

# The EU Single Voice after Lisbon:

implications of the permanent presidency  
of the Council preparatory bodies

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## 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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