
Introduction

This two-day module combines the theory and practice of the organisation and functioning of the Council Working Parties.

The first day starts by placing the Council Working Parties and their role within the Council structure, the planning of its work and the workflow. It then looks in detail into the proceedings of the Working Parties, focusing on the roles of different actors. The session covers both, the formal elements stemming from the Rules of Procedure of the Council, as well as the informal practices that have developed. It then turns to the roles of the General Secretariat of the Council. The last session covers the handling of the documents in the Council.

The second day concentrates on the tasks of the delegates. After the initial overview, the participants will engage in a workshop, where they will approach a draft proposal as if they were a delegate in a Council Working Party. The aim of the workshop is to detect potentially problematic issues, recognise caveats in drafting, enter appropriate reservations and propose alternative solutions. In the afternoon the delegates' work outside of the Council Working Party meeting will be highlighted, focusing on their relationship with other stakeholders and the coordination within their own Permanent Representation and with their administration in the capital. The final session will discuss any outstanding issues from the point of view of representing Spanish interests and working in the Spanish Permanent Representation to the EU. An experienced Spanish official will join the team of trainers.

Both days aim to assure a balance between presentations, discussion and case work. The participants will be invited to read some articles and documentation in advance.

Seminar team

Dr Sabina Lange, Lecturer, EIPA

Ms Katarzyna Okoń, Counsellor, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the EU

Mr David Hollister, Former Official from the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union

Mr Juan Arístegui, Head of Cabinet of the Secretary of State for the European Union

Ms Araceli Barragán, Programme Organiser, EIPA

Programme

WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2012

09.30 **Welcome and introduction**

Juan Pablo Hernández López, INAP, Madrid
Sabina Lange, Lecturer; European Decision-Making Unit, EIPA, Maastricht

09.45 **Structure and organisation of the Council: planning of the work, workflow and role of the Council Working Parties**

The seminar begins with a short overview of the general organisation of the Council's work and its structures. It then places the Council Working Parties (and the special Committees) in the context of the Council's work, the planning of its work, and the decision-making.

Sabina Lange

11.30 Coffee break

11.45 **Actors in a Council Working Party and their roles: Rules of Procedure and common practices**

This session looks in detail into the proceedings of the work of a Council Working Party and the roles of various actors, with a special focus on the Presidency and the Commission. It analyses the Rules of Procedure with regard to the conduct of meetings, as well as practices that have been established with regard to invited guests, informal meetings and other Council-related fora, which are related to the work of a Council Working Party.

14.00 Lunch

15.30 **The role of the General Secretariat of the Council**

The work of the Council is supported by the General Secretariat of the Council. It helps the planning of the work of the Council; it supports it logistically and with advice and guidance with regard to the substance of the dossiers, as well as with legal advice on form, substance and procedure. These aspects of the role of the General Secretariat of the Council as well as the relations with the Presidency and other delegations will be highlighted.

David Hollister, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union

16.30 Coffee break

17.00 Documents: handling and compilation of Council documents

The final session of the first day takes a closer look at the variety of documents produced in the course of a life of a file in the Council, from it being discussed in a Council Working Party to its adoption at the Council meeting. Typology of documents, timeliness of their circulation, transparency issues, language regime and other aspects will be discussed.

18.30 End of first day

THURSDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2012

09.30 Delegates in a Council Working Party: tasks of a delegate

This session presents a brief overview of the variety of tasks of delegates and different options at their disposal with regard to entering the reservations. The session acts as preparation for the workshop, where delegates take upon themselves the handling of a dossier in the Council Working party.

Katarzyna Okoń, Counsellor, Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU
Sabina Lange

10.15 Workshop: handling of a dossier in a Council Working Party

Working parties are tasked with examining all the relevant files and dossiers in their area and reducing the number of open issues to be dealt with by the COREPER, and eventually by the Ministers. They tackle general questions as well as technical issues related to any file. In the workshop the participants will represent different delegations in the Council Working Party. They will receive an extract from a file (a Commission legislative proposal) and a short mandate from the Member State they will be presenting. They will then be invited to scrutinise the file. The aim of the workshop is to detect potentially problematic issues, recognise caveats in drafting, enter appropriate reservations and propose alternative solutions.

11.30 Coffee break

11.45 Workshop: handling of a dossier in a Council Working Party (cont.)

14.00 Lunch

15.30 Delegates' work outside the Working Party meeting: relations with other actors and coordination within the Permanent Representation and with the capital

This session looks into the nature, common practices and specificities of delegates' relations with other stakeholders in the policy-process as well as with her/his own administration in Brussels and in the capital. It specifically addresses the work and relations with other delegates, with the Presidency, with Commission officials and with staff and members of the European Parliament as well as with interest representatives.

16.30 Coffee

17.00 **Discussion: representing Spanish interests in the Council and working in the Spanish Permanent Representation**

An experienced Spanish official will join the team of trainers to discuss with the participants the organisation and workings of the Spanish Permanent Representation and representation of Spanish interests in the Council. Participants will also be invited to address any remaining issues concerning the organisation and functioning of the Council Working Parties.

Juan Arístegui, Head of Cabinet of the Secretary of State for the European Union
Katarzyna Okoń
Sabina Lange

18.30 Evaluation and end of the seminar