

The European Commission

The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission

The European Union

The European Union (EU) is a unique economic and political union between 27 EU countries. It began in the aftermath of the Second World War as a purely economic union and gradually evolved into an organisation spanning policy areas, from climate, environment and health to external relations and security, justice and migration.

The EU is governed by the principle of representative democracy, with citizens directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament and Member States represented in the European Council and the Council of the EU. The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm, which promotes the general interest of the EU by proposing legislation to and enforcing decisions by the Parliament and the Council.

The EU is represented at the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G8 (Group of Eight industrialised nations) and the G20 (Group of 20).

The European Commission

The European Commission is the executive body of the EU, and is responsible for proposing legislation, verifying its implementation, and upholding the Union's treaties. Political leadership is provided by a team of 27 Commissioners (one from each EU country) – led by the Commission President, who decides who is responsible for which policy area. Each member of the College is nominated by their national government, and then appointed by the European Council after the approval of the European Parliament.

The day-to-day running of Commission business is performed by staff (specialists in domains such as law, finance, economics, science, communications and administration) working in departments known as Directorates-General (DGs). Each DG is responsible for a specific policy area. DGs develop, implement and manage EU policy, law, and funding programmes. The Commission proposes new laws, but it is the European Parliament and Council of the European Union that enact them. Service departments deal with administrative issues, and executive agencies manage programmes set up by the Commission.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC)

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is one of the Commission's DGs. It is the Commission's science and knowledge service, carrying out research in order to provide independent scientific advice and support to EU policy.

JRC staff create, manage and make sense of knowledge, and develop innovative tools and make them available to policymakers; anticipate emerging issues that need to be addressed at EU level and understand policy environments; and collaborate with over a thousand organisations worldwide.

JRC work has a direct impact on the lives of citizens by contributing with its research outcomes to a healthy and safe environment, secure energy supplies, sustainable mobility and consumer health and safety. The JRC draws on over 60 years of scientific experience, and continually builds expertise in knowledge production and knowledge management. The organisation hosts specialist laboratories and unique research facilities, and is the workplace for thousands of scientists. The JRC has six sites in five EU countries (Brussels, Geel, Ispra, Karlsruhe, Petten and Seville).

JRC research is clustered into ten science areas: agriculture and food security; economic and monetary union; energy and transport; environment and climate change; health and consumer protection; information society; innovation and growth; nuclear safety and security; safety and security; and standards. Details can be found on <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/science-areas>. The research is carried out through six knowledge production directorates, working alongside additional support, strategy and knowledge management directorates. See <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/about/jrc-in-brief> for further information. The work presented in this Atlas was carried out in the Directorate for Sustainable Resources.

The Directorate for Sustainable Resources

The Joint Research Centre in Ispra (the third biggest European Commission site after Brussels and Luxembourg) is the main location of the Directorate for Sustainable Resources. The directorate is a leading exponent of environmental, economic and process modelling, geospatial statistics and information processing, and Earth observation science and applications. It has dedicated laboratory facilities, runs in situ measurement campaigns, and is engaged in education and capacity building on site and with partner institutions throughout the world.

The directorate carries out research on food and nutrition security, agricultural production, consumption and trade, the food chain, land use, land-use change, soil, water (inland and marine), forests, raw materials, fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystem services. The directorate's research highlights the threats to our existing resources and natural capital, and the role of sustainable resources in climate change mitigation and adaptation; explores alternative resource management pathways; supports the development of a sustainable bioeconomy in Europe; and provides insight into the functions of sustainable resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



The Directorate for Sustainable Resources is located in Ispra, a small town on the shore of Lake Maggiore in northern Italy. The JRC's Ispra site is in the centre foreground, Monte Rosa, the second highest mountain in western Europe (after Mont Blanc), is the high-point on the skyline. (EC-JRC)

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Location of the directorates and headquarters of the JRC. (EC-JRC)

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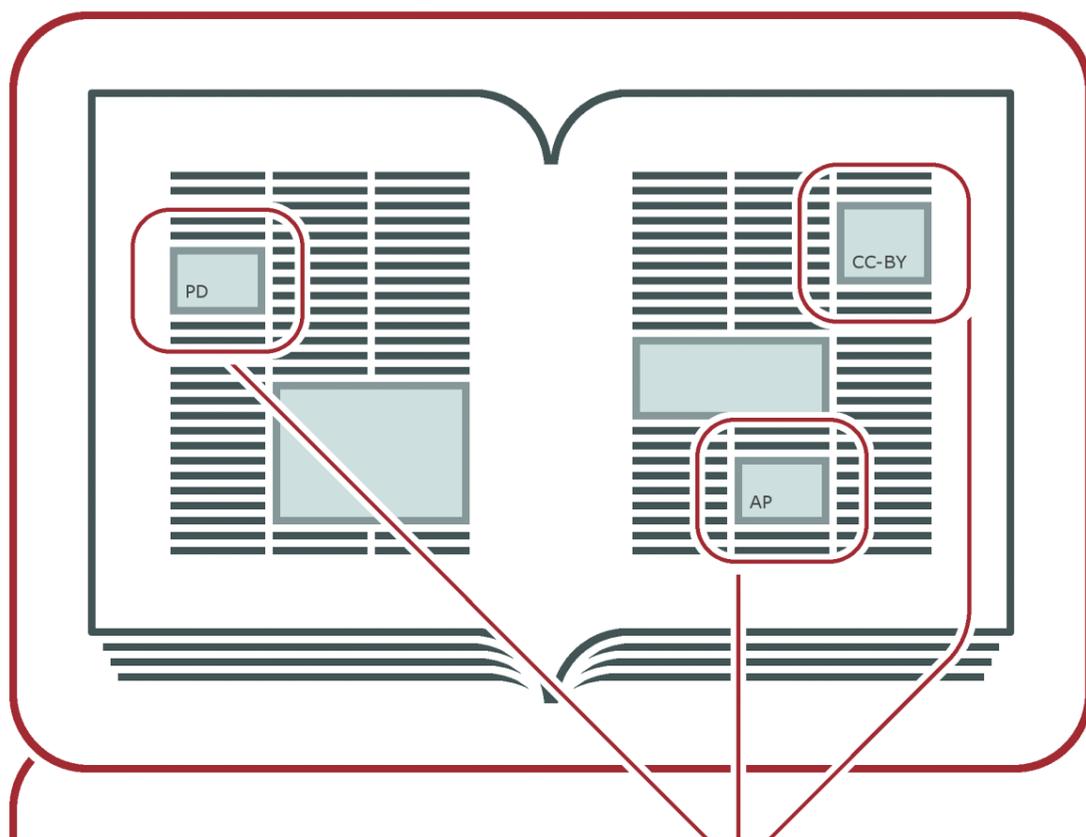
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