Institut Européen
d'Administration Publique

European Institute
of Public Administration

EIPASCOPE

No. 1992/1

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EIPA and Maastricht in the European Limelight – Ten Years After!

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EIPA was able to achieve its objectives thanks to the valuable support and essential contribution of Mr Schmelzer, former Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, who held the position of Chairman of the Board of Governors for the last eight years. Mr Schmelzer played an important part, particularly in the relations with the Dutch Government. The current Chairman of the Board is Mr Peter Sutherland, Chairman of Allied Irish Banks and former Commissioner at the Commission of the European Communities. EIPA is pleased that it can call upon on a 'European personality' whose experience will certainly contribute to its further development in a European context.

Last year the European Council took place in Maastricht for the second time, when EIPA was celebrating its tenth anniversary. Along with other international institutions, EIPA organized two open days in honour of the European Council. On that occasion Dr F. Laursen, Professor of International Politics at EIPA, gave a lecture on the 'Aspects of the Intergovernmental Conference' with special emphasis on 'Expectations and Hopes'. In addition, the Documentation Centre and conference rooms were made accessible to the general public and video presentations were given on the European Community. Numerous visitors were attracted from all over Europe.

With the aim to keep pace with the way Europe is rapidly evolving, EIPA is striving to develop its expertise and adapt to the emerging needs. EIPA's Board lately decided to expand and establish an antenna in Luxembourg, the 'Centre européen de la Magistrature'. Concerning the EFTA countries, EIPA has signed a cooperation agreement with Austria and more recently with Switzerland, the same will be done with the other EFTA countries in the near future.There is no doubt that EIPA will spare no effort to maintain its widely recognized reputation in Europe.

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The Portuguese Presidency and the 'Waves Movement'

Francisco de Meirelles
Researcher at EIPA

In 1987 and 1988 a study was conducted at EIPA on the Member States' capacities for policy coordination[1] in view of their participation in the European decision-making process. This study was extended to Spain[2] at the time of the preparations for Spain's first Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Community. The main conclusion of this study was that the increase in the capacity to coordinate policies happened in 'waves'. This means that each time a new and important development took place in the integration process of Spain, the coordination capacity would drop to a lower level, yet remain higher than the previous level after the last important development. This happened, for instance, after the accession in 1986, and again after the Spanish Presidency in 1989. Simultaneously, the increase in the capacity to coordinate takes some time to develop, but then develops quite quickly, before it again reduces speed; this produces a curve that looks like a 'wave'. A succession of these curves produced with new changes in the environment can be described as a 'wave movement'.

Reflecting on the thirteen seminars we have run in Portugal since December 1990, a similar effect seems to take place in that country as well. This was not only in terms of the capacity for policy coordination, to which the last four seminars were dedicated, but also in terms of knowledge of the European Community and the European decision-making processes, and the country's participation in European integration. This wave effect was noticeable during the run up to the Portuguese Presidency when, judging by the press references, its deeper aims were not fully appreciated. As time went by, more information became available and the role of the Presidency became clearer and the wave effect accelerated.

One easy way of checking this positive movement is to compare the government' s references to the Presidency one year ago and those at present. In the past, it was common to refer to the Presidency as 'a chance to promote Portuguese interests', or that the government should 'use the Presidency to achieve certain advantages'; nowadays, the official declarations on the Presidency refer more to the service that Portugal is going to provide to the European Community and its members, and to the role of 'good Europeans' and 'good European policy-making coordinators' rather than 'main actors on the scene'. This kind of statement seems to be more in accordance with the proper role of the Presidency, particularly in the case of the smaller Member States, as is confirmed by the analysis published by EIPA in 1988.[3]

It remains to be seen whether the Portuguese Presidency will be a success or not. However, there are some indications that the country is choosing a very cautious and conscientious way of preparing itself for this task. EIPA modestly hopes that it has contributed to that preparation by training almost 250 civil servants in the institutional framework of European policy-making and specific techniques for conducting meetings in the Council of Ministers. At the same time EIPA also trained more than 80 civil servants responsible for the internal coordinating mechanisms, which play a definite role in the way a country participates in European policymaking. Besides this, the positions assumed recently by the Portuguese in the two Intergovernmental Conferences show increasing flexibility which is of the utmost importance for the success of the Presidency when Portugal finally assumes that chair.

In all likelihood, Portugal will place the emphasis during its Presidency on the issue of 'social and economic cohesion', one of the flags it has been flying since the accession in 1986. On the other hand, the European Community will be facing a number of serious challenges, such as revision of the Common Agricultural Policy and the restructuring and funding of the special European funds for the next couple of years. Externally, there will be the Yugoslavia dossier, and the former Soviet Union and Eastern Block issues. Whether Portugal is going to try and extend the social and economic cohesion principle to include the external relations of the EC,

or whether it will only focus on the internal dimension of this principle, are questions that are still unanswered however, indications seem to point to the latter.

Finally, we wish Portugal success in the coming six months in its task of Presidency of the Council of Ministers. As Portugal is the last country of the present Member States to assume this role, may its investment in preparation pay the dividends the country, and Europe, deserves. *Felicidades.*

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[1] See 'Action or Reaction: Report on the Erenstein Colloquium' by Les Metcalfe. EIPA internal document.

[2] See 'La adaptación de la Administración española a la participación en la Comunidad Europea', by Eduardo Zapico Goni . EIPA internal document.

[3] See 'The European Council 1974-1986: Evaluation and Prospects, edited by Jean-Marc Hoscheit and Wolfgang Wessels, EIPA, Maastricht, 1988.