



How are laws made and passed in the EU?

First, the European Commission drafts a legislative proposal. The scope of the law is defined based on information from roadmaps and/or impact assessments on the topic, as well as feedback from various sources.

Roadmap: A roadmap describes the problem to be tackled and objectives to be met, explain why EU action is needed, outline policy options and describe the main features of the consultation strategy.

Impact assessment (type of roadmap): Sometimes the potential impact of a law or policy on the economy, environment or society is so significant that an impact assessment is required. In that case, the roadmap is replaced by an inception impact assessment, which goes into greater detail. The aim of this assessment is to analyse into more detail the issue to be addressed, whether action should be taken at EU level and the potential economic, social and environmental effects of the different solutions outlined.

Feedback: Anyone can provide feedback on EU law-making as it evolves – from the preparation phase through to proposals for new laws and evaluations of how existing laws are performing. Feedback can be given through open public consultations and other online tools, including the [‘Have Your Say’ portal](#). The Commission may also seek expertise in a given area and target specific stakeholder groups.

The European Commission then submits a legislative proposal to the European Parliament. This is called a proposal for a regulation (or directive or decision).

The proposal is reviewed by the European Parliament, and then by the Council of the European Union. It needs to be approved by both parties to become a binding law. This review process is also called a ‘reading’. In the ordinary legislative procedure, there are first and second readings; if no agreement is reached, a conciliation committee can be convened, and the act can still be adopted at a third reading on the joint text. In practice, most files finish at 1st or early 2nd reading now.

During the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission often hold trilogues: informal meetings to reach a provisional political agreement acceptable to Parliament and Council.

If the European Parliament and the Council approve the proposal and any amendments made, the legislative proposal is adopted and becomes a regulation, directive, or a decision. The difference between these three is that:

- Regulations are legal acts that apply automatically and uniformly to all EU countries as soon as they enter into force, without needing to be transposed into national law. They are binding in their entirety on all EU countries.
- Directives require EU countries to achieve a certain result but leave them free to choose how to do so. EU countries must adopt measures to incorporate them into national law (transpose) in order to achieve the objectives set by the directive. National authorities must communicate these measures to the European



Commission. Transposition into national law must take place by the deadline set when the directive is adopted (generally within 2 years).

- Decisions apply in specific cases, involving particular authorities or individuals and are fully binding.
- In addition, Delegated Acts and Implementing Acts are often adopted to provide more details or practical guidance for implementing EU laws. Delegated Acts add detail or make small updates to non-essential parts of an existing EU law. They cannot change the law's essential elements. The Commission adopts them on its own, because the basic act has "delegated" that power. The European Parliament and the Council don't vote to approve each one, but they can object within a set deadline (or even revoke the delegation). If neither object, the act takes effect
- Implementing Acts provide practical rules to ensure EU laws are applied the same way in all Member States. They execute the basic act; they don't amend it. Implementing Acts are usually approved by the Commission (sometimes the Council, in specific cases). Drafts are checked by committees of national officials. This oversight system is called comitology. Parliament and Council don't have to approve each act.

If the proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or the Parliament and the Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted.

Useful sources to keep abreast of the EU legislation and regulatory changes

Current EU legislation

[EUR-Lex - Access to European Union law](#) – is an official EU web portal providing searchable access to EU treaties, legislation, case-law and related legal documents, with tools for browsing, filtering and monitoring EU law.

[The Official Journal \(OJ\) of the European Union](#) is the official publication for EU legislation and communications from EU institutions. As a rule, EU legislative acts become binding only after their publication in the OJ, on the date specified in the act, or, if the date is not specified, 20 days after publication.

Tracking changes and updates

[European Parliament Legislative Train Schedule](#) allows searching for legislation updates by policy areas and their current status and includes summaries of the proposed changes and envisaged timelines.

[EU Law Tracker](#) keeps track of the progress on the legislative priorities agreed by the three EU institutions in the Joint Declaration.