

Danish positions – ICG 2003

Catharina Sørensen – Danish Institute for International Studies

The Danish government was satisfied with the overall results of the European Convention and so was a broad majority of Parliament. Also the Danish Employers' Confederation (DA) and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) were generally positive towards the Convention's results.

The government finds that little is to be gained from re-opening the discussion of individual articles during the IGC. However, in case negotiations are reopened Denmark will not sit idle. For instance, in case negotiations on the definition of QMV are reopened, the Danish aim will be to achieve a more balanced combination of the criterion related to the population and the one related to the number of countries so that a decision would need to be backed by 60% of EU citizens and 60% of member-states in order to be accepted.

Although favourable to the overall extension of QMV as established in the Convention's proposal, the Danish government is unlikely to back the extension of QMV to the area of taxation. With regard to the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Danish government acknowledges that a more extensive use of majority voting may be necessary; however, this is unlikely to be a high priority during the negotiations. Moreover, according to the Danish government, defence issues should still be decided by unanimity.

At the beginning of the IGC, the Danish position on the structure of the Commission changed in favour of a model where all member-states retain their commissioner. Denmark suggests that the number of Directorate Generals instead is limited so that two commissioners may share one DG.

The Danish government supports the idea of a permanent and elected President of the European Council in combination with rotating presidencies of the individual councils. Denmark would prefer that the new position is labelled "chairman" instead of "president"; that the President's role is clearly demarcated and that his/her election is based on the principle of equality among the member-states. Rotating Council presidencies must be maintained since it helps make the EU closer to its citizens

The Danish government wants the Minister of Foreign Affairs to be placed within the structures of the Council. With regard to the number of seats in the European Parliament, the Danish government supports that the minimum is kept at 4 (as in the Convention's proposal) but will also accept keeping the number at 5.

Finally it should be mentioned that an overarching concern of the Danish Presidency with regard to the IGC is to sustain the four Danish opt-outs in a protocol to the new Constitution. This aim may well be reflected in the relatively flexible Danish positions on the above institutional questions.