

The Council of the European Union is the central decision body of the European Union. It serves as the main legislator together with the European Parliament and also exercises executive functions. The Council has a Janus face: as an organ of the Community it is composed of representatives from the Member States. The Member States exercise their influence on the European Union in the Council. Thus the Council may act as a motor or as a procrastinator of European integration.

Despite its important position the academic discussion of the Council is still unsatisfactory, at least in Germany. It is the aim of this book to close the gaps in the academic discussion of the Council. In order to do so, the structure and workings of the Council will be described, its position in the institutional setup of the European Union will be analyzed and its contribution to a democratically legitimized exercise of power within the Union will be examined. With its comprehensive overview the book may serve at the same time as a handbook on the Council for students, academics and practitioners.