New power means more responsibility. As the only directly-elected EU institution, the Parliament will have new tools to give a stronger voice to the 507 million citizens it represents and to hold the EU accountable to them. The Parliament will be the guardian of EU citizens’ new catalogue of civil, political, economic and social rights – the Charter of Fundamental Rights – embedded in the Lisbon Treaty, as well as their new right of citizens’ initiative, which will allow people to call for new policy proposals if supported by 1 million signatures.

Institutional triangle
Three institutions are responsible for making policy and taking decisions:
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The powers of the EU institutions have been laid down by founding treaties negotiated and ratified by member countries. In policy areas not covered by the treaties, national governments are free to exercise their own sovereignty.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
www.europarl.europa.eu
The European Parliament was set up to represent EU citizens directly. It was directly elected by EU citizens for the first time in 1979. The current Parliament was elected for five years in June 2009 and has 766 members (MEP) from all 28 countries. The MEPs sit in political groups – they are not organised by nationality, but by political affiliation; currently, there are 7 political groups in the EP. Every new EU treaty has increased the European Parliament’s legislative power. The Lisbon Treaty (2009) has increased the mandate of the Parliament, in line with the efforts to deal with “democratic deficit” and to ensure that EU citizens’ voices reflected in the Parliament are fully respected.

- The Lisbon Treaty makes the Parliament a stronger lawmaker by bringing over 40 new fields within the "co-decision" procedure, under which Parliament has equal rights with the Council. These areas include agriculture, energy security, immigration, justice and home affairs, public health and structural funds.
- From now on, the Parliament will decide on the entire EU budget together with the Council of Ministers. Until now, it did not have the final word on "compulsory expenditure" (around 45% of the EU budget) such as spending relating to agriculture or international agreements.
- The Parliament will also have a greater say on who runs the EU: it will elect the President of the European Commission, on the basis of the EU heads of state and government’s pre-selection, which must take into account the results of European elections. The whole Commission needs Parliament’s approval to take office.

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
www.consilium.europa.eu
It is the voice of EU national governments, where ministers from each Member State meet several times a month in Brussels, to adopt laws and coordinate policies. It has both a legislative function, which it shares with Parliament, and an executive function, which it shares with the Commission. It meets in ten different configurations depending on the subjects under discussion: the “Foreign Affairs” configuration is made up of foreign affairs ministers, the “Justice and Home Affairs” configuration of justice and home affairs ministers, etc. It is commonly called the Council of Ministers, or just the Council. The foreign ministers’ Council has a permanent chairperson – the EU’s High Representative for foreign and security policy. All other Council meetings are chaired by the relevant minister of the country holding the rotating EU presidency. Most decisions are reached by qualified majority vote (Member States have different
number of votes, determined by the size of their population). In votes concerning sensitive topics - like security and external affairs and taxation - decisions by the Council have to be unanimous.

**Passing EU laws:** The Council and Parliament share the final say on new EU laws proposed by the Commission. The Council can discuss the Commission’s proposals and suggest amendments (a ‘co-decision’ procedure). If Parliament and the Council agree, the law is passed. If there is disagreement, the Commission can propose new legislation, or the dispute is referred to the Court of Justice, which provides a final ruling.

**Coordinating economic policies:** The EU has six main policy areas: agriculture, regional development, transport, research, energy, and justice. The Council sets the overall economic priorities and budget, and the Commission manages the budget, ensuring the funds are spent efficiently.

**Enforcing European law:** EU law is interpreted and applied in member states by national courts. If a national court is unsure about a point of EU law, it can refer it to the Court of Justice. The Court rules on the matter and is the ultimate legal authority in the EU.

**Managing the EU’s budget and allocating funding:** The European Commission manages the budget to ensure that the EU’s funds are used effectively. It also supervises how the money is spent, ensuring accountability.

**Proposing new laws:** The Commission has the ‘right of initiative’. It can propose new laws to protect the interests of the EU and its citizens. It does this only on issues that cannot be dealt with by national governments. If the Commission proposes a law, it must obtain the approval of Parliament and the Council.

**Approving the EU budget:** The Commission approves the EU budget, setting priorities and ensuring that the money is spent effectively.

**Representing the EU internationally:** The European External Action Service (EEAS) represents the EU in negotiations with non-EU countries. It promotes the EU’s values and interests on the international stage.

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

www.ec.europa.eu

The Commission is the EU’s executive body; it is independent of national governments and represents the interests of the EU as a whole. The Commission is based in Brussels and Luxembourg and has offices (representations) in every EU country and delegations in capital cities around the world.

A new Commission is appointed every five years, following the elections to the European Parliament. Commissioners - currently one from each country, including the Commission President and Vice Presidents - are vetted by Parliament before taking office.

It has four essential functions:

- **Proposing new laws:** The Commission has the ‘right of initiative’ – it can propose new laws to protect the interests of the EU and its citizens. It does this only on issues that cannot be dealt with effectively at national, regional or local level (subsidiarity principle). When the Commission proposes a law, it tries to satisfy the widest possible range of interests and therefore it consults expert groups and holds public consultations.

- **Enforcing European law:** EU law is interpreted and applied in member states by national courts. If a national court is unsure about a point of EU law, it can refer it to the Court of Justice. The Court rules on the matter and is the ultimate legal authority in the EU.

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In order to implement EU policies, the European institutions adopt legal acts in accordance with the rules and procedures set out in the Treaties. In general, the European Commission proposes the legal acts, which are then adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. The three main procedures are consultation, assent and co-decision.

**EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

**Heads of state or government** from EU member countries meet at least four times a year within the European Council. The Council President can convene additional meetings as and when required. The Council provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and defines political directions and priorities. Decisions are usually taken by consensus.

**The Court of Justice of the European Union** makes sure that EU legislation is interpreted and applied in the same way in all member countries. The Court can also rule in legal disputes involving EU countries, EU institutions, businesses or individuals.

**Other institutions and bodies.** The EU has 6 other main bodies with specific tasks: Court of Auditors, European Central Bank, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, European Investment Bank and European Ombudsman.

**EU DELEGATION TO SERBIA**

In 1981, the Delegation of the EC established its premises in the then Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. However, since 2009, after the entry of the Lisbon Treaty into force, the EU presence in Serbia is conducted by the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia, within a new framework of functioning, European External Action Service (EEAS). The Delegation is one of the largest in the world out of over 130 similar political and diplomatic representations. The EU Delegation in Serbia has several roles: to politically and financially represent the EU and to bring its values and EU perspective closer to Serbian citizens. The EU is Serbia’s biggest financial contributor with €2,4 billion of EU donation since 2000.

In Serbia the EU Information Centre is there to answer your questions related to this issue or anything else of your interest.