

UDENRIGSMINISTERIET

EUROPAUDVALGET
(2. samling)
Alm. del - bilag 96 (offentligt)

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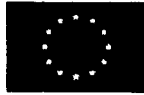
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Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges i forbindelse med Det Europæiske Råd i Laeken den 14.-15. december 2001 Rådets generalsekretær/Høje Repræsentant, Javier Solanas rapport vedrørende Rådets interne forberedelse af udvidelsen.

P. H. Olsen



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 December 2001

15100/01

POLGEN 38

INTERIM REPORT

from: The Secretary-General/High Representative
To: The European Council
Subject: *Preparing the Council for enlargement*

1. In June, the European Council considered a report by the Secretary-General¹ assessing implementation of the operational recommendations agreed at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, which were designed as an important first step in preparing the Council for enlargement. The Secretary-General's assessment highlighted many significant shortcomings in the way the Council operates, even after implementing these recommendations in the present Union of fifteen. Taking effective steps to address these shortcomings before enlargement therefore remains a pressing imperative.
2. The European Council accordingly acknowledged that additional reforms of the Council's structures and working methods are necessary. It mandated the Secretary-General to present detailed suggestions for further action to ensure an effective Council, based on better preparation of Council meetings, effective coordination between different Council formations and more efficient working methods after enlargement, so that the European Council can take the necessary decisions by June 2002.

¹ See document 9518/01 "*Preparing the Council for enlargement – Overall assessment and evaluation of implementation of the Helsinki recommendations*".

3. Recent events and the Union's response to them serve to underscore the need for an ambitious and comprehensive package of reform measures if the Council is to remain an effective decision-making body capable of delivering results quickly when needed. The series of questions raised in the first part of the Secretary-General's report to the Göteborg European Council are more relevant than ever, and constitute the general framework within which reflections are being carried forward. The objective is to draw up a coherent and ambitious series of practical suggestions which address all of these questions.
4. The fact that a Convention will be convened next year to prepare the future Intergovernmental Conference does not diminish the urgency of Council reform. A great deal can and should be done under the existing Treaties within the timeframe envisaged by the European Council and in accordance within the scope of the Secretary-General's mandate.
5. The report setting out detailed suggestions for reform within the scope of the present Treaties will consist of three main operational parts structured around three broad themes:
 - *tailoring the Council's structures to its functions*. This presupposes identifying more clearly the Council's legislative and non-legislative functions and ensuring that its structures and formations are geared to efficient performance of both these functions;
 - *strengthening the instruments and means available* to ensure that the Council is adequately supported and guided by its preparatory bodies and General Secretariat. Special consideration must be given to the Presidency's role and functions as a factor for continuity in the functioning of the Council;
 - and *rationalising working methods and logistics*, including negotiating methods and the conduct of meetings, transparency, the use of human and financial resources as well as various logistical questions. While these issues may on the face of it appear more mundane, far-reaching changes will be required in all of these areas as well if the Council is to meet the challenge of enlargement.
6. The report will be available before the end of March 2002. The President of the European Council will then make arrangements for the report to be given due consideration in an appropriate way before the necessary decisions are taken at the Seville European Council in June.

