



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 June 2001

9519/01

POLGEN 13

COPY OF LETTER

From : Javier SOLANA, Secretary-General/High Representative
Dated : 7 June 2001
To : Göran PERSSON, President of the European Council
Subject : Report to the European Council: Preparing the Council for Enlargement

You will find attached a report on preparing the Council for enlargement which I have drawn up in accordance with the request by the Helsinki European Council for an evaluation of implementation of the operational recommendations it adopted in order to improve the operation of the Council.

This report comes in three parts¹. Part I is an overall assessment of the impact of the Helsinki recommendations which outlines avenues for exploring further ways of addressing shortcomings which have been highlighted in Part II of report. Part II contains a more detailed evaluation of the recommendations agreed in Helsinki. Part III is a summary of coordination systems in the Member States which, as requested by the Helsinki European Council, has been compiled on the basis of contributions from Member States giving a practical description of their internal coordination procedures on EU matters.

In general terms, this report demonstrates the need for further detailed consideration of ways of ensuring that the Council can rise to the challenge of remaining an effective decision-making body after enlargement.

(Complimentary close).

(s.) p.o. Pierre de Boissieu

Enclosure

¹ For Parts I and II see doc. 9518/01
For Part III see doc. 9518/01 ADD 1



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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POLGEN 12

REPORT

From: The Secretary-General/High Representative

To: The European Council

PREPARING THE COUNCIL FOR ENLARGEMENT¹

PART I OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**PART II EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
HELSINKI RECOMMENDATIONS**

¹ Part III of this report containing a summary of coordination systems for EU matters in the Member States can be found in addendum 1 to this document.

PART I

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

1. In March 1999, the then Secretary-General presented a report drawn up by an internal working party on the operation of the Council with an enlarged Union in prospect (the Trumpf/Piris report)¹. This report set out a systematic and coherent analysis of all aspects of the Council's structures and working methods and put forward 144 suggestions for improving the Council's organisation and work so that it could continue to function effectively after enlargement. None of these suggestions required Treaty amendment.
2. Following examination of that report by the General Affairs Council, the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 underscored the need for substantial changes to the Council's working methods. It noted that action to preserve the Council's ability to act decisively must be taken at all levels. It accordingly approved a series of recommendations to help meet that objective.
3. The Secretary-General was requested to evaluate implementation of these recommendations by mid-2001 and, if appropriate, to make further practical suggestions for improving the Council's working methods. Part I of this report considers how the process started at Helsinki could be pursued in the light of the more detailed evaluation set out in Part II. Part III of this report (cf. Addendum I) contains a summary of coordination systems in the Member States which has been compiled, as requested by the Helsinki European Council, on the basis of contributions from Member States giving a practical description of their internal coordination procedures on EU matters.

¹ See document SN 2139/99.

4. While the Helsinki recommendations have resulted in some encouraging improvements, the present arrangements overall fall well short of what is required if the Council is serious about equipping itself with effective structures and working methods to cope with a significant increase in members. Further efforts are essential if the Council wishes to remain an effective legislative and executive body after enlargement.
5. Since the Helsinki recommendations were adopted, a number of new developments have had a significant impact on the structures and working methods of the Council and merit detailed examination. First, continued diversification of the Council's activities, including the establishment of military and civilian crisis management structures and implementation of an ambitious programme of work agreed at Tampere to create an area of freedom, security and justice, confirm the tendency towards increased segmentation of work with the attendant risk of contradiction, incoherence and inefficiency. Second, the implications of increasing recourse to innovative procedures such as the open method of coordination must be carefully assessed in order to avoid blurring the distinction between legal instruments and "soft" law, as well as between the Union's and Member States' powers in the follow-up, particularly at a time when the issue of establishing a more precise delimitation of powers is being widely debated.
6. The Council must be seen as a results-oriented decision-making body rather than a platform for political statements. Coherence and efficiency can only be improved by pursuing appropriate structural adjustments to ensure that in all fields, and throughout the entire decision-making process, Union action is consistent with the will of its political leaders. This implies effective interdepartmental coordination in the Member States themselves, and some kind of central backbone in the Council with effective coordination capability, culminating in a European Council focused on its primary tasks of prioritising work and lending political impetus.

7. As far as the *European Council* is concerned, action needs to be taken to ensure that it is not overloaded with matters which should be dealt with by the Council as a matter of routine, and that it is in a position to fulfil its proper leadership role by providing the necessary impetus for the development of the Union and defining general political guidelines. Part of the problem is that preparation by the institutional machinery is rarely carried out in a manner that provides the European Council with a basis on which it can freely debate and give guidance on the Union's policy direction, while preparation outside the institutional machinery largely escapes proper oversight. This begs two questions. First, what steps can be taken to ensure that the European Council focuses on its primary tasks defined in the Treaties. Second, how can its work be prepared in a way that marries the degree of flexibility required for the Union's supreme political authority with the necessary involvement of the normal institutional machinery.
8. The fact that *the Council* is a single body but organised for practical reasons into different working formations (with a variety of preparatory channels) means that it must at one and the same time operate as an effective legislative and executive body in different policy sectors, while also acting as an effective overall coordinating body to ensure coherence of policy outcomes. Two general questions need to be considered further. First, how can the Council's structures and working methods be adapted so that it can continue to act decisively in different policy areas, taking account of the specific features of each sector and its dual legislative and executive roles. Second, how can an overall supervisory and coordinating function such as that conferred on the General Affairs Council be best performed given the difficulties which it still appears to be experiencing in fulfilling that role. In other words, given the evident need for a Council which genuinely deals with general affairs, the question is what this General Affairs Council can and ought to be.

9. The fragmented nature of the Council has traditionally been offset by having *COREPER* as a single preparatory body and a central clearing house for all preparatory work. However, the proliferation of senior preparatory bodies in recent years has complicated and weakened this central coordinating function. In this context, two questions require addressing. First, what steps need to be taken to limit the proliferation of specific preparatory channels in different policy areas. Second, how can *COREPER*'s central coordinating role be improved by putting into practice the provisions already incorporated into the rules of procedure to restore an effective coordinating function, without calling into question the particularities of certain policy sectors.
10. Regarding the *Presidency's role*, it is paradoxical that Presidencies appear on the one hand too weak, as a result of the ever growing political and administrative responsibilities imposed upon them, and too strong, by yielding to the temptation to "stamp" their priorities on the Union going beyond the legitimate desire to make their mark during their stewardship of the Council. Two key issues need to be addressed. First, what steps can be taken to ensure that the Presidency has at its disposal the full range of support required for it to effectively discharge its duties (e.g. through the General Secretariat, the possible formalisation of a Vice-Presidency and the possibility of chairpersons of preparatory bodies in certain cases being appointed for fixed terms). Second, how can ways and means be found so that the Presidency is an effective instrument for strengthening continuity through pursuing the Union's priority objectives, thereby avoiding abruptly shifting priorities from one Presidency to the next.
11. All of the points outlined above merit detailed consideration so that an ambitious and comprehensive package of reform measures can be drawn up which will ensure that the Council remains an effective decision-making body after enlargement. The future well-being of the Union after enlargement demands nothing less.

PART II

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Part II of this report evaluates the overall impact of the recommendations approved by the Helsinki European Council to ensure an effective Council for an enlarged Union¹, as well as the practical steps taken in support of the overall objective.

The European Council

2. Since Helsinki the European Council has held four formal meetings (in Lisbon, Santa Maria da Feira, Nice and Stockholm) and one informal meeting in Biarritz. The results of the Helsinki reforms have been mixed. On the plus side, Presidencies have in general managed to limit the conclusions to fifteen pages and have, to a certain extent, followed the injunction only to include items which have actually been discussed during the proceedings. The conclusions are now somewhat better structured and more readable than in the past. Moreover, Presidencies appear to have finally broken the bad habit of considering European Council conclusions as a backward-looking litany of Presidency successes.
3. However, the situation is not satisfactory. First, the purpose of limiting the length of the conclusions was to encourage a concisely drafted selection of the Union's genuine political priorities for the issues under discussion. Although the conclusions are now consistent with the letter of that recommendation (by artificially compressing the text), they do not yet reflect the spirit of that recommendation. The conclusions should not be a vehicle for self-congratulation by preparatory bodies on subjects which have not been discussed, but should explain why the European Council is issuing the guidelines that it is issuing. Second, the conclusions still on occasion enter into a level of technical detail which seems inappropriate for the European Council, whose function under the Treaty is to provide political impetus and guidance. The result is that instead of giving a clear and understandable political steer to the Union, the conclusions tend, at least in part, towards micromanagement of the work of the Council and the Commission.

¹ Cf. Annex III to the Helsinki European Council conclusions.

4. Moreover, a satisfactory balance has not yet been found in the preparatory process for the European Council between the flexibility required for meetings of the Union's supreme political body and the necessary involvement of the normal institutional machinery under the GAC's responsibility. Some recent initiatives taken by the Swedish Presidency (e.g. the presentation of synthesis papers outlining work undertaken on particular issues in different Council formations) go in the right direction.

General Affairs Council: external relations

5. As far as implementation of the Helsinki recommendations relating to external relations are concerned, the picture is a mixed one. On 29 June 2000, the Council adopted conclusions to rationalise the management of the Union's external commitments at ministerial level¹, which foresee *inter alia* a *rolling schedule* over three Presidencies of ministerial meetings with third countries, which is regularly adjusted and updated, and *streamlining the timing and level of representation* at meetings with third countries, by avoiding a stipulated periodicity and the need for representation of all members of the Council. The rolling schedule is already playing a useful role in the long-term planning of third country meetings, and, as a general rule, the Union is now represented at most meetings of bodies created under international agreements by the new Troika.
6. An analysis of possible ways and means of improving the use of networks of Member States embassies and Commission delegations formed part of the review of the efficiency of the Union's collective resources produced by the Secretary-General for the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers in Evian in October 2000².

¹ See document 9660/00.

² See document SN 1731/6/00 REV 6.

7. However, in its report to the January General Affairs Council¹, the Presidency noted that weaknesses continue to exist upstream in the policy-making process (lack of clear focus and political priorities), in implementation (inefficiencies in procedures and follow-up) and horizontally between Community and Member States (duplication, failure to maximise aid effectiveness and unbalanced coordination and planning). Difficulties have also been highlighted in the use to which the various instruments at the Union's disposal, in particular common strategies, are put².
8. As part of its response, on 22 January 2001 the Council adopted guidelines for strengthening operational coordination between the Community and the Member States in the field of external assistance³. Further reflection appears necessary on the need to adapt Council structures and working methods as part of the process of improving overall policy and delivery effectiveness, particularly given the increasing amount of time members of the General Affairs Council now need to devote to external relations and security and defence matters.

Role of the Secretary-General/High Representative

9. Close cooperation and an effective working relationship has been established with successive Presidencies, the Commission and third organisations, including the UN, the OSCE and NATO. The Secretary-General/High Representative has actively assumed his role under the Treaty by carrying out mandates conferred by the European Council and the Council, such as those relating to the Balkans and the Middle East, by assisting the Presidency to put into place arrangements for the Common European Security and Defence Policy and by actively contributing to important policy debates in the Council.

¹ See document 5449/01.

² See document 14871/01.

³ See document 5431/01.

The General Affairs Council: horizontal coordinating role

10. The Council has followed the practice recommended at Helsinki of systematically dividing its agenda into two parts: external relations and horizontal questions (i.e. institutional affairs, general financial questions, cohesion policy, enlargement, etc.) including overall policy coordination (in particular preparing the European Council). However, these changes are of a more formal and procedural rather than operational nature, and appear to have only marginally strengthened the authority and impact of the General Affairs Council on horizontal matters.

Council formations and Informal Ministerial Meetings

Council formations

11. The General Affairs Council reduced the number of Council formations to sixteen in order to improve the coherence and consistency in the Council's work and prevent fragmentation of the Union's activities. This list and the relevant Council conclusions have been published in the Official Journal¹. Recourse to "back-to-back" arrangements is urged where practicable (i.e. convening two Council formations dealing with related topics one immediately after the other). The rules of procedure now explicitly state that any alterations to this list may only be undertaken by the Council in its General Affairs configuration.

¹ OJ C 174 of 23 June 2000, p.1.

12. Experience has shown that after the laboriously arrived at agreement on sixteen Council configurations, some mergers are still giving rise to internal organisational difficulties for certain delegations, with some practical problems arising at the level of the Council as a result of the mergers undertaken. Where necessary in certain Council configurations, governments have adjusted ministerial representation depending on the agenda items for discussion and Presidencies have generally sought to group 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. This means in fact that in certain cases the new formations have been conducted more as back-to-back meetings than as truly merged meetings. The number of actual Council sessions appears to have stabilised at around 80 to 90 per year. The recommendation not to convene joint Council formations has largely been observed, with the exception of the convening of one joint ECOFIN and JHA Council meeting, and the emergence of a new phenomenon in the form of the General Affairs Council attended by Defence Ministers.
13. As part of the review of Council formations foreseen in the rules of procedure, consideration will need to be given to the need to further rationalise the division of work between Council formations in order to improve coordination in certain sectors. Budgetary matters offer one such example. Responsibility for different aspects is currently divided between the Budget Council (for adopting the budget), the ECOFIN Council (discharge, budgetary orientations, presentation of the preliminary draft and financial legislation) and the General Affairs Council (budgetary implications of external actions, Commission reform, staff regulations).

Informal ministerial meetings

14. No Presidency has yet succeeded in limiting the number of such meetings to five. Under the Portuguese and French Presidencies there were seven such meetings, and under the Swedish Presidency six. The impression also continues to be conveyed on occasion after such meetings that formal conclusions have been reached by Ministers, including on legislative matters. Moreover, a number of informal "seminars" or "conferences" of Ministers are still being organised as *de facto* informal meetings of Ministers under another guise, with the presence of Commissioners and Council officials, which defeats the object of limiting the number of informal meetings.

The Council's Legislative Role

15. In general, the steps taken by the Presidency and Secretariat in implementing pragmatically the joint Declaration of 4 May 1999 in cooperation with the European Parliament, have significantly improved the conduct of the codecision procedure. This has been achieved due to improved programming and coordinating of preparatory and conciliation meetings with the European Parliament, and endeavouring as far as possible in less politically controversial dossiers to undertake contacts from the outset of the process in order to facilitate a successful outcome at the first or second reading stages wherever this is possible. A report by the Presidency and the Council Secretariat on improving the effectiveness of the co-decision procedure was noted by the Nice European Council¹.
16. As far as the proper use of legislative instruments is concerned, the Council is still displaying a tendency to adopt declarations, resolutions and other non standard form of acts when dealing with legislative matters. More has to be done to reduce further the number of such non-standard acts by distinguishing declarations serving to provide political guidance for further work from statements of purely declaration character.
17. A draft interinstitutional Agreement on a more structured use of the recasting technique is being prepared by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Council hopes that it can be adopted shortly.

¹ See document 13316/1/00 REV. 1.

COREPER

18. The Helsinki recommendations clarified COREPER's role and responsibility for the final preparation and presentation of all agenda items to the Council, given its central position in preparing all Council discussions. Article 19 of the Council's rules of procedure now specify explicitly the principles and rules which COREPER is responsible for upholding. Steps have also been taken in the rules of procedures to lay down deadlines for preparatory work to be completed prior to COREPER as a general rule. Difficulties continue to exist, however, in actually applying in everyday practice many of the formal rules which have been introduced into the rules of procedure, particularly in enabling COREPER to exercise its generally accepted supervisory role over all the Council's preparatory work.

The Presidency

19. Efforts to step up collaboration between successive Presidencies to encourage continuity (e.g. drawing up rolling work programmes or sharing certain tasks) and improve overall coherence (through the possibility of drawing on assistance from the Member States next holding the Presidency or by appointing Chairpersons of preparatory bodies for a specified duration) have been positive. The positive results from the limited use which has been made of existing possibilities suggest that further encouragement should be given to ways of strengthening collaboration and coordination over successive presidencies in a more systematic way.
20. The lack of continuity witnessed between Presidencies can be seen in the temptation experienced by each Presidency to stamp their particular priorities on the Union during their stewardship. This temptation is becoming more marked as the time between any Member State holding successive presidencies increases – and will lengthen even further after enlargement –, and as a result of the systemic shortcomings which exist in the Council. This can lead to sharp swings in the Union's priorities from one six month period to the next, with the attendant risk of undermining the coherence, continuity and impact of Union policies.

Transparency and information policy

21. Since 1999, access to Council documents has been greatly improved. In July 2000, the Council was the first institution to put into practice a public register listing its documents, which is accessible to the public via Internet. As at 31 December 2000, the public register contained references to approximately 180 000 documents (all languages combined). The register also allows access via Internet to the full text of documents which have been released to the public following individual requests. As at 31 December 2000, about 20 000 such documents were directly available to the public. This figure is about to grow significantly following a new Council Decision in April 2001, which provides for large categories of Council documents to be made directly available to the public via Internet. Following a recommendation from the Ombudsman, efforts are currently under way within the General Secretariat with a view to further improving the coverage of all relevant Council documents in the register.
22. Thanks to the register, the number of documents examined following applications rose from 4 000 documents in 1998 to over 7 000 in 2000. Out of those, 84% were released. The accessibility of Council documents will further improve from the end of 2001, when the new Regulation based on Article 255(2) of the EC Treaty regarding public access to documents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission becomes applicable.
23. Common guidelines have been adopted by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in order to improve the quality of drafting of Community legislation, which is also an important factor in the transparency of the Council's work. Pursuant to a new article in the Council's rules of procedure, the Legal Service checks the drafting quality of proposals and draft acts and makes drafting suggestions. Moreover, the Legal Service has drawn up *"guidelines for Member States' initiatives within the framework of Title IV of Part III of the Treaty establishing the European Community and Title VI of the Treaty on European Union"*. However, more still needs to be done to ensure improved drafting quality.

24. Article 8 of the rules of procedure was amended following Helsinki in a bid to improve the interest of public debates. While the new rules have been implemented without particular difficulty, the artificiality of many of these debates and their lack of public impact continues to be criticised.
25. As far as information policy is concerned, interinstitutional contacts have taken place to consider the possibility of setting up a joint information centre for receiving visitors and coordinating publications. To date, initial steps have been taken to explore the possibility of setting up an interinstitutional library, and cooperation has been stepped up between the institutions on use of the Internet, publications and call centres. The Commission intends to present a communication shortly on the Union's information policy.

Organisation and conduct of meetings

Programming of Council work

26. Changes have been made in the rules of procedure to encourage systematic programming of Council work on all legislative matters and other aspects of the Council's work not dependent on the latest political developments, and to impose deadlines for the completion of preparatory work before dossiers are referred to COREPER and the Council. However, the effective results of these changes have not entirely yielded satisfactory results in practice. Further reflection is required (see the section on the Presidency above).

Working parties

27. Greater order and clarity regarding the number and remits of Council preparatory bodies has resulted from the creation of an official list of all Council preparatory Committees and Working Parties. This list is regularly updated by the Secretariat in the light of decisions by COREPER to create new Working Parties and by the Presidency to introduce new sub-areas under certain Working Party headings. The most recent version of this list contains around 185 Council Committees and Working Parties¹. Despite some rationalisation of the Council's preparatory bodies, the number of Working Party meetings has steadily increased every year from 2.705 in 1997 to 3.537 in 2000. While a significant part of this increase is undoubtedly due to the expansion in the Council's work, particularly in new policy areas, it is also partly symptomatic of systemic weakness in overall coordination. One new High Level Working Party was set up (on taxation in January 2000) although its mandate came to an end at the Feira European Council.

Conduct of meetings

28. The rules of procedure provide the Presidency with the means to restrict the number of members present in the meeting room, to set the order in which items are to be taken and determine the duration of discussion on each item. Although these means exist, it is questionable whether adequate use is being made of those possibilities. There is still a tendency, especially in the Council, to embark on long table rounds on certain items, and to restate well-known positions or arguments, rather than to focus work on finding common solutions. The situation needs to be improved in two ways. First, greater discipline needs to be exercised by Presidencies and delegations in order to ensure that COREPER and Council discussions have something at stake. Second, steps need to be taken to ensure that documentation at the disposal of COREPER or the Council is geared to active problem solving, which means that papers need to be issue-based rather than position-based, table rounds should be avoided and once a clear direction is emerging in discussions, attempts should always be made to formulate operational suggestions. Thirdly, the conduct of meetings would also be improved in some cases if access to meeting rooms was more restricted.

¹ See document 8559/01.

The General Secretariat and practical logistics

29. The development of the European Union since the Treaty of Maastricht, in particular recent developments in CFSP, with the appointment of the High Representative and the setting up of new military and civilian crisis management capabilities, have had a considerable impact on the Council's and the Secretariat's structures and working methods. Recommendations 46 to 54 adopted at Helsinki dealt with the role and organisation of the General Secretariat, practical aspects of the Council's work and future building requirements. The initial assessment of implementation of these recommendations is broadly positive, although some of them can only be fully implemented over the medium-term.
30. The General Secretariat has embarked on a comprehensive process of adaptation designed to implement the letter and the spirit of the Helsinki recommendations. A detailed overview of the measures being implemented in each of these areas can be found in a note presented to Permanent Representatives on 18 April 2001¹. The main purpose of these adaptations is to:
- tailor the Secretariat's structures to the operational requirements of the Council, in particular by reorganising work in larger administrative units and to strengthen internal auditing to ensure the best possible match between the Council's requirements and the human and material resources available in the General Secretariat;
 - implement a human-resources policy designed to provide greater staff motivation and enable staff to carry out their tasks efficiently;
 - develop the use and ensuring better application of modern technology, including data processing and electronic means.
31. Certain of these reforms, such as a better training through exchanges with national administrations, require the cooperation of Member States which has not always been forthcoming up to now.

¹ See document SN 2472/01.

32. As far as practical issues, such as the layout of meeting rooms, translation and interpreting are concerned, the Helsinki European Council underlined the need for new imaginative and pragmatic solutions while respecting basic principles. Studies have been carried out on the impact of future enlargements on the Council's building requirements. To date, a number of guidelines have already been adopted as working hypotheses: keeping the Justus Lipsius building as the Council's Headquarters, maintaining present principles as far as language coverage is concerned, limiting to two the number of places per delegation at the table in meeting rooms, and finding a building in the near vicinity to cover new requirements. The practical organisation of interpreting facilities (traditional booths or remote interpreting) is still under examination. A number of these questions have also been examined by an interinstitutional Task Force on enlargement in the report it submitted on 20 December 2000. Logistical problems such as these need to be tackled now so that appropriate solutions can be agreed in good time.
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**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 June 2001

**9518/01
ADD 1**

POLGEN 12

ADDENDUM 1 TO THE REPORT

From: The Secretary-General/High Representative

To: The European Council

**PREPARING THE
COUNCIL FOR ENLARGEMENT**

PART III

**SUMMARY OF COORDINATION SYSTEMS FOR EU
MATTERS IN THE MEMBER STATES**

1. While internal coordination in the Member States is, and must remain, the exclusive preserve of each government, effective coordination has a direct bearing on the functioning and coherence of the Council. One of the operational recommendations approved by the Helsinki European Council accordingly invites each Member State to keep under permanent review its internal coordination arrangements for EU matters so that they are tailored to ensuring the optimum functioning of the Council.
2. The same recommendation asked for a summary of coordination systems in the different Member States to be compiled on the basis of a contribution from each Member State giving a practical description of internal coordination procedures on EU matters. This part of the report and the attached country fact sheets fulfil that remit.
3. The fact sheets show that a number of features common to coordination systems can be discerned. The coordination structure in most Member States is organised hierarchically. Decisions and arbitration occur at all levels, with the national Cabinet or Council of Ministers and/or the Prime Minister in most cases acting as the arbiter of last resort. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), either as the principal actor or working in tandem with the Ministry of Finance and/or the Prime Minister's Office, plays an important role in almost all Member States. This role is apparent at various stages of the coordination process. The MFA is often the ministry responsible for disseminating information within the national administrative structure and for triggering the coordination process. Special administrative units for EU matters exist within most MFAs and often they are the initial point of coordination. In some Member States a specific interdepartmental coordination body exists in which senior civil servants from the various national ministries are brought together on a regular basis. Where such specific interdepartmental coordination bodies exist, the MFA, in most cases, chairs this body and/or provides its secretariat.
4. Coordination arrangements in each Member State also show certain differences which reflect the specific history, constitutional structure (unitary or federal), political situation (coalition government or not) and administrative tradition of each Member State.

5. With the increasing prominence of the European Union in public policy, the post of Minister or Secretary of State for European Affairs has been created in most Member States' government structures under the auspices of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. However, the nature of the post varies: in some it is more a politico-administrative post whilst in others it is a ministerial political appointment. The Minister or Secretary of State for European Affairs often plays a specific role in the coordination process in various ways, for example by chairing in some cases the specific interdepartmental coordination body where such a body exists.
6. In order to make the coordination process more efficient and to bring it closer to the last resort arbitration, some Member States have chosen to create a small unit either within or adjoining the Prime Minister's Office. The central position of such units facilitates an overall view of the various activities of government relating to EU matters.
7. Although the official role of the Permanent Representation of each Member State in Brussels varies (in some cases participating formally in the process while in others it has no pre-determined role), in reality the Permanent Representation plays a role in all cases. It actively participates in several stages of the coordination process and in certain Member States it ensures *de facto* the "first line" of this process.
8. Finally, there is considerable variation in the scope of participation of national parliaments in the process depending on the constitutional structure and political tradition and practice of each Member State.

BELGIUM

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation
2. Coordination triggered by	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs/PR/Federal or Federated Authorities
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Permanent Representation – Inter-departmental Conferences by sector¹ – Council of Ministers or Inter-departmental Conference on Foreign Policy
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The Permanent Representation actually conducts coordination work under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. the Directorate for European Integration and coordination. This directorate ensures the Presidency and the Secretariat of the various inter-departmental conferences.
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	See above
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role except for the Euro group
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion in the framework of constitutional relations between the Parliament and the Government
8. Participation of interest groups	As a rule no, but they can be consulted depending on the subject

¹ Agriculture (CIA), Environment (CCPIE), Energy (CIEE and CONCERE), Research (CIS), Economy (CEI), etc.

SPAIN

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation
2. Coordination triggered by	The Secretariat of State for European Affairs (SEAE)
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry of Foreign Affairs - SEAE – Inter-departmental Conference for EU affairs (CIAUE). This conference is composed by Deputy-director of the President of the Government's office and the under-secretaries of the different Ministries (exception for External Affairs) and the General Secretariat for maritime Fisheries – Delegated Government Commission for Economic Affairs – Conference for issues linked to the EU which allows the participation of the autonomous communities in the European Affairs
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The CIAUE chaired by the Secretary of State for European Affairs and its Vice-Chairpersons are the Secretary of the delegated commission and the General-Secretary for European Affairs. The Secretariat is ensured by the Director-General for technical affairs of the SEAE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	High degree of autonomy
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role ¹
7. Role of the national Parliament	The Committee for the European Union (deputies and senators) follows closely all European Affairs
8. Participation of interest groups	Classical "lobbying"

¹ It being understood that the Ministry of Finance participates in the two inter-departmental levels.

DENMARK

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. Coordination triggered by	Specialised Committees
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<p>– The 35 specialised committees report to the EU Committee which filters and separates the issues according to their subject and procedure. This committee prepares discussion at the governmental committee on foreign policy. The EU Committee is composed of civil servants responsible for the coordination of EU affairs in different ministries</p> <p>– Governmental Committee on Foreign Policy</p>
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The Presidency and the secretariat of the EU Committee is ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chaired at Secretary of State level). Meetings are convened weekly
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	No specific role
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role
7. Role of the national Parliament	Close cooperation between the Government and the Parliamentary Committee on EU affairs is foreseen by law. The Parliamentary Committee has a key role in discussion before decision-taking by the national Government
8. Participation of interest groups	They have an opportunity to participate at specialised committee and on an ad hoc basis on the invitation of the specialised Committee concerned

GREECE

1. Information circulated by	Permanent Representation (which notifies at the same time the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs)
2. Coordination triggered by	Permanent Representation
3. Different stages of coordination / arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working party level: flexible arrangements between Ministries – Coreper level: Ministry of Foreign Affairs convenes a meeting the day before. The Ministry of Economic Affairs attends and all Ministries concerned – Council of Ministers level: jointly prepared by the competent Ministries and the Permanent Representations – European Council level: ministry of Foreign Affairs assisted by Ministry of Economic Affairs and all the other competent Ministries
4. Coordination instrument/ leading Ministry	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Dissemination of information and "first line" of coordination
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion in the framework of constitutional relations between the Parliament and the Government
8. Participation of interest groups	No specific role

ITALY

1. Information circulated by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for EC policies
2. Coordination triggered by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for EC policies
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for EC policies
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	No specific instrument. The Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for EU policies – in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensures general coordination. However, each Ministry may lead the substantial coordination if the core matter falls within its own competence
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	No specific role; may suggest or promote specific initiatives
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role at this stage
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion (mainly "ex post") in the framework of the constitutional relations between the Parliament and the Government. Monitoring of and participation ("ex ante") of the Parliament in the EU decision-making process is increasing. The Parliament must be informed by the Government of all legislative initiatives taken by the European Commission. For instance, according to the Rule of Procedures of the Chamber of Deputies, the European Union Policy Committee and the Standing Committees may arrange for a debate to be held, with the participation of the Minister responsible, on proposals made by the European Commission, where such proposals or specific subjects are to be included in the agenda of the Council of the European Union, or on matters concerning international agreements involving the Communities or their activities.
8. Participation of interest groups	Not formally organised, but possible during the process. The Presidency of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for EU policies organises seminars, events and conferences on the main European topics, as well as exchange of information and sharing of database on national scale. In recent years CNEL (National Council for work and economy), a constitutional body, plays a specific role as an open arena of debate on European issues.

IRELAND

1. Information circulated by	Department (Ministry) of Foreign Affairs
2. Coordination triggered by	Lead Department (Ministry) for particular sector/dossier
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	Department of Foreign Affairs/other lead Department Ministerial Committee for European Affairs
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	Inter-departmental coordination is assisted by a group of high ranking civil servants from the various Departments (Ministries), under the chairmanship of the Taoiseach's (Prime Minister's) Department
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Key role on the internal coordination
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Participates on its own right on the Ministerial Committee
7. Role of the national Parliament	Committee for European Affairs follows closely the Government's European policy, and independently monitors the Commission's legislative proposals
8. Participation of interest groups	Input from the social partners through the National Economic and Social Forum/Classic "lobbying"

THE NETHERLANDS

1. Information circulated by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. Coordination triggered by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter-departmental working group for the appraisal of Commission proposals and Member State initiatives ex Title IV to VI EU treaty (BNC) agrees on first Netherlands position and on which Ministry is leading - lead Ministries coordinate and send instructions to various Council working groups - weekly "PermRep instructions" meeting for Coreper Coordination Committee on problems of European integration and association (CoCo): main arbitration panel on non-political level, chaired by Secretary of State for European Affairs - (for discussion of important policy papers or strategic issues a sub council of the ministerial cabinet on EU affairs may be convened, the so-called REIA - Council of Ministers: ultimate decision making/arbitration forum on political level
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BNC/Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides chair and secretariat; attended by generalists from EU-divisions of all Ministries; frequency once every two weeks - PermRep instructions meeting/Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides chair and secretariat; attended by senior generalists from EU divisions of all Ministries; frequency weekly - Coordination Committee on problems of European integration and association (CoCo). This Committee is composed of (deputy)directors of all Ministries and is chaired by the Secretary of State for European Affairs. The Deputy-Chair is the Minister for Economic Affairs. Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides secretariat - meetings of the sub council on EU affairs of the ministerial cabinet are chaired by the prime minister; secretariat by ministry of General Affairs (the Prime Minister's office) - Ministerial Cabinet/chaired by Prime Minister; Ministry of General Affairs
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Active participation in particular at the "PermRep instructions" and "CoCo" level; regular attendance of deputy PermRep or staff member in weekly CoCo-meeting in The Hague; weekly meetings of the PermRep with the Secretary of State and his Director-General for European affairs
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role

<p>7. Role of the national Parliament</p>	<p>The BNC provides Parliament with the first appraisal (ref 3) in standard format of a "fiche"; upon request, parliament is informed during subsequent negotiations in Council and codecision; parliament can raise questions directly with the responsible Minister or Secretary of State in regular meetings (commission or plenary) on EU Council meetings or in ad hoc debates¹</p>
<p>8. Participation of interest groups</p>	<p>Classical "lobbying"; organisations representing local government receive BNC-fiches and can comment on them in regular meetings chaired by ministry of the interior</p>

¹ In the Netherlands Ministers are individually accountable to the Parliament. The Parliament can pass a motion of no-confidence in a specific Minister.

LUXEMBOURG

1. Information circulated by	via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. Coordination triggered by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs or at the request of one ministry in case of conflict of competence regarding the substance
3. Different stages of coordination / arbitration	At level of civil servant and, if necessary, at political level (between interested ministers or at the level of the Government Council)
4. Coordination instrument/ leading Ministry	Informal ad hoc group called "European Correspondents" (assists the Government Council) composed by civil servants specialised in European Affairs from each ministry. Presidency and Secretariat of this group are ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Brussels PR ensures the vice-presidency
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification of a possible need for coordination – support the coordination – participation in the meetings of the European Correspondents
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Participates in the meetings of the European Correspondents
7. Role of the national Parliament	The Chamber of deputies is informed of each new initiative and it is up to this Chamber to convene the competent ministries to the meetings of the competent parliamentary committees
8. Participation of interest groups	No formal structure but in case of need ad hoc participation

UNITED KINGDOM

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent representation
2. Coordination triggered by	The competent ministry
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<p>– Competent Ministry organises meetings with other interested Ministries. Consultation of interested parties. Instructions to the Permanent Representation and information of the National Parliament</p> <p>– (European) Defence and Overseas Policy subcommittee gathers all the Ministers interested in EU affairs</p>
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office organises <i>ad hoc</i> meetings and cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representation. This Secretariat consists of 14 civil servants. The Presidency and Secretariat of these meetings is ensured by the head of the European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office. Meetings take place daily and a formal weekly meeting is convened where the Permanent Representation participates.
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Active participation in examining important issues, in deciding on urgent tactical and strategic questions and on certain issues where preparation is deemed incomplete
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Participation at all levels
7. Role of the national Parliament	Examines all legislative proposals submitted to the EU Council of Ministers, as well as any other important document
8. Participation of interest groups	Consulted by the competent ministry

AUSTRIA

1. Information circulated by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. Coordination triggered by	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<p>– The competent Ministry ensures coordination at Council working party level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the Austrian position for CRP I, CRP II and GAC. Other Council formations are coordinated by the relevant competent Ministry. For the European Council, it is the Federal Chancellery that ensures coordination</p> <p>– Federal Government</p>
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	<p>CRP I and II: weekly coordination meetings with all concerned Ministries, the "Länder" and Social Partners/Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>GAC: coordination meeting/Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Other Council formations: coordination meetings/competent Ministries</p> <p>European Council: coordination meeting/Federal Chancellery</p>
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Not represented in the coordination meetings but regularly consulted on specific questions
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Competent for ECOFIN and Budget Council and respective working party level; competent for all financial and budgetary matters.
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion in the framework of the constitutional relations between the Parliament and the Government ¹
8. Participation of interest groups	Social Partners must have the opportunity to give an opinion.

¹ The competent Minister of the Federal Government is bound by an opinion of the Nationalrat (lower Chamber) if the draft EC act requires transposition into national law or implies adoption of a directly applicable legal act on questions relating to federal legislation. Similar procedures apply with respect to an opinion of the Bundesrat (upper Chamber of Parliament) if the draft EC act needs imperatively be implemented by a federal constitutional law that would require the agreement of the Bundesrat.

GERMANY

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance
2. Coordination triggered by	The competent Ministry but the coordinators (Foreign Affairs and Finance) can intervene at any moment
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – "Europabeauftragte" in the different Ministries – Questions that cannot be solved at this level are submitted to the regular meetings of the Directors-general and the meetings of Secretaries of State for European Affairs. The Secretaries of State for European Affairs in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry for Consumer protection and Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and in the Ministry of Environment, the Permanent Representative and the Head of the Chancellor's office participate. Other Secretaries of State participate depending on the agenda. – Ministerial (bilateral) or the Federal Council of Ministers
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The monthly meetings of Secretaries of State are presided by the "Staatsminister" (deputy Minister) for European Affairs and the vice-president is the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Finance. The Secretariat is ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Active participation
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Ensures in tandem with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs internal federal coordination
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion in both chambers of Parliament in the framework of the constitutional relations between parliament and the government
8. Participation of interest groups	Continuous dialogue at all levels

FINLAND

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation
2. Coordination triggered by	The competent Ministry or the EU Governmental Secretariat
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 39 sections which assist the competent ministries. The EU Secretariat and in most cases the Ministry of Finance are represented in each section – Committee for European Affairs – Ministerial Committee for European Affairs
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The EU Secretariat which is a unit attached to the Prime Minister's office and is headed by the Secretary of State for European Affairs
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	The Permanent Representative takes part in the weekly meeting of the Ministerial Committee
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Participates in almost all the sections
7. Role of the national Parliament	Active weekly participation in the discussion of the European Affairs
8. Participation of interest groups	Meetings at level of sections can be organised with the participation of interest groups

PORTUGAL

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate-General for Community Affairs - DGAC)
2. Coordination triggered by	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGAC and sometimes at the initiative of the Permanent Representation)
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGAC and Permanent Representation) – Inter-departmental Committee for Community Affairs (CIAC). This Committee is composed of the Directors-General of European Affairs offices of the various Ministries and the autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores). When necessary, the Committee can create sub-committees to study specific issue in more detail – Council of Ministers for EU Affairs
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	The CIAC is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who can delegate to the Secretary of State for European Affairs. The secretariat is ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Active participation at the DGAC and the CIAC
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	No specific role
7. Role of the national Parliament	A permanent parliamentary committee for European Affairs exists and it oversees the European Affairs presented by the Government. This Committee meets weekly and can be attended by Portuguese MEPs
8. Participation of interest groups	The CIAC can examine opinions issued by the Economic and Social Partners

FRANCE

1. Information circulated by	General Secretariat of the Inter-departmental Committee for European Economic cooperation questions (SGCI)
2. Coordination triggered by	SGCI
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<p>Under the responsibility of the Prime Minister, arbitration may be performed at three levels depending on the political importance of the subject:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – by the SGCI, at meetings attended by officials from the competent ministries, – by the Prime Minister's private office at meetings of the private staffs of the competent ministers – by the Prime Minister himself, at meetings of the Inter-departmental Committee attended automatically by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for European Affairs, the Minister for the Economy and Finance as well as other ministers concerned
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	<p>The SGCI coordinates inter-departmental work, organises if necessary its meetings up to senior civil servant level and forwards instructions to the Permanent Representation (except on CFSP matters). The SGCI, which is directly dependent on the Prime Minister, is composed of civil servants on secondment from several ministries (thematic competence) for a period of 3 to 4 years. It is chaired by the Secretary-General of the SGCI who is also traditionally the adviser of the Prime Minister for European Affairs. He is assisted by three Deputy Secretaries-General</p>
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Participates in meetings organised by the SGCI when asked to do so
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	Takes part in the Inter-departmental Committee
7. Role of the national Parliament	Information and general discussion in the framework of constitutional relations between the Parliament and the Government
8. Participation of interest groups	

SWEDEN

1. Information circulated by	The Permanent Representation
2. Coordination triggered by	Competent Ministry
3. Different stages of coordination/arbitration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Competent Ministry cooperates at civil servant level with other interested Ministries – EU Committee which is composed by all secretaries of State – The Council of Ministers
4. Coordination instrument/lead Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – EU unit of the Foreign Ministry – Prime Minister's office + small EU unit attached to his Private Office – EU Committee which is presided by the Secretary of State for EU questions
5. Role of the Permanent Representation	Active involvement in examining questions on the agenda and in finally formulating instructions
6. Role of the Ministry of Finance	The Directorate for the Budget participates in the common preparation of Community files
7. Role of the national Parliament	<p>EU Committee of the Riksdag is informed and consulted in all cases (before all Council meetings). The competent minister takes into account the position of this Committee but is not formally bound by it</p>
8. Participation of interest groups	Consulted by the competent Ministry