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Practical arrangements

Introduction

47. As soon as it took office the present Commission emphasized that it was determined to make full use of its powers under the Treaties to strengthen the roles of both the Community and its political institutions: Parliament, the Council and the Commission. Signature of the Single Act can only strengthen the Commission's resolve.

48. With an eye to its entry into force the aim must be to make operation of the institutions more efficient and more democratic:

(i) the Council's decision-making capacity will have to be increased by proceeding to a vote instead of searching constantly for unanimity;

(ii) the Commission's political role will have to be strengthened to allow it to take a stance more in line with its initiating and executive function;

(iii) Parliament will have to be given a greater role in decision-making.

49. Attainment of these goals may prove difficult given the practices which have developed over the years. It will call for watchfulness and improved coordination, a vital factor if the Commission is to increase its effectiveness and adhere more closely to the principle of collective responsibility.

50. The provisions of this part of the Vade-mecum are designed to combine the need for greater consistency with the need for more flexibility and swifter reactions. They affect the entire decisionmaking process, from the drafting stage to the adoption of proposals by the Council. Consideration is being given to the best way of giving Parliament more influence on decision-making, in particular through to the cooperation procedure. Appropriate instructions will be issued in due course.

51. Although they are in complete conformity with the Treaty of Rome – leaving changes introduced by the Single Act aside – it should be noted that the provisions of this part of the Guide require a substantial departure from current practice. 52. The key to the success of a proposal is of course its political and technical quality. However, due weight must be given, in drawing up proposals, to the institutional context. To this end:

(i) care must be taken to choose the correct legal basis. If it calls for a qualified majority there must be sound reasons for selecting it, especially where another Treaty article might be considered (see sections 74 to 85);

(ii) binding acts, in other words regulations, directives or decisions, should be chosen wherever this is allowed by the Treaty or the Single Act; recourse to non-binding acts, such as resolutions, communications and recommendations, should be the exception rather than the rule and justification should be provided (see sections 86 to 92);

(iii) the Commission's executive powers, whether conferred by the Council or arising from Treaty provisions on implementation of the budget must be exploited to the full and the instructions issued by the Commission in December 1985 as regards the committee procedures which can be envisaged (advisory, management and regulatory committees) must be strictly observed (see sections 93 to 105);

(iv) all the implications of the Community's external competence must be taken into account (see sections 106 to 112).

53. The line to be followed in drafting proposals applies equally to the code of practice for Commission representatives at meetings within the Council. Beginning at working party level:

(i) every effort should be made where the Commission's initial proposal is based on a Treaty article calling for a majority decision to guide proceedings towards a majority decision rather than allowing talks at expert level to drag on indefinitely in the hope of producing unanimity (see sections 55 to 63);

(ii) delegations should be encouraged to abstain to facilitate a decision in cases where unanimity is still required (see sections 64 to 65); and

(iii) constant vigilance should be exercised to prevent (a) the introduction of legal bases, additional or otherwise, calling for unanimity and (b) the watering down of either the form or the substance of a proposal. In no circumstances can the substance of a Commission proposal be altered by a Commission staff paper (see sections 66 to 85);

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(iv) as far as the Commission's executive powers are concerned, there must be no departure from the committee formula proposed (see sections 93 to 105). tional aspects of a proposal are as vital as its substance. Whatever the temptation, there can be no trade-off between institutional principles and 'progress' on the substance of the proposal. It is obvious that any quarter given on one proposal will have repercussions on many others.

54. To sum up, it must be stressed that the institu-

Rules governing voting in the Council

Simple majority (Text of Article 148(1) of the EEC Treaty)

'Save as otherwise provided in this Treaty, the Council shall act by a majority of its members.'

Qualified majority (Text of Article 148(2) of the EEC Treaty as amended by Article 14 of the Act of Accession of Spain and Portugal)

Where the Council is required to act by a qualified majority, the votes of its members shall be weighted as follows:

| Belgium | 5 |
|----------------|---------|
| Denmark | 3 |
| Germany | 10 |
| Greece | 5 |
| Spain | _5 8 |
| France | 10 |
| Ireland | 3 |
| Italy | 10 |
| Luxembourg | 2 |
| Netherlands | 5 |
| Portugal | 5 |
| United Kingdom | 10 |

For their adoption, acts of the Council shall require at least:

(i) 54 votes in favour where this Treaty requires them to be adopted on a proposal from the Commission,

(ii) 54 votes in favour, cast by at least eight members, in other cases.'