

Specimen Response for Study Theme 3D (Exemplar 1)

STUDY THEME 3D – THE EUROPEAN UNION

Question

Assess the effectiveness of the European Parliament in EU decision making.

(15 marks)

Response

There are three main institutions within the European Union. The Council of Ministers, The European Parliament and the Commission. There is however a difference with the way Britain operates, as in the UK the Parliament takes all of the important decisions. Unlike this, in the EU the most important decisions are taken in the Council of Ministers and not the European Parliament. The European Parliament has little influence in making decisions which people say is ineffective, however they do integrate with the Council of Ministers to make some co-decisions like the fishing policy, however they must agree or be agreed with by the Council of Ministers.

In the UK the House of Commons is able to pass laws and decide on the amount of tax people pay. In the EU the Parliament may only suggest and give ideas about changing European law, they have no power to enforce that. The simple truth is countries like Britain do not want to give up their independence and power to Europe so therefore the Parliament can not be granted power.

The European Parliament has increased to over 700 MEP's with the recent introduction of 10 new countries into the EU and the Parliament will again be changing so that it does not become too big. Most Scots do not know who their MEP's are as to be honest most voters do not bother to vote in euro-elections as they can not see why it matters. The Parliament does have some power that it uses. They are responsible for approving commissioners into the European Commission and furthermore they are responsible for approving the budget, something at this precise moment they are delaying.

The European Parliament does not have the same powers given to it as the Council of Ministers has. The Council of Ministers have 25 representatives from all the member countries who come in to discuss various issues. For the more important decisions the leaders of the countries like the PM in Britain go along to the meetings. However if it is an issue such as Transport then the Minister for Transport goes along to discuss. All 25 members must agree on the issue discussed otherwise the decision taken by them is not effective. Many people argue that if more members join the EU a Q.V.M should be introduced to help with decision making so then the majority will get their decision passed.

The European Commission has a more important job than the Parliament as they are the people who decide on the Common Agricultural Policy to give out to the member countries and have to decide who gets what amount of funding back at the same time. They also have to deal with the CFP where they decide on helping out fishing industries within Europe like Scotland where the Commission has rather hampered them than helped the fishing industry.

In conclusion the European Parliament does have some influence in the EU on decision making however it is very little and can be ineffective at the same time. People argue that it should be given more power to help run Europe however with countries like Britain refusing to share their legislation it does not look like Europe will see the Parliament getting more power any time soon.

Marking Instructions for Study Theme 3D (Exemplar 1)

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(15 marks)

Developed, exemplified, balanced and analytical answers may refer to:

- ◆ European Parliament is “the crucible of a supranational democracy”
- ◆ may force the Commission to resign (as it did in 1999)
- ◆ may reject the nomination of a new president for the Commission
- ◆ has the power of veto over new members and association agreements
- ◆ co-decision powers give it the right to amend and veto, but not to initiate, legislation over most of what the EU does
- ◆ once seen as only a talking shop, its powers have been expanded. Plays a vital role in shaping everything from business to the environment
- ◆ a key power is its control over the EC budget in many areas, including development cooperation
- ◆ if approved, an EU constitution would expand its co-decision powers from 39 to 80 policy areas
- ◆ reportedly has a say in 80% of the legislation passed in the EU

However, the Council:

- is the EU decision maker
- discusses proposals put forward by the Commission, decides what form these proposals should take, amends them if necessary and decides whether or not they should become law
- takes many decisions behind closed doors
- ◆ the co-decision procedure does not apply to either tax matters or foreign policy – it may only give a “non-binding” opinion
- ◆ claim that there is no public interest or engagement in the EU Parliament – low turnout (46%) in elections
- ◆ other relevant points.

‘Achieve’ answers must feature both knowledge and understanding and analysis.

Comments on Specimen Answer for Study Theme 3D (Exemplar 1)

This is a concise answer, with analysis permeating. The start is strong in that it gets to grips with the question straight away. There is relevant and apposite comparison with the UK Parliament. The candidate quickly points up the importance of the Council of Ministers.

The candidate points out the link between the perceived ineffectiveness of the Parliament and voter turn-out. The answer also demonstrates and exemplifies well the role of the Commission in relation to the Parliament. There is some inaccuracy about the Commission and it is thin on exemplification.

The conclusion is precise, but floats a new idea about its future role. It echoes the first paragraph.

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