

The EU Single Voice after Lisbon:

implications of the permanent presidency
of the Council preparatory bodies

Author: Marta Paricio Montesinos
Tutor: Oriol Costa Fernández

UAB Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

1. Context

- The Lisbon Treaty aimed to give more coherence, visibility to the EU and strengthen its Single Voice.
- Therefore, Lisbon replaced the six-month rotating presidencies in the Council with permanent ones, specially in CFSP.
- The HR/VP chairs the FAC and EEAS officials chair the PSC and some CFSP CWGs.
- The main critics of the rotating president were: lack of continuity on agenda, it relied on the interests and capacity of the country at the helm and its organisation was chaotic.

2. Objectives

Analyse interviews carried out in recent studies with PSC ambassadors, national delegates in CWGs and EEAS officials, to answer:

a) Has the permanent president met its expectations? Has ensured the internal cohesiveness and strengthen the EU Single Voice?

Compare the permanent presidency system with the informal one used in MEAs in which the rotating president is still present, to answer:

b) Was the permanent president the best option to overcome the critics of the old system?



3. RESULTS



EEAS Permanent Presidency
In PSC and CFSP
WGs

VS.

Informal system
LEAD NEGOTIATOR
In MEAs
Supervised by the
rotating
presidency

- ✓ Has **greater resources**, more permanence and a more global vision.
- ✓ Enhances EU coherence and **visibility** in International fora and facilitates the continuity of negotiations in the FAC.
- ✗ Emerging **tension** between EEAS and PSC ambassadors, the EEAS has its own agenda.
- ✗ The **level of ambition has decreased**. It is no longer feel as a failure if agreements are not reached.
- ✗ There is a **disaffection** of member states, more fragmentation, less internal cohesiveness and less Council conclusions.

- ✓ Three main institutional bodies: WPIEI, expert groups and EU Teams. So, the Presidency **shares the burden of the negotiation** task.
- ✓ The expertise of many actors can be optimally used and **member states are fully involved** in the process.
- ✓ The fact that the lead negotiators work for a couple of years guarantees the **continuity** on the agenda.
- ✗ Requires a lot of time, **effort** and preparation.

4. Conclusions

a) The permanent presidency has not strengthen the EU Single Voice. For the moment, there is a disaffection and passivity among member states that has to be solved. It might have damaged the internal cohesiveness of the organs it chairs hindering the formation of Council decisions and a single message.

b) The "lead negotiator system" shows that to overcome the obstacles of the rotating presidency was not necessary to remove it.

5. Selected References

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