



THESSISMUN 2007

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Guide for Intergovernmental Decision and Common Position Writing for the Council of Ministers



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General Research and advisory delegate information

The Council of Ministers

The Council is the main decision-making body of the European Union

The ministers of the Member States meet within the Council of the European Union. Depending on the issue on the agenda, each country will be represented by the minister responsible for that subject (foreign affairs, finance, social affairs, transport, agriculture, etc.).

The presidency of the Council is held for six months by each Member State on a rotational basis.

The Council is responsible for decision-making and co-ordination

The Council of the European Union passes laws, usually legislating jointly with the European Parliament. The Council co-ordinates the broad economic policies of the Member States. The Council defines and implements the EU's common foreign and security policy, based on guidelines set by the European Council. The Council concludes, on behalf of the Community and the Union, international agreements between the EU and one or more states or international organisations. The Council co-ordinates the actions of Member States and adopts measures in the area of police and judicial co-operation in criminal matters. The Council and the European Parliament constitute the budgetary authority that adopts the Community's budget.

The acts of the Council

The acts of the Council can take the form of regulations, directives, decisions, common actions or common positions, recommendations or opinions. The Council can also adopt conclusions, declarations or resolutions. When the Council acts as a legislator, in principle it is the European Commission that makes proposals. These are examined within the Council, which can modify them before adopting them. **The Council usually reaches decisions by allowing discussions to continue until a consensus is reached.**

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The Council meets in nine different configurations depending on the subjects being examined. For example, the “General Affairs and External Relations” configuration is made up of foreign affairs ministers, the “Justice and Home Affairs” configuration of justice and home affairs ministers, etc. All the work of the Council is prepared or co-ordinated by the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER), made up of the permanent representatives of the member states working in Brussels and of their assistants.

The Council of Ministers Simulation in ThessISMUN 2007

As soon as you receive your country assignment, you should begin your research. You may divide your research into four categories:

- 1. Research on the History of the European Union, on the structure and functioning of its Bodies and Councils, on the role the E.U. plays in International Politics**
- 2. Research on the history and functional purpose of the Council of Ministers**
- 3. Research on your assigned country’s background, its political and economic system, political structure and current political affairs, its culture and values**
- 4. Research on your assigned country’s policies with regard to the certain topic, on country’s viewpoints in all relevant issues**

Bear in mind that many of your sources may be biased. If possible, try to find independent confirmation of the information you have obtained, from more than one source. Moreover, when gathering information it is important to distinguish between opinions and facts. Facts are used to support opinions. Whenever possible use facts to support your arguments. Eventually, you will be presenting an opinion and must defend it against other opinions, thus it is crucial for you to be familiar with different viewpoints and opinions on your topic. Become familiar with arguments that are different from the one your country is likely to take on your topic. Remember, it is up to you to

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decide which particular points you want to focus on in your own arguments and this decision needs to be guided by your country's position. **Keep in mind that you should speak in the name of the country that you are representing.** Study already adopted Common Positions and Intergovernmental Decisions by the Council, on your topic to find out what issues tend to be discussed when your topic is debated. Common Positions and Intergovernmental Decisions adopted by the Council can be found at the **EU online library- Documents and at each respective Presidency's web page.**

Here are some common Internet resources to help you get started:

- European Union Official Website www.europa.eu
- EU States Embassies and Consulates web site, usembassy.state.gov
- The Central Intelligence Agency website, contains reports on economic, political and social conditions of most of the countries in the world, www.cia.gov
- The International Crisis Group website www.icg.org

Finally, if you have tried these different resources and still face difficulties finding information, send an email to the **ThessISMUN Board.**

Furthermore it is of critical importance to:

- Review the ThessISMUN Council of Ministers of the EU rules and procedures. These rules are intended to create a level playing field allowing each delegate/country to accomplish their individual goals in speaking about their policies while maximizing opportunities for the group to reach consensus on the issue
- Remember it is not your opinion you are illustrating and defending, but the country's you are representing. The Secretary General of the Council of Ministers and the Commissioner will be responsible under the Deputy Secretary General, for the adoption and the

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implementation of the Official Policy Guidelines, by the Country representatives in the Council. Delegates that diverge from their assigned country's official policy guidelines, will be advised towards the correction of their policy and provided with the appropriate material on this extend by the Deputy Secretary General.

- Be aware of different political perspectives
- Attain a good knowledge of your allies and your opposition. In order to adequately represent your country during the model, you will need to interact with delegates from other countries. Knowing their positions on your topic will help you predict their arguments during debate. This will be very useful in helping you decide in advance where it might be useful to seek cooperation or compromise.
- Congratulate the members of your delegation (and fellow delegates representing different countries and viewpoints) on their contributions to the council sessions.

Decision Writing and Submission

There are two forms of decisions in the Council of Ministers: the Common Position and the Intergovernmental Decision.

1. Common Position (First – Community Pillar)

If the issue under discussion pertains to the First Pillar of the E.U.,¹ the Council has to reach a Common Position through the process of the Qualified Majority Vote. The Common Position is drafted by the European Commission.

¹ The Treaty of Maastricht which established the European Union, divided EU policies into three main areas, called **pillars**:

1. The first or “Community” pillar concerns economic, social and environmental policies.
2. The second or “Common Foreign and Security Policy” (CFSP) pillar concerns foreign policy and military matters.

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2. Intergovernmental Decision (Second – Third Community Pillar)

If the issue under discussion pertains to the Second and the Third Pillar of the E.U., the Council has to reach a Common Position through the process of Unanimity (Intergovernmental Decision).

Sponsor

The main writer of the draft Common Position is the European Commission. The main writer of the draft Intergovernmental Decision is recognized as the Sponsor. The Sponsor must be present for a draft Intergovernmental Decision to be introduced to the floor. The Sponsor must agree to support an Intergovernmental Decision, unless major changes have been introduced through the amendment process.

Introduction

The Commissioner may move to introduce a Draft Common Position. Delegates may move to introduce an Intergovernmental Decision once it has been approved and assigned a number by the President and distributed to the Council. The introduction of an Intergovernmental Decision shall be procedural in nature. The content of the introduction shall be limited to the reading of the draft Common Position or Intergovernmental Decision as a whole where upon the Commissioner / Sponsor of the Draft Common Position / Intergovernmental Decision shall be granted the floor for the allotted time limit.

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3. The third or “Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters” (PJCC) pillar concerns co-operation in the fight against crime. This pillar was originally named “Justice and Home Affairs”.

Within each pillar, a different balance is struck between the supranational and intergovernmental principles.

Supranationalism is strongest in the first pillar. Its function generally corresponded at first to the three European Communities (European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom) whose organizational structure had already been unified in the 1960s through the Merger Treaty. Later, through the Treaty of Maastricht the word "Economic" was removed from the EEC, so it became simply the EC. Then with the Treaty of Amsterdam additional areas would be transferred from the third pillar to the first. In 2002, the ECSC ceased to exist because the treaty which established it, the Treaty of Paris, had expired.

In the CFSP and PJCC pillars the powers of the European Parliament, the Commission and the European Court of Justice with respect to the Council are significantly limited, without however being altogether eliminated. The balance struck in the first pillar is frequently referred to as the "community method", since it is that used by the European Community.

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A regular Decision of the Council of Ministers of the EU has the following pattern:

Draft Decision

Draft Decision is a Decision as it is drafted and passed in Council Sessions that are taking place during the ThessIS MUN Conference. The Council of Ministers Decisions have to be adopted in unanimity.

It is important to acknowledge that in drafting a Decision wording will influence its acceptance among fellow delegates. The draft Decision should be clear and concise. Consequently, the better the substance of a draft Decision the higher the success of achieving consensus the council session. The main aim of the Decision writing is to put down ideas in a clear and concise manner in accordance with the provided format.

Sample 1 of a Draft Decision

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of governments of the member states
meeting within the Council**

**on the Integration of the Structures of the European Union: Common Foreign and Security
Policy - Dealing with terrorism, setting new priorities**

(Council Meeting- Thessaloniki, 11 April 2007)

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“THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

1. RECALLING...,
2. HAVING REGARD...,
3. NOTING...,
4. RECALLING...,

Have adopted the following conclusions

A) ON MOTORING THE PROCESS OF THE ADOPTION OF A CFSC BY THE MEMBER STATES

5. RECONFIRM....
6. WELCOME....
7. REAFFIRM....
8. COMMEND....
9. CALL ON....
10. NOTE WITH SATISFACTION....
11. ENCOURAGE....
12. NOTE....
13. TAKE NOTE IN....

B) ON DELIVERING ON...

14. EMPHASIZE....
15. WELCOME....



16. SUPPORT ...
17. UNDERLINE....
18. LOOK FORWARD....
19. WILL CONTINUE....
20. REQUEST....
21. INVITE....
22. COMMIT....
23. STRESS THE IMPORTANCE....

Sample 2 of a Draft Decision

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of governments of the member states
meeting within the Council,**

(upon the subject ...)

(Council Meeting- Thessaloniki, 11 April 2007)

1. *The Council of Ministers of the European Union,*
2. *Having regard and due respect to the International Law,*
3. *Taking into consideration the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions,*



4. *Has adopted the following conclusions*
5. *Expresses its concerns/ condolences/ determination...*
6. *Stresses to...*
7. *Condemns.../ approves.../ accepts.../ adopts.../ recognizes...*
8. *Is willing to...*
9. *(Furthermore) Suggests (that)...*
10. *Expresses its deep appreciation...*
11. *Calls upon...*
12. *Recognizes/ stresses/ emphasizes the importance of...*
13. *Reaffirms...*
14. *Urges/ invites/ Declares...*
15. *Decides...*
16. *Reaffirms its commitment to the.../ Remains committed to the ...*
17. *Recognizing that the Union faces a wide range of threats...*

Each clause is numbered (1-...). All the clauses end with dot. Each clause may contain more than one sentence.

Amendments

After draft Common Position and draft Intergovernmental Decision have been submitted to the council for discussion, draft Common Position and draft Intergovernmental Decision may be modified through changes known as amendments, suggested by the delegates of the council, representing adjusted perspectives or proposals on the topic under discussion. Phrasing and purpose



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of the amendment should complement the draft Common Position and the draft intergovernmental Decision.

There are two types of amendments as outlined in the **Rules of Procedure** as well:

1. **Non Substantive Amendments**, correcting grammatical, spelling or formatting mistakes will be automatically adopted without vote from the Council, at the discretion of the President. Following the initial reading of the draft Common Position by the Commissioner or the draft Intergovernmental Decision by its sponsor, delegates are permitted to point out any such problems to the President.
2. **Substantive Amendments**, require approval from the President to be introduced. Amendments will be put to a vote prior to the vote on the Common Position or Intergovernmental Decision as a whole. Amendments to Amendments are out of order. Due to the nature of the Intergovernmental Decision all amendments to it must be unanimously voted.