

Myth-busting the Democratic Legitimacy of the European Union

Institutions of the European Union

The EU's main institutions:

- *European Council* sets the EU's broad priorities and brings together 28 Heads of Government.
- *European Commission* represents the Union's interests and whose members are appointed by national governments.
- *European Parliament* represents European citizens through directly elected Members of European Parliament (MEPs).
- *Council of Ministers* represents the governments of individual member states and allows governments to defend their own country's national interests.

1: “European laws are made by unelected bureaucrats”

Not true. Only the Council and European Parliament can make laws. The European Commission can only make *proposals*, which are then debated, amended and passed or rejected by elected national governments and directly-elected MEPs, who must both agree on the final text.

2: “Most of our laws come from Brussels”

Not even almost. According to the independent and politically neutral [House of Commons Library](#) only 13.2% of UK laws come from the EU. The figure of 13.2% actually includes many other laws (the “vast majority”, according to the report) which simply mention the EU.

3: “The EU forces its will on member countries”

Nothing can be agreed at EU level unless all member states have explicitly agreed by treaty to do so – and even then, each piece of legislation is agreed by national governments. For sensitive matters such as Treaties, the requirement for this agreement is complete unanimity, and in other areas, there is a very high ‘qualified majority’ threshold.

The Prime Minister's reform deal has given the UK clear legal recognition as an independent sovereign country in charge of its own destiny.

4: “Europe is run by a sprawling bureaucracy”

The European Commission has fewer employees than a city council such as Leicester. It employs 33,000 people and is committed to 5% staff reduction in all institutions by 2018. The EU spends 6% on administration.

5: “The European Court of Human Rights is forcing us to...”

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has nothing to do with the EU. It is an entirely separate institution, with separate membership. The ECHR is the court which enforces the Convention on Human Rights which was drawn up by the Council of Europe in 1947. Churchill helped set up the Council of Europe in the aftermath of World War II and Britain has always been a signatory to the Convention. Leaving the EU would not change this.