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## **How did Sweden Manage the European Union?**

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## **How did Sweden Manage the European Union?**

From a Swedish perspective the Swedish Presidency during the spring of 2001 was the single most important European event since the accession in 1995. It has even been argued that for the first time since the Vienna conference 1814-1815 Sweden could act on equal terms with the more powerful nations in determining European security policy (Wahlbäck, 2000, p 1). This raises several questions:

- (1) Does the presidency, as such, carry any weight?
- (2) Could a small member state, like Sweden, manage the EU as well as a large one like Germany or Great Britain? Is it possible that small is more efficient?
- (3) Did Sweden, in the role of the Presidency, influence the policies of the European Union?
- (4) To what extent can a reluctant and neutral nation like Sweden manage the Common Foreign and Security Policy area despite its non-NATO membership? What about the EMU?
- (5) What were the national and international reactions?

\* In this article I have brought together research ideas from the book: *When Europe came to Sweden: The Presidency of the EU 2001* (in Swedish) edited by Jonas Tallberg to be published by the end of 2001 by SNS, Stockholm, Sweden. The book is a product of the project *Comparing Presidencies* and affiliated. For further information about the project visit our Web page: [www.svet.lu.se/Research/Research.html](http://www.svet.lu.se/Research/Research.html).

## ***Does the presidency carry any weight?***

According to the Treaty of Rome, the office of the Presidency is responsible for convening meetings and shall be held in turn by each member state for a term of six months.<sup>1</sup> These provisions express solely the management function of the Presidency. This very limited legal base for Council Presidential action, combined with the initiative role of the Commission, resulted in the office of the Presidency being pictured as a paradox, encompassing "responsabilité sans pouvoir". Does this statement still hold true?

The role of the Presidency has, it seems, developed as a response to new developments in the integration process, as well as changes in inter-institutional relations. These are, in short: the development of the European Council as an institution, the increasing international commitments (in particular, the quick evolution of or even revolution in Common Foreign and Security Policy) and the enhanced role of the informal dialogues<sup>2</sup> and the conciliation committee in the co-decision procedure (cf. Hix, 1999, p. 94 and Shackleton, 2001, .p. 6).

Traditionally, leadership in the EU could be found in the Commission or in the German-French axis. The Commission was the EU-engine during the second half of the 1980's and the early 1990's. Weak Commission leadership, legitimacy problems and an active promotion of intergovernmental cooperation has moved power from the Commission to the Council. Furthermore a situation with new leaders in France and Germany, France pushing for parity while Germany is making concessions, has replaced the active cooperation between Helmut Kohl and Francois Mitterand. The

1 Presidencies 1998-2003: 1998 United Kingdom/Austria; 1999 Germany/Finland; 2000 Portugal/France; 2001 Sweden/Belgium; 2002 Spain/Denmark; 2003 Greece.

2 The "informal dialogues" in the co-decision procedure have no direct support in the Treaties. Its flexibility has reduced the number of dossiers needed for meetings with the conciliation committee. The dialogue is an instrument used by the Presidency and the concepts dialogue, limited dialogue, developed dialogue, political dialogue and technical dialogue have been used. However, compared to parliamentary committees in the European Parliament the dialogues are closed even if there is a considerable leakage especially by the MEPs who frequently put documents on the Internet or leak them to newspapers (cf. Note by the French Presidency 28 November 2000 and Shackleton, 2001).

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North/South cultural division is creating negotiation problems (cf. P. 14 below). With successive enlargements the European Union will also face an East/West cultural division.

All this implies that the European Union cries out for leadership, which opens a window of opportunity for increased influence by the Presidency (see Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997, Schout 1998 and Hix 1999).

The Council Presidency is at the nexus between national and EU politics, and its role reflects these dual interests, emphasizing the intergovernmental game and national influences, but also the interplay with institutional actors, i.e. the Commission and the Parliament. In time certain role functions of the Presidency have indeed increased in importance, in particular, its position as mediator, external representative and as spokesman and contact for the other EU institutions.

Bobby McDonagh, a member of the Irish Presidency team, describes the feelings of the Irish when assuming the Presidency in 1996:

(It was) like walking into a sudden pool of light. – Other delegations start turning to the incoming Presidency looking for answers. – Your thoughts, priorities and plans gradually begin to attract significant interest (1998:69).

This pool of light and the apparent increase in responsibilities raise the question of whether the Presidency also has become a more important power-base for member states, employed in order to further their national interests. The major dilemma which each Presidency has to handle, and which often is noted in the literature, is the extent to which the Presidency can promote its own national interests or whether it should only concentrate on "getting things done" (e.g. Neligan 1998).

The "getting things done" will be achieved through four functions:

### *(1) Administration and coordination*

Sweden planned and carried through roughly 2000 meetings on all levels in the Council and arranged more than eighty informal meetings and conferences spread out over about forty places in Sweden. The main administra-

tive, coordinative and security challenges were the two European Council meetings in Stockholm and Gothenburg. Efficiency is the main goal of this function.

The primary goal was to manage the issue inheritance as well as possible by producing joint strategies and decisions. In this management there was, however, a dilemma between influencing the Swedish opinion and improving the Swedish reputation in the European Union. The Swedish opinion would be favourably influenced if Sweden were perceived as an important actor in the EU, actively pushing "Swedish issues". Such an activity might, however, make the Swedish Presidency less efficient in "getting things done". To favour the Swedish opinion a lot of information activities took place and in order to enhance the feeling of participation meetings were spread all over Sweden. Finally, the emphasis in the instructions for all relations on all levels was on "being open, helpful and service minded" (unpublished paper from the Swedish Government).

## *(2) Political agenda setting*

Sweden's three priorities were Enlargement, Employment and Environment but some argue that Sweden's main result was the regulation 1049/2001 on public access to EU documents.

The priorities of the Presidency are supposed to promote the interests of the entire union, so national concessions must be made to achieve results. However, when setting the agenda, the Presidency wields considerable power. The Presidency can push issues. During the first two months of the Swedish Presidency, it convened seven working group meetings, five COREPER meetings and four dialogues with parliament "all on the issue of access to documents" (Minister Brita Leijon, 15/3, 2000/01:22). The Presidency can also exclude issues; actively keeping certain issues off the agenda during the six months a country holds the Presidency. The Northern and Southern dimensions have this character. The Portuguese Presidency was not actively promoting the Northern dimension, and their Southern dimension was not high on the Swedish agenda even though it has been discussed in the Swedish Parliament (January 2000). Challenging the notion

that the Presidency offers a scope for active agenda management, some observers claim, however, that "the fact is that the great bulk of a Presidency's program will at all times consist of inherited and wholly foreseeable material" (Neligan 1998:7, see also Wurzel 1996:280). Thus many Presidencies will only engage in agenda-clearing trying to avoid making any mistakes, being "consolidating" presidencies. The Finnish Presidency is a possible example. Moreover, unexpected urgent issues might crowd out prioritized ones.

### *(3) Mediation*

The Presidency is supposed to carry issues forward to a decision through mediation and building consensus. Public access to EU documents, the further liberalization of EU trade policies and the enlargement process were three important areas of mediation and consensus building for the Swedish Presidency. The repertoire of mediation instruments is large (see Westlake 1995) – ranging from "confessionals" in negotiations to high-level tours to foreign capitals, as the French presidency was doing before the Nice summit and as Sweden did before Gothenburg and in the access regulation process. Sweden was, however, in Swedish and European press, criticized for this consensual leadership style, considered to be lacking in vision. Important deciding factors for a mediator is the ability to decide when the time is right and to have luck vis-à-vis the agenda. Sweden, I think, had the ability and the luck.

### *(4) Representation*

Swedish ministers represented the Council in external meetings through the Common Foreign and Security Policy and in internal co-decision negotiations with parliament and commission. The extended use of the triad is of special interest here since it is argued that it moves power from the Commission to the Council (cf. Shackleton, 2001, p. 6). Within CFSP, Sweden showed in several issues, above all in the policy against Macedonia, a capacity and a will to produce a united EU strategy. Sweden as a small state did surprisingly well relying on good relations with Blair and Schröder. Relations between Solana, Patten and the Swedish Foreign Min-

ister Lind seem to have been excellent. However, the visit to the Ukraine at the end of the Presidency was regarded in some quarters as excessive Swedish activity (Interview with a high-ranking Swedish Government official, 21/8 2001).

In conclusion states will vary in what type of leadership they try to adopt: consensual, consolidating, entrepreneurial or more power-oriented (cf. Malnes, 1995). Different strategies may be used in the pre-presidential, in the presidential and in the post-presidential phases.

When the phones stop ringing, the Presidency knows that it is in the post-presidential phase.

That phase is, however, of great interest since this is the stage where the fate of the Presidency's agenda setting is ultimately determined. At that stage Sweden must as a common Member State draw on the networks it has built up during its stint at the Presidency of the Council in order to get their proposals implemented (for this section cf. Tallberg, 2001).

### ***Can a small member state manage the European Union?***

Are the small member-states better or worse managers than the large ones? It is fairly often argued that the smaller states are the ones that do best. European Voice (1999, no 46) stated:

The Finnish presidency has proved once again that small countries are often the most adept at managing the EU's business.

The arguments behind this view are first of all degree of "commitment". For the smaller member states, whose capacity to contribute to the course of European integration may otherwise be restricted, the privileged role of the Presidency is of particular interest. The second argument is that small states are more efficient as mediators since they can never expect to be successful in pushing their national interests the way large countries can. Small states must rely more on compromises and a problem solving capacity. The third argument is that a small bureaucracy is not always or even

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usually a less efficient bureaucracy than a large one. A small staff with high quality has many advantages. The roads of communication are short and problems of coordination are facilitated. A fourth argument is that smaller countries usually have closer contacts with the Commission and the Council Secretariat. These closer contacts, it is argued, make for better presidencies.

The counterarguments are primarily that managing capability is closely correlated with a member state's administrative and material strength, which often is associated with size. A larger state usually has a broader technical expertise. Primarily, however, a larger state is assumed to be more able to put pressure on smaller states and push through solutions. It has been argued that: "success in EC negotiation and integration depends heavily on the political will of the larger member states" (Kirchner 1992, p. 110). There has, however, been a detrimental tendency among the larger states to push national priorities. The British Presidency in 1992 and the French in 2000 are obvious examples. This can partly be explained by the fact that the larger states regard the Presidency as only a part of their foreign policy while the Presidency is a unique opportunity for the smaller nations. As noted above the small nations have special problems with the external relations since this is of special interest for the larger nations and since the external large nations like USA, Russia and Japan tend to turn to the larger European states in important foreign policy issues. However, large nations obviously do act in the European interest. The best example might be Germany 1983, which was heavily praised after acting in a neutral manner in a conflict where the nation had very strong interests of its own. It is furthermore important to point out that the British management of its presidencies in 1992 and 1998 was roundly praised (for this section cf. Elgström/Carlsson, 2000, p. 82f. and Tallberg, 2001).

I do think that Denmark, Finland and Sweden have proven that a small nation can manage the practical aspects of being the President but the question remains whether an ambitious small nation can influence the European Union through the Presidency. Managing the inheritance is one way. Impartiality, ability to listen, solving problems and being a builder of consen-

sus are important functions for a successful manager. Those are not, however, functions for an influential Presidency – or are they?

***Did Sweden, in the role of the Presidency, influence the policies of the European Union?***

The Swedish Presidency was focusing on enlargement, employment and environment. Providing access to European documents was an issue with a Commission proposal on the table and with positions taken by Parliament and the member states in the Council. Sweden pushed hard for enlargement and transparency with Germany opposing the presidential solutions in both issues. Employment and environment were areas with large internal Swedish expectations that Sweden would make a difference. CFSP was an unexpected addition more popular in Europe than at home. What kind of influence did the Swedish Presidency have on these issues? Did they meet the expectations?

How could Sweden influence matters in a "history-making area" like the enlargement? It could be argued that the context for influence was not favourable since from the perspective of the Presidency Sweden was in a three-level game. The first level was the relation to Swedish opinion. Here, curiously enough, the sceptical Swedes were positive (see e.g. The Eurobarometer, 54 April 2001) according to which 56% of the Swedes were in favour of the enlargement and 32% were against). The second level were the meetings and discussions with the candidate countries. Without the huge efforts by the candidate countries facing an enthusiastic Presidency it would not have been possible to open sixty-four chapters<sup>3</sup> and close sixty-six. After the Swedish period Hungary and Cyprus led the race with 22 closed chapters followed by Slovenia with 20 closed chapters. Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were next with 19 closed chapters. Bulgaria and Rumania with ten and seven closed chapters need more time and a lot of support. Poland, which especially by Germany, is considered to be the strategically most important country in the enlargement process, is after the

3 The negotiations between the EU and the Candidate countries are subdivided into 30 different topics called chapters.

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Swedish presidency only on a ninth position with sixteen closed chapters. On a positive note it has been argued that Poland is close to closure on a number of chapters (Commission representative interview 3/7, 2001).

According to interviews with Commission officials (3/7, 2001) Sweden has found creative solutions in the environmental field, in the field of movement of capital and the variable time frame for the free movement of labour. Moreover, there have been more chapters closed than were expected.

The problematic third level is the EU one. Internal EU discussions framed by a North/South division are complicated. Another problem was a Commission wavering between a Swedish "regatta" position, that each applicant should be judged on its merits and a "political grouping" of the applicant countries. A political grouping would slow down the process according to Swedish representatives. Another problem were demands by Spain that they should be guaranteed the same level of regional support after the enlargement. Germany and France (e.g.) were against the dates in the Gothenburg document, which finally stated:

At the meeting of the European Council in Gothenburg it was established that a significant breakthrough had taken place and that the enlargement procedure is now irreversible. Heads of government agreed on two deadlines:

Conclusion of the negotiations before the end of 2002 for the best prepared candidate countries;

Accession to the EU for these countries in time to be able to participate in the European Parliament elections in 2004 as members (Results of the Swedish Presidency, 01/07/2001, p. 1).

Against the dates, the German Chancellor Schröder argued that from a symbolic point of view this was more important for Sweden than for Germany but that a goal is not a commitment (Economist, 23/6, 2001). A close look at what was agreed on tends to support Schröder's view that no promise was given.

The negative result of the Irish referendum might have made dates more important and the flaring up of the conflict in Macedonia might have heightened the European security perspective. In fact a shift in "framing" might have been the most important result of the Swedish Presidency. The

enlargement should not be about regional support, the invasion of labour or budgetary problems, it should be about security, welfare and democratisation.

Obviously there were sour notes about the Gothenburg breakthrough. The Economist finds the parallel with the situation in the Soviet Union when the workers pretended to work and the politicians pretended to pay for it. The EU pretends that there is a breakthrough and the candidate countries pretend to believe it (Economist, 23/6, 2001, p. 40).

Anyhow, it seems that a small country like Sweden can push an important issue like the enlargement with some success. Creativity and mediation ability paid off. It is also possible to conclude that the Commission and the Council Secretariat are the friends of the small countries. If power shifts away to the national governments that might be detrimental for the influence of small countries (for this section cf. Bengtsson, 2001).

Sweden, which since 1995 had pushed for greater openness, found itself in quite a complicated situation when it should first, in the Council, chair the process to reach a common position on public access to EU-documents and then in a co-decision process with the Parliament argue this position. In the Council, Sweden's position was backed only by Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands and to some extent by Great Britain and Ireland. The opposition to greater access was led by France, Spain, Germany and Austria, a formidable opposition. However, the European Parliament's position was, especially when it came to parliamentary access, even more friendly towards openness than the Swedish view. So Sweden faced the unpleasant situation of having to argue for a common position far from its own preferences against a Parliament with some very radical views on openness. At the end of January 2001 triologue negotiations between the Commission, the Parliament and the Council were in full swing and by the end of April an agreement was reached. In the Gothenburg document it was stated under the headline:

An open, modern and effective union: A decision was taken on a regulation that signifies a major step forward as regards openness in EU institutions and citizens' access to EU documents. Both documents drawn up and documents received are covered by the regulation, in-

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cluding the sensitive documents (cf. the Solana decision), albeit with certain special rules. Public records must be established. These records will be available through the Internet. Swedish regulations on public access will not be affected negatively. The Council also adopted a decision to make Council documents available on the Internet (Results of the Swedish Presidency, 01/07/2001, p .30f.).

In this process we have two puzzles to unravel.

- (1) How can the different positions of Parliament and the Council be explained? Politicians from the same countries are found in both institutions.
- (2) How did two minorities in Parliament and in the Council fundamentally change the Commission's proposal?

One explanation to the first puzzle is the conflict between the diplomatic secrecy-culture in the Council versus the process-democratic position of the EU-parliament. The diplomatic secrecy culture is based on an intergovernmentalist perspective:

We represent our country in complicated negotiations with other countries. Our negotiation positions must be secret in order to reach the best result possible for our countries. Furthermore, if we divulge the positions of the other countries this will effect the negotiation confidence in a negative way.

Against this we have the Parliament's position that this is a joint problem-solving process and that Parliament must be as well informed as the Council in order to be able to participate in an efficient way.

A second explanation is that there is a conflict between politicians looking for legitimacy, and bureaucrats looking for efficiency. The argument behind the difference might then be that politicians are more influential in Parliament than they are in the Council. The Swedish position is that openness/accountability is an efficiency-producing instrument e.g. in bringing down the level of corruption. It has been said that openness promotes the best bureaucrats and weeds out the worst.

A third explanation is that in the Parliament, Members most interested in openness and accountability are from the Nordic Countries, the Netherlands and the UK. This has produced the effect that the rapporteurs were all

from these countries. The debate in Parliament was completely dominated by MEPs from these countries. There was, however, through the whole process, a feeling that if the issue would be polarized, representatives from the secrecy inclined member states might also get involved in the process with a negative result from an openness perspective.

A fourth explanation is that the British process toward a Freedom of Information Act tipped the scale in Parliament. In Parliament the British MEP Michael Cashman and Graham Watson played decisive roles. It might also be noted that with the British and the Irish the openness coalition reaches the important blocking position in the Council.

A fifth explanation is that the process of change is a result of a gradual process involving the Ombudsman and the Court on the basis of complaints from true agents of change like the Guardian, Statewatch and the Journalist. These agents of change influence public opinion and no Parliament is insensitive to public pressure. It might be noted that they were very critical when the solution was reached. Statewatch's Tony Bunyan was quoted in the Guardian: "The Parliament has rolled over and given in to the council. Its been a wholly undemocratic process" (The Guardian 26/04/2001). However, why the Council should be less sensitive than the Parliament to public pressure is a good question.

It is important to notice that the Swedish Presidency influenced the openness process before being part of the negotiation process as President. The first instrument, which already had been used, was to use the shadow of the incoming Presidency. In my opinion several of the Commission's access proposals were influenced by the Swedish position and the incoming Swedish Presidency (especially the proposals concerning easier access to incoming documents, masking and registers.) The shadow of the Belgian Presidency (in the second half of 2001) was according to MEP sources important in the transparency process.

It was also important in the process to influence by example. The order went out to all the Swedish chairpersons that this was going to be the most transparent Presidency ever. Denmark, 1993, UK 1992 and 1998 introduced some transparency activities to the European Union. Finland 1999

was leading by example when it put documents and calendars on the Web for the first time ("lex Kempainen"). After some passivity by the Portuguese and French Presidencies the Swedish Presidency carried the Finnish example forward.

Our second puzzle was how two minorities in Parliament and in Council could change the Commission proposal in fundamental ways.

First of all the Commission produced a proposal that didn't satisfy anyone. The necessity to protect sensitive documents was not anticipated, the list of exceptions was a step backwards even according to Council lawyers, the process towards a better administrative culture was not codified, civil society was not consulted etc. Furthermore, if the Commission had produced a proposal less adapted to its own administrative structure and to Swedish demands and more adapted to a secrecy related majority view the Swedish negotiation position would have been much worse. The problem for the Commission, however, was that there was no active majority position. The majority was uninterested until the problem with sensitive NATO-documents appeared.

The second factor were the relations between the Parliament, Council, Presidency and Commission. The transparency activists in Parliament trusted the Swedish Presidency and distrusted the French and even more a Spanish one on the horizon. The Council trusted the Swedish chief negotiator Gunnar Lund. His instrument against the most secrecy minded members of the Council was the Parliament and a commitment to protect the sensitive documents.

A third factor was the form of the process, which produced Commission passivity all the way up to the last days of the negotiations. In the informal dialogues the Commission refused to be treated as a Member State expected to produce demands during the dialogue process.

A fourth factor was Sweden's technical competence. Being from a country that had dealt, legally, with the issue since 1766, the Swedish experts had the upper hand against lawyers from the Council and from countries with little experience in Freedom Of Information Acts. Related to this was the negotiation ability of Gunnar Lund.

He stepped on a number of toes but his use of the parliament and not to allow certain proposals on the table was very clever (High ranking Commission representative 18/6, 2001).

A fifth factor was the deadline, May 1, 2001, in the Amsterdam treaty, which was used heavily as an instrument in Sweden's/Gunnar Lund's pushing activities.

The result was a regulation in which the Council achieved its special treatment of sensitive documents. The Parliament and the Presidency achieved an improved obligation for the bureaucrats to help out as well as a higher level of parliamentary control. Moreover, a number of exceptions like "space to think" and "the confidentiality of the proceedings" were "softened up" in a transparency direction. These writings will be watched over by the Ombudsman and transparency friendly MEPs. The Court will be obliged to give its verdict on the scope of the definitions in a number of cases. The Court and Swedish officials will decide whether Sweden got the much-wanted protection for its Constitution. The Commission (and the Council) will have trouble with the conflict between the new regulation and the secrecy culture in parts of the organisations. The Commission will above all have a lot of work to do implementing the new regulation. The overview is given to Parliament with the interinstitutional committee, the yearly reports, the evaluation in 2004, the Ombudsman and the Court, which so far has decided in a way favoring more openness.

In Europe the new regulation was roundly praised, except by very openness friendly MEP's and organisations with an increased transparency on the agenda, which criticized the secrecy of the trialogue process and the sensitive documents solution fearing that it would spill over into new areas. In Sweden this criticism was echoed and the problem with originator control was added since it threatened the Swedish constitutional principle that no one but the law could tell a Swedish official, which documents should be secret (for this section cf. Bjurulf, 2001).

The employment issue was definitely an issue with a history. The question was whether Sweden could follow up the employment process from Luxemburg 1997, with employment guidelines and national programs, via the Cardiff process to improve structural reforms of goods-, service- and capi-

tal markets to the Cologne process, which implies a coordination of macro-economic policies (cf. Jacobsson, 2001).

In the employment area the Swedish Presidency had problems on several levels:

- (1) It was wedged in between the French and the Belgian Presidencies who rather wanted to focus on a European social agenda and social cohesion (Jacobsson, 2000, p. 6). The Belgian employment minister Onkelinx talked about a "European social model" to replace different national models and made specific proposals concerning joint pension, equality and labour market regulations. Here the Swedish government was not enthusiastic, especially due to the conflict between a continental family based welfare system and joint taxation and a Swedish individually based system with day-care centres, individual taxation etc.
- (2) Another conflict is the Swedish position that full employment is the best instrument against social deprivation. Denmark will have to follow up the employment perspective if this is lost during the Belgian and Spanish Presidencies.
- (3) There is also a conflict between the free market enthusiasts Great Britain and Spain on one hand and France and Germany on the other, which are of the opinion that liberalization is not a goal, it is a means. Furthermore national interests (not the least French) have played a complicating part.
- (4) The main problem for Sweden was the economic down turn, which seems to have dampened the Lisbon enthusiasm.

Sweden chose, in this process, to be manager, mediator and a builder of consensus with the problems stated above. The Presidency worked closely with the Commission and the Council Secretariat. Sweden was criticized, even by Prodi, President of the Commission, for being too geared toward compromises. Compared to the Portuguese, the French and the Belgian Presidencies the Swedish Presidencies seem to be short of visions and demands. The explanation can be found in the conflicts above but also in the fact that demands would necessitate more federal solutions, which is not

according to Swedish goals. Anyhow the Swedish Presidency seems to have been a good manager (for this section cf. Jacobsson, 2001).

Environment, a true Nordic priority is an excellent issue for a positive Swedish internal opinion. In this area Sweden thinks it can lead Europe by example. The Swedes argue that they are at the forefront having concrete, clear and long-term policies for an ecologically sustainable development. The Swedish Prime Minister has also stressed the importance of the environment issue area in Swedish public opinion. The Swedish Presidency achieved a EU strategy for sustainable development at the meeting of the European Council in Gothenburg. The starting-point was that EU citizens shall be guaranteed economic stability, social security and a clean and healthy and secure environment, and that sustainable development called for global solutions (Results of the Swedish Presidency, 01/07/2001).

*In the environmental field the EU is going through a framing process. In the words of Annika Kronsell:*

environmental problems have been defined first as costly impediments to economic practices; later as a possible source of income and new markets; and finally as the basis of economic activities. It is in reflective problem framing that most changes toward greening have taken place. This has been done in declarations, programs and reports but perhaps less so in practical politics (Kronsell, 1997, p. 194).

*It is quite obvious that different countries within the EU are at different levels in this framing process. The Swedish Presidency was not in a position to push through a great breakthrough in the environmental field. The fact that the proposal from the Commission came late was one major problem. The fact that harmonization of taxes is against Swedish policies was a problem especially from a Green perspective as regards a much needed tax on the emission of carbon dioxides.*

*On a positive note the EU's conflict with the USA on the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol might be positive for the environmental issue if the conflict results in a climate dialogue between EU and USA. The breakthrough in the closure of the environmental chapters with the candidate countries might be of the utmost importance for the greening of Europe.*

Thus, in conclusion, Sweden exerted some influence in areas where they could show "how it could be done from a different perspective". Employment and environment were such areas for the Swedish Presidency but the influence was mostly a strategy producer. The time was not right for a substantial breakthrough. In the enlargement field Sweden was mostly a pusher. In the transparency issue the time was right and if the Swedish Presidency made Europe take another step towards greater openness, service mindedness and accountability, that might help a fledging EU-legitimacy. The main problem for Swedish influence in general is the North-South cultural division. We (Elgström, Bjurulf, Johansson and Sanerstedt, 2001) asked the Swedish members of the EU committees which country representatives they usually cooperated with. Not surprisingly Denmark and Finland were at the top with 70%. Great Britain was not far behind with 63% followed by the Netherlands at 36% and Germany at 27% and the Mediterranean countries close to zero. This is, however, the base for blocking coalitions but not for qualified majority positions. A Northern European agenda has clear problems reaching a qualified majority and these problems will magnify when the enlargement is completed. So far the North/South dimension is, according to our respondents, the only dominant type of coalition. 82% of the committee representatives said that the North/South division occurred much more often than the integrationists/sovereignty dimension with 32%. However, in its role as a consensus builder the Presidency can never build only on a Northern European agenda. In that job you need good people with good ideas. Not least since the consensus principle in the European Union should and many times do promote good ideas.

### ***Could a reluctant and neutral European nation like Sweden manage the CFSP despite its non-NATO membership. What about the EMU?***

The Swedes solved what might be regarded as a dilemma by focusing on traditional Swedish interests like intensified cooperation with the UN, development of EU's civil crisis management and conflict prevention and

playing down NATO relations and the development of military capacity resources, deficiencies and priority clarifications as well as a better basis for new contributions of forces from Member States in the autumn of 2001. Sweden as a small state had intensive cooperation with the high representative Solana and the Commission representative Patten. Sweden relied on Solana and might even have bolstered his position. A larger state would probably have used its own foreign office to a higher degree instead. Relations between Solana and the Swedish Foreign Minister Lindh seem to have been excellent. Obviously, Sweden needed Solanas position as a former Secretary General of NATO. It is rumoured that Lindh gave Solana a new mobile so they could speed up the exchange of messages.

However, Sweden showed in several issues, above all in the policy against Macedonia a capacity and a will to produce a united EU strategy. During the Swedish Presidency the EU was also very active in the Middle East.

Sweden as a small state did well in the CFSP issue area. Sweden as a new member did surprisingly well relying on a good relationship with Solana, Patten, Blair and Schröder. The picture of Sweden as a reluctant European, especially in the CFSP area, must be revised. There is a glaring difference between the Swedish activities in Europe and the scepticism shown in front of Swedish audiences. Swedish neutrality and "the old type of Swedish activism" are and will be debated. If it is possible to elevate Swedish ideas of conflict prevention and conflict management to a European level and thus put them on the international scene by an actor large enough to be a serious contender and complement to the USA that might be a good argument against Sweden performing its traditional role as a conscience for the world as well as a good argument for working for a CFSP with better policies, organisation and equipment (for this section cf. Bengtsson/Strömvik, 2001).

What about the EMU? Not much of the EMU was mentioned in the Results of the Swedish Presidency. It might be argued that this is an area where all the decisions have been taken and implementation has been left to ECB in Frankfurt. Here and there especially in federalist parts of the EU-parliament there were some grumbles about Swedish non-membership. However, it is

my opinion that if Sweden lacked influence this could more be attributed to other factors, like smallness, radical goals and cultural conflicts.

### ***What were the national and international reactions to the Swedish Presidency?***

A Presidency is evaluated at many levels. Government colleagues, across Europe are evaluating the Swedish Prime Ministers efforts during the six months. EU-institutions are buzzing with reactions. Media had their articles and their TV-talk shows. These images are important even if you do not agree with the statement that images are not the only thing, they are everything.

Of special interest for us is the reaction in Swedish and European newspapers as well as the reaction in the Swedish and the EU-Parliament (EP). Those reactions are the most open ones. Reactions in the Council and Commission are also important but harder to get at.

#### *Newspaper reactions:*

*When comparing Swedish and European newspaper reactions the transparency (access) regulation and the management function would seem to have been great achievements according to European newspapers. The European newspapers were less impressed with the three E's and especially Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung was not impressed by the enlargement negotiations. On the whole it is striking that in the Frankfurter Allgemeine as well as in Le Monde and in Le Figaro, Sweden's position as Presidency was rarely mentioned and Sweden was not considered a factor in the negotiations except when it came to transparency. All in all the Financial Times was slightly more positive (from Broman and Rosén, 2001).*

*The reactions in the Swedish newspapers (Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet) were almost the opposite with, first of all, a critical reaction to the transparency (access) regulation with a general press opinion that Sweden could have done more. Secondly, the Swedish impact on the enlargement negotiations was considered to be the largest success. Above all, in the Swedish newspapers attention was drawn to the political posi-*

*tion Sweden had as (external) representative of the union (Meetings with Bush and Putin, negotiations about Macedonia and the Middle East). In fact Swedish and European press only agreed on Sweden being a good manager. Safe but dull (From Broman and Rosén, 2001).*

*Parliamentarian reactions:*

In the Swedish Parliament there was a distinct party truce in line with a Swedish foreign policy tradition. The two largest political parties in Parliament, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, usually find common ground in the foreign policy area. In a comparative perspective this bipartisanship is not unusual especially not during EU-Presidencies. The only clear exception was the conflict between the President and the Prime Minister during the French Presidency in the fall of 2000. The only conflict that can be found in the Swedish Parliament is the question of how the power should be distributed within the EU. That question is a "hot potato" for the Swedish Social Democrats and it is not surprising that this question was happily deferred to the Belgian Presidency. In fact the Swedish Social Democrats are in favour of extending EU-power to new areas provided that it is done through the intergovernmental coordination method. Swedish Conservatives and Liberals are sceptical to extending EU-power e.g. in the Employment area. They want a limited but strong EU. The Social Democrats would seem to be in some trouble here since their electorate is not in favour of extending power to the EU (cf. Hegeland and Johansson, 2001).

The reaction in the EP was politically biased. The Social Democrats liked what the Swedes did but the Conservatives were more critical. It came as no surprise that the Swedish PM's preference for the intergovernmental model and a strong Council was generally criticized. When the Swedish PM met the Parliament on January 17, 2001, the EPP leader Hans Gert Pötering stated that the Council should not be stronger, it should rather be more transparent and it should be reformed in order to open the Council doors to the public.

Since Parliament is an EU-institution, which pushes enlargement, many MEP's have officially and unofficially been very pleased with Sweden's

commitment. They regarded the statements in the Gothenburg documents as a great achievement (Malmstrom, 2001).

As regards employment, many MEP's criticized Sweden's lack of convincing e.g. Germany and France in Stockholm to take more financial deregulation steps (Malmstrom, 2001).

As regards environment, Sweden has been praised for its ambitions. Parliament states in its final declaration:

that it is pleased that the Swedish Presidency has considered sustainable development to be of such a significance.

The transparency (access) regulation was criticized for the lack of transparency in its trialogue form. "Openness but behind closed doors". As regards substance Parliament had a lot of trust in the Swedish Presidency. A majority praised Sweden for the result even though the regulation was only regarded as a step forward and that the continuing transparency process should be closely monitored by Parliament.

As regards CFSP the consolidation of a European position and the development of conflict prevention and civilian conflict management was noted by Parliament. It was considered that Foreign Minister Anna Lind had been impressive in her work with Chris Patten and Javier Solana in Macedonia and the Middle East (Malmstrom, 2001).

*Parliamentary criticism in the EU was mainly that the Swedish Presidency had no ideas on the future of the EU. The Swedish PM and the Foreign Minister both emphasized the importance of a discussion of this future but they had few ideas how this future should be shaped. Pat Cox said to the Swedish Foreign Minister when Nice was debated in Parliament that Sweden's position was "extremely cautious". Concerning management, Parliament felt somewhat pushed aside during the first half of the Swedish Presidency. During the second half there was nothing but praise. The trialogue method was an efficient, albeit non-transparent, tool in the hands of the Swedish Presidency (Malmstrom, 2001).*

## **Conclusion**

Concluding, we will return to our questions and make our final remarks.

(1) Does the presidency, as such, carry any weight?

We can, I think, conclude that the presidency does carry weight, but only if it is lucky with the agenda. The presidency doesn't run the agenda, the agenda runs the presidency. Sweden was lucky that the transparency issue had progressed just far enough so that Sweden with a lot of effort could be influential. Sweden was, probably, also lucky with the enlargement. With a lot of effort and some good ideas I do think that it is difficult to argue that Sweden didn't have a lasting influence on the process. However, Sweden didn't carry much weight in the employment and the environment issue area despite a lot of effort. The time was not right for all the reasons given above. Another example is Germany, which had high ambitions for their presidency in the spring of 1999 but was unfortunate with the demise of the Commission and the war in Kosovo. These crises were important for carrying the EU-process forward but they didn't help the German ambitions.

(2) Could a small member state, like Sweden, manage the EU as well as a large one?

There are two main reasons why this is possible. The first is EU's primary commandment for its presidency: "Thou shall have no other priorities but the best of the Union." For reasons given above it seems easier for a small nation to follow that commandment than it is for a larger one. It is easy to find examples where large nations have been carried away by their national (e.g. France, 2000) priorities. The other reason is the hypothesis that in an international system where the very idea of sovereignty itself is under challenge and large multilateral institutions are gaining power, influence is no longer related to size but rather to a capacity for innovative thinking and a capacity for building networks and alliances (Joenniemi, 1998, p. 62 and Arter, 2000, p. 678 and 691).

(3) Did Sweden in the role of the Presidency influence the policies of the European Union?

## Sweden and the European Union

We have concluded that Sweden exerted influence as a strategic producer in the employment and environment issue areas. In the enlargement field Sweden was mostly a pusher. In the transparency (access) issue Sweden has helped Europe take another step toward greater openness, service-mindedness and accountability that might help a fledging EU-legitimacy. Of greater importance from a Swedish perspective is whether Sweden passed the initiation rite that the Presidency is for a new member. In my opinion the real initiation was the Swedish efforts within the CFSP and fighting the USA over the Kyoto treaty. After the CFSP efforts I would be very much surprised if Sweden were not regarded as a "real member", even if I have met several high ranking members in Brussels wondering how neutral Sweden could act the way they do/did in the CFSP issue area.

- (4) Could a reluctant and neutral nation like Sweden manage the CFSP despite its non-NATO membership? What about the EMU?

Surprisingly enough Swedish management of the CFSP seems to have been a success due to good chemistry between Lindh, Patten and Solana and a huge Swedish management effort within the security issue area. This I think toned down Sweden's reputation as a "reluctant" European. However, with the EMU question still unresolved, it is still there.

- (5) What were the national and international reactions?

If the first commandment for a EU presidency is "don't forget that you work for the Union", the second commandment is "don't forget that you are not elected by the Union". This was Finland's mistake according to Finnish representatives in Brussels. Finnish representatives worked so much in the interests of the Union that they forgot about Finnish media and the general Finnish public. A positive Finnish opinion turned chilly. However, when extremely positive reviews turned up in international media Finnish media thawed. (DN, 1/7, 2000). The Swedish media didn't react in quite the same way. The (few) positive reactions in the European media and the more frequent positive reactions in the European Parliament didn't convince the Swedish media. The Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, The Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, the Minis-

ter of Trade Leif Pagrotsky and the permanent representative Gunnar Lund have all been treated in a positive way in several leading European Newspapers (Broman and Rosén, 2001). In Swedish media the less flattering aspects and isolated mistakes have got a lot of coverage. Surprisingly enough the Swedes have become more positive to the EMU after the Swedish Presidency. In September 2001 an opinion poll by Demoskop polled 44% yes and 44% no to the EMU (in May, 2001 there was a 9% difference against). The PM explains the change more by economic factors including the fledging Swedish crown rather than the Swedish Presidency (DN, 9/9, 2001).

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