

Specimen Response for Study Theme 3D (Exemplar 2)

STUDY THEME 3D – THE EUROPEAN UNION

Question

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

(15 marks)

Response

The EU Institution which makes the most important decisions for Europe is the Council of Ministers. It makes the most decisions because countries such as Britain don't want to give up their independence to a European Parliament. Each member country sends a member of its govt. to go and help make decisions. If it was a very important issue, Tony Blair would go for Britain. If it was about farming, Britain's Agriculture Minister would attend.

Most decisions still require all 25 members to agree, but some decisions are now made using the qualified majority vote. Supporters of greater European integration want this to become the norm. As the EU gets bigger, it will be more difficult to get all member countries to agree, therefore there will be more pressure from the QMV system.

The European Parliament has 700 plus members. This number changed when ten more members joined. Scotland has 8 MEPS (members of European parliament). Bigger countries get more MEPS. Most Scots don't know who their MEPS are, under half of voters bother to turn up to vote in European elections. This shows people don't think of the European parliament as important.

The European parliament is not as powerful as the British Parliament. In the House of Commons, new laws are decided upon. The European Parliament does not make important decisions like this, it mainly makes comments, produces reports and suggests things. New powers of the European Parliament include deciding on new entrants, approving the commission (has rejected commission) and approving the EU budget.. Supporters of greater Europe integration want the European Parliament to take more decisions, this would mean decisions would be made for the whole of Europe, whether individual countries agreed or not.

The European Commission runs the European Union. It handles the money the EU gets from its members. It also makes sure the rules of the EU are followed. This sometimes annoys countries which have to change their way of doing something. The commission also produces proposals which are approved by the European Parliament. For example, the cut back of fishing in the North Sea, under the CFP.

In conclusion, the EU tries to run as efficiently as possible through these institutions. This allows countries to keep their independence.

Marking Instructions for Study Theme 3D (Exemplar 2)

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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 2)

This is an answer that repays a second reading. It is unsophisticated but makes a good attempt at answering the question.

It displays knowledge and understanding of the main institutions and has a working knowledge of their relative importance. The low popular esteem of the Parliament is mentioned. There is some evidence of analysis and reference to the Commission is relevant. There should be more development of the effectiveness of the Parliament compared with the Council of Ministers.

The conclusion is weak and largely irrelevant, but enough for a bare B pass.

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