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THE EC COUNCIL PRESIDENCY AT WORK

**Emil J Kirchner
Director
Centre for European Studies
University of Essex UK**

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THE PRESIDENCY AT WORK

Introduction

The dictum that the Commission proposes and the Council of Ministers disposes has been widely ridiculed as being out of step with reality. Both the proposing and the disposing qualities were questioned in the 1970s and early 1980s; with the Commission being seen as a quasi-secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the latter declassified as an instrument of the European Council. By contrast the role of the Council Presidency was viewed as both contributing to and benefitting from the influential role of the European Council.

The Single European Act of 1986 (SEA) seems to have affected the role of the European Council in EC decision making by reinstating some of the validity of the original dictum about relations between the Commission and the Council of Ministers. The SEA might also have limited the role of the Council Presidency as an initiator, power-broker and influencer of EC decision-making. The SEA has effectively advanced decision-making by reinforcing the powers of the Commission, (as well as those of the EP,) by introducing majority voting for the bulk of provisions for the completion of the internal market, and by proposing a timetable. The role of the Commission in initiation and mediation has been strengthened, the Council of Ministers is able to take decisions more rapidly and frequently and is less often forced to refer to the European Council as the final arbitrator. The manoeuvrability of the Presidency is curtailed because its needs to relate closely to the Commission's time table or the guidelines provided for in both the Commission's 1985 White Paper, and the SEA.

The Presidency provides opportunities but these should not be equated with presidential power akin to the US system. The office bears certain privileges, like setting policy priorities, obtaining information, and determining the agenda, e.g. influencing the nature of debate and the timing of decisions for legislative adoption. It gives a government the opportunity to draw attention to themselves. Against that, the Presidency has no executive powers, e.g. vetoes or sanction possibilities. It co-ordinates proceedings within the various Council or COREPER group meetings with the intention of finding a consensus or winning formula, but it remains one of twelve equals in the EC negotiating forum (1). Decisions have to be taken by all twelve member states and involve compromises, if not sacrifices, of national interest. The degree of manoeuvrability held by a Presidency in consensus-building is subject to considerable uncertainties emanating, for example, from the general economic and political conditions in which member states find themselves at a given time. External events like the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident or recent events in Eastern Europe, unresolved problems or outstanding reforms of the EC, (2) and the general attitudes of governments towards integration. These influences can add to the vagaries of competing national interests and can either harden or relax a given national negotiation position. As a consequence, gaps can appear between the policy programme put forward in the beginning and the output achieved at the end of a Presidency. Needless to say a Presidency carries responsibility and a punishing workload which can be particularly burdensome for small countries.

Nonetheless some Presidencies seem to do better than others under adverse conditions. For example, a comparison of Presidencies between 1986 and 1989 shows that some have been more successful than others either with regard to a

range of policy objectives or in helping to solve acute problems. This raises a number of questions about the Presidency and the office holder; the extent to which the Presidency carries power irrespective of the office holder or the extent to which influence of the Presidency depends on the power position of the office holder. (3) For example, is size, experience, commitment and political clout of the office holder a decisive factor in influencing the course of events? Were the more successful Presidencies confronted with less pressing problems, more conducive circumstances (economic, political and institutional climate), or were they endowed with more organisational resources, experience and brokerage-skills?

To explore these questions we need to know more about the economic and political climate in which Presidencies operate, the prevailing attitudes of member states towards integration and the general level of co-operation within the EC. Next an examination of the policy priorities is in order. How do Presidencies combine national with Community interest?; long-term goals with six monthly aims?; and inherited tasks with new initiatives? What methods do they use for achieving stipulated aims or coping with 'unexpected' events, e.g. the way the agenda is being set, and the form in which compromise solutions are introduced? Another aspect to examine is the way in which the Presidency seeks to promote co-operation with the Commission and the EP. Finally, the performance of the Presidency needs to be dealt with. The slowness with which EC problems are resolved (CAP, budget, transport, fiscal policy, etc.) has obvious implications for what can be achieved within six months. A distinction is thus required between actual decisions and considerable preparatory work for decisions; between decisions over important issues and less important ones (quality versus quantity); and between the successful contributions of the

Presidency and those of other member states or EC institutions. These will be examined comparatively in this chapter and used for an evaluation of the role and importance of the Presidency.

The countries who have held the Presidency between 1986 and 1989 include 'old hands' with years of experience in EC affairs (Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and West Germany); countries who had the Presidency for the third time (Denmark and the United Kingdom); Greece who had its second turn; and Spain, which after three years of EC membership, had its first go. Four of these countries had right of centre administrations (Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany, and the United Kingdom), and one a left of centre (Spain). Changes in the political composition of governments occurred in France, Belgium, Greece and Portugal. (4)

The findings in this chapter will be based on a series of inter-views with Foreign Office officials in eight EC member states and officials of EC institutions. (5)

The Setting

When planning for a Presidency, among the main concerns are the domestic, EC and international economic and political climate, organisational resources and expertise, and ongoing EC internal and external tasks. Of these, the surrounding economic and political climate is particularly important in that it can influence the negotiating position of individual governments and thus have bearings on the prospects for consensus or compromise. Deep seated economic difficulties (high unemployment, high inflation and low growth rates) can

either, (as was the the case in the 1970s,) result in a hardening of national positions, or encourage, (as in the beginning of the 1980s,) a Community solution. A country's basic approach must also be considered. As Helen Wallace suggests it is unrealistic to expect governments to act out of character for the six months duration of the Presidency. Rather, the framework of their general attitude to the EC and the particular interests which concern them will influence their behaviour and margin of manoeuvre. (6)

In the following a brief review of the main economic and political conditions between 1986 and 1989 will be attempted, together with a short examination of the basic dispositions of the countries which held the Presidency towards European unification. This section will be rounded off with a list of the main events, both within and outside the EC, and an exploration of the main expectations held at the start of the six monthly Presidencies.

a) the economic and political situation

With regard to the economic situation, there were general improvements in EC growth, inflation and unemployment terms over the period concerned. (7) Whereas the Community had lost 1 800 000 jobs between 1982 and 1984, it had created 3 200 000 between 1985 and 1987, and was expected to create 5 million between 1988 and 1990.(8) However, unemployment, particularly long term unemployment, was still at an unacceptable high of 16.5 million in 1989. Moreover, the stock market crash of October 1987 adversely affected the economic outlook and gave rise to pessimism regarding the prospects for continued economic growth. On the other hand, the appearance of the Checcini report in 1988 predicted substantial economic growth and lower prices for goods with the completion of the internal market by 1992.(9)

With regard to the political situation, as table 1 shows, only the British and the Greek Presidencies were free of general elections or referenda either in their own or in other member states. Spain had to cope with general elections in Ireland, Luxembourg and Greece, and direct elections to the European Parliament in all EC countries; West Germany experienced general elections in Denmark and France and, presidential elections in France; Denmark was confronted with general elections in Portugal, the United Kingdom, Belgium and a referendum in Italy; the Netherlands witnessed general elections in France and Spain and a referendum in Spain. Importantly, Denmark and the Netherlands had elections in their own countries during their respective Presidencies. France was confronted with three general elections in other member states, and Belgium had the misfortune of five general elections in other member states, Spanish elections to the EP, plus a national referendum in Ireland. In other words, general elections took place in all Community countries during 1986 and 1989, with two such elections occurring in France, Greece, Ireland, and Spain (altogether 16 general elections). EP elections took place in all countries in 1989; a procedure Spain and Portugal had both undertaken in 1987 as well. Besides a number of state elections in West Germany there were also a substantial number of local elections; the latter have not been counted here.

If a distinction is made between the four most populous EC countries and the rest, then the French general elections during the Dutch and the West German Presidencies (plus the French presidential elections during the West German Presidency) and the British, Italian and West German elections during the Belgian Presidency weigh particularly heavily. As Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Foreign Minister, pointed out, the convergence of a number of

national elections during the Belgian Presidency 'was paralysing in its effect'. (10) Coalition stress or prolonged inability to form a coalition can be an additional disruptive factor. Once again Belgium suffered from the four month Italian coalition crisis, and Belgium itself caused disquiet during the Danish and West German Presidencies when, over a five month period, it was unable to form a governing coalition. However, considering the stress of "cohabitation" in the French coalition between 1986 and 1988 and the closeness to the French presidential elections, the achievement of the emergency EC summit in Brussels during the West Germany Presidency, is particularly significant. Nonetheless, as Helen Wallace points out the '...dislocating consequences of changes of government are less problematic for those countries in which a broad consensus on EC issues persists across political parties, than for those in which distinctive party views obtain, or where attitudes towards the EC are evolving.' (11) Belgium belongs to those countries where elections seems to have less of an effect on EC policy given the virtual unanimity which prevails across political party lines on this issue. (12)

Another potential disrupting factor is the occurrence of referenda during a Presidency. Both the Danish referendum of 1986 and the Irish referendum of 1987, (during the Dutch and Belgian Presidencies respectively), related to the SEA and the future of the EC and, therefore, had direct implications on the priorities, agenda setting and consensus building of these Presidencies.

b) orientation towards integration

There was generally a strong and stable public support in favour of European unification during the period in question, e.g. those who say that the EC is a good thing. The exception was Denmark which until the Spring of 1990,

was among the lowest with 44 percent public support. (13) However, West Germany had a drop in support in 1987/88 which might have had something to do with the dispute between West Germany and the Commission over agricultural reform, steel subsidies, and beer regulations. (14) Moreover, there were relatively low turnouts in the 1989 EP direct elections (average of 63.29% for all twelve countries) with below 50% ratings in Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the U.K. The fact that the latter scored the lowest (41.8%) might have been influenced by Thatcher's Bruges speech in the Autumn of 1988, which was highly critical of further integration.

Whether measured by public opinion, elite perception or government attitude, different commitments to the process of integration can be noted; with Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain and West Germany occupying one side of the spectrum, and Denmark, Greece and the United Kingdom the other. This demarcation holds, by and large, with regard to the SEA. Whereas Britain and Denmark see it mostly as the accomplishment of a free trade area and, therefore, as an end in itself, the other countries perceive it as a stepping stone towards further economic and political unification. Whereas the Benelux countries, France, West Germany and Spain explicitly advocate such a link or toll on the virtues of political union, Britain and Denmark either consciously play down the political connotations, (15) or avoid such expressions altogether. (16) For the U.K. a Community of independent sovereign nations would do better than a giant new European state. Similarly, differences emerge over moves towards Economic and Monetary Union, the establishment of a European Central Bank, the harmonisation of fiscal policy, and the abolition of border controls. Part of the reason for this might be found in differences over the insistence on national identity (17), national character or habits, e.g.

British pragmatism and common sense approach versus French Cartisian logic, strategic thinking and planning. For example, Mrs Thatcher was proud of pointing out that 'we have our eyes more on the ground rather than on the distant horizons' and 'concentrate on the down-to-earth topics leading to actions of direct and practical benefits'. (18)

However, the above demarcation into two sets of countries does not hold over the issue of enlarged powers for the European Parliament; France is opposed and Greece takes a more favourable line. (19) Both Denmark and Britain emphasise change, not in the powers of the EP but in the relationship between the EP and the Council, e.g. more consultation. (20) In contrast Belgium, Holland, Spain and West Germany advocate more rights for the EP.

Having examined the economic, political and attitudinal aspects which affect the role of Presidencies, attention will now turn to the linkage between the tasks and expectations of Presidencies.

c) chronology and expectations

After the successful introduction of the SEA, and the admittance of Portugal and Spain as EC members in 1986, the Community underwent a period of regeneration and consolidation. The Dutch Presidency in the first half of 1986 had to complete the signing of the SEA, which in the Danish case required a national referendum. The signed, but not yet ratified, SEA underwent an experimental application during the Dutch, British and Belgian Presidencies (January 1986 to June 1987). For the Dutch, the entry of Portugal and Spain required additional adjustment. In view of these circumstances, the Dutch were careful 'not to pitch hopes too high' (21) and to put the emphasis on the

implementation of the internal market. Britain took a similar stance. An additional problem which befell the British Presidency was how to cope with the post-Chernobyl situation and the growing problem of CAP and financial reforms. According to Geoffrey Howe, Britain took over the Presidency 'with a mixture of trepidation, hope and determination'. (22)

The problem of CAP and financial reform, conveniently postponed at the 1986 London European Council, loomed large at the beginning of the Belgian Presidency in 1987. Indeed Delors was asked to undertake a tour of Capitals by the London European Council of December 1986. The tentative conclusions reached at the Reagan-Gorbachev Reykjavik summit in October 1986, on the abolition of nuclear missiles, had also ruffled the feathers of European leaders. The summit demonstrated the lack of consultation with the Europeans by the Americans and seemingly exposed the vulnerability of the Europeans in security terms. In addition, Belgium anticipated a number of elections in other member states. Subsequently, Leo Tindemans, the Belgian foreign minister, saw few possibilities in January 1987 of promoting the process of integration. He even went as far as to suggest that 'considering what Belgium was confronted with one could be inclined to be distraught and dispense with the Presidency'. (23) The, unsurprising, failure of the Brussels European Council of June 1987 to make an effective impact on the Delors package (24) meant that problems and pressures were mounting by the time Denmark was starting its turn in the Presidency in the second half of 1987. With the positive outcome of the Irish referendum in May 1987, the SEA was formally ratified and its decision-making reforms (co-operation and assent procedures and majority voting) could officially be applied from 1 July 1987. Under this dual challenge of the pending Delors' package and the formal start of the SEA, Ellemann-Jensen, the

Danish foreign minister, 'sought to be realistic in the presentation of Danish priorities' and to avoid 'any great initiative on what we want'. (25) Though progress was made during the Danish Presidency on the adoption of the Delors reforms, major disagreements over agricultural reforms between Britain and West Germany continued. Consequently, the Copenhagen European Council of December 1987 ended in failure and without a communique.

Being partly responsible for the continuing legacy of the Delors package, the West German Presidency made major efforts at the beginning of 1988 to find a solution which came via the Brussels emergency European Council in February 1988. The West Germany Presidency followed this success with an impressive number of provisions being adopted from the Commission's White Paper, initiatives in EC external matters, and the launch of a study on how to establish EMU. The newly found dynamism, if not euphoria, instilled self-confidence in subsequent Presidencies (26) and encouraged attempts to link the internal market programme with monetary, social and environmental objectives of the SEA in particular. Also East-West confrontation began to thaw significantly, a factor the Greek Presidency seized upon and sought to promote further. By the time the Spanish Presidency began its term, in the first half of 1989, the difficult issues of the internal market programme (such as fiscal policy, company law, merger controls, etc.) began to surface more cogently, and the Delors Committee (27) was expected to present its report on EMU. Therefore a mixture of expectations and concerns prevailed. The latter were coloured by the fact that Spain was a complete novice in the experience of EC presidencies. In addition, it was faced with a new Commission and the prospect of direct elections to the EP in June 1989. Foreign Minister Fernandez-Ordonez reflected on this when he stressed that the Spanish programme was 'modest and realistic

in its expectations'. (28) Spain did better than generally expected, especially with regard to internal market matters and monetary co-operation. Hopes were high when France took over the Presidency in the second half of 1989, the year of its bi-centenary celebrations, and a newly elected EP, expectations were high. It was hoped that France, which had traditionally tried for the spectacular, would become the torchbearer for the adoption of the European Social Charter, which had been narrowly missed at the Madrid European Council of June 1989, and become the trailblazer for an Intergovernmental Conference on EMU. Equally, great strides were expected in the internal market programme. However, Roland Dumas, the French Foreign Minister, was careful not to let such great expectations colour the course of events and stressed instead that France was 'not too ambitious in its objectives' (29)

The Priorities

As the outline above suggests, the selection of policy priorities of presidencies is influenced by general economic and political conditions, by countries' basic dispositions regarding European unification, and, most importantly, by the general Community time-table. (30) In turn, this time-table reflects either recurrent issues, like the annual budgetary and agricultural price review, or pre-arranged Community commitments and objectives, like the SEA programme, renewal of external trade or aid and co-operation agreements, anniversary celebrations (31) and 'year themes' (32). In addition to the Commission's time-table, there are EPC mandates. Presidencies are, therefore, not enclosed epochs but merely phases of an ongoing process. (33) This was recognised in the decision by the Luxembourg, Dutch and British Presidencies to initiate a 'rolling' Presidency on internal market matters in

1985/86 e.g. not to attempt to achieve everything in one Presidency but over successive ones.

The empirical evidence suggests that in general terms, the Presidencies under review let the Commission set the agenda for the major issues, such as the internal market, the Delors package, and EMU, in a way not witnessed prior to 1986. (34) However, the French Presidency of 1989 reinstated a more independent line, especially in a response to events in Eastern Europe. In the following, the Presidencies' priorities will be briefly examined with regard to the internal market programme, the other SEA objectives, and EC external policies.

a) internal market

All eight presidencies referred to the completion of the internal market as a major priority. They followed consistently the Commission's time-table and guidelines, but inserted their own specific interests where possible. Examples of the latter included the Dutch emphasis on transport policy, especially road haulage (a traditional Dutch interest); the British stress on financial services, in line with the introduction of the 'big bang' in 1986 and its competitive edge in the financial sector. The accent on air transport fares and public procurement can also be related to British market advantages and privatisation interests. Denmark's high standards in environmental policy and consumer protection, were reflected in demands for action in these fields e.g. the curbing of emission from motor vehicles and the improvement and harmonization of food law. West Germany insisted more explicitly on progress in company law, because of the potential migration of German firms to other EC countries which do not have similar company structures or worker participation

arrangements. Given their large farming population, it is not surprising that both Greece and Spain highlighted their concern over harmonisation measures on agricultural machinery and veterinary issues. In line with its national emphasis on research and development (witness the French initiative on Eureka), France laid particular stress on progress in the telecommunication and audio-visual sectors. (35)

b) other SEA objectives

Whilst the the SEA laid out a number of objectives, it made no provisions for financial arrangements. Any attempt to do so faced a multitude of related items, chief among which were agricultural reforms as well as British budgetary rebates. (36) In February 1987, Delors boldly introduced a proposal in which he combined the issue of agricultural and financial reforms with the question of regional aid. The Belgian, Danish, West German and Greek (37) Presidencies were confronted with the adoption and implementation of this package. By the time the Spanish took over the Presidency the threefold concern of the Delors package had become a minor concern, but the monetary issue had come prominently to the fore.

Three factors may explain why it took until 1988 before monetary co-operation became a specific concern in the priorities of Council Presidencies: the absorption of the Community in the solution of the Delors package in 1987, the stockmarket crash of October 1987; and increasing Franco-German co-operation (38). West Germany thus became the first Presidency to strive for the EMU, call for a strengthening of the EMS, and the establishment of a European Central Bank. As a consequence a decision was taken at the Hannover European Council in June 1988 to establish a committee aimed at exploring how and when

EMU could be phased-in. This committee, consisting primarily of governors of national central banks, was headed by Jacques Delors and is subsequently known as the 'Delors Committee'. The Spanish Presidency prepared for dealing with the findings of the Delors committee and sought to 'make as much progress as possible in defining the necessary stages for achieving monetary union'. (39) Similarly, after the positive decision at the Madrid European Council in June 1989, the French Presidency declared that it wanted 'to organise its work so that the European Council in Strasbourg can express an opinion on the progress achieved over the whole area of EMU'. (40)

The idea that the single market must be linked with economic growth, higher standards of living, a better quality of life together with progress in the social field, grew slowly on EC member states. There was, and still is, dispute over whether social Europe is an integral part of economic Europe or whether it is a by-product of it. (41) Subsequently, whilst the Commission consistently proposed measures to improve the employment situation, promote vocational training, and raise health and safety standards in the work place, measures (backed by successive Presidencies), it was only during the Greek Presidency that the Commission came up with its blueprint for a European Charter for Basic Social Rights. (42) Though Greece had declared the social dimension a priority, the delay by the Commission in presenting specific proposals gave the Spanish and French Presidencies the opportunity to take up this task with more vigour. Like Greece, both had socialist administrations and were thus particularly keen to see the social dimension developed.

The Chernobyl effect, the Seveso incident, (43) the spread of acid rain, and the 'greenhouse' factor became the basis for the Commission proposals of

1987 regarding air and water pollution, disposal of dangerous waste, and the ozone layer. In turn, these became concerns of the Presidencies, especially those of Denmark, West Germany and Greece, the latter expressing particular concern over pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. However, on the whole, these Commission efforts were reactive and haphazard attempts rather than systematic efforts to construct an environmental policy. The Commission's own omission was recognized by Delors when he remarked that the issue of the environment had been approached with greater dynamism by the Hannover European Council than by the Commission.(44)

The SEA, in Article 130 I, stipulates the adoption by the Community of multi-annual research and development framework programmes. Efforts to do so occurred during the Dutch, British, Belgian and Danish Presidencies. It fell on successive Presidencies to emphasise specific programmes, like ESPRIT, BRITE, RACE, etc.

c) external relations

External relations consist of trade, aid and development, and EPC matters. External trade issues were a recurrent theme during all eight Presidencies, involving, for example, GATT (either via the Uruguay Round, or the Multifibre Agreement), (45) the U.S.A., Japan, ASEAN, EFTA and COMECON countries.

Renewal of the Lome convention came up during the 1987 Belgian Presidency and continued until it was concluded during the French Presidency in 1989. The Belgian Presidency had also proposed a compensation system for the least developed countries' export revenues, and the Spanish Presidency advocated steps to overcome the debt problem of middle-income countries (especially in

Latin America) through the establishment of a European Guarantee Fund.

Unlike EC external trade, or aid and co-operation policy, EPC is an intergovernmental exercise. On EPC the Presidency is supposed to initiate proposals, implement the decisions and discuss them with third countries. EPC tasks often involve mandates for either the Presidency or the Troika, (46) and entail 'missions' to third countries. As pointed out by Helen Wallace, 'EPC make ministerial interventions both more influential and less predictable than in Community business, where the options are more circumscribed, the room for manoeuvre is generally limited and the weight of precedent and existing commitments is often overbearing'. (47) EPC is heavily influenced by external events such as the CSCE dialogue, UN proceedings, regional conflicts (Middle East, Central America, South Africa, Afghanistan, South East Asia) and arms control agreements between the USA and the Soviet Union. Though EPC is mostly reactive, there were also a number of Presidency initiatives. For example, Britain emphasised issues of international drug trafficking and international terrorism; Denmark initiated the first EC-USA foreign ministers meeting; West Germany tried to make progress on common guidelines for arms exports; Greece tried to initiate a political dialogue with Eastern European countries. Spain, initiated contacts with all the participants in the Middle East conflict, (48) and relaunched the Euro-Arab Dialogue; while France advanced the idea of establishing a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Both the German and the French initiatives are also examples of a tendency by Presidencies to combine EPC and external trade matters.

The Methods

Presidencies cannot switch programmes, but they can select certain priorities within a given parameter, or provide political impetus. Going a step further, even though a Presidency is confronted with ongoing Community work programmes, this work needs to be shaped and decisions have to be taken about whether a given issue is 'ripe' for COREPER or Council meetings. As van den Broek, the Dutch Foreign Minister, points out 'an active Presidency is not simply tolerated, it is required and expected'. (49) What then distinguishes an active from a passive Presidency? How does an active Presidency live up to its role as a stimulant, interlocuteur and broker?

For analytical reasons three interrelated styles can be identified: style of engagement, style of agenda setting, and style of arbitration.

a) style of engagement

The way Presidencies engage themselves relates to their basic orientation towards integration and to the way they interpret their role under certain climates or conditions. For example, the Dutch regarded their Presidency primarily as 'a service to the Community and political cooperation'. Their aims were to concentrate on the 'management and technical part' of Community business. Greece saw its role largely as an administrator and expediter and put the emphasis on practical decisions. The U.K. Presidency tried to portray itself as a 'normal and engaged member', to repeat its previous record of 'solid management', and to strive for a 'harmonious' European Council. One reason, perhaps, why the U.K. refused to deal with the looming financial and agricultural crisis. (50) Whereas West Germany put the emphasis on 'responsibility', Spain highlighted the 'dignity' of running the Presidency.

Presidencies attempt to communicate their aims and to canvass the views of other governments and EC institutions on these aims. (51) They make use of a variety of communication methods. In most cases the incumbent president (a head of state or government) sends letters to his/her counterparts inviting them to take additional steps on, for example, the adoption of provisions of the Commission's 1985 White Paper. Presidents also undertake visits to other countries for the same or similar Community purposes; sometimes, as in the Belgian case, a tour of all capitals takes place before a pending European Council meeting. Equally, bi-lateral talks, which may overlap with the routine meetings among governments, are arranged involving Ministers and civil servants. Of considerable importance is Franco-German co-operation which often results in joint EC initiatives or compromises. One attempt at such a compromise occurred at the Brussels emergency Summit in February 1988 which helped to lay the groundwork for agricultural reforms, especially on Monetary Compensatory Amounts (MCAs) and cereal thresholds. The establishment of so-called 'national co-ordinators', on, for example, the free movement of people, has been yet another instrument for the Presidency to carry out its tasks more effectively. (52) However, a main characteristic of style of engagement relates to the extent to which Presidencies pursue an innovative role rather than the role of a manager. The extent to which the Presidency engages in routine tasks, deals with the 'rolling' agenda of the internal market troika or carries out prevailing EPC mandates should be distinguished from a Presidency which acts as an innovator. West Germany, on EMU, and France, in dealing with regime changes in Eastern Europe, were two Presidencies which used their role in an innovative way.

b) style of agenda setting

Besides having to decide when, a Presidency also has to determine how, to put an item on the agenda. A Presidency might have made clear the objectives, and might have got backing for them from the Commission, but it makes quite a difference how this priority is put on the agenda. A Presidency has, first of all, a choice over the type of Council of Ministers meeting it wants to arrange, e.g. a formal or an informal one. Secondly, it must determine whether to put up an item for a decision or for a point of debate. Thirdly, it has flexibility over whether to call for an 'A' or 'B' point procedure. (53)

It has become customary to call for informal Council meetings at the beginning of the Presidency's term. Although usually no decision-making takes place in informal meetings, (54) they offer the chance to explain informally the intentions of the Presidency and to explore the possibilities for decision-making by the formal Councils. The Greek suggestion to hold an informal meeting of the Social Council serves as an interesting illustration of the question of choice. On the one hand, it had declared social policy a top priority, and had sent a memo to this effect to the Commission three months prior to the beginning of its Presidency. Therefore one or two formal Council of Ministers' meetings dealing with social policy would have seemed to be appropriate. On the other hand, Greece had no concrete points on which to proceed formally since the Commission had been unable, until November 1988, to finalise the content of its own proposals. This highlights the importance of the Commission and demonstrates that what is desirable from the Presidency's point of view is not always possible from the Commission's perspective. It made sense for the Danish Presidency to make the first Internal Market Council meeting an informal one in order to acquaint ministers with the new rules. This

is particularly true given the amount of preparatory work done by the Belgian, British and Dutch Presidencies in 1986/7 and the fact that the SEA became fully operative in July 1987. It is interesting to note that both an emergency and an extraordinary European Council were held during the West German and French Presidencies respectively. After the Reykjavik debacle of September 1986 Delors made a similar request to the British Presidency, but was turned down.

c) style of arbitration

As a general rule, it is easier to find agreement on questions that unite than it is to resolve those that divide or threaten to divide. On the other hand, what is needed are texts which are acceptable, not those with which everyone necessarily agrees, e.g. it is not necessary to win over every delegation but to produce a text which every delegation can live with, or which is sufficiently close for a delegation not to obstruct.

On most internal market issues a Presidency has to decide when to call for a vote and when to continue to seek agreement. The acceptance of majority voting as the general practice makes members of the Council more eager to accept compromises before a vote takes place. Greece speeded up the process of majority voting; Spain and France followed. However, formal votes are not always taken in cases where the Presidency feels that the necessary majority prevails. (55) Sometimes, however, a country purposely wants to be outvoted in order to demonstrate to a domestic audience its inability to secure the outcome it wanted. (56) Generally, the aim within the Council of Ministers is to seek consensus, and there has, as yet, been no insistence on the veto with regard to internal market issues. (57)

Against the role model which depicts the Presidency as an arbitrator, a Presidency also seeks to defend its own interests. There are limits, however, on the extent to which the latter can be done. A Presidency must avoid being seen to abuse power, as trust is lost between the participants. On the other hand, it also must also be seen to avoid deadlock, splits or isolation of a country or group of countries at either the level of the Council of Ministers or European Council. In short, it must place the emphasis on the exercise of 'good office'. Belgium, in its 1987 Presidency tried to keep the Delors package together but faced great difficulties. These difficulties resulted from a number of diverse but interrelated sources. They included Italian and Portuguese objections to financial reform, British demands for an EC budgetary discipline and rebate, and West German and British differences over the reduction of CAP expenditures and the phasing-in of cereal quotas. French and German disputes over the maintenance of MCAs, and Danish and Dutch objections to large scale CAP reforms were other points of disagreement. Finally the Mediterranean countries and Ireland, were at odds with Britain and Germany over the increase of structural funds for the poorer regions. Under these circumstances, although Belgium had the Delors package discussed by the Permanent Representative Committee every week and considered by the General Affairs Council in April, May and June of 1987, it could not have it carried at the European Council in Brussels in June 1987. As Prime Minister Martens remarked: 'At a given moment [during the Presidency] it would undoubtedly have been possible to achieve unanimity, but that would have resulted in conclusions drawn in Brussels being much less clear and in fact meaningless'. (58) The Belgian insistence on the total package thus avoided a provisional or short-term solution which would have undermined attempts to seek long-term progress on agricultural, financial and regional aid questions. Even worse, according to

Wilfred Martens: 'any attempt to rushwould have doomed the European Council meeting to failure and created divisions within the Community which would have taken a long time to heal'. (59)

The Danish Presidency of 1987 continued in the effort to avoid splits and the isolation of one or a group of countries. To achieve this it decided to prepare the Copenhagen European Council of December 1987 in a different way by sending a set of draft conclusions (drawn up by the Presidency) before the meeting, (a substantial document of 35 to 40 pages) to give colleagues an opportunity to have a thorough discussion with their governments at home on the total solution. The Danes assumed, with some justification, that the Presidency's memorandum would be the only possible basis for a compromise. (60) However, the other delegations maintained their positions. This was most noticeable in the opposing views of Britain and West Germany. On the other hand, by refusing to apply COREPER to the British budgetary problem, the Danish Presidency showed inflexibility towards a solution of the Delors' package at COREPER level which might have helped to prepare matters for the Copenhagen Summit. The Danish view was that this matter could only be dealt with at higher level. (61)

Chancellor Kohl, during the West Germany Presidency of the first half of 1988, also sent a suggested compromise to other EC leaders (62) which, unlike the ill-fated Danish one, produced results. According to Genscher this was 'because each of us was ready to compromise, everyone benefitted'. (63) Though it is debatable whether British gains were commensurate with their initial demands for agricultural and financial reform, it was an acceptable compromise. That such outcomes are the exception rather than the rule became evident in the

Spanish Presidency at the Madrid European Council in June 1989 when it tried to promote the adoption of the European Social Charter and the Delors Committee Report on EMU. Once again the Presidency's handling avoided greater damage through the postponement of the Social Charter adoption, and a compromise formula over the adoption of the Delors Committee recommendations. (64) As Solbes Mira pointed out, 'the Madrid Summit avoided a breach which was not a situation of 10 to 2 or 11 to 1, but something much deeper which would have created difficulties for integration and the building of Europe'. (65)

What then are the factors which determine an active or strong presidency? Are the willingness for self sacrifice, effective leadership and sound co-operation with the Commission and the EP the key ingredients to success? There was general agreement that West Germany made a number of sacrifices. (66) These involved insurance, transport and agricultural and demonstrated courage in the face of prevailing domestic opposition, especially from farmers, and in the pending State elections. Similarly, sacrifices were made by France on road haulage, further deregulation of air travel, and on the partial opening of the telecommunication market to free competition, ending the stranglehold of the Post Telegraph and Telephones on services such as telebanking, cashpoints, and data information services. France was also willing to remove its remaining foreign exchange controls six months earlier than the agreed deadline. In contrast, the British Presidency was accused of dragging its feet on matters relating to the pollution of the North Sea, on the control of air pollution, and on sanctions against South Africa. Though Denmark was prepared to forego national interests, especially in the agricultural sector, and to act as an honest broker, it did not get the compromise solution. Part of the reason for this might have been that it lacked political clout.

Political Clout and Leadership Qualities

It is often maintained that small countries are the ideal brokers, particularly in situations where two or more large countries are at loggerheads. This did not hold during either the Belgian or Danish Presidency. As a matter of fact Martens, the Belgian Prime Minister, accused West Germany and Britain of systematically pursuing their own interests at the expense of the smaller countries and at the expense of progress on EC integration. (67) Rather, as the case over the adoption of the Delors package in February 1988 showed, success in EC negotiation and integration depends heavily on the political will of the larger member states. It seems that large countries, probably because of their economic and political weight, have more clout in forcing compromises than the smaller ones. (68) This is particularly so when it is combined with leadership qualities.

Leadership qualities are a necessary ingredient for an effective Presidency and need to be evident at various levels: European Council, Council of Ministers, COREPER and Working Groups. Both Helmut Kohl and Hans Dietrich Genscher were seen as providing 'strong' leadership during the West German Presidency. Such 'strength' was missing in Poul Schluter's case (69) with regard to the Danish Presidency and, due to his illness, in Papandreou's case with regard to the Greek Presidency. On the other hand, some of the individual Greek chairmen of Council of Ministers, like Theodoros Pangalos (Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for European Community Affairs), Panayotis Roumeliotis (National Economy), and Mrs. Vasso Papandreou (Internal Market), received favourable appraisal. (70) Chairmanship of the Internal Market Council, often held by the so-called Euro-Minister, is becoming

increasingly important. Leadership qualities require a great deal of understanding of the partner's positions, tact in the handling of conflictual issues, and, as far as possible, a minimum of personal likes and dislikes. The apparent difficulties between Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl, and the seemingly friendly relationship between Hans Dietrich Genscher and Roland Dumas demonstrate, however, that requirements and practice do not always coincide.

Leadership qualities are also a factor in the relationship between the Presidency and the Commission as well as the EP. As Bassompierre suggests, the best results have been achieved by good teamwork between the Presidency and the Commission. (71) These results, however, are not always achieved, as the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Jacques Delors showed, not only during the British Presidency of 1986 but also subsequently. Initially, there was also a frosty relationship between the 1988 German Presidency and the Commission, because of disputes over beer regulations, steel subsidies and cereal thresholds. This improved after the joint meeting in December 1987 between the German Government and the Commission college. The French Presidency of 1989 benefitted from the fact that Jacques Delors was an ex-Government colleague which helped to foster close contacts with Roland Dumas (Foreign Minister), Mrs. Edith Cresson (Minister for European Affairs), and President Francois Mitterrand.

Generally there is close collaboration between the Presidency and the Commission, especially between the president of the Commission and the Foreign Minister of the country holding the Presidency. (72) This contact helps, among other things, in the formulation and finalisation of compromises. Jacques Delors has also frequently acted as a trouble-shooter and has undertaken tours

of capitals as in 1987. The Commission, whilst interested in Community progress, also shares responsibility when things go badly within the EC. (73)

Presidencies devote considerable time to maintaining a dialogue with the EP. Foreign Ministers attend the EP plenary sessions at least twice (presenting the programme and reporting on what was achieved), and there have been additional visits, especially when more than one European Council was held. (74) Euro-Ministers are the most frequent visitors and they usually deal with internal market and general affairs issues. Ministers also meet EP committees frequently, for example, during the Dutch Presidency approximately 20 such meetings took place. The Political Affairs Committee, the Agricultural, the Internal Market Committees, and the Budget Committee are the most visited. The Dutch even invited all the rapporteurs of EP Committees dealing with internal market matters to meetings of the Council of Ministers. However, only a few of these rapporteurs attended. (75) These contacts help to facilitate the take up of parliamentary amendments to legislative proposals still being considered by Council of Ministers. It is customary for Presidencies to liaise with MEPs from their own countries in particular, e.g. to transmit information about the Presidencies aims and actions. Chairmen of EP Political Groups are also regularly informed.

A Presidency is required to answer a series of written and oral questions. There is a feeling, however, that many of the oral questions posed are esoteric and can only be dealt with in a very general way. Some Presidencies even expressed disillusionment and felt they were wasting their time dealing with an 'irresponsible' and undisciplined institution. (76)

Evaluation: opportunities and constraints

Is the Presidency more of a constraint than an opportunity? The West German Presidency of 1988 demonstrated that it can be an opportunity to make a significant political impact either on national objectives or agreements on Community policies. However, more often than not the opposite can happen and constraints outweigh opportunities, e.g. burdensome routine tasks which give very little influence to the incumbent. (77) Generally speaking there are limited opportunities for Presidencies to determine the agenda of the Community, to influence the outcome of Community policies, (78) or, for that matter, to pursue objectives of national interest. There are a number of constraints. Firstly, a Presidency is conditioned by the setting (economic, political, and institutional). Secondly, the EC is like a convoy - it moves slowly. Thirdly, the Community is not a 'Selbstzweck' but consists of a number of competing national interests and represents a forum for negotiation. The emphasis is on economic calculations about gains and losses rather than on problem-solving. Fourthly, the Presidency has no veto or sanction capability.

Though these constraints are considerable, it would be wrong to equate the influence of the Presidency with the exercise of either 'negative power' (to keep off or delay items on the agenda) or 'chance' (to claim credit for an agreement that was already on the books) (79) For one thing, the SEA has provided guidelines which Presidencies can follow; unlike the 1970s or early 1980s when Presidencies were primarily engaged in crisis-management. Secondly, the Troika principle or 'rolling' presidencies has made them more effective. Thirdly, the game involved in achieving the adoption of the 275 provisions of the Commission's White Paper, stimulates a Presidency to achieve credible results. This often motivates Presidencies to make self-sacrifices (or to

forego national interests), to lend their weight to compromise solutions, and to seek extensive cooperation with the Commission and the EP.

What powers are vested in the Presidency and how important is the office holder? Though the principle of rotation gives each country, whether small or large, equal opportunities, different office holders exercise different styles of engagement, agenda setting and arbitration. Equally, they offer different leadership abilities which affect the effectiveness of the Presidency as an instrument of EC decision-making. However, the separation between the 'chair' and the office holder in terms of effectiveness cannot always be made in practice. Furthermore, whilst it can be argued that 'small countries' can (and wish to) derive more overt benefit from the extra influence of the 'chair', this factor was not found to be important in this study.

Given that Community progress comes from slow co-operation, one should avoid judging a particular Presidency by its ability either to score high on what has become the European League Table of White Paper adoptions, or by its ability to achieve spectacular results. The danger with 'high scores' is that it does not differentiate quantity from quality; e.g. some pieces of legislation are of very limited importance and do not carry much weight in assessing economic advantages for member states. Yet they score just the same as other legislation which may be of greater importance for the conclusion of the internal market. The importance of preparatory work to the collective effort also deserves consideration. For example, the 1987 Danish Presidency had prepared the groundwork for a solution to the Delors package, yet it was the succeeding West German Presidency which was credited with the success. As the Danish Prime Minister Schluter complained, member states were not disposed

towards a compromise at the Copenhagen Summit, even though 'they were only trifles apart'. (80)

The apex for every Presidency is the European Council. IT is usually held at the end of the Presidency's term of office but can occur twice as was the case during the West German and French Presidencies and during the Irish and Italian Presidencies (all between 1988 and 1990). European Councils are a media stunt, in that they are a forum where either difficult problems are being resolved or important impulses are given for further Community development. Wilfred Martens and Helmut Kohl, for different reasons, were credited with having restored the European Council to the role of a political instigator during their respective Presidencies. It had assumed the role of an appeal body in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the face of the impotence of the Council of Ministers and COREPER. Martens preserved and promoted the Delors package and Kohl effectively prepared the Hannover European Council of June 1988. In contrast, the unsuccessful Copenhagen Summit of December 1987 was marred by innumerable matters of detail which should have been dealt with by the portfolio ministers before going to the European Council. (81) The absence of such details enabled the European Councils of The Hague (1986) and of Hannover (1988) in particular to devote itself to its original task e.g., to the conduct of policy discussions, to develop guidelines for the future, and to discuss major international problems. (82)

Conclusion

Although, the increase of majority voting by the SEA has affected the role of the Council Presidency as an initiator, power broker and influencer, in

general terms, the SEA has furthered both the management and innovative role of the Council Presidency. With the increasing volume of work brought about via the implementation of the internal market programme, more management activities were assumed by the Presidency. Similarly, the general aims raised in the SEA about social, monetary and foreign policy co-operation enabled certain Presidencies to employ an innovative role. Of the eight Presidencies examined, most sought to expand implementation of the SEA, Britain and Denmark were the exceptions. Also, most appeared prepared, to a considerable extent, to put the Community interest above the national interest. The European Council still represents the big occasion for the Council Presidency to present their six monthly stint in a positive light. The European Council meetings during the West German, Spanish and French Presidencies (1988-89) stand out particularly well in this respect (as do those during the Irish and Italian Presidencies in 1990). They represent the main vehicle for launching new initiatives and for furthering EC integration.

Since the SEA there has been a significant improvement both in the working relationship and in the collaboration between the Council Presidency and the Commission. Old Commission ideas for downgrading the Presidency and the tendency to regard the Presidency as a dangerous rival of the Commission has all but disappeared. The emphasis is now on legislative and political planning, involving the Commission, a seamless flow of Presidencies and increasingly the European Parliament as well. (83) Also EC and EPC matters are coming closer together because of the increasingly political use made (by the Commission among others) of the Community's economic instruments; witness their use in 1990/91 over Eastern Europe for instance. In short, both the Presidency and the Commission engage in joint tasks and in the co-ordination of their policy

objectives. The so called Delors package of 1987 and the Delors Report on EMU of 1989 are two of the clearest expressions of joint collaboration.

Caution is, therefore, in order to neither overplay nor under-estimate the impact of the Council Presidency in EC decision-making. The Presidency provides opportunities in the setting of political priorities and in determining the agenda, but entails limitations to what can be achieved. (84) These drawbacks result from the short duration of Presidencies, the 'rolling Presidency programmes', the overlap in functions between the Presidency and the Commission, and the prevailing economic and political conditions both domestically and in other EC countries. In the final analysis, the Council Presidency deals with twelve sovereign states and their competing interests, an independent-minded Commission and an aspirational EP. It needs considerable brokerage skill, to produce a winning coalition even in situations of majority voting. These skills require, among other things, leadership qualities, political clout, the formulation of compromises or 'package' solutions, concession on its own national interest, and an effective and co-operative working relationship with the Commission and the EP. Among the eight Presidencies examined for the period 1986 to 1989, the French and West German and to some extent Spanish Presidencies combined these requirements most effectively. These Presidencies also pursued, what Hellen Wallace describes as, a distinctive political objective and therefore tended to view the Presidency strategically. (85) There is no evidence, as was found in the mid 1980's, (86) that the Council Presidency has reached a plateau in the Community framework. On the contrary the indication is that the SEA has given the Council Presidency additional opportunities to play a greater and more effective role in EC decision-making.

However, whilst the overall impact of the Council Presidency on EC decision-making can not easily be assessed, a distinction should be made between the management and mediating performance of the Council Presidency in legislative terms on the one hand, and its performance as an innovator for new policies on the other. The dynamics of the SEA, regime changes in Eastern Europe and the Gulf conflict have acted as a stimulant for innovative measures on the part of the Presidencies between 1990 and 1991. These initiatives were mostly directed towards the Intergovernmental Conferences on EMU and Political Union.

Footnotes

1. Helen Wallace, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities: a comparative perspective', Colm O Nuallain ed., in collaboration with Jean-Marc Hoscheit, The Presidency of the European Council of Ministers. Impacts and Implications for National Governments, London, 1985, p. 262.
2. For example, Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Foreign Minister, cited the delay to entry into force of the SEA as having 'disrupted the scheduling of legislative activity'. See the Official Journal of the EC, 16. 6. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.49.
3. For a thorough analysis of this point see Axel Vornbaeumen, Dynamik in der Zwangsjacke: Die Praesidentschaft im Ministerrat der Europaeischen Gemeinschaft als Fuehrungsinstrument, Europa Union Verlag, Bonn, 1985.
4. These involved the period of 'cohabitation' (between Socialist and right of centre parties in France) during 1986 and 1988; the formation of a grand coalition in Belgium after the December 1987 general elections; the coming to power of the Portuguese Social Democrats in 1987; and the displacement of PASOK in Greece in 1989 by a coalition between New Democracy and the Communist Party.
5. Around fifty officials were interviewed; about five from each of the eight Presidencies examined, and about three officials each from the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat of the European Parliament, and the EPC Secretariat.
6. See H. Wallace, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers', pp. 272-73.

7. Growth, Inflation and Unemployment Rates (in percentages)
between 1985 and 1989

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Growth rate	0.9	1,9	2.3	2.8	2.9
Inflation rate	5.2	2.8	3.4	4.3	5.4
Unemployment rate	10.9	10.8	10.5	10.0	9.0

Source: Eurostatistics: Data for Short Term Analysis, Annual Reports 1986, pp.87-90.

8. Figures mentioned by Jacques Delors in a statement before the EP. See the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the European Parliament, 26. 7. 1989, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.27

9. Paolo Cecchini with Michel Catinat and Alexis Jacquemin, The European Challenge 1992: The Benefits of a Single Market, (English edition by John Robinson), Aldershot, 1988.

10. Leo Tindemans, in a speech before the European Parliament, quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 16. 6. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 49.

11. H. Wallace, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers', p. 274.

12. I am indebted to John Fitzmaurice for having brought this point to my attention.

13. See Euro Barometer: Early Release, 33, 17. 5. 1990, p. 2.

14 For details see Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Gerhard Herdegen, 'Die Oeffentliche Meinung', Werner Weidenfeld and Wolfgang Wessels eds., Jahrbuch Europaeische Integration, 1987/88, Bonn, 1988, pp.316-329.

15. Witness the initial stress by British governments on the EEC rather than the EC, and the stress in late 1990 on the ERM rather than the EMS.

16. For example, the MEP Marco Pannella criticised Ellemann-Jensen, the Danish Foreign Minister for not having mentioned the word 'Political Union' once in his speech before the European Parliament in July 1987 when introducing the Danish Presidency programme. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 8.7. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 138.

17. For example, British reluctance to countenance the further surrender of national sovereignty to the EC reflects the instinct of a nation which has enjoyed centuries of freedom from foreign interference.

18. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP., 9.12, 1986, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 43.

19. As the Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Karolos Papoulias pointed out 'we have consistently advocated a substantial strength of the powers of the EP', Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 5.2. 1988, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 31

20. However, since the 1986 referendum, Denmark seems to have developed a somewhat more positive attitude towards the EP. Nonetheless whilst there was more concern over the democratic deficit in 1989/90, the Danes were careful that the granting of more powers to the EP was not given at the expense of the powers of national parliaments.

21. Statement by Van den Broek, Dutch Foreign Minister, before the EP, Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 1.6. 1986, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg.

22. Quoted in Commission of the European Communities, Bulletin of the EC, 7/8, 1986, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.144.

23. See Wichard Woyke, 'Belgien, Niederlande, Luxemburg', Weidenfeld und Wessels eds., Jahrbuch der Eurpaeischen Integration 1987/88, p.334.

24. The Delors package, submitted in February 1987, comprised agricultural and financial reforms and regional aid.

25. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 8. 7. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.142.

26. Fernandez-Ordonez, the Spanish Foreign Minister, when presenting the Spanish programme had this in mind when he remarked that: 'The crisis looming over European integration has been overcome and we have stretching out before us a period of time in which we can work constructively without having to take decisions on what ought to be termed questions of survival'. The Official

Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 2-373, 17. 1. 1989, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, pp. 28-55.

27. At the Hannover European Council in June 1988 a committee was established which consisted of the governors of the twelve national banks and was chaired by Jacques Delors. It subsequently became known as the Delors committee.

28. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 17. 7. 1989, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.56.

29. Interviews with French government officials.

30. Jorgen G. Christensen goes as far as to argue that there is 'no realistic chance for a country of either setting its mark on the policies or determining the agenda of the Community'. Christensen, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities: the case of Denmark', O Nuallain and Hoscheit, The Presidency of the European Council of Ministers, p. 71.

31. For example, 1987 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome.

32. Such themes were: the European year for road safety (1986), the European year of the Environment (1987), and the European cancer information year (1989)

33. See Werner Ungerer, 'EC Progress under the German Presidency', Aussen Politik (German Foreign Affairs Review), XXXIX, 4, 1988, p. 321.

34. This was the view of a substantial number of government officials interviewed.

35. The French government had presented an eight point proposal at the Rhodes summit in December 1988. It also had held an audiovisual conference between 30 September and 2 October 1989 in Paris.

36. Whilst the Fontainebleau European Council of 1984 had made some temporary arrangement with regard to British budgetary rebates, by 1986/87 the limits of this arrangement had been reached.

37. In conjunction with the implementation of the February 1988 European Council decision, the Greek Presidency had made the design of working guidelines for the European Communities structural funds a main priority.

38. As part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Franco-German Friendship Treaty, the French government had tried to couple increased security co-operation with increased monetary co-operation and had proposed the establishment of an Economic Council.

39. Stage one of this 'Report' called for full implementation of the internal market, closer co-ordination of member states' economic and monetary policies, abolition of exchange controls and entry by all member states into the European Monetary System on equal terms. Stage two envisaged the establishment of a European System of Central Banks (ESCB), a narrowing of margins of fluctuations within the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), a pooling of some exchange reserves and precise though not binding Community rules on national budget deficits and

their financing. Stage three foresaw the ESCB establishing a common monetary policy to replace co-ordinated independent national monetary policies, official reserves pooled and managed by the ESCB, decisions on exchange market interventions left to the ESCB, and irrevocably locked exchange rates, probably followed by the introduction of a single currency.

40. Statement by Mr. Roland Dumas, French Foreign Minister, before the EP, the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 27. 7. 1989, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 63.

41. See for example, Juliet Lodge, 'Social policy', Journal of European Integration. XIII, pp. 135-150; and Emil J. Kirchner, Trade Unions as a Pressure Group in the European Community, Westmead, 1977, chapter seven.

42. This Social Charter embraces employment/unemployment, health and safety at the work place, vocational training, the rights and freedoms of employees and trade unions, equal treatment for men and women, and the protection of the environment.

43. Seveso marked the dioxin tragedy in 1986; drums containing waste were being transported within the Community without even the most elementary safety precautions.

44. See the statement by Delors before the EP, the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 6. 7. 1988, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.140.

45. For further details on the MFA see footnote 17 in chapter three.
46. Troika is a system whereby three Presidencies liaise closely: the incumbent, the predecessor and the successor. It was first introduced with regard to EPC matters in 1981, in the so called London Report, and extended to internal market affairs in 1985.
47. H. Wallace, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers', p. 275.
48. For example, the Troika visited Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and met Mr. Yasser Arafat in Madrid.
49. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 11. 6. 1986 Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.114.
50. This apparently was the wish of Jacques Delors. See Peter Hort, 'Der Europaeische Rat', Werner Weidenfeld and Wolfgang Wessels, eds. 1986/87, Jahrbuch der Europaeischen Integration 1986/87, Bonn, 1987, p. 54.
51. This was done successfully by Britain on its employment initiative, by France on proposals concerning the audiovisual sector, and by Spain on Monetary Union. Greece was less successful with regard to its initiative on social policy, even though Greece had sent a memorandum on this subject to the Commission three months in advance of its Presidency.
52. National co-ordinators are national representatives dealing exclusively

with internal market matters within COREPER.

53. For details on 'A' and 'B' point procedures see chapter three of this book.

54. There have, however, been exceptions. For example, the informal ECOFIN meeting at Nyborg, in November 1987, took a number of decisions to strengthen the EMS.

55. See Werner Ungerer, 'Die neuen Verfahren nach der Einheitlichen Europaeischen Akte: Eine Bilanz aus der Ratsperspektive' Integration, 3/89, Bonn, July 1989, p. 98.

56. For example, West Germany accepted being 'outvoted' with regard to the Directive on machine tool in order, so it seemed, to demonstrate its inability to fulfill demands presented by the German machine tool lobby.

57 See Ungerer, 'Die neuen Verfahren', p. 98.

58. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 7. 2. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.27.

59. Ibid.

60. This compromise proposal consisted of a reduction in agricultural expenditures, (without questioning the basic principle of CAP), a substantial rise in regional aid, (but not as high as proposed by the Commission), and EC financial reforms.

61. This view was particularly held by Belgian government officials.

62. This compromise made two significant concessions to British demands for rigorous controls on farm spending. In other respects the proposals were rather coy, leaving many blanks to be filled in by the summitters. But it made specific suggestions on aid to poorer regions, new ceilings on EC revenue of around 1.3 percent of the Community's GNP, on ceilings for cereal harvests, placing a limit on overall EC farm spending, and an offer to extend Britain's rebate.

63. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 16. 6. 1988, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.

64. Only phase one of the Delors committee report was adopted at the Madrid European Council.

65. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 26. 7. 1989, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.56.

66. See, for example, the European Parliament debate of 6.7.1988. Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 6.7.1988, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 144.

67. See Woyke, 'Belgien, Niederland, Luxemburg', p. 335.

68. See Peter Hort, 'Der Europaeische Rat', in Werner Weidenfeld and Wolfgang Wessels eds., Jahrbuch der Europaeischen Integration, 1988/89,

Bonn, 1989, p.43.

69. Ibid., p.45.

70. See Heinz-Juergen Axt, 'Griechenland', Weidenfeld and Wessels eds., Jahrbuch der Europaeischen Integration, 1988/89, Bonn, 1989, p. 327

71. Guy de Bassompierre, Changing The Guard in Brussels: An Insider's View of the EC Presidency, New York, 1988, p.81.

72. Consultation and co-operation is intensified before and during the Presidency and involves various levels: college, individual Commissioners, services on the Commission's part, and government members, government services, and the Permanent Delegation on the Presidency's part. Greece, France and West Germany had joint meetings between the government and the Commission college.

73. As Delors pointed out with regard to the Copenhage Summit: 'Failure is also failure of the Comission. When things go badly within Europe, every one is at fault'. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 16. 12. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.132.

74. The Stuttgart European Council of 1983 decided that the Presidency should report to the EP on the outcome of each European Council.

75. Karl Heinz Buck, 'Der Ministerrat', Weidenfeld and Wessels eds., Jahrbuch Europaeische Integration 1986/87, Bonn, 1987, p. 63.

76. For further details on French position towards the EP see chapter six.

77. See Christensen, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers', p.71

78. Ibid.

79. H. Wallace and Edwards concluded in 1976 that 'The only strategy left to the chair is to block issues by keeping them off the agenda or by delaying their discussion in Committee, except for the rare moment of good luck when a Presidency is able to claim credit for an agreement that was already on the books'. Hellen Wallace and Geoffrey Edwards, 'European Community: the evolving role of the Presidency of the Council', International Affairs, October 1976, p. 549.

80. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 16. 12. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p. 127.

81. Poul Schluter, the Danish Prime Minister, complained that governments had not given their portfolio ministers enough discretion to enable them to complete their business in their own Council of Ministers meetings. See the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 16. 12. 1987, Office for Official Publications, Luxembourg, p.128.

82. As Jacques Delors remarked, the Hannover summit was 'remnescent of the early days of informal discussions, so informal that it was a rarity to see leaders and foreign ministers reading from pre-prepared notes'. Quoted in the Official Journal of the EC, Debates of the EP, 6. 7.1988, Office for Official

Publications, Luxembourg, p. 140. For an analysis of the original aims of the European Council see Gianni Bonvicini and Elfriede Regelsberger, 'The decision-making process in the EC's European Council', The International Spectator, XXII, 3, pp. 152-176.

83. I am indebted to John Fitzmaurice for having brought this point to my attention.

84. Guy de Bassompierre goes as far as to suggest that 'Presidency, however worthy and able can only influence, at best, 5 to 10 per cent of issues', de Bassompierre, *Changing the Guard*, p. 130.

85. H. Wallace, 'The Presidency of the Council of Ministers', p. 274.

86. O Nuallain and Hoscheit, *The Presidency of the European Council of Ministers*, p. XI.

Table 5.1

1935

1966

1987

1988

1989

	J	JU	DI	J.	JU	JU	JU	DJ	JU	DJ	J.	D
Portugal		RS/6.11 -FM; -FO; -FT; -JM; -SO	FE/26.1 & 16.2		GR/3.4	GE/19.7 EP/19.7 RS/17.8.1 FO; -SO						
Ireland			RS/13.2 -FT; -SO; -BN; -JM R/26.6		GR/20.1 GE/17.2 RS/10.3 -FM; -FO; -FT; -AG; -SO; -JM; -BN R/26.5							
Italy		FE/3.7	GR/27.6	RS/1.8 -FT; JM; -SO; BN	GR/3.3 RS/18.4 -FM; FT; JM; SO; BN GE/14.6	R/8-9.11 GR/9.7 RS/29.7 -FM; FT; -SO; -JM; BN						
Luxembourg			GE/21.5	RS/14.7 -JM -BN								
NL												
UK		RS/2-17.9 -BN -JM	RS/10.2 -JM RS/21.5 -BN		GE/RS/11.6 -AG; SO; JM							
Belgium	RS/7.1 -FT	GE/13.10 RS/28.11 -FT -JM	R/27.2 RS/12.3 -AG -SO		GR/19.10 GE/13.12	RS/9.5 FT; JM; SO GR/19.10						
Denmark					GE/8.9 RS/10.9 -JM; AG; -SO; BN	GR/14.4 GE/10.5 RS/3.6 -JM; -BN						
West Germany	SE/10.3 SAARLAND WEST BERLIN SE/12.5 NORTH- RHINE WESTPHALIA		SE/15.6 LOEHR SAARDN	SE/12.10 BAVARIA	GE/25.1 RS/11.3 -BN	SE/13.9 BRD; BN SCHL. HOLST.	SE/20.3 BADEN W	RS/29.11 -JM	SE/WESTBERLIN 29.1 SE/HESS: 12.3 RS/13.4 -FT; JM FE/23.5			
Greece	GE/2.6 RS/26.7 -FT -JM		RS/24.4 -JM	RS/30.10 -SO; -JM	RS/5.2 -JM	RS/22.9 -SO; JM RS/26.11 -JM	RS/21.6	RS/16.11 -SO RS/15.10 -JM	RS/17.3 -BN; -JM GE/18.6	RS/2.7 -FM; -FO; -FT; -JM; -SO; BN; GE/5.11 RS/23.11 -FM; -FO; -FT; JM; -SO; BN		
Spain		RS/3.7 -FO -FT -JM	R/12.3 GE/22.6 SE/22.6 Andalusia	RS/26.7 -SO	SE/10.6 EP/10.6		SE/29.5 Catalunida	RS/8.7 -JM; -SO		GE/29.10		
France			GE/16.3 RS/20.3 -FM; -FO; -FT; -JM; -AG; -SO; -BN				FE/24.4 and 8.5 RS/12.5 -FM; -FO; FT; -SO; JM; -AG; BN; GE/5 and 12.6 RS/28.6 -SO.	R/6.11				

Key:
 GE - General Elections
 GR - Government Resignations
 RS - Government Resignations
 AG - Agric. Min.
 BN - Britton. Min.
 FT - Finance Min.
 FO - Foreign Min.
 FM - Trade & Industry
 JM - Prime Min.
 SO - Soc. Policy Min.

