

Institutions of the European Union: Medical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The way through the institutions of the European Union (EU) is very difficult. The difficulties will increase with the expansion of EU to 25 member states, and even more so in the area of medical societies. Following the agenda of the EU, an efficient public health service is a responsibility of every member country. The possibilities of medical interest are pointed out in this paper.

Key words: European Union, Institutions, European Council, European Parliament, European Commission

Introduction

Important is the Institutional Triangle: European Council, European Parliament and European Commission. The Council of the European Union (EU) is the EU's *legislative and decision-making body*. It is the embodiment of the Member States, whose representatives it brings together regularly at ministerial level. According to the matters on the agenda the Council meets on different compositions (Figure 1).

European Council

The Council has a number of key-responsibilities: It is the Union's legislative body for a wide range of EU issues. It exercises that legislative power in co-decision with the EU-Parliament. It coordinates the broad economic policies. It concludes, on behalf of the EU, international agreements. It shares budgetary authority with Parliament. It takes the decisions for foreign and security policy. It coordinates the field of police and judicial cooperation.

European Parliament

The European Parliament acts as legislative but more as a control organ Brussels/Strasbourg. The EU-Parliament has about 520 members elected every 5 years. The Parliament is the expression of 450 million citizens. Brought together within pan-European political groups, the major political parties operating in the Member states are represented. The Parliament has

three essential functions: It shares with the Council the power to legislate, i.e. adopt European laws (directives, regulations, decisions). Its involvement in the legislative process helps to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of the texts adopted. It shares budgetary authority with the Council, and can therefore influence the EU spending. At the end of the procedure, it adopts the budget in its entirety. It exercises democratic supervision over the Commission. It approves the nomination of Commissioners and has the right to censure the Commission. It also exercises political supervision over all the institutions.

European Commission

The European Commission is the Executive. The members are: The President, 2 Vice-presidents and 25 Commissioners. The EU Commission embodies and upholds the general interest of the Union. The President and Members of the Commission are appointed by the Member States after they have been approved by the EU-Parliament. The Commission is the driving force in the Union's institutional system. The EU Commission has the functions: It has the right to initiate draft legislation and therefore presents legislative proposals to the Council and Parliament. As the Union's executive body, it is responsible for implementing the EU-legislation (directives, regulations, decisions), budget and programmes adopted by the Council and Parliament. As custodian of the contracts compliance with the law is fol-

lowed together with the European court of justice regarding the laws of coexistence. As the EU deputy of international standing the commission is responsible for overseas trade and foreign policies.

The following is a list of relevant EU commissions for medical doctors:

- Commission of Health and Consumer protection
- Commission of Justice and Interior
- Commission of Competition
- Commission of Employment and Social market.

This division of authority means that every guideline change, that doctors wish to make, must first authorized by the above 4 commissions and the parliament prior to approval by the Council of ministers therefore an approved guideline will result law in the EU community.

Comité Permanent (C.P.) and Comité Consultatif (C.C.)

Both Committees have been advising the commission since 1959 regarding queries of:

School and University (C.C.). The contents of further training in our profession (C.P.)

Therefore doctors belong to the *Comité Permanent (C.P.)* or C.P. (Comité Permanent des médecins de la CEE). In the CP the professional body of doctors of each land is presented by the chamber president and vice-president.

Doctors association in the EU who advise the C.P.

Those are: UEMO = Association of GP's in the EU; UEMS = Association of Specialists in the EU; and European association of public employed doctors.

All three associations inform each other via association delegates. Their proposals are sent to the Comité Permanent. The UEMS consists of each and every specialist discipline. A new specialist department can be founded when a majority of 2/3 of EU States have the particular discipline. In the Section Ophthalmology (SO) each member country has 2 ophthalmologists. Germany has 1 locum from the academic sphere and 1 locum who is an established ophthalmologist. The SO elects from its centre the chairperson and deputy. The above act is in the interests of all ophthalmologists in the UEMS. The UEMS convenes twice to three times per year.

How can a national Ophthalmologic Society ensure that its interests will be accomplished in accordance with the guidelines?

The official march through the instances to acceptance is by submitting the application to:

- Section of Ophthalmology (Figure 2)
- UEMS = Total of all sections
- Comité Permanent (Chambers Presidents and Vice-Presidents)
- European Commission
- European Parliament

The Decision is by head of section of ministry department.

The „institutional triangle“

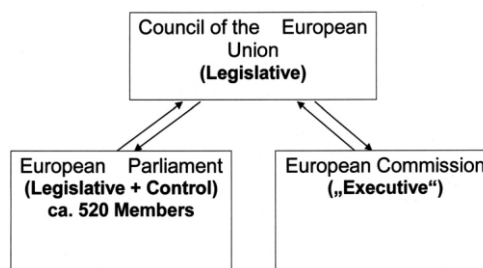


Fig. 1. Important institutional triangle in the European Union.

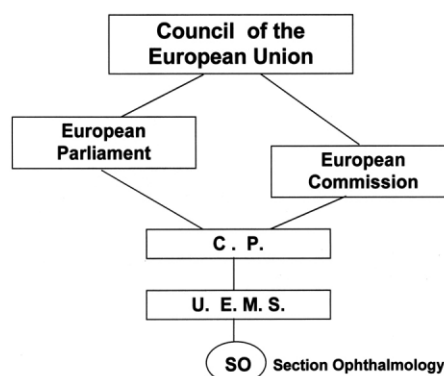


Fig. 2. The official way through the EU instances to acceptance.

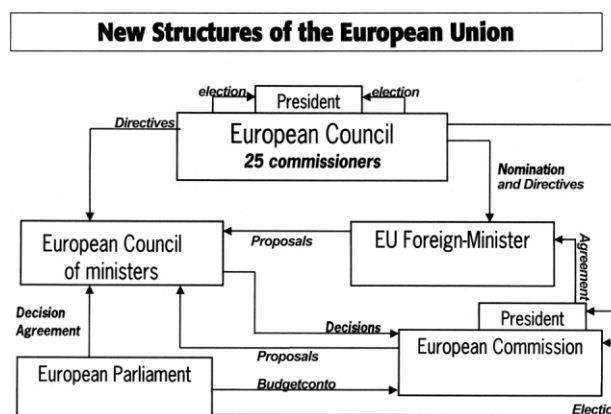


Fig. 3. Organization of new structures in the European Union.

European Court of Justice

The European Court of Justice with Headquarters in Luxemburg has the sole responsibility for implementation and planning of community rights. It rules when differences occur between various communities, businesses and individuals.

For doctors the European Court of Justice is currently the sole legislator in the public health service. The judgements need to be modified to EU-rights.

Summary

The EU is a difficult governing instrument. The difficulties will increase with the EU extension to 25 Com-

munity states and even more Doctor associations. Following the basic contract of the European Union the public health service is each and every member land's *own* issue. Presently approximately 25 million-citizens are moving from EU country to another EU-country every year. A minimum requirement regarding the public health service is very much needed (Figure 3).

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INSTITUCIJE EUROPSKE UNIJE: MEDICINSKA PERSPEKTIVA

SAŽETAK

Put kroz institucije Europske unije vrlo je težak. Poteškoće će porasti proširenjem Unije do 25 država članica a još više povećanjem liječničkih udruženja. Slijedeći temeljni ugovor Europske unije javno-zdravstvena služba stvar je svake pojedine zemlje. U radu su istaknute mogućnosti od medicinskog interesa.