



Module 1

# EU Governance & Decision-Making Processes

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Visualizing the EU: Enhancing Public Awareness of European Policies, Values, and Initiatives at Polish HEIs

Grant Agreement 101235890 — ERASMUS-JMO-2025-HEI-TCH-RSCH

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## Lecture Overview

Three core dimensions of EU governance and their impact on Polish higher education institutions

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### Understanding EU Governance

Why it matters for Polish HEIs

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### The Core Institutional Triangle

Commission, Parliament, Council

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### EU Competences & Multi-Level Governance

Who can act and how

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### The Policy Cycle & Decision-Making

From agenda-setting to implementation

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### From Brussels to Warsaw to Campus

Policy transfer pathways

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### Polish HEIs as Contributors

Beyond being recipients

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### Key Takeaways & Discussion

Main conclusions and activities



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# What is EU Governance & Why It Matters for Polish HEIs

## Defining EU Governance

**Institutional System:** The network of institutions that make and implement decisions

**Competence Distribution:** How authority is shared across EU, national, regional, and local levels

**Actor Interaction:** The dynamic between EU institutions, Member States, and stakeholders

**Policy Movement:** From design and negotiation to implementation and evaluation

## The Multi-Level Reality

EU governance operates through **shared, negotiated, and multi-directional** processes. It is not top-down but involves constant interaction between supranational institutions, national governments, regional actors, sectoral institutions like universities, and civil society stakeholders.

EU governance is not abstract—it directly shapes university operations and daily academic life

## How EU Governance Shapes Polish HEIs

### Funding

Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, structural funds

### Quality

Assurance frameworks and standards

### Digital


Education agendas and transformation

### Inclusion

Mobility and accessibility policies

### Research & Innovation

International cooperation frameworks and priorities

 **Main Question: How do decisions move from Brussels to Warsaw and finally to Polish HEIs?**



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# The Core Institutional Triangle

Three institutions central to agenda-setting, legislative negotiation, and policy adoption



## European Commission

**Proposes** legislation and policy initiatives

**Ensures** implementation of EU law across Member States

**Manages** EU policies, programmes, and budgets

**Monitors** compliance with EU regulations

**Represents** the general interests of the Union

★ **Why it matters:** Many education, research, and innovation initiatives begin here



## European Parliament

**Represents** EU citizens directly elected every 5 years

**Debates** and amends legislative proposals

**Shares** legislative and budgetary power with Council

**Monitors** other EU institutions democratically

**Influences** priorities through committees and reports

★ **Relevance:** Shapes debates on education, inclusion, mobility, and digital transformation



## Council of the EU

**Represents** Member State governments

**Negotiates** and adopts legislation with Parliament

**Coordinates** national policies across sectors

**Works** through sectoral configurations and working groups

**Reflects** national interests in EU policy-making

★ **Key point:** This is where national governments directly shape EU decisions

These three institutions interact in a dynamic process of agenda-setting, legislative negotiation, adoption of EU acts, and policy coordination



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# Other ~~Key~~ EU Bodies & The European Council



## European Council

- Defines the EU's general political direction and priorities
- Sets strategic priorities for the Union's development
- Brings together heads of state or government of Member States
- Does not usually pass legislation—that's for other institutions
- Influences the long-term political agenda and strategic frame

**Importance:** Sets the strategic frame within which sectoral policies develop

## Court of Justice of the EU

Ensures EU law is interpreted and applied consistently across Member States. Legal interpretations shape how education policies are implemented nationally.

Additional actors contribute to legal interpretation, consultation, technical expertise, and policy implementation



## Consultative Bodies

### European Economic and Social Committee

Represents employers, workers, and civil society interests

### Committee of the Regions

Represents regional and local authorities



## EU Agencies & Expert Networks

- ✓ Technical expertise and implementation support
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement and consultation
- ✓ Specialized knowledge and research
- ✓ Policy networks and expert groups



These bodies contribute to legal interpretation, consultation, technical expertise, and policy implementation



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# EU Competences: Who Can Act & How



The type of competence affects the degree of EU authority, the role of Member States, and policy transfer to national systems



## Exclusive Competences

EU alone can legislate

- > Customs union
- > Competition rules for internal market
- > Monetary policy (euro area)
- > Common commercial policy

Not directly HE-centred but shapes the wider EU legal environment



## Shared Competences

EU & Member States both act

- > Internal market
- > Environment
- > Social policy (some aspects)
- > Economic, social & territorial cohesion

Both levels coordinate and collaborate



## Supporting Competences

EU supports & coordinates

- > Education
- > Culture
- > Youth
- > Vocational training

EU incentivises rather than governs directly



**Important implication: In education, the EU usually supports, coordinates, and incentivises rather than fully governs**



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# Multi-Level Governance in Practice

Higher education is influenced through both binding law and soft governance mechanisms



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**1** **Supranational Level**  
EU Institutions

Propose or coordinate policy agendas, legislative initiatives, and funding programmes



**2** **National Level**  
Member States

Adapt and implement EU policies through national legislation and regulatory frameworks



**3** **Ministerial Level**  
Poland

Interpret and operationalise priorities into domestic policy frameworks and guidelines



**4** **Institutional Level**  
Polish HEIs

Respond through institutional strategies, projects, curriculum adaptation, and participation



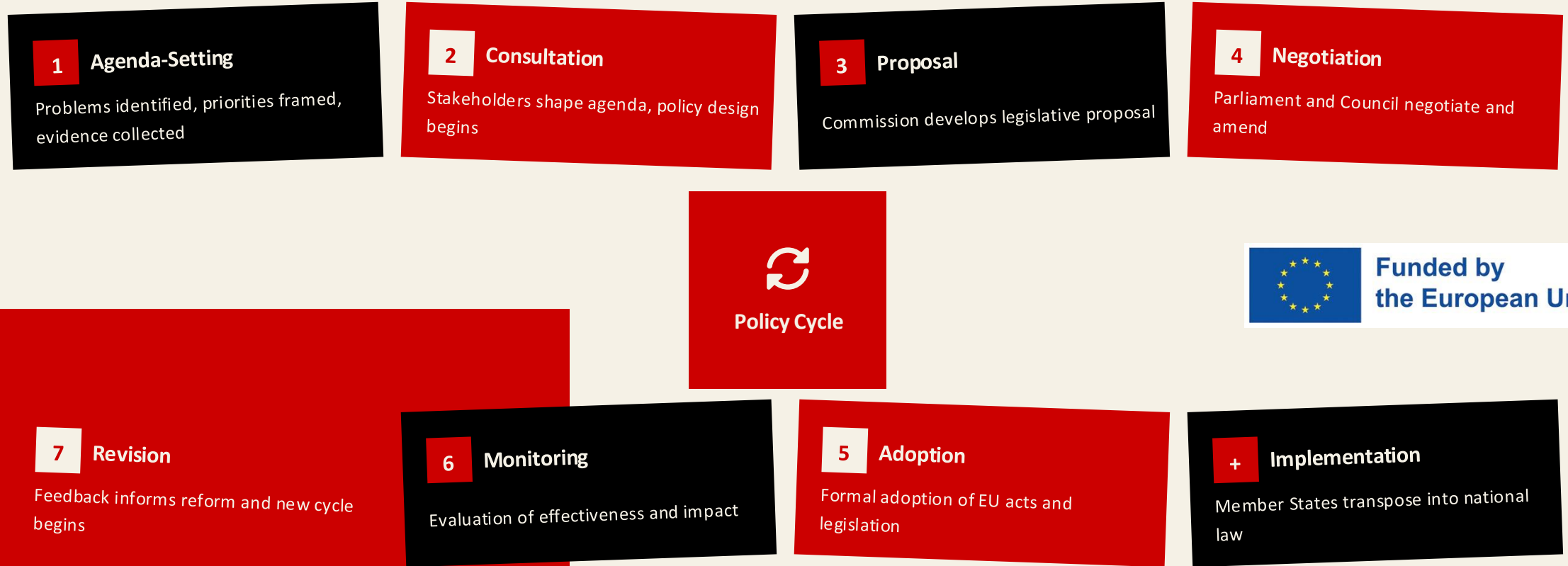
**Key Point: This governance is shared, negotiated, and multi-directional—not simply top-down**

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# The EU Policy Cycle & Decision-Making

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The cycle is rarely linear—it involves feedback loops, negotiation, and revision



## Ordinary Legislative Procedure

Commission proposal → Parliament reading → Council position → Negotiations → Adoption

## Soft Governance Matters

Not all influence comes through binding law—recommendations, action plans, and communications are crucial in higher education

# From Brussels to Warsaw: The Policy Transfer Pathway

Policy transfer is selective, mediated, and context-dependent



## 1. European Commission Proposals

Policy agenda, legislative initiatives, funding programmes



## 2. Council & Parliament Negotiations

Legislative debate, amendments, compromise texts



## 3. National Government Engagement

Polish government positions, coordination with EU



## 4. Polish Ministries & Agencies

Operationalisation, guidelines, programme design



## 5. Institutional Practice

Strategic planning, curriculum, mobility, digital platforms



Key Idea: This is the point at which policy becomes visible for universities



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# Case Example: How EU Priorities Become HEI Practices



Illustrative pathway: Digital Education Policy

## 1 EU Policy Agenda

EU identifies **digital transformation** as strategic priority through European Council conclusions and Commission communications

## 2 Commission Initiatives

Commission develops **Digital Education Action Plan**, funding priorities, and guidelines for Member States

## 3 National Translation

Poland translates priorities into **national frameworks**, ministerial guidelines, and operational programmes

## 4 Institutional Adoption

- Universities adopt digital learning platforms
- Teaching methods are redesigned
- Strategies are updated to align with EU priorities
- Staff training programmes are implemented



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## 5 Direct Impact

**Students and staff** experience these changes directly through new learning environments, digital tools, and enhanced accessibility

 This demonstrates the **multi-step, multi-actor nature of policy implementation**

Alternative examples: Inclusion policy | European Universities alliances | Research cooperation frameworks | Cohesion-related regional support

# Polish HEIs as Contributors: Beyond Being Recipients

## How Polish HEIs Influence EU Processes



### Participation in Consultations

Responding to Green Papers, White Papers, and public consultations



### Alliances & Networks

European Universities alliances, academic associations, thematic networks



### Project Partnerships

Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, structural funds projects



### Expert Input & Dialogue






Policy dialogue, expert groups, advisory roles



### Evidence Generation

Research, dissemination, best practice sharing

## Common Misconceptions

-  **Myth:** The EU decides everything centrally
-  **Myth:** Education is fully governed by Brussels
-  **Myth:** Implementation is automatic and uniform
-  **Myth:** All Member States experience EU policy the same way
-  **Myth:** EU communication is neutral and uncontested

## A Better View

EU governance is **negotiated, layered, and politically mediated**. It involves constant interaction, compromise, and adaptation across multiple levels and actors.



Universities are not only recipients but also contributors to EU policy processes



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# Key Takeaways & Discussion

- ✓ **The EU is a complex multi-level governance system** with interconnected institutions and actors
- ✓ **Institutions have distinct but interdependent roles** in agenda-setting, legislation, and implementation
- ✓ **Decision-making combines formal procedures** with political negotiation and compromise
- ✓ **Education is influenced mainly through supporting** and coordinating mechanisms, not direct governance
- ✓ **Polish HEIs are both shaped by and able to engage** with EU policy processes as contributors

**Thank you for your attention**

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## Discussion Prompt

**Which EU decisions or initiatives have the strongest visible impact on Polish HEIs?**

- Erasmus+ mobility programmes
- European Universities alliances
- Digital education transformation
- Inclusion and accessibility policies
- Research cooperation frameworks

## Suggested Follow-Up Activity

**Mini-task:** Create a visual pathway showing how one EU initiative reaches a Polish HEI

**Topics:** Erasmus+ | Digital education | Inclusion policy

**Output:** Simple flowchart with 6-10 steps



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