicant countries. They provide information for the public on the **European Union** and its policies. The **European Parliament's** website gives information on the activities of the **European Parliament** and its Members: www.europarl.eu.int.



OSCE

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe is made up of European, Asian and North American nations. Its role is to prevent conflict situations in Europe, manage them if they do occur and act in the wake of any conflict.



Directive

A directive is one of the forms that a 'European law' can take. It lays down the results to be achieved but leaves it up to the Member States to decide how to achieve them.

Second reading

When the **European Parliament** has received the Council's 'common position' it begins to prepare for its second reading if it wishes to insist on changes proposed at first reading.



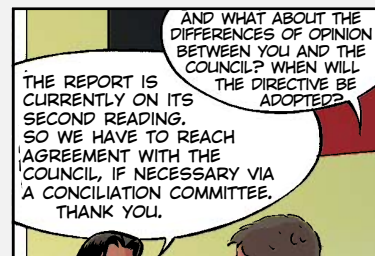
NGO

Non-governmental organisation: many organisations that do not depend on governments are active in areas such as food aid, health, human rights and the environment. The list is extremely long, and includes the Red Cross, Amnesty International, Médecins sans Frontières, Caritas, Oxfam and WWF International.



Conciliation Committee

Under the codecision procedure, if there is still disagreement between the **European Parliament** and the **Council of Ministers** after Parliament's second reading, the members of the **Council** and a delegation from **Parliament** meet in a 'Conciliation Committee' to try to find a compromise. The **Parliament** and **Council** delegations are of equal size.

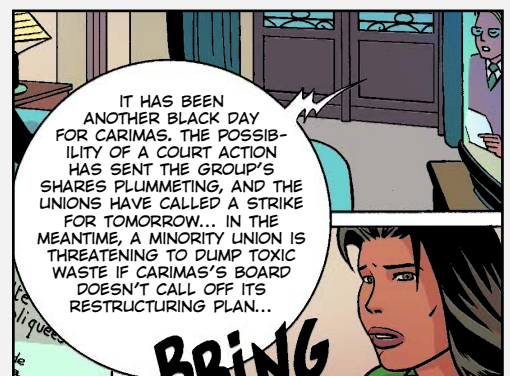


Minority union

Trade unions, which defend the rights of workers in a company, an industry or at national or **European Union** level, first came into being in the nineteenth century. Union elections are held within companies. A union may have a majority or dominant position, or a minority position.

Board

The board of a company is the body which takes strategic decisions for the company.



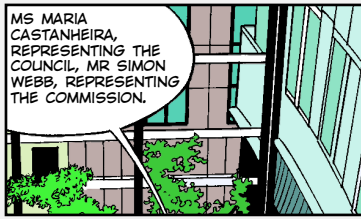
'But you're going to have to negotiate with the Council.'

The **Conciliation Committee** is the forum for this negotiation, the aim of which is to reach a compromise between the **European Parliament** and the **Council** of the European Union.

An informal meeting of the Conciliation Committee

Informal meetings of a **Conciliation Committee** can be held without the presence of all the parties involved. They are preparatory working meetings where, among other things, possible compromise solutions can be discussed.





‘Ms Maria Castanheira, representing the Council, Mr Simon Webb, representing the Commission’

At this informal meeting of the **Conciliation Committee** the **Council of Ministers** is represented by an official from the **Member State** holding the Council presidency (a presidency lasts for 6 months), the **Commission** by one of its officials.



‘You won’t get many of the Member States to agree...’

The Member States adopt a position through the intermediary of their representative on the **Council of Ministers**.

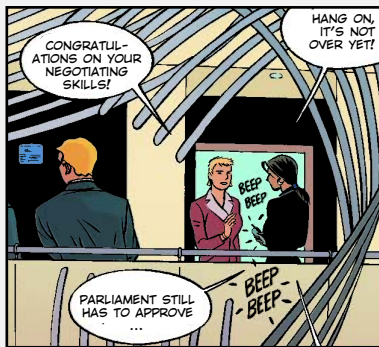
Implementing deadlines

Directives stipulate that the measures adopted must be implemented within a certain period, thus giving the Member States time to adjust.



Conciliation Committee (continued)

At official meetings of a **Conciliation Committee** the **Council of Ministers** presidency is represented by the relevant minister of the country holding the presidency and the **European Commission** is represented by a Commissioner. The **European Parliament** delegation, which is politically balanced, is chaired by one of Parliament's Vice-Presidents and must include the **rapporteur** and the chairman of the relevant parliamentary standing committee.



‘Parliament still has to approve...’

While success in the conciliation process almost always guarantees the success of the legislative procedure, the **European Parliament** still has to confirm the **Conciliation Committee's** draft text at a third reading.



‘Fimoil has launched a hostile takeover bid!’

When companies are trying to take over a competitor they often use the 'takeover bid' technique. The shareholders of the company being targeted are offered a price for their shares which is higher than their price on the stock exchange. If the company believes this operation to be harmful to it, it will call it a 'hostile takeover bid'.