The main political institutions in Britain

Government

Made up of the political party (or parties, in the case of a coalition) with a majority in the House of Commons. The Leader of the largest party becomes Prime Minister, and most Ministers are MPs in the House of Commons.

House of Commons ☒

650 Members of Parliament

Each represents around 75,000 voters in a single-member constituency and is elected with a plurality of votes called "first-past-the-post".

House of Lords

Approximately 830 Peers

Life Peers are appointed by the House of Lords Appointments Commission. There are also 26 Lords Spiritual (Church of England Bishops) and 92 Hereditary Peers.

Scottish Parliament ☒

129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

73 are elected from single-member constituencies, while 56 are elected on a regional list system.

Welsh Assembly ☒

60 Members of the Welsh Assembly (AMs)

40 are elected from single-member constituencies, while 20 are elected on a regional list system.

London Assembly ☒

25 Members of the London Assembly (AMs)

14 are elected from single-member constituencies, while 11 are elected on a list system.

Civil Service

Including non-departmental public bodies, regulators and local government servants

Supporting the political institutions, creating and implementing legislation without being affiliated to a political party or promoting the views of a particular political party.

European Parliament ☒

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

Elected on a list system, with different regions electing between 4 and 10 MEPs depending on size.

Local Government ☒

407 councils in England, Scotland and Wales

District, Borough, Metropolitan, Unitary and County Councils deliver services, run elections and collect council tax. Councils elect different numbers of councillors, some have directly-elected mayors, and some have parish councils.

PCCs ☒ *41 Police Crime Commissioners in most of England and Wales*

Other institutions with influence on politics in Britain

Political parties

The United Nations

European political institutions

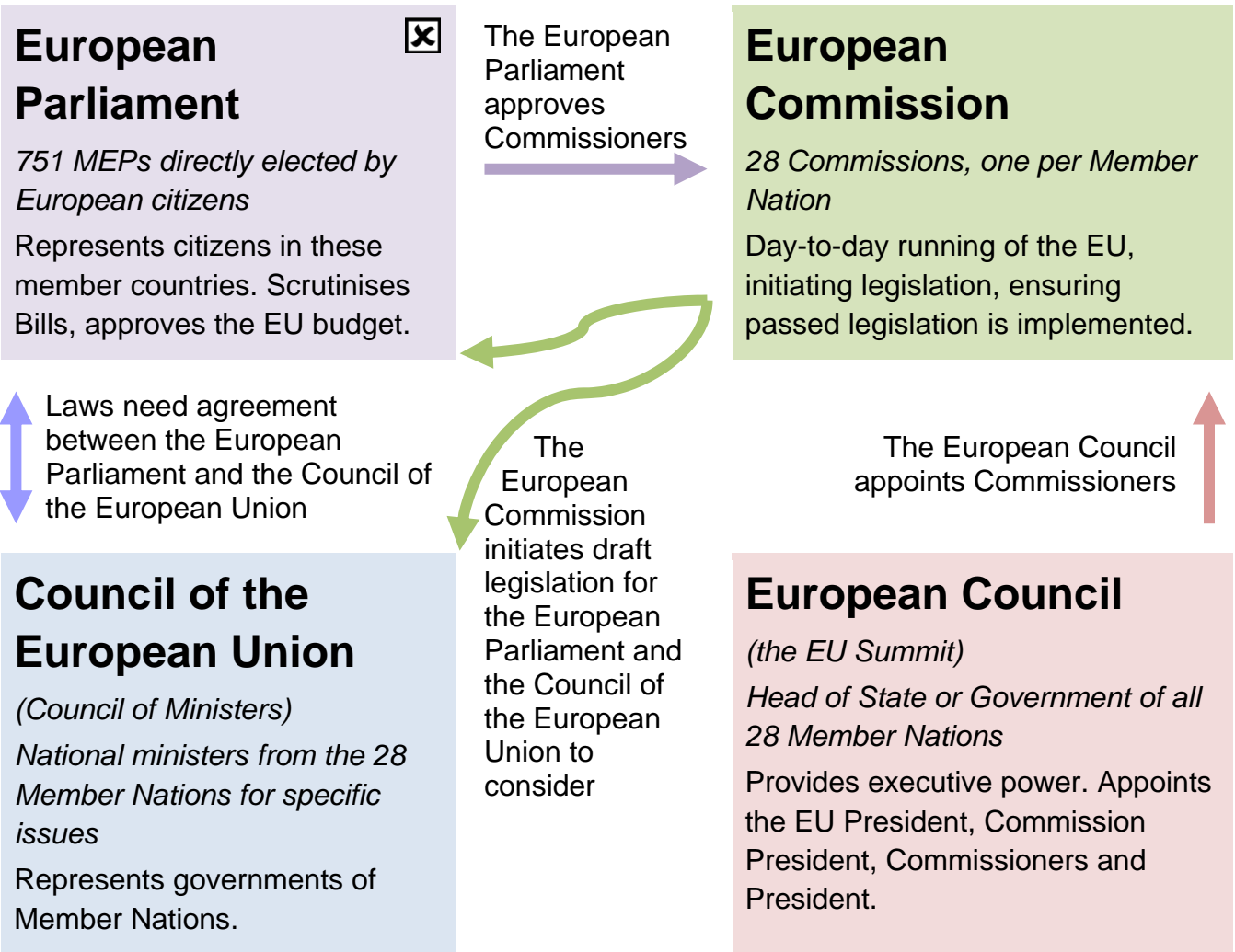The courts

The media

Trade unions

Corporate or professional bodies, non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, academics...

The stock exchange

Faith bodies

The main political institutions of the European Union

Citizens Citizens from the Member Nations vote for MEPs.

European Parliament

751 MEPs directly elected by European citizens

Represents citizens in these member countries. Scrutinises Bills, approves the EU budget.

The European Parliament approves Commissioners

European Commission

28 Commissions, one per Member Nation

Day-to-day running of the EU, initiating legislation, ensuring passed legislation is implemented.

Laws need agreement between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union

The European Commission initiates draft legislation for the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to consider

Council of the European Union

(Council of Ministers)

National ministers from the 28 Member Nations for specific issues

Represents governments of Member Nations.

The European Council appoints Commissioners

European Council

(the EU Summit)

Head of State or Government of all 28 Member Nations

Provides executive power. Appoints the EU President, Commission President, Commissioners and President.

Governments The 28 Member Nations send national politicians to the Council of the European Union. Heads of State or Government attend European Council.

Court of Justice of the European Union

Contains the European Court of Justice, the highest court in the EU

European Central Bank

Administers the monetary policy of the Eurozone

European Court of Auditors

Audits finances of the European Union

Not to be confused with...

The Council of Europe

The institutions of the Council of Europe include the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of the Council of Europe, the **European Court of Human Rights** (see right), the Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Conference of International NGOs.

...of which the best known is...

The European Court of Human Rights

Created by the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950