

CFSP Watch 2005 – Austria – by Alexander Breitegger¹

1. What are the priorities for your government in CFSP in 2005? What are the key issues for your country in 2005 (especially with regard to the negative referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands; after the recent EU enlargement and on behalf of the perspective of the upcoming accession round(s))?

a) Priorities in 2005

In 2005, Austria's regional CFSP priorities have been the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. The CFSP activities have had an emphasis on human rights and basic freedoms, as well as human security. The strengthening of EU crisis management capabilities in the military as well as in the civilian field have also been aspects to which Austria has attached particular importance.

Already in 2005, the priorities of the Austrian government were marked by the preparations for the EU Presidency which Austria will assume for the first half of 2006. This includes close co-operation with the UK as the current EU presidency in the EU Troika.

During the upcoming Presidency and in line with its traditional CFSP approach, Austria will put special emphasis on the countries of the Western Balkans and assist their efforts to move closer to the EU. In Austria's view, a strengthening of the European perspective is a key instrument to bring stability and prosperity to the region.

b) Constitutional Treaty

In May 2005, the Austrian Parliament approved the ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Austria remains committed to the key provisions laid down in the Constitutional Treaty and would like to see those objectives realised, including those related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

2. Does your country adopt a more pessimistic or optimistic stance regarding the ratification crisis of the Constitutional Treaty? How might the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands influence the ratification debate in your country and also have an impact on the outcome of the referendum?

a) Stance on future of Constitution

Austria maintains a realistic position with regard to the future of the Constitutional Treaty. Following the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands the European Heads of State and Government reached agreement in June 2005 on a "period of reflection". Austria takes this very seriously and recognises the need to engage in a debate on the future of Europe. It is imperative to reconnect the European project with the European citizen. In order to foster this debate, Austria is planning a conference on subsidiarity during its Presidency in the first half of 2006. At this conference, the level of decision making and the role of national parliaments in the process of EU integration shall be the focus of particular discussion.

b) Impact of ratification debate in Austria

In Austria, the general public has been involved in the debate on the Constitutional Treaty from an early stage with initiatives such as "Future of Europe"². While the CFSP instruments were never

¹ University of Vienna; the author would like to thank the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Prof. Hanspeter Neuhold of the University of Vienna for help and advice in drafting this report.

² Future of Europe, available at www.zukunfteuropa.at.

the subject of a wider debate in the Austrian public, particular issues, such as the EU's battle groups or the accession of Turkey to the EU, have been issues of wider public interest. The ratification debate in France and the Netherlands did not influence the debate in Austria, since the Constitutional Treaty had already been ratified by Austria by the time of the referenda in France and the Netherlands.

3. National perceptions and positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues in 2005. Please describe key positions and perceptions in your country with regard to EU foreign policy, taking into account:

- **The perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP (e.g. taking into account current developments like the current ratification crisis of the Constitutional Treaty);**
- **The role of the EU in crisis management e.g. in Congo, Georgia, Darfur;**
- **The perceived impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP;**
- **The view of the European Security Strategy (ESS) as an instrument for enhancing coherence in the EU's security policy; how does your country view the ESS and which issues are of particular importance?**
- **European Neighbourhood Policy and its implications;**

The creation of battle groups and their role for ESDP.

a) Perception of CFSP/ESDP

In spite of the initial lack of a common position on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in spite of disagreement on the intervention in Iraq, CFSP can be considered as a success. CFSP has come a far way since its inception and has developed considerably during the last years.

A few key examples:

- Through the creation of the post of High Representative and the institution of EU Special Representatives, the Union has heightened its international visibility. The EU is not any more exclusively dependent on rotating presidencies for its representation on the international stage.
- Through the ESDP the EU has acquired the capability to undertake common crisis management operations both in the military as well as in the civilian field. Eleven such operations and missions have been undertaken by the Union in regions as diverse as Bosnia, Sudan or Indonesia/Aceh.

For a country of Austria's size a coordinated approach with partners whose values and interests coincide has become an absolute necessity. CFSP and ESDP are important pillars for a strong Union in a globalized world. The future of CFSP is closely linked to the future of Austria's foreign policy. Although CFSP is still a work in progress, its instruments work well. The European Security Strategy is an important and integral element of CFSP/ESDP.

b) Role of the EU in crisis management:

The EU's activities in crisis management constitute an important element of the EU's external action. Austria contributes both to civilian and military crisis management operations and, with regard to the Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the third largest troop contributor on a per-capita basis. Alternative: Austria will continue to support future EU missions where the required consensus is achieved.

c) Perceived Impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP:

The last enlargement in March 2004 brought membership up from 15 to 25. Bulgaria and Romania will soon join the Union. Accession negotiations have recently begun with Turkey and Croatia. Both

in terms of territory and population, the Union is increasingly seen as an important player in international relations. Many countries have high expectations regarding the Union.

d) European Neighbourhood Policy and its Implications:

The European Neighbourhood Policy is a useful instrument to promote the EU's interest in its neighbourhood and in particular in the countries bordering the new EU-member states. During the Austrian Presidency there will be efforts to implement action plans which are tailored to the needs of the individual countries.

e) Creation of Battle Groups and their Role for ESDP:

The Battlegroups concept is an important element in the further development of the Union's military capabilities. The ability to react quickly to a given crisis situation, even if only with a limited number of soldiers, is of paramount importance. The Battlegroup concept as such does not constitute an extension of the range of tasks the EU is ready to take over ("Petersberg-tasks"). Austria is planning to contribute to a battlegroup with Germany and the Czech Republic.

4. The Constitutional Treaty and its future – National perceptions concerning a 'plan B'?

Official positions on the Constitutional Treaty provisions on CFSP / ESDP and external relations?

Constitutional Treaty or some version of 'Nice Treaty Plus'? Describe (briefly) the position of your country on the following key issues and the possibility of their realisation without a Constitutional Treaty as a 'plan B', 'C' or 'D':

a) External Representation and Basic Structures of the European External Action Service:

Austria fully supports the provisions on the EU's external relations in the Constitutional Treaty including the European Foreign Minister and the European External Action Service. Natural disasters, such as the (Asian) tsunami in January 2005 and the increased threat of terrorism, have shown that increased co-operation between EU member states would be useful, in particular in consular matters. Such co-operation could possibly become part of the EU External Action Service.

b) Decision taking in CFSP

Unanimous decision-taking still prevails in CFSP matters. It has become more cumbersome over time with the increase in the number of Member States. The Union will only be able to act in the world if it can act quickly and decisively. An extension of majority rule would therefore be desirable.

c) Extension of Petersberg tasks

The current instruments available are sufficient for the time being. The Petersberg spectrum is wide and provides for sufficient flexibility to conduct various missions.

d) Regions promising for operations

Currently the Union is active both in Europe (Western Balkans), but also far away from Europe (Darfur, Aceh). Each mission varies in nature and has different requirements. A commitment to neighbouring regions combined with a global responsibility will determine future operations.

e) Civilian-military cell

The establishment of a civil-military cell at the EUMS was welcomed by Austria. The necessity of an operational headquarters is to be further discussed.

f) Permanent structured cooperation

Permanent structured cooperation in the field of CFSP will require an amendment to the Treaties. Permanent structured cooperation within the framework of the EU would not be possible without a treaty change. The proposals laid down in the European Constitution were welcomed by Austria. This or similar innovations would suit Austrian interests.

g) Creation of Core Groups Inside or Outside the EU in case of failure of the Constitutional Treaty:

Core groups should – if necessary and as far as possible – be formed inside the common institutional framework of the Union and provide an opportunity for all member states to join.

5. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research

The following institutions are working in the field of CFSP:

- Diplomatic Academy of Vienna
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- University of Vienna, Department of European Law, International Law & Comparative Law
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Universitätsstrasse 2, A-1090 Vienna, Austria
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- University of Innsbruck, Department of Political Science, recently founded European Security Policy Professorship,
Head of Department of European Security Policy: Prof. Dr. Alexander Siedschlag
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