



EUROPEAN UNION
THE COUNCIL

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SEMDOC

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CAB 9

NOTE

From : the Presidency

to : the Permanent Representatives Committee

Subject : *Operation of the Council with an enlarged Union in prospect*
– *Method of work*

1. This note sets out the Presidency's intended method of work for examining the above report (doc. SN 2139/99) in order to meet the European Council's call for specific proposals to be made to the Helsinki European Council for improving the operation of the Council with a view to enlargement.
2. The Presidency recalls that the General Affairs Council will have overall responsibility for drawing up a list of operational recommendations for the European Council in Helsinki, including measures to ensure their observance and enforcement. In order to assist the Council in preparing its report, COREPER has been mandated to undertake a detailed examination of the issues raised in the Secretariat's report, as well as any other relevant points not covered. COREPER may confer detailed examination of specific items to the Antici Group, as necessary.

3. In order to facilitate work on the report, the Presidency has grouped together the avenues to be explored for each of the chapters in the report into two broad categories:

- (i) the first category consists of *practical suggestions* which can be implemented directly by the Presidency or the Secretary-General, acting within their respective responsibilities. The Presidency intends to take steps to ensure that the suggestions indicated in the first column in Annex I are applied over the coming six months. The future Secretary-General and his Deputy will take steps to begin applying as soon as practicable the suggestions listed in the second column of Annex I which they deem appropriate, after undertaking the necessary internal reviews and consultations with staff representatives where appropriate. Delegations will have an opportunity to comment on any specific points in the Antici Group, where the Presidency will provide more detailed information on how it intends to implement these practical changes.

The report to the Helsinki European Council will take stock of implementation of these suggestions during the Finnish Presidency, and make any recommendations necessary in order to ensure their continued enforcement.

- (ii) the second category involves *suggestions which are more far-reaching and political in scope* and which require agreement among Member States before being implemented (listed in the third column in Annex I). The Presidency intends to undertake a thorough examination of these issues in COREPER in order to assess how they can be translated into operational recommendations by the Helsinki European Council. Delegations will find attached in Annex II a provisional timetable for this work.

As part of this work, COREPER will be invited to consider measures to ensure the observance and enforcement of any suggested recommendations and establish a possible timetable, if appropriate, for implementing certain of those recommendations.

4. Delegations are also invited to make any further suggestions for improving the work of the Council which are not addressed in the Secretary-General's report.

5. The Chair of COREPER I will be invited to report COREPER I's views on the suggestions contained in the report regarding the Council's legislative work at the COREPER II meeting on 8 September. The Presidency intends to ensure that other relevant committees are consulted on the parts of the report which directly concern them. The views expressed during these consultations will be taken on board as appropriate by the Presidency in drafting its report.

6. In the light of the work undertaken, a draft report will be submitted to COREPER on 30 November and finalised for the Helsinki European Council by the General Affairs Council on 6 December.

7. COREPER is invited to endorse the proposed method of work.

CLASSIFICATION OF SUGGESTIONS

The Finnish Presidency intends to apply the measures listed below in the Presidency column. These measures will be the subject of recommendations to be made by the General Affairs Council to the European Council, in the light of experience gained during the Finnish Presidency, in order to ensure their continued application by future Presidencies.

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary -general	Council/ COREPER
	European Council			
1.	Two European Councils per semester	x		
2.	"Informal" meetings of Heads of State or Government	x		
3.	Limit number of seats at table to 2 per delegation ¹	x		
4.	Strengthen coordinating role of the General Affairs Council and COREPER	x		
5.	After enlargement, meetings in capital of Presidency and video-conferences instead of "tour of capitals"			x
6.	Special preparation (conclaves, GAC, COREPER) for more complex business	x		
7.	No formalisation of "European sherpas"	x		
8.	Apply to European Council new working methods envisaged for Council	x		
9.	More substance and less drafting	x		
10.	Make conclusions more operational and readable	x		
11.	Uphold European Council's role	x		
	General Affairs Council (horizontal questions)			
12.	Arrange agenda re importance of subjects	x		
13.	Divide Council meeting into 2 stages (junior Ministers and Ministers)			x
14.	Agenda presented in 2 parts	x		
15.	Agenda in 2 formally separate parts			x
16.	Agenda in 2 formally separate parts and 2 days (institutional/horizontal questions - foreign policy)			x
17.	Establish Institutional and Horizontal Affairs Council composed of Ministers			x
18.	Establish Institutional and Horizontal Affairs Council composed of Deputy Prime Ministers			x

¹ An additional seat is provided for Member States whose Head of State is in attendance.

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary -general	Council/ COREPER
	General Affairs Council (external relations)			
19.	Role of Secretary-General/CFSP High Representative			x
20.	Ensure close cooperation Presidency-SG/HR-Commission	x	x	x
21.	Make new policy planning and early warning unit an effective tool for SG/HR		x	
22.	Assign chairmanship of Political Committee to SG/HR			x
23.	Combine 1st and 2nd pillar working parties	x		
24.	Subdivide agenda into 2 parts (see 14.)	x		
25.	Only place items requiring operational decisions or political guidance on agenda (see 98.)	x		
26.	Focus discussions on major political issues (options papers)	x	x	
27.	Greater use of "(highly) restricted" sessions instead of lunches (see 101.)	x		
28.	More spontaneous discussions instead of table rounds	x		
29.	Systematic schedules for meetings with third countries programmed over several Presidencies	x		
30.	Assign to SG/HR role of "delegated authority"			x
31.	Establish permanent CFSP body in Brussels			x
32.	"Special envoys" under the SG/HR's authority and to chair working parties			x
33.	Close coordination between authorities responsible for political and budgetary monitoring and authorities responsible for practical implementation			x
34.	Entrust specific implementation tasks to Member States under the Council's authority in close cooperation with the Presidency			x
35.	Make use of "new Troika"	x		
36.	Assign to SG/HR representational role in political dialogue and day to day contacts			x
37.	Streamline representation in joint bodies between Union and third countries			x
38.	Strengthen implementation of Union's diplomatic action by using Member State and Commission networks			x
	ECOFIN Council			
39.	Clearer demarcation of responsibilities for areas dealt with by ECOFIN Council	x		x
40.	Right to scrutinise any matter with significant EU budgetary implications			x
41.	Brief COREPER regularly on other bodies' work	x	x	
42.	Ensure COREPER's institutional and legislative role for ECOFIN items	x		
43.	Closer coordination at national level			x

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary -general	Council/ COREPER
	Specialist Councils			
44.	Discontinue some Council compositions	x		x
45.	Combine some Council compositions			x
46.	Council's compositions listed in Rules of Procedure			x
47.	Reduce use of non operational acts	x		
48.	Refrain from "high-level working parties"			x
49.	No "Jumbo" meetings	x		
	Legislative role			
50.	Maintain nature of Directives			x
51.	Combine proposals to avoid excessive legislative procedures			x
52.	More consolidation of new legislation			x
53.	Council Legal Service to check drafting quality		x	
54.	Make preparatory documents public			x
55.	Open part of legislative debates to the public			x
56.	Improve public information on role and work of Council	x	x	x
57.	Presidency and GSC to follow regularly EP first readings	x	x	
58.	Presentation of common position to EP and of EP second reading to COREPER			x
59.	Synchronise EP and Council proceedings	x		
60.	Revise division of labour between COREPER I and II (see 76.)			x
61.	Increase informal meetings to prepare for conciliation	x		
62.	Simplify procedures for adopting joint text by the Conciliation Committee			x
	External Communication			
63.	Step up Presidency's action in communication	x		
64.	Appointment of spokesman of SG/HR		x	
65.	Develop information to public		x	
66.	Develop publications and use of Internet	x	x	x
67.	Open genuine Council debates to public			x
68.	Improve supply to Member States' TV channels			x
69.	Rationalise/automate procedures for public access to documents		x	x
70.	Establish framework for a Union information policy			x
71.	Joint EP, Council and Commission information centre			x

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary -general	Council/ COREPER
	Preparation of Council meetings: COREPER and the other Committees and Working Parties involved			
72.	Reduce number of working parties			x
73.	Reduce number/duration of meetings	x		
74.	Procedures to ensure single forum for taking final decision on "inter-pillar" dossiers	x	x	
75.	No COREPER III			x
76.	Reallocate tasks between COREPER I and II (see 60.)			x
77.	Increase role of "Antici" and "Mertens" groups	x		
78.	Convene ad hoc meetings of COREPER	x		
79.	Confer on COREPER the multidisciplinary dossiers	x		
80.	Reminder that any Council decisions must first be submitted to COREPER			x
81.	Clarify tasks of COREPER where preparation by a high-level committee has enabled agreement			x
82.	Highlight fact that the Permanent Representative represents his Government/Prime Minister			x
83.	Closer links between the Permanent Representative and national government body responsible for coordination			x
84.	Permanent Representative to attend inter-ministerial meetings in his capital			x
85.	COREPER members to be political figures?			x
86.	New Council formation composed of Ministers or State Secretaries?			x
	Working and negotiating methods			
87.	Systematic six-monthly programming	x		
88.	Extend programming to cover two or more six-monthly periods	x	x	
89.	More use of ad hoc "horizontal" bodies	x		
90.	Under the Presidency's responsibility, a select group of delegations to examine particular aspects of a question			x
91.	Unofficial bilateral/multilateral contacts by Presidency	x		
92.	Improve allocation of responsibilities between working parties, COREPER and Council	x		
93.	Allow sufficient time between meetings	x		
94.	Written procedure at preliminary stage of examination of a complex dossier			x
95.	Give delegations only one seat around meeting table			x
96.	Supplement Rules of Procedure with specific provisions increasing the role of the Presidency (see 122.)			x

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary -general	Council/ COREPER
97.	More use of written communication			x
98.	Reduce number of Council agenda items (see 25.)	x		
99.	Alternatives to table rounds	x		
100.	More systematic recourse to meetings of working parties in the margins of COREPER/Councils			x
101.	More "(highly) restricted" meetings, fewer working lunches (see 27.)			x
102.	Restricted "conclaves" devoted to a single important issue	x		
103.	Enforce existing rules on informal ministerial meetings	x		
	The Member States			
104.	Arrange an informal meeting of those responsible at national level for coordinating Community negotiations			x
105.	Form and place of internal body to act as arbiter on European questions			x
106.	Establish the necessary room for manoeuvre			x
107.	Increase the status and powers of members of COREPER			x
	The Presidency			
108.	Set up work programmes over 2 or more semesters	x		
109.	Allow next Presidency to chair working parties at the end of present Presidency's semester	x		
110.	Ensure greater availability of committee and working party chairpersons	x		
111.	Second committee and working party chairpersons to the Permanent Representations in good time	x		
112.	Train committee and working party chairpersons adequately on procedures and methods	x		
113.	Ensure best possible allocation of responsibilities between the capital and the Permanent Representation	x		
114.	Presidency official to plan working party meetings in close cooperation with "Antici"/"Mertens" colleagues and the GSC	x		
115.	Establish office of Vice-President for each Council formation			x
116.	Strengthen the role of the GSC in assisting the Presidency	x	x	
117.	Chairmanship of certain temporary working parties to one person for the duration of the dossier			x
118.	SG/HR to chair the political committee and Secretariat officials to chair certain other committees and groups			x
119.	Chair of committees and working parties elected by peers for two or three years assisted by a deputy from the Presidency			x

No.	Description	Presidency	Secretary-general	Council/ COREPER
120.	Vice-Chair appointed for preparatory bodies subject to six-monthly rotation			x
121.	Some technical working parties to be chaired by the Secretariat			x
122.	Presidency's responsibilities and powers to be incorporated in the Rules of Procedure (see 96.)			x
	The General Secretariat			
123.	Involve the Secretariat more closely in the Presidency's decisions on the organisation of work	x		
124.	Broader Secretariat responsibility for coordinating work			x
125.	Recognise the Secretariat's responsibility for the nature and drafting of reports and option papers			x
126.	Assist the Presidency in its "good offices"			x
127.	Acknowledge that the Secretary-General has full responsibility for managing the Council budget			x
128.	Secretariat to represent the Presidency in the Parliament	x		
129.	Reorganise the Secretariat		x	
130.	Strengthen internal auditing		x	
131.	Ensure adequate staff training		x	
132.	More effective management		x	
	The practical framework			
133.	Define office requirements		x	x
134.	One seat at the table and layout of rooms			x
135.	Interpretation outside the room			x
136.	Timetable for implementing changes			x
137.	Managing increased document production	x	x	
138.	Options of increasing translation capacity		x	
139.	Continue full interpreting at political level			x
140.	Continue pragmatic policy on interpreting at committee and working party level			x
141.	Study on new interpreting methods		x	
142.	Improving the organisation and working methods of the Secretariat		x	
143.	Modern communication techniques		x	x

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE

Meeting dates	Topics for Discussion
7 July	Endorsement of method of work
14 July	Chapters 8 and 9 - <i>Preparation for meetings</i> - <i>Working and negotiating methods</i>
8 September	Chapters 4, 5 and 6 - <i>ECOFIN Council</i> - <i>Specialist Councils</i> - <i>Legislative role</i>
23 September	Chapters 1 and 2 - <i>European Council</i> - <i>General Affairs Council (Horizontal questions)</i> Chapters 8 and 9
6 October	Chapters 10 and 11 - <i>Member States</i> - <i>The Presidency</i>
27 October	Chapter 3 - <i>General Affairs Council (External relations)</i>
10 November	Chapters 12, 13 and 6 - <i>General Secretariat</i> - <i>Practical facilities</i> - <i>External communication</i>
30 November	Presentation of draft report
6 December General Affairs Council	Presentation of draft report
10/11 December Helsinki European Council	Presentation of report