

resolved by substantive agreement on issues through Coreper. As a result of Amsterdam, the Secretary General will also be responsible for the overall coordination of the CFSP. A special secretariat will be created to assist him in his task.

A Cabinet assists the Secretary-General. Its two components are the press service and the Private Office. The latter, similar to the Cabinet of the Commissioners, in conjunction with the Council's Directorates-General (DGs) provides the administrative, organisational and technical support required by the Secretary-General in preparation for the meetings of working parties, and Coreper as well as the Council. The press service produces the Council press releases issued before and after Council meetings, maintains ongoing press relations and ensures the circulation throughout the Council of pertinent information from the continuous flow of information received by the Council. The press service also keeps Member States' embassies apprised of the Council proceedings through notices of Council meetings and agendas. The General Secretariat is able to develop and maintain close relationships with the Permanent Representations and national experts through this latter contact and the constant interaction via the Council DGs.

There are 10 DGs in the General Secretariat aligned with the relevant subject-based Councils. DGs are responsible for preparing the minutes of the Council meetings and, where necessary, consulting with the Presidency on compromise texts. The Council Secretariat also has a separate legal service which ensures the proper form and appropriate legal basis of Council proposals in conjunction with the associated DG.

The services provided by the General Secretariat are foremost at the disposal of the Council Presidency to ensure that it fulfils its Presidential mandate to the extent that it is consistent with the interests and function of the Council. It is dedicated largely to securing agreement and compromise solutions among the parties involved at the various levels. This role of securing compromise solutions among divergent national interests distinguishes the Secretariat General from the Commission, the latter approaching any given issue with a view to achieving the particular underlying objectives of its own proposals for the sole Community interest.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE

Council of the European Union

- Consists of Ministers of the 15 Member States acting as representatives of their governments in the subject policy area;
- The schedule of Council meetings varies according to the subject area. In external affairs, the Foreign Ministers meet at least monthly in the format of the General Affairs Council (GAC).

Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER)

- Consists of national Ambassadors of the Member States' Permanent Representations to the EU;
- Ensures ongoing preliminary negotiations, and agreements-in-principle, usually in non-contentious areas, on proposals to go before the Council.

Council Working Groups

- Consist of national civil servants from each of the Member States, specialising in relevant policy areas;
- Ensure ongoing negotiations on technical details of proposals to go before the Coreper.

Structure of the Secretariat-General of the Council of the European Union

Secretary-General

Private Office
Press Office
Legal Service

Directorate-General A

Director-General

- I. Personnel and administration
- II. Protocol, organisation, security, infrastructures
- III. Translation and document production
- IV. Finances