Basic information

2002/2550(RSP) RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	Procedure completed
Resolution on reform of the Council and transparency **Subject** 8.40.02 Council of the Union	

Key players

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2463	2002-11-18

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
16/05/2002	Decision by Parliament	T5-0246/2002	Summary
16/05/2002	End of procedure in Parliament		
07/11/2002	Final act published in Official Journal		
18/11/2002	Debate in Council		Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2002/2550(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Resolution on statement
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 136-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Motion for a resolution		B5-0249/2002	15/05/2002	
Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects		T5-0246/2002 OJ C 180 31.07.2003, p. 0404-0491 E	16/05/2002	Summary

Resolution on reform of the Council and transparency

2002/2550(RSP) - 18/11/2002

With the challenges posed by enlargement to the functioning of the Council, the European Council started its reform process at Helsinki in December 1999. The discussion continued in Gothenburg and Barcelona on the basis of reports presented by the Secretary General/High Representative. The European Council in Seville in June 2002 subsequently adopted a set of specific measures to be implemented without amendment to the Treaties. It also expressed readiness to continue the discussions, requesting the Danish Presidency to present an initial report to the December European Council. Against this background, the General Affairs Council debated the future report and reviewed the various possible options for reform. The draft report prepared by the presidency contained two parts. The first set out the main issues having arisen from the discussions so far and the second described possible approaches to presidency reform in the form of three models. Model 1 would maintain the main features of the present rotating presidency while extending the cooperation between successive presidencies even beyond what was decided in Seville . There would be a systematic obligation to share and delegate power. Model 2 consisted of a combination of an ‘institutional’ presidency for the Council’s coordinating chain (General Affairs and External Relations Council and Coreper), to be chaired for instance by the SG/HR or his representatives, with a system of either a rotating presidency or elected presidents for most of the other Council configurations and preparatory bodies. Model 3 was based on the idea of the ‘Team Presidency’. The team could be composed of three to five members, selected according to criteria such as geography and size, for a given period of time (one and a half or two and a half years), to be renewed either at fixed intervals or through a ‘rolling’ system. The presidency of Council configurations would be shared between the members of the team. As a variation, it would be possible to maintain in addition the six-monthly component for the purposes of the coordinating chain (GAERC + Coreper). The Danish Presidency also proposed strengthening the role of the High Representative to respond to the particular problem posed by the presidency function in the area of external relations. The tasks envisaged ranged from chairing certain Council meetings to supervising EU special envoys and included representing the Union in international organisations or in meetings with third countries, negotiating international agreements in the area of CFSP/ESDP, submitting proposals and informing Parliament. Finally, the Danish draft report presented the ideas put forward by a number of Member States on an elected president of the European Council. This variant could be combined with models 2 or 3. The European Council president would be elected for a longer period (of up to five years), would prepare and preside over the European Council and would represent the EU in relations with third countries at Heads of State or Government level. Concluding the debate, several Member States indicated a preference for reform model 1 while also referring to the broader debate on the future institutional structure of the Union within the framework of the Convention and the subsequent Intergovernmental Conference. Other delegations underlined that it would be necessary to consider measures going beyond model 1.

Resolution on reform of the Council and transparency

2002/2550(RSP) - 16/05/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted the resolution on the reform of the Council and transparency. Parliament repeats that the projected reform must give precedence to the Community method over the intergovernmental method in decision-making procedures in all the Union's spheres of activity and it stresses in this connection that the reform of the Council must be consistent with the more general objective of rebalancing the powers of the union's institutions with the aim of conferring legislative power on the Council and Parliament and executive power on the Commission. It notes that the re-establishing the European Council's role of laying down political guidelines is an initial step in the direction called for by Parliament. Moreover, it stresses nonetheless that upgrading the role of the General Affairs Council and reestablishing a single procedure for the preparation of decisions are essential corollaries to this reform. The primary aim, according to MEPs must be to adapt the Council's political set up and procedures to take account of the increasing number of its members. Parliament had already requested the Council when it acts as legislator to deliberate and vote in public. Furthermore, the Council should permit the presence of television cameras to film the debates and the voting. The Council secretary-general should report back to Parliament before the European Council meeting in Seville, this is particularly important following the European Council in Barcelona, which fell short of setting out clear guidelines for Council transparency. On a specific point relating to the co-decision legislative procedure, MEPs declared that it is essential that the Council be present when legislative texts are adopted in Parliament and, on the other, that Parliament be present when the Council takes final legislative decisions. Parliament should also be able to speak at Council meetings. Parliament and the Council should together publicly announce the final outcome of the legislative procedure. Finally, the Parliament called on the Council and Member States to join forces to launch an information campaign with a view of informing citizens of their fundamental right of public access to documents at European level.