

# The EU decision-making process

The EU's legislative process is lengthy and complex and vastly different from the UK's parliamentary route. A large proportion of EU laws are agreed through 'co-decision', meaning the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (representatives of the 27 EU member states) are co-legislators. The diagram below charts the journey through the typical European legislative process. The NHS European Office engages throughout the different stages of this process to seek to exert influence.

## Pre-legislative work

The European Commission often seeks the views of stakeholders on a proposal before it is published. This could be through a formal consultation process or by holding informal discussions with key stakeholders. By influencing at the earliest possible opportunity, we can shape the direction and scope of a new or revised piece of legislation.

## The legislative process

The office needs to gauge the potential impact of a proposal on the NHS to shape its influencing lines. To understand the implications and the range of services affected, we often consult publicly on an issue, utilising the NHS Confederation's networks and other communication channels to seek NHS views.

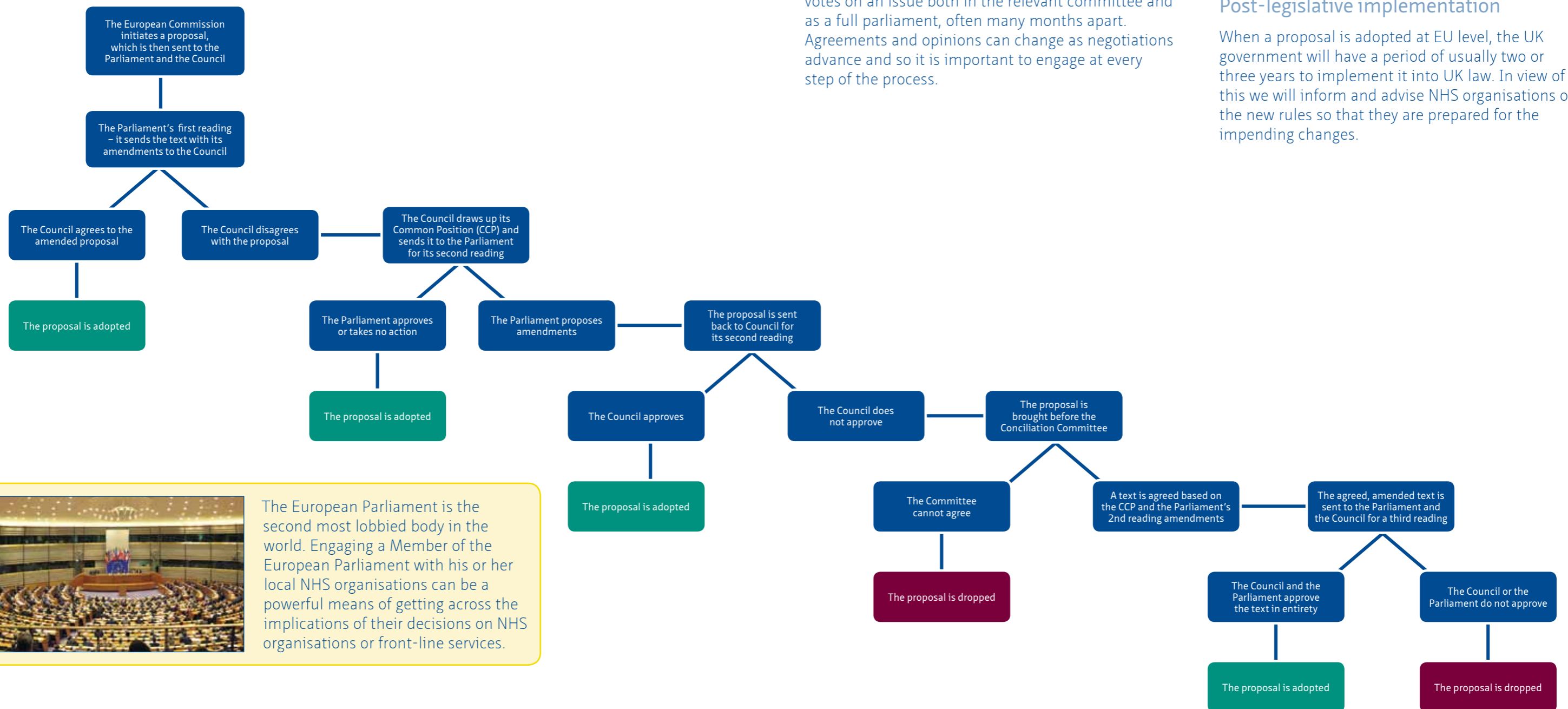
As the proposal passes through the European Parliament, we inform key MEPs of NHS views and concerns. The European Parliament debates and votes on an issue both in the relevant committee and as a full parliament, often many months apart. Agreements and opinions can change as negotiations advance and so it is important to engage at every step of the process.

The relevant government department also discusses the issue in the Council of Ministers, though not necessarily at the same time as the Parliament. We therefore work closely with the relevant government department to ensure the position being pushed by the UK reflects as far as possible NHS views.

If no agreement is reached by the EU institutions on a proposal, we will keep a watching brief as discussions may resume later.

## Post-legislative implementation

When a proposal is adopted at EU level, the UK government will have a period of usually two or three years to implement it into UK law. In view of this we will inform and advise NHS organisations of the new rules so that they are prepared for the impending changes.



The European Parliament is the second most lobbied body in the world. Engaging a Member of the European Parliament with his or her local NHS organisations can be a powerful means of getting across the implications of their decisions on NHS organisations or front-line services.