

Carers and effective advocacy

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Content:

- 1 Introducing the EU institutions
- 2 EU policy and carers
- 3 Policy opportunities for carers: advocacy

1 Introducing the EU institutions

The EU: its main institutions

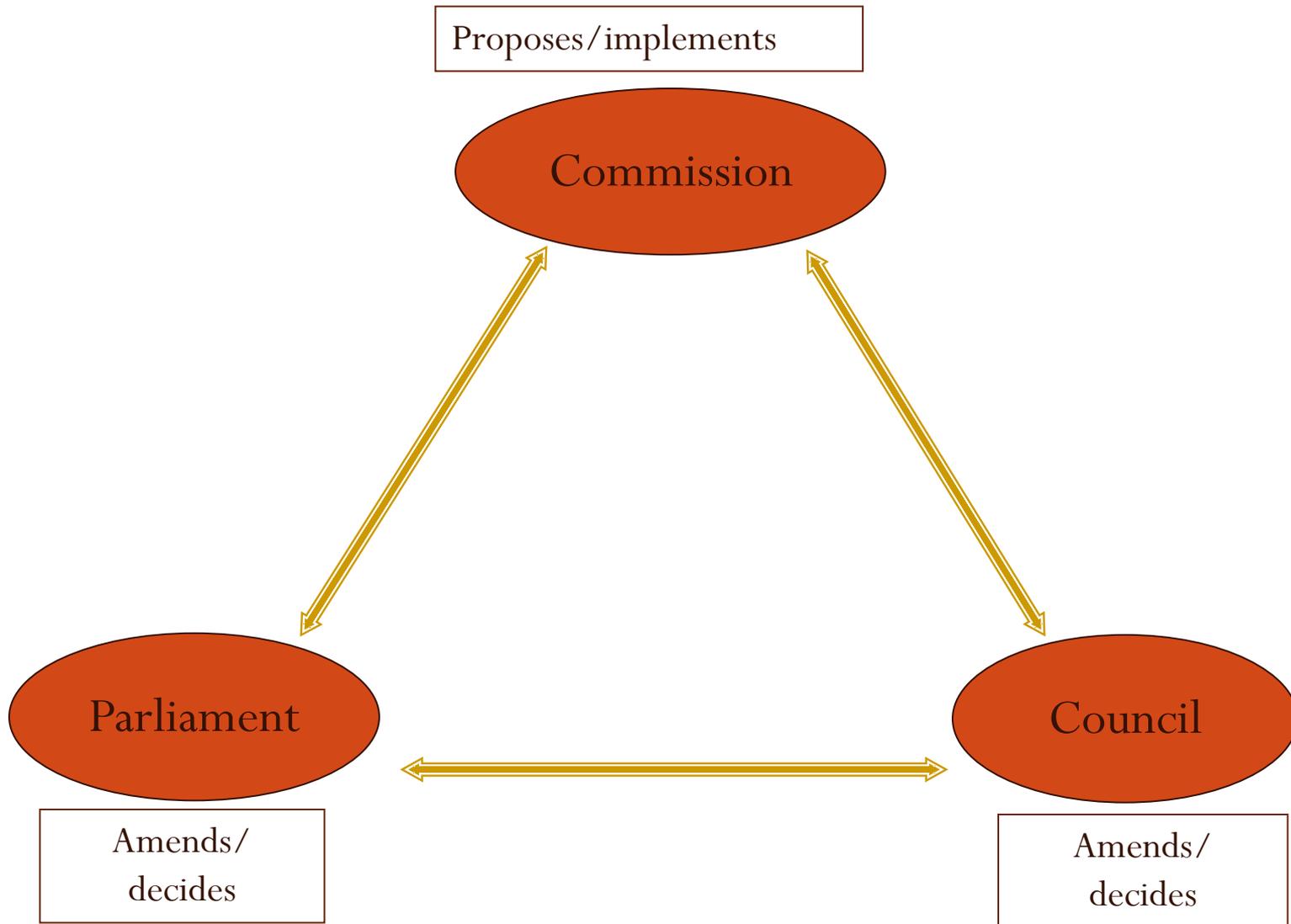
European Commission

European Parliament

**Council of the
European Union**

Other Bodies

The Institutional Triangle



European Commission



European Commission

- Driving force within the EU
- Upholds the interests of the EU as a whole
- No individual country interests

European Parliament

- “The voice of the European citizens”
- Members:
 - 754
 - Europe-wide political blocks (not national blocks)
 - Directly elected for 5 years (next elections: June 2014)
- Power on the increase (co-decision)



Council of Ministers



- Main decision making body
 - Represents the Member States
- Council meetings: participation dependent on the agenda; health ministers attend the Health Council
- Passes European laws (in many areas together with the European Parliament)

2 EU policy and carers

The EU and carers

- No formal or limited EU remit on health care systems, health care delivery, social policies
- Member States are responsible and want to keep their power in these fields
- So: no power to directly address carers issues or put in place binding legislation
- However.....

Carers issues are European issues:

Decreasing informal care potential:

- Demographic ageing: increasing care need in all member states
- Changing family structures (fewer children, increasing mobility, more divorces)
- Increasing female labour market participation

Carers are a huge resource

- The vast majority of care (80%) is being provided by relatives, neighbours and friends
- This resource is the cornerstone of care provision
- Free of charge: invisible contribution to Member States' economy and health care systems
- Not sufficiently recognised by EU and national policy measures

Carers need support

If carers are expected to continue to care – and they are – concrete measures need to be taken to support them.

This will not just benefit carers but society as a whole.

3 Policy opportunities for carers: effective advocacy

Examples of advocacy activities:

- The European Parliament Interest Group on Carers (set up by Eurocarers in 2007)
- Eurocarers:
 - Responds to as many initiatives as possible: letters, position statements, meeting attendance
 - Ensures amendments inserting carers into relevant policy reports
 - Works with other relevant organisations to amplify its voice
 - Participates in EU research projects

Advocacy...

- Is a matter of making the most of opportunities..
- by being creative
- by cooperating with others
- by being pro-active
- by being patient!

Current EU initiatives with an **indirect** link to carers:

- EU Workforce for Health
- Alzheimer initiatives
- Open Method of Coordination (health/ltc)
- Mental health initiatives
- EU Health Strategy
- Health inequalities
- Employment Strategy

Recent EU initiatives with an **direct** link to carers:

- Active and Healthy Ageing Partnership (2011)
- Communication on the employment potential of household and personal services (2012)
- ‘Social Investment Package’ with Document on Long-term care provision (2013)

Discussion and questions