

## **New method of calculating a qualified majority in the Council**

As from 1 November 2014 new rules for the calculation of a qualified majority in the European Council and in the Council of the EU will apply. As from this date, a system of double majority of members and of population will replace the current rules based on a system of weighted votes attributed to each member state, applied since 1957.

The new voting rules are aimed at facilitating the European Council's and the Council's decision taking by qualified majority and at strengthening the democratic legitimacy, in line with the principle "one citizen - one vote".

When acting on a proposal from the Commission or the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a qualified majority will require the support of **at least 55% of the members** (i.e. in the EU 28 at least 16 member states) representing **at least 65% of the EU population** (i.e. in 2014 around 328.6 million)<sup>1</sup>. A blocking minority will have to include at least four members; otherwise, the qualified majority will be deemed to have been attained.

Where the European Council or the Council do *not* act on the basis of a proposal from the Commission or from the High Representative, the qualified majority threshold is 72% of the members (i.e. in the EU 28 at least 21 member states) representing at least 65% of the EU population.

In cases where not all members participate in voting on a proposal from the Commission or the High Representative (such as on acts adopted within an enhanced cooperation, acts concerning the Schengen area or acts on which only members of the eurozone vote) the qualified majority is reached when at least 55% of the *participating* member states representing at least 65% of the population of these member states are in favour. The member states' threshold increases to 72% when the participating members do not act on a proposal from the Commission or the High Representative. In those cases a blocking minority must include at least the minimum number of member states representing more than 35% of the population of the participating countries, plus one member.

In order to secure a smooth transition to the new rules, **transitional provisions** will allow any member state to request, until 31 March 2017, that the rules on majority voting in force before 1 November 2014 apply to a specific act.

---

<sup>1</sup> Out of a total of 505.6 million. The total population of the EU is updated by Eurostat and the Council's rules of procedure amended accordingly.

In addition, there is a possibility for a member state to ask the Council to do all in its powers to reach, within a reasonable time, a satisfactory solution to address the minority's concerns when a qualified majority is reached in the Council but the minority is close to the blocking minority<sup>2</sup> (so called Ioannina-bis mechanism).

Population of each member state and its share compared to the total population of the EU for the period 1 November 2014 to 31 December 2014:

Member state	Population (x 1 000)	Percentage of the total population of the Union
Germany	80 523,7	15,93
France	65 633,2	12,98
United Kingdom	63 730,1	12,61
Italy	59 685,2	11,81
Spain	46 704,3	9,24
Poland	38 533,3	7,62
Romania	20 057,5	3,97
Netherlands	16 779,6	3,32
Belgium	11 161,6	2,21
Greece	11 062,5	2,19
Czech Republic	10 516,1	2,08
Portugal	10 487,3	2,07
Hungary	9 908,8	1,96
Sweden	9 555,9	1,89
Austria	8 451,9	1,67
Bulgaria	7 284,6	1,44
Denmark	5 602,6	1,11
Finland	5 426,7	1,07
Slovakia	5 410,8	1,07
Ireland	4 591,1	0,91
Croatia	4 262,1	0,84
Lithuania	2 971,9	0,59
Slovenia	2 058,8	0,41
Latvia	2 023,8	0,40
Estonia	1 324,8	0,26
Cyprus	865,9	0,17
Luxembourg	537,0	0,11
Malta	421,4	0,08
Total	505 572,5	100
Threshold 65%	328 622,1	

<sup>2</sup> From 1 November 2014 to 31 March 2017 a minority is considered close to a blocking minority when the opposed member states represent at 75% of the population or at least 75% of the number of countries necessary to constitute a blocking minority. From 1 April 2017 onwards the minority needs to represent at least 55% of the EU population or of the number of member states necessary to constitute a blocking minority.