

EU Presidency note on the weightings of votes in the Council (24 May 2000)

Caption: Note from the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, dated 24 May 2000, on the weightings of votes in the Council. In its note, the Presidency provides tables that illustrate the possible methods for amending the weighting of votes in the Council.

Source: Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Presidency note – IGC 2000 – Weightings of votes in the Council, CONFER 4745/00. Brussels: 24.05.2000. 8 p.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/cig2000/en/04745en.pdf.

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CONFERENCE
OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS
OF THE MEMBER STATES

Brussels, 24 May 2000 (26.05)
(OR. fr)

CONFER 4745/00

LIMITE

PRESIDENCY NOTE

Subject : *CIG 2000*
– *Weightings of votes in the Council*

INTRODUCTION

At their first discussion of the matter, the representatives concentrated on the main characteristics of the future system for weighting votes within the Council, irrespective of the option chosen (dual majority or reweighting) to ensure that the system is fair, transparent, effective and can be easily understood by citizens.

The discussions have shown that there is very broad agreement that **any weighting system must reflect the dual nature of the Union**, which is both a Union of States and a Union of peoples. As a result:

- any qualified majority must be in accordance with a minimum threshold (expressed in terms of population) sufficient to ensure its legitimacy; if the current system were simply extrapolated to a Union consisting of 28 Member States, minimum representation in population terms resulting from the qualified majority would fall to 51,36% instead of the present 58,16%.¹ The first discussions have brought to the fore a rather clear trend in favour of a minimum threshold in the vicinity of 60%;
- most of the Member States also consider that any qualified majority should include at least half of the Member States of the Union, as has always been the case up to now.

Many delegations having expressed the hope that work would be carried out on the basis of concrete examples, the Presidency presents the annexed tables showing the possible methods for modifying the weighting of votes within the Council. These tables **are not negotiating proposals tabled by the Presidency**; they are simply technical illustrations of possible methods based on certain working *hypotheses* which are themselves conditioned by a number of *parameters* which should be the subject of political negotiations in due course.

¹ The following are given for the delegations' information:

- in Annex I, the current weighting of votes and the most recent Eurostat statistics concerning the population of the EU with 15 members;
- in annex II, the weighting and the figures corresponding to the population of an EU with 28 members in the case of a linear extrapolation of the current system.

A. DUAL MAJORITY SYSTEM

Hypotheses

The dual majority system involves setting a dual threshold expressed respectively:

- as a number of Member States, and
- as a percentage of the EU population.

Adoption of a measure by a qualified majority within the Council depends on those two conditions being met.

Taking account of the need to present such a system simply and comprehensibly, the table given in Annex III contains reference figures making it possible to calculate easily whether the population criterion has been met. These figures correspond to the population of each Member State in proportion to the Union's total population, rounded up to the nearest tenth of a percentage point and multiplied by ten.

Parameters

If such a system were adopted, two political parameters would need to be defined by the Conference:

1. *The minimum percentage of the total EU population required for a qualified majority; if a minimum threshold of 60% were adopted in accordance with the general approach set out above (see introduction), the table given in Annex III shows that the reference figure applicable would be 600.*
2. *The minimum number of Member States; in accordance with the approach set out in the introduction, the minimum number of Member States in the example set out in Annex III has been set at half (i.e. 14).*

B. REWEIGHTING

Hypotheses

Under the current system of vote weighting, the voting strength of each Member State reflects relative population size, not in an absolute and linear way as under a dual majority system, but in accordance with a highly degressive proportional method resulting from a political agreement. To illustrate a reweighting model in favour of the most populated Member States based on the same principle, the Presidency has based itself upon the following hypotheses illustrated in Annex IV:

- (i) Taking as a basis the linear extrapolation to 28 Member States set out in Annex II, the votes of all Member States have been *doubled*, the main justification for this doubling of votes being to broaden the scope for differentiation between the States if that proves necessary in the course of the negotiations.
- (ii) One vote has been subtracted from each Member State to introduce an element of reweighting which is generalised but limited in scope.
- (iii) Only Member States *abandoning the right to nominate a second Commissioner* have been allocated additional votes (taking account of the link made in this connection in the Treaty Protocol on the institutions with the prospect of enlargement of the European Union).

Parameters

If the Conference tended towards such a method, the discussion should focus in particular on the following parameters:

1. ***The threshold for a qualified majority (in terms of votes).*** *Since the Union's inception, this figure has remained around 71%. The actual level of the threshold, however, which determines the ease with which decisions can be taken in the Council with any given vote weightings, has still to be examined inter alia in the light of Declaration No 50 annexed to the Final Act of the Treaty of Amsterdam.*
2. ***Limitation of reweighting solely to Member States which forego a second Commissioner, a limitation which has already been disputed by certain delegations.***
3. ***The degree of homogeneity of clusters of Member States and the possible desirability of revising the criteria for forming clusters.***
4. ***The minimum number of Member States represented by a qualified majority; the corollary of the current system being that a qualified majority always represents at least half of the Member States, the issue is whether that criterion should be retained, either as an arithmetical consequence of the system itself or in the form of a rule expressly mentioned in the Treaty.***
5. ***The minimum population weight of any qualified majority.*** *The annexed example is based on a figure of 58,18% which is approximately equivalent to the present level.*
6. ***The time when the new weighting should be introduced.***
7. ***The configurations of the Union to be taken into account to illustrate further simulations.*** *In the light of the political undertakings given to the applicant countries, the Presidency has selected simulations based on a number of 28 Member States. Taking account of the comments made by certain delegations, the Presidency is prepared to submit tables limited to the existing Member States and to the applicants for which accession negotiations have already started.*

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The representatives are asked to express an opinion on all the questions set out in this note, in particular on each of the negotiating parameters for the dual majority system and reweighting.

Annex I

EU-15 MEMBER STATES
(1999 Eurostat Population Data)

MEMBER STATES	VOTES	POPULATION /000
Germany	10	82 038
United Kingdom	10	59 247
France	10	58 966
Italy	10	57 612
Spain	8	39 394
Netherlands	5	15 760
Greece	5	10 533
Belgium	5	10 213
Portugal	5	9 980
Sweden	4	8 854
Austria	4	8 082
Denmark	3	5 313
Finland	3	5 160
Ireland	3	3 744
Luxembourg	2	429
TOTAL EU	87	375 325

Total Votes = 87	Votes	% Votes	Min. No (and %) of Member States	Min. % of population
Qualified majority	62	71,26%	8 (53%)	58,16%
Blocking minority	26	29,89%	3 (20%)	12,38%

Annex II**EXTRAPOLATION TO EU-28 OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM¹**
(1999 Eurostat Population Data)

MEMBER STATES	VOTES	POPULATION /000
Germany	10	82 038
Turkey ²	10	64 385
United Kingdom	10	59 247
France	10	58 966
Italy	10	57 612
Spain	8	39 394
Poland	8	38 667
Romania	6	22 489
Netherlands	5	15 760
Greece	5	10 533
Czech Republic	5	10 290
Belgium	5	10 213
Hungary	5	10 092
Portugal	5	9 980
Sweden	4	8 854
Bulgaria	4	8 230
Austria	4	8 082
Slovakia	3	5 393
Denmark	3	5 313
Finland	3	5 160
Ireland	3	3 744
Lithuania	3	3 701
Latvia	3	2 439
Slovenia	3	1 978
Estonia	3	1 446
Cyprus	2	752
Luxembourg	2	429
Malta	2	379
TOTAL EU	144	545 566

Total Votes = 144	Votes	% Votes	Min. No (and %) of Member States	Min. % of Population
Qualified majority	102	70,83%	14 (50%)	51,36%
Blocking minority	43	29,86%	5 (17,9%)	10,45%

¹ Maintaining and extrapolating the current weighting of votes in the Council for States which have recognised candidate status. This extrapolation model was used during the Amsterdam IGC (with the addition of Malta and Turkey).

² Estimated figure cited in the Commission's opinion (source: national/IMF).

Annex III

**REFERENCE TABLE FOR CALCULATING
POPULATION WEIGHT
IN A DUAL MAJORITY SYSTEM
FOR AN EU WITH 28 MEMBER STATES**

MEMBER STATE	POPULATION WEIGHT
Germany	150
Turkey	118
United Kingdom	109
France	108
Italy	106
Spain	72
Poland	71
Romania	41
Netherlands	29
Greece	19
Czech Republic	19
Belgium	19
Hungary	18
Portugal	18
Sweden	16
Bulgaria	15
Austria	15
Slovakia	10
Denmark	10
Finland	9
Ireland	7
Lithuania	7
Latvia	4
Slovenia	4
Estonia	3
Cyprus	1
Luxembourg	1
Malta	1
TOTAL EU	1 000

Total votes	Population weight	Minimum No (and %) of Member States	Minimum % of population
Qualified majority	600	14 (50%)	60%
Blocking minority	401	4 (14,29%)	12,08%

Annex IV**SIMULATION OF POSSIBLE REWEIGHTING IN FAVOUR OF
THE MOST POPULATED MEMBER STATES**

(see point B, page 3)

MEMBER STATE	VOTES
Germany	23
Turkey	23
United Kingdom	23
France	23
Italy	23
Spain	19
Poland	19
Romania	11
Netherlands	9
Greece	9
Czech Republic	9
Belgium	9
Hungary	9
Portugal	9
Sweden	7
Bulgaria	7
Austria	7
Slovakia	5
Denmark	5
Finland	5
Ireland	5
Lithuania	5
Latvia	5
Slovenia	5
Estonia	5
Cyprus	3
Luxembourg	3
Malta	3
TOTAL EU	288

Total votes = 288	Votes	% votes	Minimum No (and %) of Member States	Minimum % of population
Qualified majority	206	71,53%	13 (46,43%)	58,18%
Blocking minority	83	28,82%	4 (14,29%)	12,94%

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