

European Council

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About European Council:

- It is the European Union's institution that defines the **general political direction** and priorities of the European Union.
- It was created as an **informal forum** in 1974 for discussion between heads of state or government of the EU member states.
- **Treaty of Maastricht:** Under this **treaty** the European Council acquired a **formal status and role** to provide the impetus and general political guidelines for the EU.
- **Members:** The members of the European Council are **the heads of state or government of the 27 EU member states**, the European Council President and the President of the European Commission.
- It usually meets **4 times a year** – but the President can convene additional meetings to address urgent issues.
- It generally decides issues by consensus – but by unanimity or qualified majority in some cases. **Only** the heads of **state/government can vote**.
- **What are the functions?**
 - It decides on the EU's overall direction and political priorities – but **does not pass laws**.

- It deals with complex or sensitive issues that cannot be resolved at lower levels of intergovernmental cooperation
- It **sets the EU's common foreign & security** policy, taking into account EU strategic interests and defence implications
- It nominates and appoints candidates to certain high profile EU level roles, such as the ECB and the Commission

- **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
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Q1: What is the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1960 by the Stockholm Convention. It promotes free trade and economic integration between its members within Europe and globally.

Source: Prime Minister congratulates H.E António Costa on being elected as President of the European Council

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