



## GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

### *~BACKGROUND~*

## President of the European Council

November 2009

Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the President of the European Council is a stable and full-time function. At their informal meeting in Brussels on 19 November, ahead of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December, EU Heads of State or Government agreed on the election of Mr Herman VAN ROMPUY as the elect President.

### **What are his duties?**

According to Article 15 (6) of the Treaty on the European Union, the President of the European Council:

- chairs it and drives forward its work;
- ensures the preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council in cooperation with the President of the Commission, and on the basis of the work of the General Affairs Council;
- endeavours to facilitate cohesion and consensus within the European Council;
- presents a report to the European Parliament after each of the meetings of the European Council.

He also, at his level and in that capacity, ensures the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

He may not hold a national office at the same time as being President.

# P R E S S

## **How was elected and for what duration ?**

According to the Treaty, the European Council elects its President by a qualified majority for a term of two and a half years, renewable once. But the decision to appoint Herman VAN ROMPUY was taken unanimously by all Member States. The formal decision will be taken once the Treaty is in force.

## **The European Council**

Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Council becomes an institution. It provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and defines the general political directions and priorities thereof. It will not exercise legislative functions.

The European Council consists of the Heads of State or government of the Member States, together with its President and the President of the Commission. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security takes part in its work.

The European Council meets twice every six months, convened by its President. When the situation so requires, the President will convene a special meeting of the European Council.

## **Supporting arrangements**

The European Council is assisted by the General Secretariat of the Council (i.e. no new administration).

The staff of the General Secretariat is therefore be at the President's disposal, including the Directorate for general political questions, the Legal Service, policy DGs (Ecofin, environment, JHA, etc.), translation services, protocol, press office, etc. The President has his own private office.

The President has his office, as from appointment, at the Council's Justus Lipsius building. Once the new European Council building has been completed, estimated 2013, the President will then be situated there.

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