INST 037

COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 11 February 2000

6102/00

LIMITE

POLGEN 4

"A" ITEM NOTE

From :	The Presidency
To :	The General Affairs Council
Subject :	*Follow-up to the Helsinki European Council Conclusions – Council formations*

1. The Helsinki European Council, in recommendation no 9 of Annex III to the conclusions, agreed that the number of Council formations should be reduced in order to improve the consistency and coherence of the Council's work. It instructed the General Affairs Council to take the necessary steps to achieve this objective as soon as possible.

2. The suggested approach in the Annex is designed to meet the objective laid down by the Helsinki European Council. It merges certain Council formations and does not preclude that, where practicable, certain formations be convened in "back-to-back" format. The Presidency has endeavoured to take account of the range of views expressed by delegations and considers that the approach attached is the only feasible outcome at this stage in implementing the European Council conclusions.

3. The suggested mergers should be undertaken as soon as practicable and should be fully implemented by the beginning of 2001.

4. The Council is invited to endorse the points set out in the Annex to this note.

Annex

LIST OF COUNCIL FORMATIONS

A. The following Council formations may be convened:

General Affairs
Agriculture
Economic and Financial Affairs
Environment
Transport and Telecommunications
Employment and Social Policy[1]
Fisheries
Industry and Energy
Justice, Home Affairs and Civil Protection
Internal Market, Consumer Affairs and Tourism
Research
Budget
Culture
Development
Education and Youth Affairs
Health

B. The Presidency will organise Council agendas by grouping together related agenda items, in order to facilitate attendance by the relevant national representatives, particularly where a given Council formation has to deal with clearly distinguishable sets of topics.

C. It is up to each Member State to determine the way in which it is represented at the level of the Council, in accordance with Article 203 of the EC Treaty.

D. The Council will examine by July 2001 the list of Council formations, *inter alia* in the light of experience gained in organising "back-to-back" sessions.

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[1] The change of name of this formation reflects the wording of recent Treaty changes.