



Report

WHAT FUTURE FOR QMV IN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.

About Think Visegrad

Think Visegrad Platform is a network of 8 think tanks from the V4 countries established to hold a structured dialog on issues of strategic regional importance. The network analyzes key issues for the Visegrad Group (V4), and provides recommendations to the governments of V4 countries, the annual presidencies of the group, and the International Visegrad Fund. Think Visegrad covers thematic priorities of V4 including energy security, V4's internal cohesion, EU institutions and politics, the Western Balkans, relations with Eastern Partnership countries, development assistance, hard security, environmental protection, Roma-related issues, migration, transport, etc.



On October 5th, EUROPEUM's Brussels Office under the representation of Think Visegrad Brussels and in cooperation with European Policy Centre (EPC) organized an expert discussion titled "What future for QMV in Foreign and Security Policy". This discussion gathered over 25 experts from think-tanks, academia, European institutions and diplomats from EU Member states.

Main focus of the debate was to provide an overview of the current positions of certain Member states toward a possible shift to Qualified Majority Voting in Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, and to discuss potential positive and negative aspects of this decision, taking into consideration relevant arguments that will shape the outcomes of the broader discussion on how to make the EU more actionable while protecting crucial national interests of each Member state.

The concern of being overruled was a recurring theme in the debate, indicating a fear that potential shift to a different way of conducting the decisions could lead into further divisions within the Union and could spark differentiated approaches to European integration and decision-making. For some, a sense of belonging to the European family is strongly intertwined with efforts of reaching unanimous decisions even if those decisions take longer to agree on. The importance of having each voice heard was stressed on several occasions, as this is considered as a vital aspect of EU policy. Similarly, there is a belief that while achieving consensus may be a lengthy, arduous process, it ultimately leads to success.

On the other hand, some have highlighted that the current consensus-driven approach to shaping foreign policy has proven to be ineffective. The intergovernmental model for foreign policy is viewed as lacking efficiency and not being prioritized. The necessary tools for effective foreign policy are available, but political will is the crucial element required.

Several participants argued that the concept of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) holds crucial implications for the EU's ability to assert itself in global geopolitical discussions involving China, Russia, and the United States, and this goes beyond questions of national interests, as those should be set in line with the interests of the EU on global scale. Presently, the EU's role in foreign policy is relatively modest, and its position may result in it assuming a more passive role. In this context, some experts posit that QMV could expedite decision-making and enhance efficiency.

Additionally, a discussion has arisen regarding the actual threat to unity, as QMV, from one perspective, appears to promote compromise, flexibility, and effective decision-making, with a possibility of a safety net in place to allay concerns about national security for member states. As of now, the EU has not demonstrated proficiency in finalizing the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), a significant detriment to its effectiveness and legitimacy.

It has been argued that Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) was essential for addressing crucial topics such as the future enlargement of the EU. Indeed, it was a recurring topic during the discussion, closely tied to the issue of QMV in Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The question of what kind of Europe is envisioned for a Europe with 30+ members was frequently raised. In addition, maintaining unanimity in the Enlargement Policy is seen by many as a severe obstacle to the European perspective of the candidate countries due to possible vetoes of Member states on the grounds of bilateral disputes, or other issues that have nothing in common with the technical process of the accession negotiations. It was emphasized that QMV does not need to be employed constantly, and when it is used, there is still a safety net in place.

Another important consideration is that the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) should not inadvertently foster polarization and excessive politicization. While advocating for negotiation remains crucial, there should also

be a culture of voting integrated into the process. This balanced approach aims to preserve the spirit of collaboration while recognizing the need for structured decision-making. However, given that democracy is a cornerstone of the European Union, questions have arisen about its functioning. When consensus proves elusive, a structured vote is organized, allowing for negotiations to reach a common ground even if being in the minority is challenging.

Furthermore, implementing QMV would necessitate a more proactive role of the European Council, elevating it to a pivotal position in the process. Ultimately, the prospect of achieving both unity and effectiveness in a constructive and global manner is conceivable. As discussions over the adoption of QMV in certain policy areas will be connected to broader discussions about the EU reform and the future visions of the EU, it is crucial that all relevant actors are involved in these discussions and all countries, both on governmental and non-governmental level feel that they are represented in this crucial aspect of decision-making.