



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

Public Lecture No.8

---

# *The European Council: Towards a new institutional reality?*

---

06 March 2020

The EEG / CEPS

Brussels, Belgium



**TRACK** Teaching and Researching  
the European Council

---

Title : „The European Council: Towards a new institutional reality?  
Date : 06 March 2020  
Venue : The EEG / CEPS, Brussels, Belgium  
Participants : 36

---

As a first part of its kick - off activities in the EU community in Brussels and beyond TRACK organized a panel in the CEPS idea lab which each year assembles several hundred experts and multipliers not only from the Brussels arena but from all over Europe.

TRACK was able to attract leading experts for discussions in the panel. Also in the audience experienced experts and early stage researchers were involved.

The main points of the public lecture where:

- with look in the **history and future** of the European Council (EUCO): Clear answers to the question ,New faces - old patterns? where: the EUCO has taken and will do so in the future the role as the dominant crisis manager and ultimate decision maker, as the Heads of State or Government have always seen their tasks to have the final word- even if they are normally frustrated about the long and cumbersome sessions. The term ,Chiefsache' was repeatedly used.

- in respect to the impact on the **inter- institutional relations and balance the** experts painted a differentiated picture:

- the power battle with the EP might get more intense - especially as the EP will try to have a strong say in the decisions on the MFF. There is a clear need to find forms of a constructive cooperation. The political leaders in the EUCO need to get aware that they have to find a consensus with the EP. As for the EP, there were doubts if and how the EP, now more fragmented then before the last election, will get to the necessary majority of half its members to give its consent to the EUCO's agreement or if the EP will turn into blocking veto player.

- as to the relation with the Commission: a main argument was that both EU institutions need each other: there is no clear principal - agent relationship. The relations between both Presidents have developed to be business like.

- As to the **intra- institutional relations and balance of power** the search for consensus is normally orchestrated by the President. At the same time the Franco -German couple has played - especially in the golden ages of Mitterrand /Kohl and Delors - a then respected leadership role. However, except



*Disclaimer: This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

for the reactions to the EURO crises the participants observe a serious and deep rift and dissensus between the respective leaders of these two countries. Even if they are frustrated, leaders want to be seen by their domestic audience to have a say among the leaders of Europe. Thus, each of them can exercise a veto position. Many are not or insufficiently prepared to discuss details.

- The participants of the panels had no stimulating **ideas for reforms**: i.e. how to improve the work of the European Council. A main suggestion concerned the follow up in the Council: the ministers should get more aware of what their bosses have agreed upon.

One message of the panel was, that the EUCO remains a key institution which deserves further analysis and assessment.

#### Find out more...

- ▶ Wessels, Wolfgang (2019): [Das politische System der Europäischen Union](#). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- ▶ Weidenfeld, Werner; Wessels, Wolfgang (2020): [Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration](#). Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- ▶ Weidenfeld, Werner; Wessels, Wolfgang (2020): Europa von A bis Z. Taschenbuch der Europäischen Integration. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- ▶ Wolters, Johannes; Wessels, Wolfgang (2019): [Der Europäische Rat: Schlüsselinstitution der Europäischen Union](#), in: Lippert, Barbara; Becker, Peter (Hrsg.): Handbuch Europäische Union. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Website: [www.track.uni-koeln.de](http://www.track.uni-koeln.de)

 [facebook.com/track.euco](https://facebook.com/track.euco)

 [@TRACK\\_EUCO](https://twitter.com/TRACK_EUCO)

 [Newsletter](#)



*Disclaimer: This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*