



## **Presidency training – EE PRES**

# **Role of the Council of the European Union, the General Secretariat and the Presidency**

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(Education, Youth, Culture, Audiovisual & Sport)

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# INTRODUCTION

- **This training is for you BUT also for us**
- **Flexibility, inter-action**
- **No question too small or too big**

## General Session

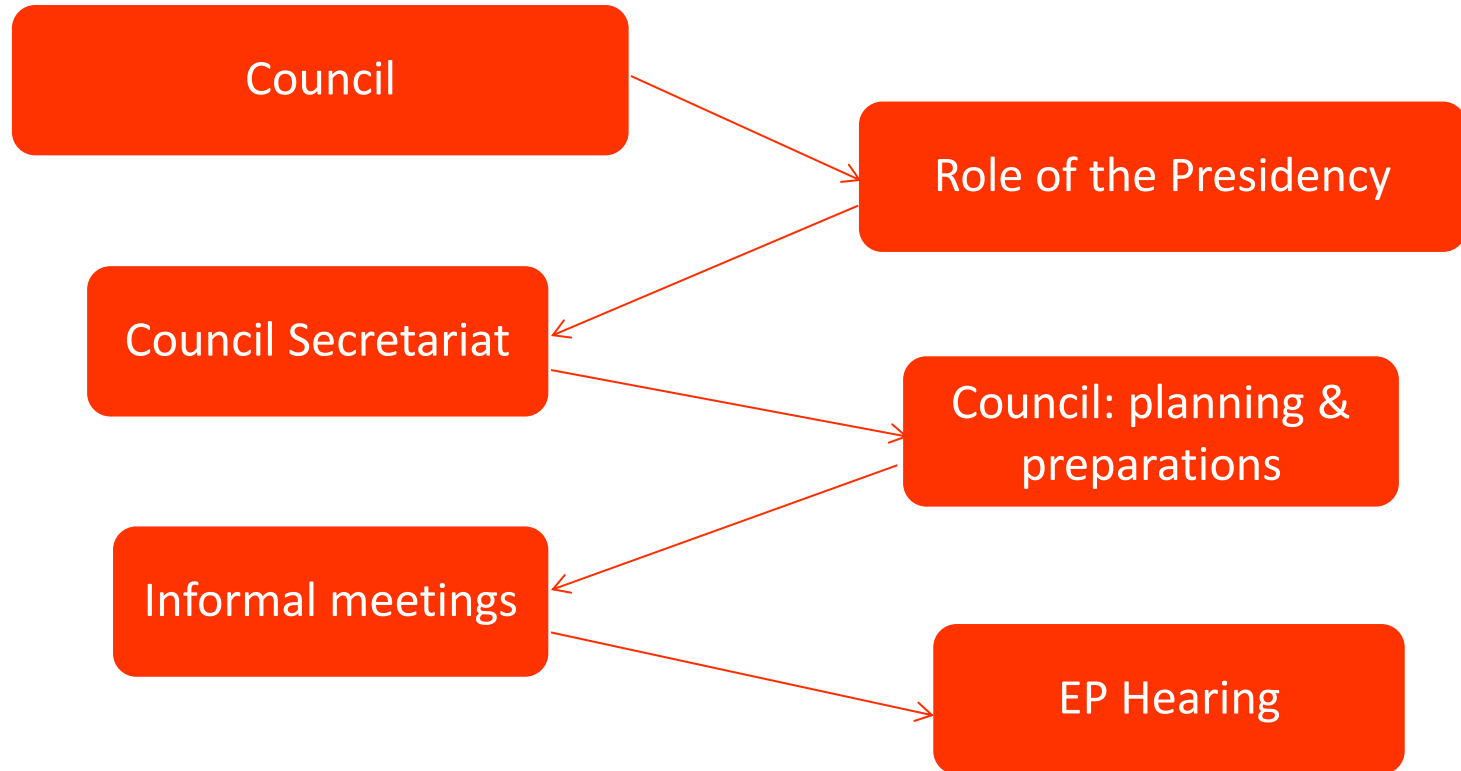
- Institutional Context
- Principles, Basics
- Aspects common to all sub-sectors
- Focus on Council (Ministerial level), Coreper

## Specific Sessions

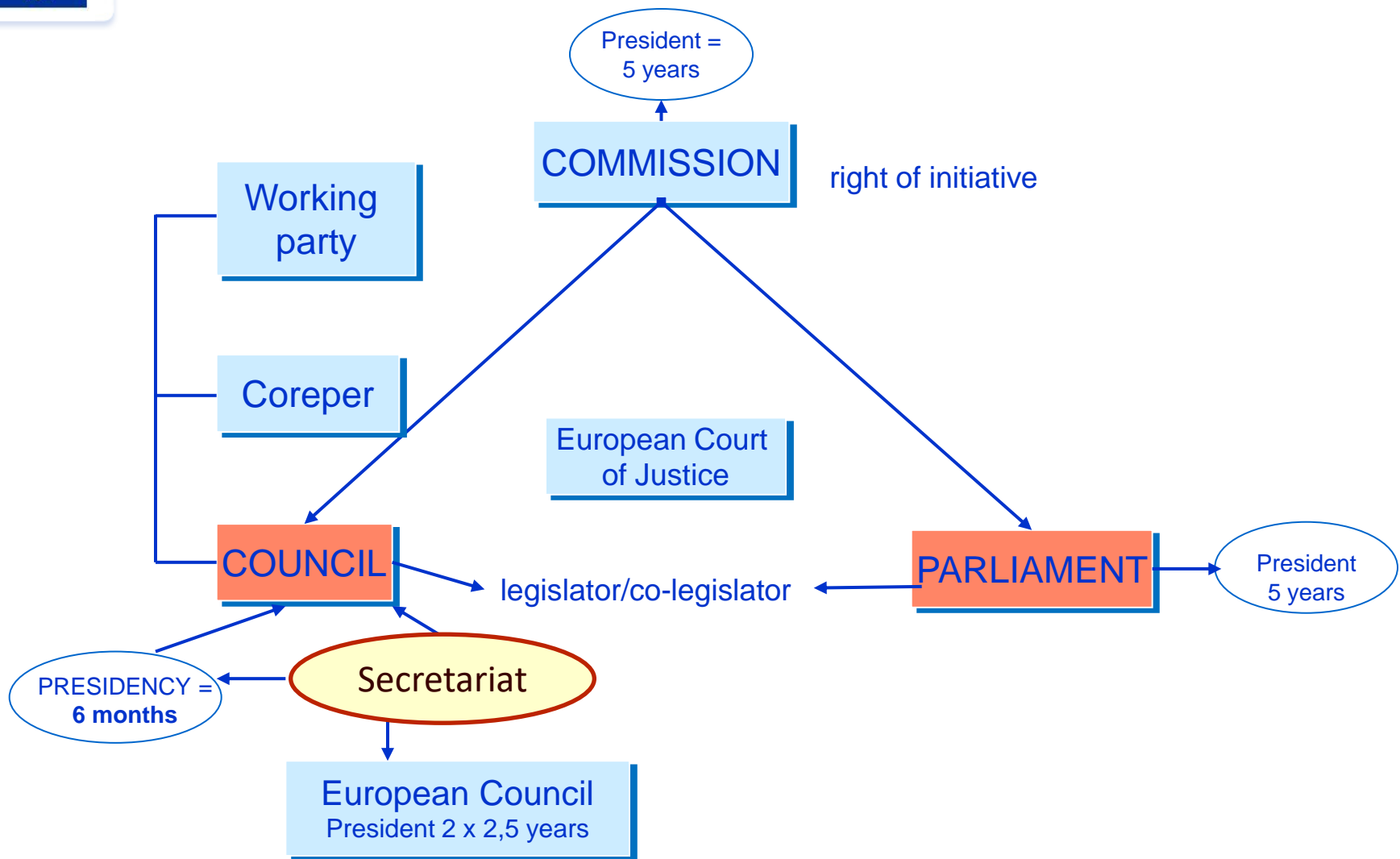
- Operational level
- Sector-specific aspects (includes European Parliament for audio-visual and education)



# PROGRAMME FOR THIS SESSION



# Decision-making in the EU: institutional triangle

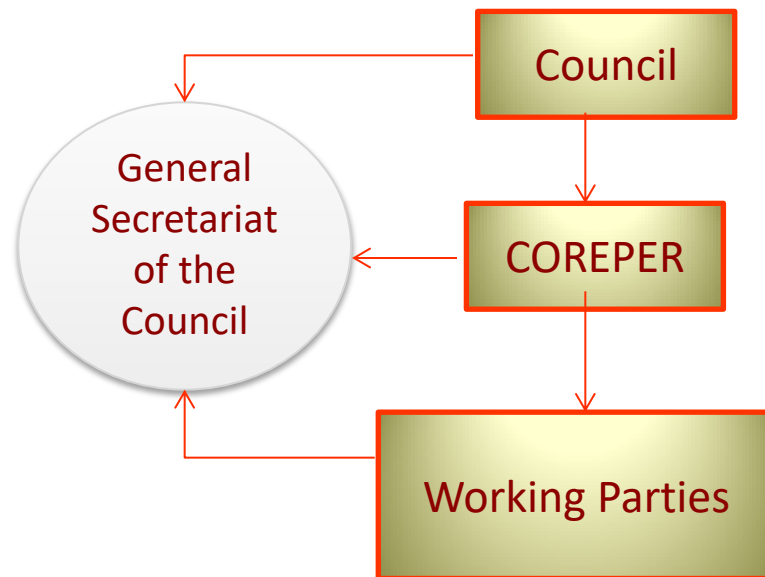




# What is the Council?

28 Member States → ministers. EU decision-maker.

*“A representative of each Member State at ministerial level, authorised to commit the government of that Member State.” (Article 16(2) TFEU)*



10 configurations → ministers  
BUT  
the Council is one

COREPER → (Deputy)  
Permanent Representatives

ca 200 → experts from  
national ministries and  
Permanent Representations



# Main tasks of the Council

- Legislator and co-legislator (with EP)
- Budgetary authority (with EP)
- Develops the common foreign and security policy (with the European Council and the High Representative)
- Concludes international agreements on behalf of the EU
- Coordinates Member States' policies (economic and monetary)



## EYCS Council

- Area of 'soft competence' (Arts 165, 166, 167 TFEU)
- Co-operation – supporting and supplementing Member State action
- Exception: audio-visual policy – single market regulation



# Role of the Presidency

- Single Council → single Presidency
- Presidency is neutral and impartial → not favouring its preferences or those of a particular Member State.
- Moderator for discussions → guiding, seeking solutions, working out compromise suggestions.
- Power of the Presidency: setting the agenda, organising the Council's work



# Role of the Council Secretariat I.

*“The Council shall be assisted by a General Secretariat” - Article 240(2) TFEU*

Main tasks of the Council Secretariat:

- **assists** the Council and its preparatory bodies in all their activities
- ensures the **smooth** operation of the Council
- provides the support to **Council members** and the **Presidency**, to the **Secretary General** in **all areas of activities** of the **Council**, to the **European Council**, to **Ministerial meetings** and intergovernmental conferences

HOW?

- by being **continually** involved in organising, coordinating and ensuring the coherence of the Council's work and implementation of its 18-month programme.



## Role of the Council Secretariat II.

In more detail, the Council Secretariat:

- being of a permanent nature, acts as long-term memory of the Council's discussions and decisions → **ensures continuity**
- **at the service of the Council as a whole** → independent and impartial with regard to the members of the Council and its Presidency → *practical example: note to COREPER explaining the state of the file*
- supports and **advises the Presidencies** (both on organisational/management and policy making/substance)
- act as Council's “**registrar**” (drafting of records, production, circulation and translation of documents, archiving, organising meetings, logistical support)
- ensures full respect of Council's rules of **procedure**



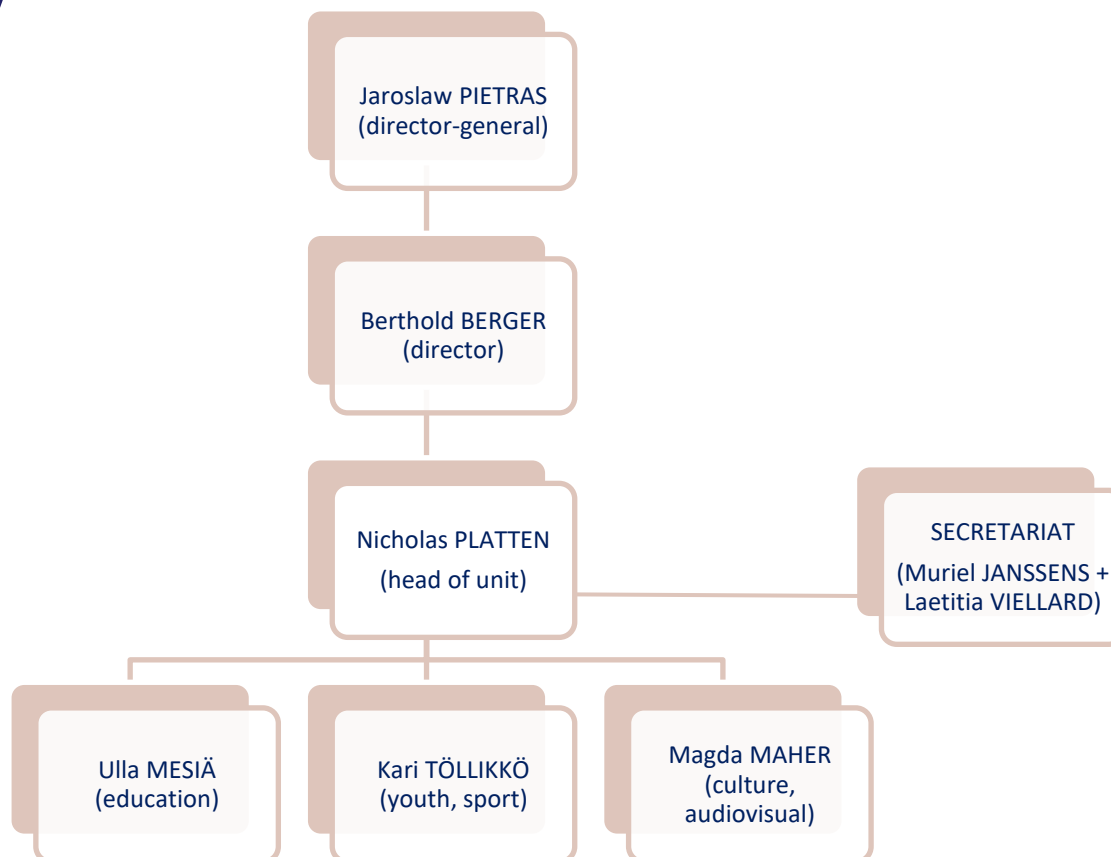
# Structure of the Council Secretariat

- Secretary general: **Mr Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen**
- Cabinet
- Directorates-general
  - Legal service
  - Administration (translation, technicians, floor managers, ICT)
  - PR, press and protocol
  - “Political” DGs (5)
- Horizontal units (general and institution policy – co-decision, relation with the EP; data protection)



# Organisation of the EYCAS Unit

## DG E – Environment, education, transport and energy





# Council agenda

- Legislative deliberations (including the adoption of legislative acts as "A items")
  - Adoption of the Council's position at first/second/third reading
  - Political agreement
  - General approach
  - Progress report
- Non-legislative activities
  - Policy debates
  - Exchange of views
  - Adoption of Council conclusions/resolutions
  - Presidency report
  - Presentations by the Commission
- Any other business
  - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

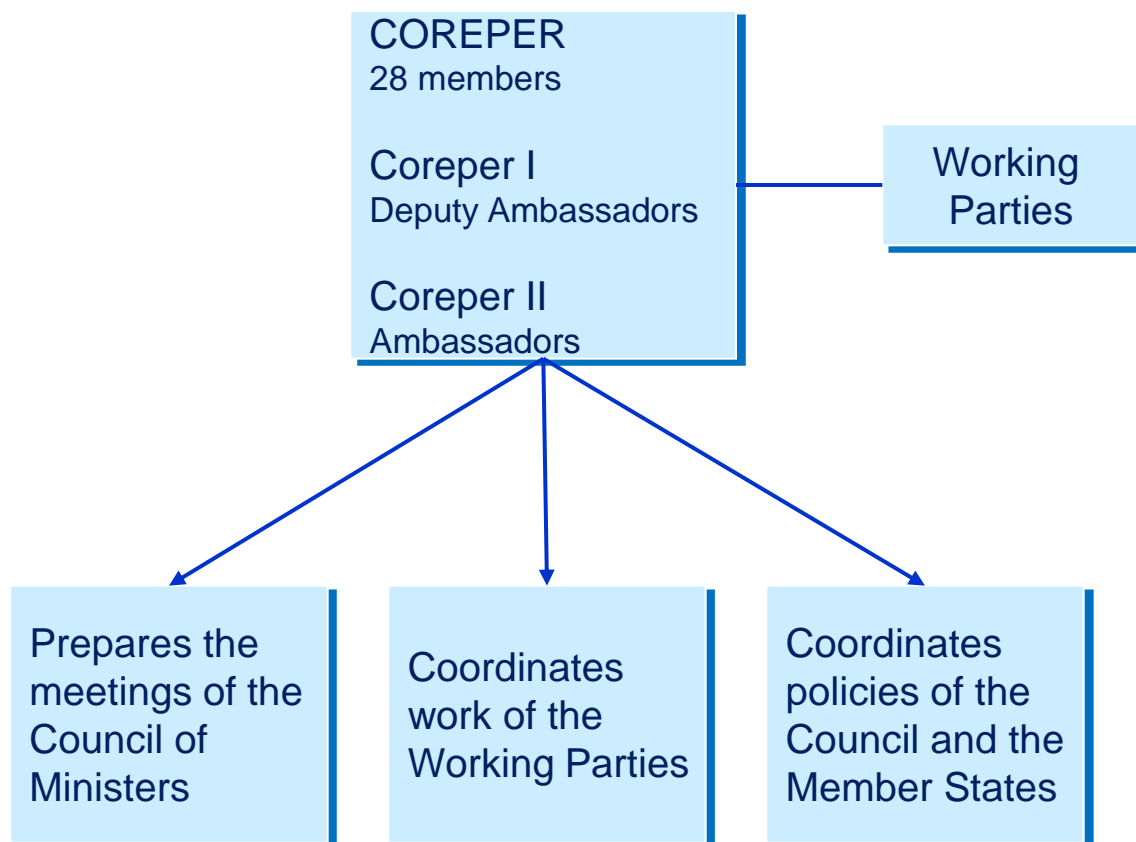


## Council Agenda : Content

- Issues with clear potential to add value at EU level
- Do not avoid 'difficult' subjects
- Be aware of the wider context (big picture)
- Plan but stay FLEXIBLE



# Committee of Permanent Representatives





## COREPER's role

- establishes the provisional agenda of the Council
- prepares the Council meeting (item by item) , addressing outstanding political points, not agreed at Working Party level.
- gives mandate to its Chair to conduct negotiations with the EP (at first/second reading as well as in view of a conciliation)
- ensures the overall monitoring of horizontal issues

- meets every week on Wednesdays (and Fridays)
- prepared by the MERTENS group



# Working Parties

- Expert groups established by Coreper to assist it in preparing the Council
- FIVE Working Parties in the EYCS area:
  - Education Committee
  - Cultural Affairs Committee
  - Audiovisual Working Party
  - Youth Working Party
  - Working Party on Sport
- This is where the work begins (more later)

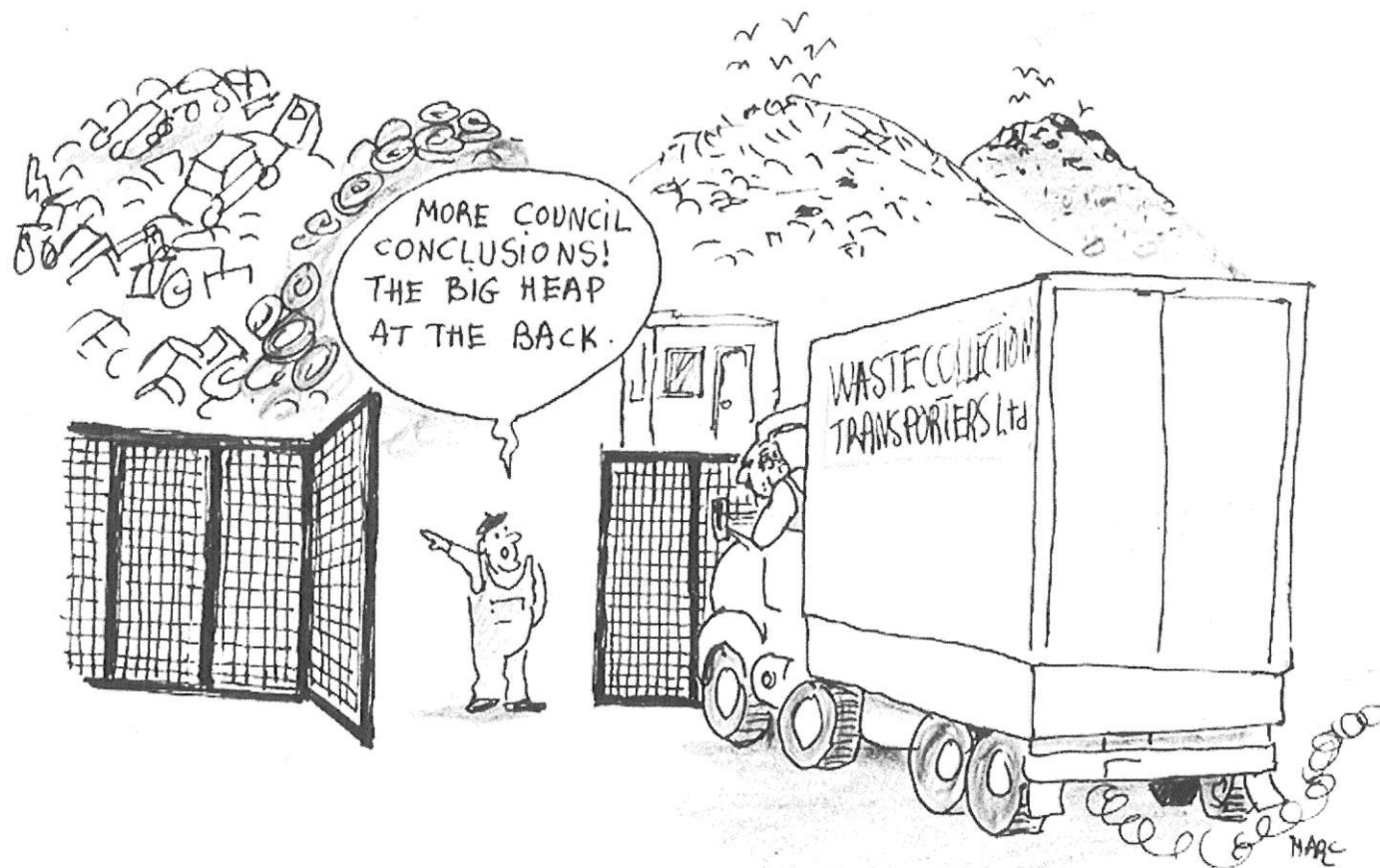


# Presidency : organisation and structures

- Different models possible (capital, Brussels)
- Clear and distinct responsibilities
- Communication
- Objective: quick (but wise!) decisions taken at the appropriate level



# Council conclusions





# Council Conclusions/Resolutions

## GOLDEN RULES

- There should be a clear "raison d'être" for the conclusion/resolution
- Decide on the key messages
- Keep it short and punchy (2 pages is fine)
- Text should form a coherent stand-alone narrative, understandable to the media and the public
- Logical structure and clear formatting essential

# Policy debates



COUNCIL POLICY DEBATE



# Policy debates

- If no legislation, focal point are the policy debates
- They provide an opportunity to:
  - discuss common challenges
  - showcase good practice
  - compare and contrast different approaches
- BUT difficulties in achieving a genuine, interactive debate among 28 ministers.



## Events in the margins of the Council

- e.g. the EYCS Council: Social partners (Education), Informal Forum (Youth) and High level SD with Sports movement
- Either breakfast or lunch (depending on the timing of the of the Council).
- High-level event (Ministers, Commissioners, EP (Deputy) Ambassadors).
- Council standing instructions
  - Practical arrangements by **Council protocol service**
  - Agenda, topics and conduct of the meeting are the Presidency's responsibility (with the help of the Secretariat)



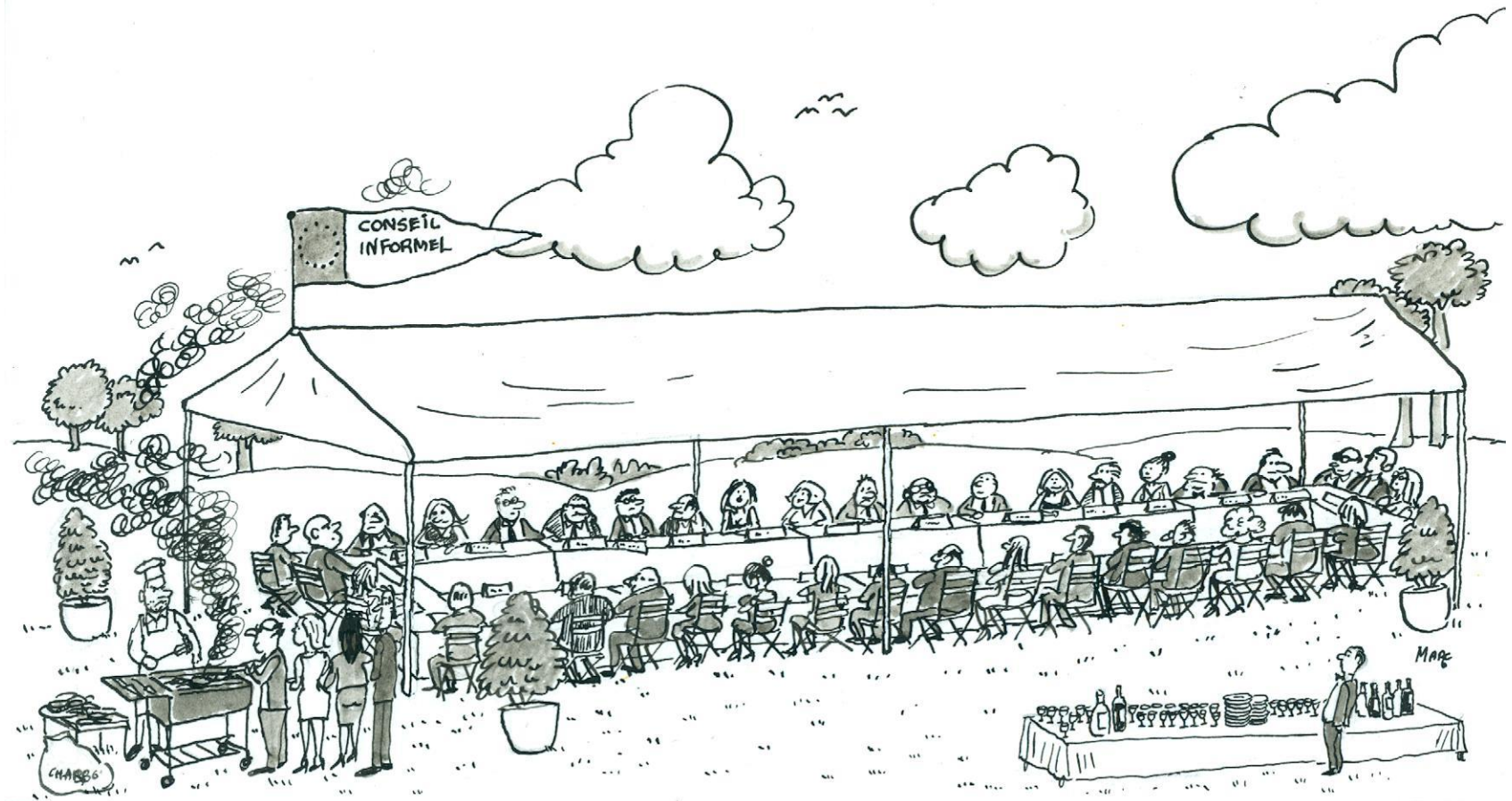
## Ministers' lunches during Council

- Lunches/breakfasts allow Ministers to effectively use time for informal exchange views in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- It allows ministers (unaccompanied by officials) to present more freely own views on more controversial elements of the debated policies and potentially they are able to achieve informal compromises on important unresolved issues.
- Any compromise reached during lunchtime has to be formalized during the formal session of the Council.

max. 2 meals per Presidency for EYCS



# Informal meetings





## Informal meetings

- Informal meetings of Council, Directors-General and Working Parties, as well as seminars/conferences
- Take place usually in the Presidency country.
- Ideal opportunity to discuss more strategic issues:
  - brainstorming
  - "test laboratory"
- No formal binding decisions
- Informal discussions can help to advance work at the formal level



## Informal meetings

- Organisation largely by the Presidency itself
  - Logistics, interpretation, documentation, timetables and convening meetings
- Presence and services of the Council Secretariat
  - presence depends on the hospitality of the Presidency,
  - no formal role but the Secretariat may help in drafting agendas and documents,
  - normal services of the Secretariat in the actual meetings



# Thank you !

