

AMENDMENT FORM

Title IV

Suggestion for amendment of Article : 16

By Members: Mr Andrew Duff, Mr Lamberto Dini, Mr Paul Helminger, Mrs Lone Dybkjaer, Lord Maclellan, Mr Adrian Severin.

Status : Members and alternate members.

Article 16 : The European Council

1. The European Council *shall define* the general political directions and priorities of the Union *at home and abroad*. It shall establish the *medium-term strategic programme of the Union, on a proposal of the Commission, after having consulted the European Parliament and national parliaments. It may act on behalf of the Council of Ministers, as well as exercise other functions as laid down in the Constitution.*
 2. The European Council shall consist of the Heads of State or Government of the Member *States and* the President of the Commission. The *[Minister of Foreign Affairs/Secretary of the Union]* shall take part in its work.
 3. The European Council shall meet quarterly *or additionally whenever the situation so requires*, convened by its President.
 4. Except where the Constitution provides otherwise, decisions of the European Council shall be taken by consensus.
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Explanation:

1. In view of its growing importance in the life of the Union, and of the consequent effect on the interinstitutional balance, the role of the European Council needs more precise definition. We have therefore dropped the ambiguous phrase 'provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development'. We have added the phrase 'at home and abroad'

to give currency to the Convention's strongly expressed will that the Union should have an enhanced capacity to act in the international scene.

In the second sentence, we have inserted a key item of annual business, which is to formulate and refresh a medium-term political programme of the Union. This should be decided by the heads of government but proposed by the Commission and be the subject of consultation with both MEPs and MPs.

This is a key element in the reform of the Council presidency, and puts an end to the distractions of the current six-monthly national programmes.

In the third sentence, we give the leadership role of the European Council more scope, but as constrained by the Constitution. That it can and does act on behalf of the Council of Ministers acting in an executive capacity should not be disguised.

The reference to 'other functions' accords with Article 15, concerning the European Parliament.

2. We do not support the proposal for a President of the European Council to be appointed from outside the membership of the European Council. Former prime ministers are not inevitably best placed to take on major international duties. Currently serving prime ministers will not take easily to playing second fiddle to one of their former colleagues. And such a 'chairman of the board' as seems to be proposed would sooner or later assume executive responsibilities that would lead to head-on clashes with the President of the Commission.

Some of us prefer the title Secretary of the Union as being less confusing with the traditional nomenclature of national ministers of foreign affairs. One might also recall that one of the chief interlocutors of this person will be the US Secretary of State.

3. The Praesidium's wording is unnecessarily complicated for a fairly straightforward concept: the European Council will meet at least four times a year.

It should fall to the Rules of Procedure of the European Council and not the Constitution to designate who each leader can bring along to the meetings.