# Knowledge organiser LC Business Unit 7 The European Union

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The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union of 27 member states which are located in Europe. It aim is to have free movement of goods, services, people and capital. One of the EU's main aims is to have a single market throughout Europe.

The Single European Market (SEM) came into effect on 1 January 1993 as a result of the Single European Act. It removed all barriers to trade within the EU.

# Institutions of the EU

The EU has a number of institutions that cover decision making, management, laws, spending and budget, and the representation of citizens of each of the member states.

# The Council of the European Union

This is the main decision making body of the EU.

It includes Ministers from each member state for the area under discussion e.g., all Health Ministers will be present for discussions on health.

The Council is the supreme law making body of the EU - the Council decides on legislation.

Policies that have been **proposed by the Commission and debated by Parliament** are sent to the council to be decided on.

It sets the objectives for EU that are both economic and political.

# **European Commission**

This is the **management body** of the EU and is made up of commissioners who are selected by the governments of each state.

The Commission **drafts proposals for new laws** and these will then be debated by parliament.

It **implements laws** and policies and **enforces existing legislation**, for example, it has the power to impose fines on companies breaking EU laws.

The Commission draws up and then manages the EU budget.

The Commission defends the interests of the EU. It must act in the best interests of the EU and independently of member states. It acts as a **mediator** to resolve disputes between member states.



# **European Parliament**

The European Parliament **represents the citizens** of the EU and the members are **directly elected** by EU citizens. The elected members are called MEPs. (Member of the European Parliament).

**It debates new legislation** - it discusses new laws sent by the Commission and proposes amendments. It has **co-decision powers (joint law making powers)** that is on an equal footing with the Council of the European Union in the vast majority of areas.

It approves the annual EU budget - approves the budget and has the power to amend it. It monitors spending by the EU.

**It acts as a supervisor** - it supervises the work of the Commission and vets and appoints new members to the Commission.

There is a democratic deficit, which means the European Parliament cannot initiate legislation.

# **The Court of Auditors**

Is responsible for ensuring the **EU budget is spent efficiently** and for the purpose intended. It carries out checks throughout member states to **ensure no fraud** is taking place.

It checks revenue has been **received** by all member states and that all **expenditure** is **lawful** and **well-managed**.

It can audit the accounts of any organisation that is **handling EU funds** and looks for any waste, mismanagement or fraud.

It prepares an **annual report** for the European Parliament and Council.

# The European Court of Justice

This Court ensures the **correct interpretation and application of EU law** by member countries.

The Court interprets and explains EU law for member states, companies and individual citizens.

It **ensures EU laws are followed** in all member states and adjudicates on all cases that come before it. Judges are appointed from each of the member states.

# **Decision making process of the EU**



Proposals for legislation are drafted by the European Commission.

**Discussion** - these proposals are discussed by the **European Parliament** and are approved or rejected. The parliament can make changes to the proposed law to improve it. It has co-decision powers with the Council of the European Union.

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Decisions and approval - is made by the Council of the European Union and they will decide if it is to be implemented as a regulation, a directive or a decision Implementation - the legislation is

Commission

Adjudication - decisions and legislation can be adjudicated (formally decided upon) by the Court of Justice.

implemented by the European

The new legislation is applied in member states of the EU. If it is a directive member states are obliged to change their national laws within a certain time limit and if it is a regulation it becomes enforceable immediately.

# Directive, regulation and decision

#### Directive

This aims to implement and enforce EU laws across all member states. Each country is obliged to change its national laws to allow for EU rules. E.g., **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE)** is a directive about the collection, recycling and recovery targets for all types of electrical goods.

EU regulation is a law that applies throughout the EU with immediate effect. It takes precedence over national laws. E.g., **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** is a law for data protection and privacy. **Decision** 

A decision is binding only on the country, company or organisation on which it was directed. E.g., **Sale of lighters**, a decision was made that only safety lighters can be placed on the EU market.

# Role of interest groups

Interest groups are pressure groups who **protect the interests** of their members and try to **influence the decision-making** of the EU.

They are not part of the EU's political framework but they use methods such as lobbying, information campaigns and public protests in attempting to influence EU decisions. E.g., **The IFA (Irish Farmers Association)** has an office in Brussels to promote and defend the interests of Irish farmers in Europe.



The European Union (EU) is an **economic and political** union of 27 member states which are located in Europe. It aim is to have free movement of goods, services, people and capital. One of the EU's main aims is to have a **single market** throughout Europe.

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# Impact of SEM/EU membership on Irish business

# **Opportunities**

- Free trade between member states the elimination of barriers and tariffs (taxes) allows free movement of goods, services, people and capital; reducing red tape, costs and simplifying trade
- Large markets to sell to the EU has a population of 500 million therefore dependence on the Irish market is reduced
- · Reduced business risk because firms are not solely dependent on the Irish market
- **Economies of scale** when Irish firms start to produce for the huge EU market, they can achieve economies of scale. This makes Irish firms more competitive
- **Expansion** open borders and free trade makes it easier for Irish firms to expand and grow if they export to the EU. As they grow, they become more competitive with foreign firms
- Public procurement all EU firms can tender for foreign government contracts in any EU countries. Irish firms may get government contracts in other EU countries
- Inward investment many multinational (MNCs) corporations have located in Ireland to gain access to the EU market. This has resulted in many jobs in Ireland.

# **Challenges**

- **Brexit** the UK left the EU on 31st December 2020. Approximately 15% of Irish goods and services are exported to the UK. In the agri-food sector around 40% of exports are destined for the UK. Businesses are facing trade disruptions and uncertainty
- **Competition** foreign imports are now directly competing with Irish goods and services. Less efficient businesses will close down as foreign firms squeeze out local producers
- Exporting costs Ireland faces high distribution costs as a result of being a small island on the periphery of Europe. This increases the costs of our exports
- EU Regulations some regulations have increased business costs e.g., new phone roaming regulations
- Public procurement many Irish firms could lose large government contracts as foreign firms can now tender (bid) too
- Free movement of people EU citizens are now allowed to move freely between member states. This could lead to competition for local jobs, scarcity of skilled staff as workers may move to other countries
- Large amounts of capital required in order to survive and remain competitive, many firms have had to expand and achieve economies of scale. This involves capital, but in the current economic climate banks are less willing to lend large amounts to business
- High labour costs Ireland has high rent and wage costs. Some MNCs have moved production to lower cost economies
- Location Ireland is a small island economy on the periphery of Europe, therefore, transport costs will be high.

# **EU policies**

# Single European Market (SEM) policy

The Single European Market (SEM) policy aims to have free movement of goods, services, people and capital. One of the EU's main aims is to have a single market throughout Europe. The SEM came into effect on 1 January 1993 as a result of the Single European Act. It removed **all barriers to trade** within the EU.

# **Social Policy/Charter -** All EU citizens have:

- Free movement the right to work in any EU country
- Working conditions the right to fair working conditions, hours, paid holiday
- **Health and safety protection** the right to protection and safety at work
- The right to be treated equally without discrimination
- The right to a **fair wage**
- The right to protection as a consumer.

#### **Impact on Ireland**

Workers have improved working conditions and greater equality Consumers rights have been improved as EU social policy directives are implemented through the Sale of Goods and Supply of Services Act 1980.

# Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is based on 3 principles:

- Single market all agricultural produce is to move freely within the EU with common prices and common rules of competition
- Financial solidarity EU gives finance to farmers. A single annual payment is given to farmers, regardless of production. From 2005 farmers 'produce for the market', that is produce what they think they can sell. This means the more efficient farmers will survive and inefficient ones will be forced to leave farming
- **EU preference** preference is given to the sale of EU products within the EU. Tariffs are placed on all non-EU produce entering the bloc.

#### Impact on Ireland

EU **farmers are protected** from low-cost food imports from outside the EU through various protection measures such as quotas and tariffs e.g., there is a quota on imports of bananas from non-EU countries to protect Spanish farmers.

CAP has **encouraged Irish agri-business to grow** into a major exporting industry.

Transitional aid is given to farmers to help them **diversify** into new areas such as forestry, flowers, berries etc.

For consumers, CAP has enabled greater choice of products and improvements in quality.

# **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** covers the following areas:

- Access to fishing grounds each state has fishing zone around the coast to which foreign boats are forbidden from entering
- Total allowable catch quotas on the quantities of certain species that can be caught. This prevents overfishing
- Structural policies grants available for new vessels and the development of ports.

#### Impact on Ireland

**A coastal band was reserved for local fishermen and small vessels** to continue to fish in the traditional way. The aim is to prevent overfishing and depleting limitedstocks.

# Competition Policy

EU competition Policy sets out rules designed to ensure fair and free competition:

- Prevent cartels rules for stopping cartels forming, when firms collude together to fix prices, share markets or block new firms from entering the market
- Dominant firms cannot abuse its position in the market by restricting competition or raising prices
- Mergers and takeovers all mergers and takeovers must be referred to the Commission for Investigation. If a dominant market position would be created by a merger or takeover, then the deal will not be allowed to go ahead
- Government aid national governments are not allowed to give special aid e.g., subsidies, to firms, if it gives them an unfair advantage over European competitors
- **Public procurement** no national government can show preference to a company from its own country when offering contracts for work.



# **Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)**

The countries of the EU that have adopted a free trade and monetary agreement. It involves a common monetary policy, and a common currency, the euro and the coordination of economic and fiscal policies.

Social

#### **European Parliament** interpretation and application of EU law. and try to influence the decision-making of **Exporting costs/ transport costs** Large markets to sell to The Court of Auditors The Court interprets and explains EU law. the EU. **EU Regulations increase costs** Reduced business risk because not • The European Court of Justice It ensures EU laws are followed and E.g., The IFA (Irish Farmers Association) has · Public procurement bids from EU dependent on Irish market alone adjudicates on all cases that come before it. an office in Brussels to promote and defend Free movement of people competition/ Economies of scale Judges are appointed from each of the the interests of Irish farmers in Europe. scarcity of skilled staff **Expansion opportunities** member states. Large amounts of capital needed • Public procurement across EU **High labour costs** · Inward investment. · Brexit causing disruption and uncertainty. What is the role of The Council of the What is the decision making process of the What are the EU policies? What is the Economic and Monetary Union What is the Competition Policy? EU? (EMU)? **European Union?** To ensure fair and free competition: Single European Market (SEM) policy Prevent cartels forming **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** This is the main decision making body of the Proposal The countries of the EU that have adopted a Dominant firms prevented from abusing Social Policy/Charter Approve or reject free trade and monetary agreement. position The Council is the supreme law making Adopt and make law **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** It involves a common monetary policy, and a Mergers and takeovers investigated body of the EU and decides on legislation. **Competition Policy** Apply common currency, the euro. Government aid not allowed to create It sets the objectives for EU that are both **Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)** It coordinates economic and fiscal policies. unfair advantage economic and political. which is a common monetary and Public procurement - no national currency policy. government can show preference. What is an EU Directive? What is the role of the European What is Single European Market (SEM) https://www.myleavingcert.ie/ **Quick revision cards** policy? Commission? This aims to implement and enforce EU laws on the European The Single European Market (SEM) policy This is the management body of the EU and across all member states. is made up of commissioners. aims to have free movement of goods, Each country is obliged to change its national Union It drafts proposals for new laws. services, people and capital. laws to allow for EU rules. It **implements laws** and policies One of the EU's main aims is to have a single E.g., Waste Electrical and Electronic and enforces existing legislation. market throughout Europe. **Equipment Directive (WEEE)** is a directive See myleavingcert for interactive It draws up and manages the EU budget. about the collection, recycling and recovery It defends the interests of the EU. targets for all types of electrical goods. It acts as a **mediator** to resolve disputes https://www.myleavingcert.ie/ between member states. What is an EU Regulation? What is the Social Policy/ social charter? What is the Common Agricultural Policy What is the role of the European What impact has the Common Agricultural Parliament? (CAP)? Policy (CAP)? had on Ireland? EU regulation is a law that applies ■ Free movement - the right to work in any It represents the citizens of the EU. throughout the EU with immediate effect. EU farmers are protected from low-cost **EU** country Single market • Working conditions - the right to fair food imports from outside the EU through It is made up of elected MEPs. It takes precedence over national laws. • Financial solidarity - EU gives finance to working conditions, fair wage, limited to It debates new legislation - it discusses new E.g., General Data Protection Regulation quotas and tariffs. laws sent by the Commission and proposes (GDPR) is a law for data protection and 48hrs per week, paid holiday CAP has encouraged Irish agri-business to **EU preference** - preference is given to the amendments. privacy. **Health and safety protection** – the right grow into a major exporting industry. sale of EU products within the EU. Tariffs Transitional aid is given to farmers to help It approves the annual EU budget, has to protection and safety at work are placed on all non-EU produce powers to amend it and oversees it. The right to be **treated equally** without them diversify into new areas. entering the bloc. CAP has enabled greater choice of products It acts as a supervisor to the work of the discrimination Commission. ■ The right to protection as a consumer. and improvements in quality. What is the role of The Court of Auditors? What is the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)? What is an EU Decision? What impact has the Social Policy had on What impact has the **Common Fisheries** Ireland? Policy (CFP)? had on Ireland? 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Services Act 1980. that is **handling EU funds**. It prepares an **annual report** for the European Parliament and Council.

What is the role of interest groups?

Interest groups are pressure groups

who protect the interests of their members

What challenges has SEM and EU

membership brought to Irish business?

**Competition** with foreign imports

What positive impacts has SEM and EU

Free trade between member states

membership had on Irish business?

Name the Institutions of the EU

**European Commission** 

The Council of the European Union

What is the role of The European Court of

This Court ensures the **correct** 

Justice?

# **Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)**

The European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) refers to the countries of the EU that have adopted a free trade and monetary agreement. It involves a common monetary policy, and a common currency, the euro and the coordination of economic and fiscal policies.

The European Central Bank (ECB) was established to operate the single monetary policy for the EU.

#### Its main aims are:

- A single currency
- A single monetary policy to bring price stability in the EU
- Creating common economic and budgetary policies which includes stable inflation rates.

#### **Benefits of EMU**

- **Common currency** no exchange rate fluctuations or costs for changing money
- Removal of exchange rate uncertainty this brings stability to Irish businesses, greater confidence and allows them more time to concentrate on growth and innovation
- Low inflation ECB seeks to keep inflation low and remain competitive with firms outside EU
- Easier to make price comparisons this allows customers to find best value and enables businesses to source cheaper materials
- Many multinationals (TNCs) are attracted to Ireland and can locate here and have the same currency as much of Europe and this creates wealth and jobs.

# **Challenges of EMU**

- Loss of its independent monetary policy -Ireland gave up its national currency and therefore its freedom to set its own monetary policy which is now set and implemented by the European Central Bank (ECB).
- **No control over the interest rate** The ECB uses a single monetary policy for all the eurozone. Ireland can no longer use monetary policy to adjust its interest rate
- Increased competition a common currency means consumers can now compare prices across the eurozone more easily. This could lead to reduced sales and profits if consumers can find cheaper products

# **Exam questions on the EU**

# **2022** section 3

The 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ireland joining the EEC (which is now known as the European Union).

(C) Describe the role of the European Commission and the European Parliament in the decision making process of the European Union. (20)

# **2021** section 3

- (C) Evaluate the impact on Ireland of any two of the following policies:
  - (i) The Common Agricultural Policy
  - (ii) The Competition Policy
  - (iii) The European Union Social Charter.

# (20)

### **2020** section 3

(B) Discuss the benefits **and** challenges of European Union membership for Irish businesses. (25)

# **2020** section **1**

5.	The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into
	effect across the EU on 25 May 2018.

In relation to EU legislation, explain the term

* * * *  * GDPR *  * * *	EU General Data Protection Regulation 25 May 2018
* * *	

Regulation.	***

(11)	identify <b>one</b> other method of implementing EU legislation.

(iii) Name the EU institution responsible for proposing EU legislation.

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The 1st January 2023 will be the 50th anniversary of Ireland joining the EEC (which is now known as the European Union)

(C) Describe the role of the European Commission and the European Parliament in the decision making process of the European Union.

Question		n Possible Responses	Max
			Mark
3	(C)	European Commission	20
		The European Commission is responsible for	
		proposing/drafting all new EU laws for discussion.	2 x 7
		The Commission comprises of 27 Commissioners from	(4+3)
		each member state who are nominated by their	1 x 6
		Governments and appointed by the Parliament.	(3+3)
		If laws are passed the Commission is responsible for	
		ensuring the law is implemented across member states	
		through directives, decisions or regulations.	
		European Parliament	
		There are 705 Members of the European Parliament	
		(MEPs) directly elected from all member states by EU citizens.	
		Their role is to represent citizen's interest in relation to EU	
		law making. The MEPs discuss and debate all new	
		legislation proposed by the European Commission.	
		The Parliament puts forward amendments to legislation	
		proposed by the Commission before it will be passed.	
		proposed by the second second to this be passed.	

# Answers and mark schemes to questions on the EU

(20)

20

2 x 8m

(4m +4m)

(2+2)

Evaluation

(C) Evaluate the impact on Ireland of any two of the following policies:

The Common Agricultural Policy

The Competition Policy

The European Union Social Charter.

#### The Common Agricultural Policy

#### Promotes a fair standard of living for farmers:

The Common Agricultural Policy gives grants farmers under the single payment scheme. The EU makes these payments to farmers to help the viability of the farm business and to enhance food, safety and environmental standards.

#### Free trade/No barriers or restrictions

EU farmers are allowed to sell their produce to other EU member states without any barriers or restrictions. This allows Irish farmers to export to a large market.

#### Improved Produce

The CAP gives EU farmers grants to spend on improving their land and animals. This helps Irish farmers to produce/offer quality crops and rear quality animals, which helps increases sales and profitability.

#### **Protect Farmers from Competition**

The common agricultural policy adds tariffs to non-EU food imports to make them dearer. This will encourage consumers to buy more from farmers/producers within the European Union

Evaluation

#### The Competition Policy

#### Bans price fixing cartels:

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

#### Approves mergers and takeovers to ensure fair competition:

The commission has the power to control large mergers and takeovers. In doing business with smaller firms, large firms may not use their bargaining power to impose conditions which would make it difficult for their supplier or customer to do business with the large firm's competitors.

#### This EU Social Charter

#### Free movement of Labour

Workers have the right to migrate freely which benefits employers in terms of recruitment and selection.

Employees have the right to fair working conditions. The establishment of the working hours directive etc. EU workers can work only a maximum of 48 hours a week. They also have the right to public holidays and pay for four weeks paid annual

#### Health protection and safety

Health protection and safety at work elements to the charter have forced employers to improve health and safety conditions in the work place. Evaluation required in each case

uestion	Possible Responses	Max Mark		
В	Benefits: Free movement of goods services and labour: The creation of the Single Market in 1993 eliminated trade barriers within the EU, allowing for the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital between member states. This helps Irish businesses attract high quality labour from EU countries.	25 5 x 5m (2+3)		
	Larger market/Increased Sales Bigger market for Irish businesses leading to greater sales potential. Irish businesses can expand and grow by trading in other EU countries. This leads to increased profitability and diversification for Irish businesses who export to the European Union.			
	Economies of Scale  When an Irish business is producing goods for the European market this can reduce costs. Mass production can help the business reduce the cost per unit of producing goods which in turn increases profitability for Irish businesses.			
	Spin-off effect of FDI for Irish Businesses As a member of the EU with open access to the EU market the Irish economy attracts foreign direct investment (FDI), thereby creating employment opportunities. The value of (FDI) in Ireland stands at over €30 billion today. Many Irish businesses supply raw materials and services to multinationals.			
	Small Irish agricultural businesses benefit from CAP Farmers, under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), receive income support measures. Between 1973 and 2008, Irish farmers received €44 billion from the (CAP). This helps Irish farming businesses stay viable.			
	Single currency in the Eurozone/European Monetary Union The introduction of the single currency brought additional incentives for foreign investors to locate in Ireland, along with relative price			

#### Extra regulations

trading or visiting in the euro zone.

bureaucracy and documentation

The EU places extra regulations on business which will increase busines

Example: Mobile operator Three is raising its monthly prices by up to €5, blaming costs and new roaming regulations

stability. The euro has made life easier for Irish businesses and travellers

Other: Less bureaucracy involved for businesses: Trade with countries who are outside the European Union requires more

The growth in Globalisation and global companies with their quality produce at competitive prices are a challenge for Irish businesses. Irish businesses will have to become more efficient and invest in R&D in order to provide products with a unique selling point (USP) to survive the competitive threat from global companies.

Currency/Exchange rate fluctuations: As the Euro (€) strengthens for example against the US dollar (\$), Irish exports become more expensi leading to a decline in sales to these very important international

Goods traded between EU and non-EU countries are subject to certain customs duties which increases the selling price of exports making then less competitive. Trading outside the EU is often subject to restriction and may require for example additional export licenses.

Language and cultural differences may be an obstacle in exporting to other EU countries. It is important to gain knowledge of cust culture and language in order to market products without causing

Distribution costs will be higher as Ireland is geographically located or less competitive prices.

BREXIT: Has created huge uncertainty for certain industries/businesses It has the potential to have negative consequences for Irish trade. Much of Ireland's agricultural exports go the UK currently and if tariffs and

Threats to Ireland's corporation tax: A push towards harmonised tax ates/a consolidated tax base for Ireland may result in a fall in tax revenues. Multinational companies which locate in Ireland because of

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect across the EU on 25 May 2018.



3m

In relation to EU legislation, explain the term

**EU Commission** 

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Identify one other method of implementing EU legislation.

(iii) Name the EU institution responsible for proposing EU legislation.

Question		ion	Possible Responses		
5.		(i)	In relation to EU legislation, explain the term Regulation.	10	
			A regulation is a binding legislative act of the EU. It must be applied in its entirety across the European Union. Regulations take	4m	
			precedence over national laws and must be implemented immediately.	(2+2)	
		(ii)	Identify one other method of implementing EU legislation.		
			An EU directive.	3m	
		/iii\	Name the Ellinstitution responsible for proposing Ellingislation		



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