Chapter 25 – European Union (EU Institutions – Commission, Parliament, Council, Court of Auditors, Court of Justice, European Council; Decision Making; Interest Groups; Directives/Regulations; Policies – CAP, CFP, EU Social Charter, Competition Policy, Single European Market (SEM); The Euro)

2010 Q4 - Short

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<th>Column 1 – Terms</th>
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<td>1. European Parliament</td>
<td>A. Draws up proposals for new EU law.</td>
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<td>2. European Commission</td>
<td>B. Most important decision-making body in the EU.</td>
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<td>3. European Court of Justice</td>
<td>C. Ensures the EU budget is spent efficiently.</td>
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<td>4. Court of Auditors</td>
<td>D. Is responsible for ensuring the correct interpretation and application of EU laws by member states.</td>
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<td>5. Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)</td>
<td>E. Is responsible for managing the euro currency and the EU's monetary policy.</td>
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<td>F. Directly elected by EU citizens.</td>
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Answer: 1F; 2A; 3D; 4C; 5B

2009 Q10 – Short (a) Explain the role of the Council of Ministers in EU decision-making.
(b) Name two other EU decision-making institutions.

MS: (a) 6 Marks (3+3) (b) (i) 2 Marks (ii) 2 Marks

The Council of Ministers must adopt all legislation before it becomes law (key decision-making body of the EU).

The Council of Ministers is comprised of ministers from governments of each EU member state. The topics on the agenda determine which minister attends. E.g. Minister for Finance

Most decisions are made by majority voting. However, unanimous agreement is required for certain issues such as taxation, launching new common policies, allowing new countries to join the EU.

European Commission; European Parliament
2014 Q3 (B) Describe the legislative process within the European Union. (20 marks)

MS: 3@(1+3) +3+3+2 marks awarded for best extra points given

1) The European Commission is the executive body of the EU. It is the body responsible for proposing and drafting EU legislation.

2) These proposals are then discussed in the European Parliament and amendments to legislation can be put forward by them.

3) The Council of the European Union is the main decision making body of the EU. It decides on legislation drafted by the European Commission and discussed by the European Parliament.

4) Once legislation is passed by the Council of the European Union and Parliament (co-decision) it is the Commission's responsibility to ensure it is implemented through a series of directives or regulations.

5) The Court of Justice interprets EU law to make sure it is applied in the same way in all EU countries and can adjudicate on the legislation introduced.
2012 Q3 (C) Discuss the role of the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) and the European Commission in the European Union (EU) decision making process. (20 marks)

**MS: 10 marks (4 + 3 + 3) 10 marks (4 + 3 + 3)**

### Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)

**Main decision making body** of the EU.  
It approves the EU budget, set goals and co-ordinates policy.  
Its decisions are made by **qualified majority voting** in most areas, **unanimity** in others such as new countries to be allowed in the EU.  
The Council is **composed 27 national ministers (one per state)**.  
The exact membership of the configuration depends upon the **topic** e.g. The Minister for Finance from each member state would sit to discuss finance.  
It **decides on legislation drafted by the European Commission**. It is called **co-decision** as the Parliament share legislative and budgetary powers.  
In a few limited areas the Council may initiate new EU law itself.

### The European Commission

The Commission **proposes new legislation** and then when it is approved, they **implement it as a regulation or directive**.  
The Commission is responsible for the **implementation of the EU budget**; ensuring, along with the Court of Auditors, that EU funds are correctly spent.  
The Commission is known as the “**guardian of treaties**” as it has a duty to ensure the treaties and laws are upheld, potentially by taking member states or other institutions to the **Court of Justice in a dispute**.
2015 Q3 (C) Examples of an EU Directive and a Regulation affecting Ireland

Waste Framework Directive, 2008/98/EC, requires member states to adopt waste management plans and waste prevention programmes. Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011, which came into effect on December 14th 2014, includes new requirements for the way in which allergen information must be displayed in restaurants, delis, canteens, takeaways, cafés and retail outlets.

Outline how EU directives and regulations are formulated and implemented. (20 marks)

MS: Formulation 12m (4@ 3m) Directive & Regulation 4m & 4m

Formulation is same as per 2014 Q3 (B)

EU Directive

The EU set desired results/changes to EU law that they want EU member states to achieve, and then allows each state to come up with the means and rules they want to achieve them within limits. It obliges member states to change their national laws to allow for EU rules, within a certain time limit.

E.g. the WEEE (Waste, electrical, and electronic equipment Directive)

EU Regulation

This is a legislative act of the EU that becomes enforceable immediately as law in its entirety in all member states simultaneously. It takes precedence over national law. It is self-executing and does not require any implementing measures. The member state doesn’t choose how to implement the law.

E.g. A common rule on compensation and assistance to airline passengers was introduced to all member states.

2013 Q9 – Short

Distinguish between a ‘Directive’ and a ‘Regulation’ as legislative instruments within the EU.

MS: 4 + 4 + 2 – 2 awarded to the best point for an extra piece of relevant information given in your answer.
Special Interest Groups are groups with a common interest that are not part of the political decision making structure, but look to influence decision making in the EU.

They lobby decision makers, run information campaigns and try to arrange public protests to try to make EU decision makers consider them in the decision making.

They are involved at the consultation stage of the decision making process.

Some Special Interest groups have permanent offices in Brussels and Strasbourg to help them lobby, negotiate and put pressure on Members of the European Parliament and the Commission through media pressure and demonstrations.

E.g. ICTU tries to influence EU decision making and policy in relation to employment, the minimum wage and the EU social charter.

E.g. The IFA engaged in intense lobbying in Brussels to obtain greater flexibility on milk quotas in advance of their 2015 abolition.

Evaluation: In my opinion Special Interest Groups really help their members have a voice and get what they want as their lobbying ensures that the requirements of the Special Interest Groups are reflected in the drafting stage of policy formation.
2014 Q3 (C) Evaluate the impact that any two of the following EU policies have on Irish businesses: (i) European Monetary Union (EMU) 
(ii) European Union Competition Policy; (iii) European Social Charter. (20 marks)

MS: 2 @ 8 (4 + 4) +(4 + 4), evaluation of each policy 4 (2+ 2)

(i) One currency reduces transaction costs that EU countries would have had when trading before it was introduced. It reduces currency fluctuations within the EU, which should make lots of trading more stable and predictable for Irish businesses that trade a lot with other European countries. 
A single currency also makes it very easy to compare products/raw materials when an Irish business is looking for a cheaper supplier in the EU.

The ECB has a monetary policy that focuses on price stability. This includes setting interest rates for the Euro zone. Record low interest rates set by the ECB of late facilitate business expansion and encourage investment.

Evaluation: In my opinion, this has impacted Irish businesses positively as Irish businesses that export a lot within the EU don’t have to worry about currency fluctuations with the Euro, giving them more stability.

(ii) The Policy aims to encourage fair competition between suppliers for Irish consumers. It looks to prevent mergers forming and larger businesses abusing their market power e.g. by imposing conditions restricting suppliers also working with competitors.

It restricts Irish businesses from forming anti-competitive cartels or keeping prices artificially high or preventing newcomers from entering the market.

Evaluation: In my opinion, the Policy is good for Irish business as the European Commission does fine companies for any unfair practices, protecting smaller Irish suppliers when dealing with large businesses.

(iii) Workers have the right to migrate freely which benefits employers in terms of recruitment and selection (free movement of labour between member states). Irish workers may also look to migrate however.

Employees have the right to a fair wage. The establishment of the minimum wage level has increased costs for business.

Employers have had to improve health and safety conditions in the work place in line with parts of the charter. This reduces compensation claims.

Evaluation: In my opinion, its great for Irish business as they have a huge choice of workers from anywhere in the EU to meet their job description.
**2010 Q3 (C) Discuss the importance for Ireland of any two of the following EU policies: (i) Competition Policy; (ii) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP); (iii) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). (20 marks)**

| MS: 10 marks: 5 m (2+3) + 5m(2+3) 10 marks: 5 m (2+3) + 5m(2+3) (2 DISTINCT POINTS FOR 2 POLICIES REQUIRED) |
|---|---|---|---|

(i) European Union Competition Policy *(as per 2014 Q3 (C)*

(ii) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

**Access to Fishing Grounds**

Access to Irish coastal waters is reserved for fishermen from local ports to a distance of 12 miles off-shore.

This prevents large foreign boats from over fishing the areas which used to happen. The EU is allowed to define where fishing is banned or restricted and all EU boats must be licensed to fish. This has helped regulate the industry.

**Conservation of Irish Fish Stocks**

This policy is designed to protect fish stocks and reduce over-fishing.

Young fish catches are reduced, the mesh size of nets is regulated and limits applied to different fishing seasons, all which should help fish stocks not to become too depleted.

(iii) Common Agricultural policy (CAP)

**Regulates Prices / Gives Stability**

The CAP ensures there won’t be big fluctuations in prices that farmers would receive for their annual output, they regulate prices in the markets which stabilizes the agricultural markets. This promotes a fair standard of living for farmers who have seen income levels drop and fall behind other industries.

**Food quality and Traceability**

CAP aids the provision of safe traceable food and ensures farmers continually improve their production standards.

Since Ireland joined the EU, Ireland has benefited from major funding, including more than €41 billion from the CAP.
Ireland’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union is an opportunity to play an active part in shaping Europe’s future.
Discuss the benefits for the Irish economy of on-going membership of the EU. (20 marks)
MS: 4 @ 5 marks (2+3)

Improvement in Infrastructure
Structural funds of over €17 billion have been made available to Ireland from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Cohesion Fund helping improve roads and public transport infrastructure. This is good for both Irish residents accessing parts of Ireland and also for businesses as distribution is quicker.

Increased FDI
As a member of the EU with open access to the EU market the Irish economy became a much more attractive prospect for foreign direct investment (FDI), thereby creating employment opportunities.
FDI by large global companies like Facebook, Google, LinkedIn has shown just how attractive Ireland is with its EU membership.

Single Currency (Euro)
A single currency was introduced to provide price stability and reduce transaction costs and currency fluctuations between EU members. It has also proved to be an incentive for foreign investors to locate here and has made life much easier for Irish consumers and businesses travelling and trading with EU member states.

Economies Of Scale
Economies of scale are made possible by the creation of a huge EU market of over 500 million people. Irish businesses can increase output by exporting to parts of the EU market, reducing their cost per unit, making them more competitive and increasing their profits.

Other: The EU’s environmental directives (wind and wave power instead of fossil fuels.); The harmonisation of taxes throughout the EU ensures that competition is not distorted.