

Twenty-seven Commissioners and each has a particular responsibility, for example transport, agriculture. Appointed by agreement between the governments of Member States for a five year (renewable) term; and each State is limited to one Commissioner (the President also acts as his country's Commissioner).

By Article 213,
Commissioners are
chosen for their
general competence
and total
independence. A
Commissioner must
not be, or seen to be, a
representative or
delegate of any
government.

The Commission is headed by the President - Ursula von der Leyen - and is chosen by Heads of Government of the Member States meeting in the European Council. The eventual choice has to be approved by the European Parliament.

UK Commissioner
Jonathan Hill resigned
in 2016 after
referendum.

## PROPOSES NEW LEGISLATION

It is therefore extremely influential in determining the direction that the EU takes. In essence, it is the engine room of the EU - the driving force towards ensuring that the European Union attains its goal of an ever-closer union of the Member States.

Once new legislation is proposed, it is then submitted to the Council of the European Union (the Council) and the European Parliament for consideration.

## IS THE EU'S EXECUTIVE ARM

The Commission is the executive body of the Union. For example, it manages the EU's budget.

In some areas like agriculture and trade policy, the Commission has considerable autonomy to take decisions without submitting proposals to the Council, either because of its specific powers under the Treaty or by delegated authority from the Council. For example, the Commission imposed a global export ban on British beef as a result of the foot and mouth crisis of 2001.

## **ENFORCES THE TREATY**

The Commission is also the guardian of the EU Treaties and is there to ensure that EU legislation is applied correctly by each Member State. It can - and does - institute legal proceedings against Member States or businesses that fail to comply with European law and, as a last resort, bring them before the European Court of Justice.

## **EXAMPLES**

- (1) 2004 against France and Germany for breaching the stability pact.
- (2) 2010 urged to take legal action against France over its deportations of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma people.
- (3) 2017 formal letter to Poland on gender discrimination contrary to a directive on gender equality in employment: introduction of a different retirement age for female judges (60 years) and male judges (65 years).