

# GLOSSARY FOR SEED POLICY LAB 1



## EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

The **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT** is one of the two institutions making up the **legislative** branch of the European Union. Its task is to adopt new EU legislation and represent the European people.

It is directly elected 705 Members of Parliament (“MEP”) from all EU Member States. Its powers have been quite reinforced since the Treaty of Lisbon, and now the Parliament has a say in all policy files linked to crop diversity.



It works in different **COMMITTEES** (ENVI and AGRI are both competent for matters related to seeds), but all texts need to be adopted in so-called **PLENARY**, which regroups all MEP’s.

European elections are based on national party lists, but MEP’s then congregate into European-level political groups : the European People’s Party (EPP), Socialists & Democrats (S&D), liberals Renew Europe (RE), Identity & Democracy (ID), Greens/EFA, Conservatives (ECR), leftists GUE, and non-affiliated few.

The **COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION** is the other institution composing the **legislative** branch of the European Union. Its task is to adopt new EU legislation and represent the EU Member States.

It is composed of heads of States and governments, in different configurations according to the topic at hand.

For matters related to crop diversity, the main interlocutor is the AGRIFISH Council, but also the ENVI Council to a certain extent.



The **EUROPEAN COMMISSION** is the **executive** branch of the European Union. Its task is to implement European legislation. It also has the power to initiate a legislative process

Different Commissioners, supported by 30’000 bureaucrats, have the power to submit legislative proposals, and are tasked with following the implementation of European law.

The Commission is divided into different **DIRECTORATE GENERALS (“DG”)**, which are akin to national Ministries.

Different DG’s are responsible for policy portfolios that impact seeds. DG SANTE is responsible for plant health, seeds marketing, the authorisation of phytosanitary products and the regulatory framework for genetically modified organisms. DG AGRI is responsible for agricultural policy and rural development. DG ENV is responsible for the EU’s environmental policy, including biodiversity and soil quality frameworks.



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## INSTRUMENTS OF EUROPEAN LAW

There are **two main instruments in European law**, that are adopted after a **COMMISSION PROPOSAL**.

A **REGULATION** (of the COUNCIL and the PARLIAMENT) is directly applicable in all Member States, without the need for a specific national law, which means that the rights and obligations of the Regulation can be indisputably invoked by citizens, and be applied by national judges.

Examples related to seeds: the new Organic production regime, as well as rules concerning plant health are both enshrined in Regulations.

A **DIRECTIVE** (of the COUNCIL and the PARLIAMENT) is not directly applicable in Member States, which need to transpose the European rules in national laws and/or decrees. This tool gives much more margin of manoeuvre to national authorities.

Examples related to seeds: the regime governing seed marketing is set in 12 different European Directives, which explains the wide differences that exist in the EU with regards to seed saving and marketing.

In these REGULATIONS or DIRECTIVES, the European Parliament and the European Council can decide to give the **Commission the power to further specify certain aspects of the general rules**.

The European Commission can thus adopt :

- **IMPLEMENTING ACTS** to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of European law,
- **DELEGATED ACTS** on the basis of a specific delegation of power in a **BASIC ACT** (i.e. either a REGULATION or DIRECTIVE of the European Council and Parliament), that defines the objectives, content and scope of the delegation of power.

Both Implementing and Delegated Acts are prepared by the Commission with heavy involvement of national authorities, regrouped either in a Committee or an Expert Group. The European Parliament is involved only at the approval stage for Delegated Act, while stakeholders are consulted through the “Have Your Say” website of the European Commission once the drafts (of both Implementing and Delegated) Acts have been finalised, four weeks before their adoption by the competent structure(s).

This leads to the adoption of **COMMISSION REGULATION** or **COMMISSION DIRECTIVE**.

