

Voice of the People

Manuscript
The Commission
With answers from politicians in Brussels
TVSYD, Denmark

Crew:

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Translation

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0'01

Question, Signe Spørring, Kolding, Denmark:

What is the difference between the Parliament and the Commission?

0'03

Answer, Jonathan Todd, Spokesman, The Commission, Brussels:

The European Commission is kind of a European civil service. But the difference from the national civil service is that we have the power to make proposals and the power to enforce Community rules and to blow the whistle when member states don't apply the rules properly. The European Parliament together with the Council of Ministers is there to discuss, and if they agree, to approve the proposals that we come up with.

So the Parliament often makes amendments, changes, to what we propose to take account of various different interests, and they, because they are directly elected by everybody in Europe, they lend legitimacy to Community legislation when it is adopted.

0'54

SIGN:

The Commission was founded in the 1950s.

Just as the Parliament and the Council.

0'59

Question, Jørgen Hæstrup, Kolding, Denmark:

Why do they make things so complicated? I think the idea of the EU is a trade agreement, but they act as if they were a government. And that is wrong.

1'20

Answer, Jonathan Todd, Spokesman, The Commission, Brussels:

Well, we don't behave as though we were a government. But what we do try to do is to do things at European level where it's better than each country doing its own thing by itself. And we can do things together quite profitably. Like e.g. research and education and agreeing on technical standards and so on.

1'46

SIGN:

Every 5th year a new Commission is appointed. The governments of the member states appoint a president of the new Commission.

1'53

Question, Ida Lyng, Kolding, Denmark:

I'd like to get a better insight into how proposals for directives are made, how they pass through the system. And who can influence it?

2'09

Answer, Jonathan Todd, Spokesman, The Commission, Brussels:

Well, the very first thing that happens is that the Commission does lots of consultations and reflections on whether it would be useful to have a directive and to coordinate legislation at European level. If we think that it is useful, then we come up with a proposal which we then submit both to the European Parliament and to the Council of Ministers. And if the Council of Ministers and the Parliament agree, then they adopt it, and then member states normally have 18 months or two years to introduce measures in national legislation to apply the directive. But we can on some occasions adopt regulations which are directly applicable without national measures. And sometimes in some areas like agriculture the Commission itself can take decisions which are directly binding.

3'02

SIGN:

When the new Commission is in power, 1 November 2004, there will be 25 commissioners, one from each member state.

3'10

Henning Dalmer, Kolding, Denmark:

Naturally, you can relate to it better, once you've been there. Maybe one should give people better opportunity to come and see things work in Brussels.

3'22

Answer, Jonathan Todd, Spokesman, The Commission, Brussels:

Obviously it would be difficult to have 450 million people from throughout the European Union all come and see the Commission. But we can do and what we do try to do is to publicize through the press, through radio and television and also through internet ... For example, if you like to, you can log on to the internet, to the Commission's website and watch the press briefing that we hold every day at 12 o'clock where we deal with current questions.

And through the internet you can actually see what is going on here in the Commission.