



Acquis communautaire

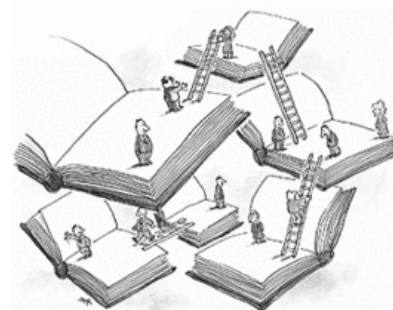
The complete body of EU legislation is around 30,000 legal acts. It is more than 100,000 pages long in the [Official Journal](#).

There is no official number of valid legal acts. The full picture may only be assembled by different pieces of information from different sources.

According to a letter from the Commission in May 2009 there are 10,785 different directives and regulations in force. In addition there are 10,014 legal acts modifying existing legislation, bringing the total number of acts to 20,799.

There are also treaties, international agreements and other different legal acts not counted. The Danish parliament's EU information office has also searched in [Eur-Lex](#) and [Pre-Lex](#) and found 579 recommendations, 3,545 communications, 51 white papers and 150 green papers which are not legally binding.

The European Court of Justice has added 7,968 verdicts to the acquis, the Court of First Instance 2,354, making in total 10,322 verdicts. Many of these Court verdicts have changed the laws or developed new rules and they are therefore an important part of the acquis.



(Photo: European Commission)

A simple look in the official database for EU regulation, [Eur-lex](#), in 2009 may bring one around 26,545 documents organised in 20 chapters. Some acts are registered under different chapters. Here, one can also find 4,115 international agreements bringing this acquis to 30,662 legal acts.

European and international standards may also be part of EU law when the EU enters into agreements. See [Standards](#) and [Number of EU laws](#) with a table for over 80,000 legal acts and standards.

EUR-LEX

Eur-Lex is the legal database of the EU. In Eur-Lex you can find 455,800 references in total. It amounts to 3,650,000 different documents if one includes the different language editions from 1951 onwards. Every year the stock of acts in Eur-Lex increases by around 15,000 on average. They are to be found here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/tools/faq.htm>

THE FULL ACQUIS

The full acquis is difficult to define; it can be described as the total body of European Union law applicable to the EU member states. It is constantly evolving and comprises:

- the content, principles and political objectives of the Treaties;
- legislation adopted pursuant to the Treaties and the case law of the Court of Justice;
- declarations and resolutions adopted by the Union;
- instruments under the Common Foreign and Security Policy;
- instruments under Justice and Home Affairs;
- international agreements concluded by the Community and those entered into by the member states themselves within the sphere of the Union's activities.

Thus it includes all treaties, all legislation valid today, all EU Court verdicts, all types of decisions from the second (Foreign and Security Policy) and third [pillars](#) (Justice and Home Affairs), as well as so-called [soft law](#).

The Acquis Communautaire is translated into the following 23 languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, German, Greek, English, Spanish,

Estonian, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene and Swedish. Irish (Gaelic) translations are not fully available.

The concept of the *acquis communautaire* includes the primacy of EU law and other principles developed by the Cou of Justice, partly through the Court's legal activism. Member states are bound to accept future majority decisions and verdicts from the EU Court.

The primacy of EU law was declared in the rejected EU Constitution Art. I-6. This article was deleted in the Lisbon Treaty. Instead, it was inserted as a footnote with the same content and with a specific reference to the Court verdicts establishing the primacy of EU law. It can be found in Declaration Number 17 attached to the Lisbon Treaty.

Adoption and implementation of the *acquis* are the basis of the accession negotiations. This principle was included in the rejected Constitution. The different areas for which reforms are needed in order to meet the accession conditions are called "chapters of the *acquis*".

The candidate countries are required to adapt their administrative and institutional infrastructures and to bring their national legislation in line with Community legislation in the areas of the different chapters. These are reviewed during the screening of the *acquis* and are evaluated regularly up until the time each chapter is closed.

The *acquis* concept is crucial to understanding the EU and the ongoing enlargement and constitutional processes.

Notes

The Danish Parliament has been told that there were around 26,000 documents sent to the applicant countries for approval. Commissioner Günter Verheugen, responsible for enlargement until November 2004, has said there are over 20,000 acts. No one can/will give the precise number of valid legal acts at any one time.

Links

See also Number of laws

Sources and scope of Community law http://www.europarl.eu.int/factsheets/1_2_1_en.htm

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/tools/faq.htm>



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