



CONSILIUM

EN

GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL

FAQs

Practical advice
for organising
Presidencies of the Council
of the European Union

PROTOCOL - CONFERENCES

JULY 2013

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Contents

Introduction	5
Practical advice for the day-to-day work of rotating Presidencies at the General Secretariat of the Council	7
Presentation of the Protocol/Conferences Directorate: services and activities	10
Events outside Brussels.....	19
Informal meetings	22
Catering: arrangements for official meals, working meals or breakfasts and other events	24
Protocol gifts and other gifts	34
Interpreting.....	35
Budgetary matters.....	40
Delegates' travel expenses	41
Decoration	44
Annex I – Contacts	45
Annex II – Decorative installations chosen by rotating Presidencies.....	47

INTRODUCTION

In our preparatory work with the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, we have always favoured meetings and discussions.

They remain essential to create good working conditions and provide the best possible assistance to those responsible for the next Presidency.

However, we thought it would be useful to draw up this document, to help those concerned make preparations in advance of a rotating Presidency's term.

We hope that it will answer the questions which arise most often and will be happy to provide you with any further information you may require.

This document, along with the *Standing Instructions on European Council and Council-related meetings*, which cover binding rules for organising meetings, can be found on Extranet (<https://extranet.consilium.europa.eu>) in the Information section.

Dominique G. MARRO,
Director Protocol/Conferences

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF ROTATING PRESIDENCIES AT THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL

The rotating Presidencies have a number of key documents at their disposal which act as a foundation for the daily work carried out during their time at the head of the Council of the European Union. These are:

- the Presidency calendar, a timetable which lists all the meetings approved by the relevant ministers;
- the *Presidency Handbook*, which details the changes brought in by the Treaty of Lisbon that affect the role and activities of the rotating Presidency;
- the *Delegates' Handbook*, which complements the Presidency Handbook;
- the *Standing Instructions on European Council and Council-related meetings*, which provide a complete list of the services made available to the rotating Presidency by the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) and detail the procedures, rules, constraints and financial considerations governing them.

1. One of the rotating Presidencies' main tasks is to plan and organise meetings, within the framework of the Presidency programme, in order to bring policy dossiers to fruition. What is the most efficient way to go about this?

Additionally, a few suggestions may be useful for the work of future rotating Presidencies:

- keep in regular contact with GSC departments;
- organise all activities and reserve any services needed in good time;
- give notification of any changes in the programme as soon as they happen, in light of the tight room reservation schedule.

2. What steps are recommended for a rotating Presidency to optimise preparations for its work at the GSC?

A dedicated team needs to be set up to prepare for proceedings. The team should be present in Brussels well before the Presidency begins, to allow it time to familiarise itself with the departments, procedures, rules, etc.

An ideal team would consist of at least one coordinator and one member in charge of planning meetings. It is extremely important that the coordinator should be in close and regular contact with Coreper I and Coreper II and have the authority to take on the spot decisions.

3. Does the Presidency have to appoint a coordinator for the scheduling of meetings and interpreting?

Yes. The coordinator appointed by the Presidency (see question 2) is responsible for the practical organisation of meetings. The coordinator keeps in regular contact with the Meetings Planning Office (see question 6.2), which is responsible for booking the meeting rooms and the teams of interpreters.

This brochure aims to give future Presidencies some useful pointers. It is also worth consulting the *Standing Instructions on European Council and Council-related meetings* for more detailed information.

4. What are the main constraints (number of rooms available each day, rules concerning interpreting, etc.) that must be taken into account if the rotating Presidency is to run proceedings smoothly?

PRESENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL/CONFERENCES DIRECTORATE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

5. What is the Protocol/ Conferences Directorate's role and what kind of assistance can it offer?

Our Directorate's mission is to act fast and flexibly to provide the first rate services (event management, support in matters of protocol, provision of suitable rooms and technology, interpreting services, catering services, administration of

delegates' travel expenses) that are needed to host high level meetings in Brussels or, if necessary, anywhere in the world.

The Protocol/Conferences Directorate provides services for the European Council and its President, the Council and its preparatory bodies, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, the President of the Eurozone and Eurogroup, and the Secretary-General.

In 2012, the Directorate helped organise almost 6 900 meetings, including seven meetings of the European Council or of euro area Heads of State or Government, eight bilateral summits (five of which were not in Brussels), 79 Council meetings and 140 Coreper I and II meetings.

It coordinates the organisation of meetings (at all levels) held in Council buildings, ensuring the efficient running of meetings of the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies, as well as meetings and summits with third countries. It directly manages the allocation of rooms and takes care of interpreting arrangements.

It is responsible for all the technical facilities in meeting rooms (audiovisual and multimedia systems, etc.), as well as assisting delegates during meetings (presence of room messengers).

It also coordinates all logistical arrangements (security, protocol, information and communication systems, medical services, etc.) for European Council meetings and other high level events, as well as directly managing accreditation for all participants. In this capacity, together with the Council Security Office, it acts as the interface with the host country's authorities and works very closely with the rotating Presidency. When meetings are held outside Brussels, it plays a similar role.

Within the Justus Lipsius (JL) building, it is responsible for handling protocol matters (including working meals) and welcoming visitors for the President of the European Council, European Council meetings and other high level events.

In April, June and October, it prepares for and coordinates the meetings of the Council of the European Union held in Luxembourg.

Outside Brussels, the Directorate prepares for the President's official and working visits, as well as meetings with third countries. It organises all the events in the margins of the Councils, organises ceremonies for the presentation of credentials by third countries' ambassadors and makes the protocol arrangements for signing ceremonies for official agreements between the Union and third countries.

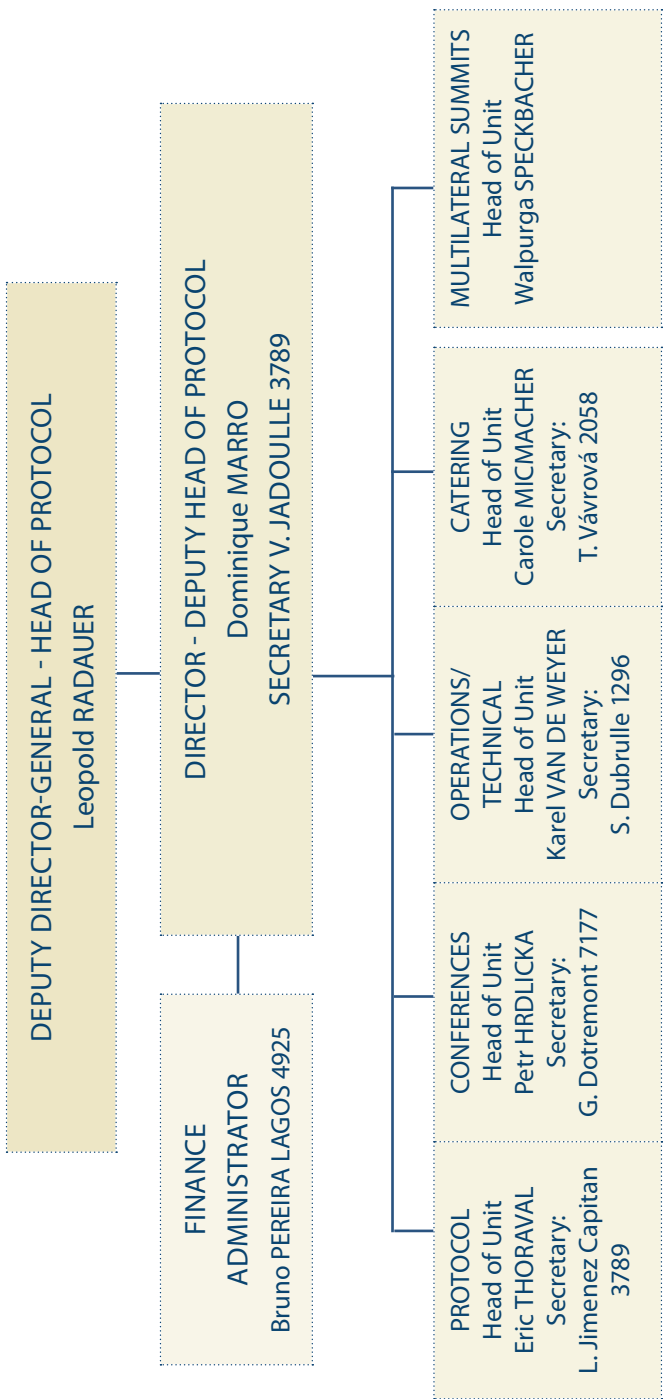
Since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, bringing new institutions into play, the GSC has had new tasks to perform. The effect on the Protocol/Conferences Directorate is that there are now a number of additional people who can call on its assistance. They are the President of the European Council, the President of the Eurozone, and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In emergencies (such as an unexpected extraordinary European Council or euro area summit), the Protocol/Conferences Directorate is obliged to cancel any activities that were previously scheduled to be held at GSC headquarters on the day of the extraordinary meeting, as the buildings switch to the security arrangements for European Councils.

Only the Lex building remains accessible (within certain limits).

6. How is the Protocol/
Conferences Directorate
structured?

The Protocol/Conferences Directorate consists of five units: the Protocol Unit, the Conferences Unit, the Operations/Technical Unit, the Catering Unit and the Multilateral Summits Unit.



The Protocol Unit is responsible for all of the formal events related to the European Council and the Council of the European Union. It is organised into three sectors (Protocol – Missions, Protocol – GSC Events, and Protocol – Official Meals).

6.1. Protocol Unit

In 2012, the Protocol Unit coordinated around 1 800 formal events, of which 100 were held outside Brussels, and 350 visitors were received by the President of the European Council.

The Missions team takes care of journeys made by the President of the European Council, both in Belgium and abroad. The team is responsible for preparing for official trips by the President of the European Council. At least one protocol officer usually goes on these trips (official visits, summits, conferences).

The GSC Events team works (together with other units from the Protocol/Conferences Directorate, as well as other GSC departments) to organise the protocol aspects of the following events:

- European Councils;
- bilateral and multilateral summits held in Brussels;
- signing ceremonies;
- political dialogues;
- visits to the President of the European Council;
- visits by delegations from third countries and international organisations invited to meetings held in the Council's buildings (in Brussels or Luxembourg);
- high-level visits (from the rank of ambassador or equivalent upwards);
- ceremonies for new ambassadors to the European Union presenting their credentials to the President of the European Council.

The Official Meals team organises all protocol tasks in relation to official meals. These may be meals for the European Council and its President or for the Council of Ministers, ambassadors' farewell dinners, or receptions. The work includes drawing up lists of guests and seating plans for official meals,

Who should I contact about:

- Confirming ministers' attendance at official meals?
- Updates to the composition of governments and ministers' official titles?
- Organisation of ambassadors' farewell dinners?
protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

preparing and sending out invitations and any other preparatory work in connection with the event, as well as welcoming the guests.

The team also keeps the lists of Member States' ministers up to date.

Within the Conferences Unit, the Meetings Planning Office plans and manages all the meetings that take place in conference rooms in the JL and Lex buildings and in

the Kirchberg Conference Centre (KCC) in Luxembourg (including cancellations, additions and changes). The rotating Presidency should use the software provided by the GSC to plan all the meetings to be held during its term, as well as to make any alterations to the arrangements (additions, cancellations and changes).

This tool, known as Presidency Interface, is available six months before a Presidency begins and is accessed via the Extranet.

Upon request, the team from the Meetings Planning Office can offer advice in the country holding the Presidency or in third countries.

Furthermore, as a rule, the Presidency must meet the following deadlines when planning its proceedings:

- Seven months before its term begins, the Presidency provides the General Political Questions Directorate (DQPG) of the GSC with a timetable for the main meetings, including Council and Coreper meetings (this timetable can always be amended if deemed necessary by the Presidency). It also includes the provisional dates for the European Council, multilateral summits and the PSC, and takes into account the constraints associated with these meetings (only two meeting rooms in the Lex building are available during European Councils and multilateral summits, and the number of rooms available in the JL building on the days preceding multilateral summits can be limited);

6.2. Conferences Unit

- Three months ahead of the term, the Presidency sends the Meetings Planning Office an estimate of the number of meetings of each working party to be held during the six months of its Presidency;
- Eight weeks ahead, the Presidency draws up a detailed work programme for the first week of its term and sends it to the Meetings Planning Office. This is the basis on which the Council's proceedings are organised for the first week of the term;
- Each subsequent week, the Presidency sends the Meetings Planning Office a detailed work programme for the meetings to be held eight weeks later.

The Meetings Planning Office also takes care of interpreting for the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies (Decision No 111/07). The office manages the interpreting budget and the allocations for the different languages, checks expenditure and informs the Member States about that expenditure, the payments to be made and the utilisation of their allocated budgets.

The Meetings Planning Office looks after the provision of interpreting services as part of the service level agreement (see questions 32 to 35) between the GSC and the Directorate-General for Interpretation (SCIC).

In Brussels, 14 meeting rooms are available to the Presidency, one of which has no interpreting booths (for the record, five rooms are made available to the European External Action Service (EEAS).

In Luxembourg, where the Council is based in April, June and October, the Presidency has two rooms with 28 booths, one with nine booths and one with eight booths, as well as two eight booth rooms reserved for meals.

Who should I contact about:

- ◉ Planning meetings?
 - ◉ Booking meeting rooms?
 - ◉ Organising interpreting when required?
- conferences.programmation@consilium.europa.

The Conferences Unit also includes a Delegates' Expenses Office. This office manages payments to Member States of a biannual allocation for the travel expenses of delegates who attend meetings hosted by the Council and certain Presidency meetings (as

described in Decision N° 30/2013). For further information about the rules on delegates' expenses, see questions 40 to 49 below.

6.3. Operations/Technical Unit

The Operations/Technical Unit is responsible for all of the technical and logistical arrangements needed for the smooth running

of meetings held on GSC premises. It is made up of a number of departments, namely:

a. Messengers/Reception — These teams are tasked with preparing the meeting rooms in the JL and Lex buildings, as well as staffing these buildings' main reception desks. They are also responsible for the distribution of documents in the meeting rooms and to interpreters.

The room messengers' role also includes welcoming delegates and helping them find their way around when required.

The group is backed up by a Logistics team which is responsible for managing the equipment needed for meetings (signboards, paper, etc.), flags when they are to be flown (at official visits, meetings with third countries, etc.) and equipment for missions.

b. Dispatching — This office organises the daily activities of staff working in meeting rooms and at the reception desks at the main entrances of the JL and Lex buildings, as well as the work of floor messengers. It prepares seating plans for meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg. In line with the *Standing Instructions on European Council and Council-related meetings* and the plans which have been drawn up, the office informs the Accreditation Service of the number of passes to provide for Coreper II Councils (FAC, GAC, JHA, ECOFIN).

Furthermore, the office is responsible for the entry of agenda data and ensuring that meeting information is displayed and updated on the screens in the conference areas. It works closely with the Meetings Planning Office to achieve this.

Dispatching is also the rotating Presidency's point of contact for the organisation and use of the Presidency rooms in Brussels and Luxembourg.

c. Accreditations — This office manages the accreditation of Heads of State or Government, delegates and participants from other institutions, as well as interpreters, journalists and outside firms when European Councils or certain other events are being held at the GSC.

Who should I contact about:

- ◉ Distribution of documents in meeting rooms?
- ◉ Seating plans for meetings?
- ◉ Floor plans for meetings?
- ◉ Flags?
- ◉ Passes for meeting rooms?

conferences.dispatching@consilium.europa.eu

Before every event, all delegations are given access to a website on which they can submit requests for accreditation.

d. Technical — The Technical team is responsible for the proper functioning of any technical equipment in the meeting rooms. The technicians monitor all of the rooms from the central control desk and can provide remote assistance to resolve technical problems.

If an audiovisual presentation is planned at a meeting, the Presidency should indicate this when reserving the room and then contact the Technical team.

e. Floor messengers (JL and Lex) — Floor messengers are primarily responsible for the flow of written information within the GSC, particularly the sorting and distribution of incoming and outgoing mail. Furthermore, their tasks include: preparing meeting rooms for Directorates-General; preparing passes (around 5 000 for each event); controlling certain points of access during European Councils; welcoming third country delegations in close cooperation with Protocol officers (as points of contact or operating lifts using a key operated priority system); welcoming visitors and helping them find their way around; assisting the Health and Safety Department if the building has to be evacuated (as evacuation stewards); and assisting people with reduced mobility.

6.4. Catering Unit

The Catering Unit comprises four teams:

a. Inspection/Food Safety — This team checks, inspects, analyses and verifies hygiene and quality (in line with the HACCP standard), ensuring the coordination, traceability, and monitoring of all catering facilities, cafeterias, restaurants and bars.

b. Coordination — This team is responsible for managing the administration's relationship with the catering contractor, monitoring the contractor's procedures (prior to the organisation of VIP receptions and VIP meals in the Council buildings) and checking that agreed prices are charged at the various sales points.

c. Inspection/Meeting rooms — This team cooperates with the waiting staff on floor 80 (meals and receptions), organises coffee/tea, drinks and sandwich services (particularly in the meeting rooms on floor 50), supervises the champagne service at the beginning or end of a Presidency and contributes to menu planning.

d. Orders — This team is responsible for orders for drinks and meals, including official meals not governed by protocol, to be served in meeting rooms. This team is also responsible for orders in the JL building that involve the President of the European Council and his Cabinet, and the Secretary-General and his Private Office.

Official meals in connection with the work of the EEAS also fall within the team's remit.

Who should I contact about:

- Service in the rooms on floor 80?
- Service of drinks and sandwiches in the meeting rooms on floor 50?
- Organising champagne at the beginning and end of the Presidency?
- Informal official meals?

protocole.commandes@consilium.europa.eu

L'unité Sommets multilatéraux est en charge de l'organisation des Sommets multilatéraux à Bruxelles.

6.5. Multilateral Summits Unit

EVENTS OUTSIDE BRUSSELS

7. The Kirchberg Conference Centre (KCC) in Luxembourg is the Council's headquarters in April, June and October. Are there particular rules for organising meetings there?

Meetings in Luxembourg are organised and run in accordance with the same rules that apply to the JL building, which are described in this guide. During meetings of the Council of Ministers at the Kirchberg Conference Centre (KCC), a team leader from the Protocol/Conferences Directorate is present to coordinate all organisational tasks.

8. Who is the right person to contact to book a briefing or meeting room at the KCC?

The Presidency can reserve the briefing rooms for preparation of Council meetings by contacting the Dispatching team.

As in Brussels, the Presidency contacts the Meetings Planning Office to make reservations for formal Council meetings.

Contacts:

Dispatching:

conferences.dispatching@consilium.europa.eu

Conferences Unit - Meetings Planning:

conferences.programmation@consilium.europa.eu

NB: Information about the KCC can be found in the brochure entitled "Council of the European Union Luxembourg – Centre de conférences Kirchberg: Practical information guide for delegations".

9. What assistance can the Protocol/Conferences Directorate provide for meetings with third countries outside the GSC?

When formal meetings of the Council of Ministers with third countries are held elsewhere than Brussels or Luxembourg, the Protocol/Conferences Directorate offers a range of services to the rotating Presidency to facilitate the planning, preparation and management of those meetings. The head of the Conferences Unit coordinates these services, which include interpreting teams if required.

Contact:

Mr Petr HRDLICKA: petr.hrdlicka@consilium.europa.eu

Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, these events are now chaired by the President of the European Council (at the level of Heads of State or Government) or the High Representative (at ministerial level).

Nevertheless, the rotating Presidency may decide to host in its home country

one of the events involving third countries that are planned during its six month term, taking into account the possible political impact of the event and budgetary and organisational demands.

These decisions must be discussed and then agreed with the Cabinet of the President and/or that of the High Representative. The Protocol/Conferences Directorate must be kept informed of the course of action chosen.

The rotating Presidency may also decide to host a multilateral summit to be held during its term (see Decision 14631/1/12).

10. Can the rotating Presidency decide to host a summit or high level event involving third countries on behalf of the European Union in its own country?

11. What assistance can the Protocol/Conferences Directorate provide when the rotating Presidency decides to host a high level event involving third countries in its own country?

If the rotating Presidency decides to host an event in its home country (in agreement with the President of the European Council), it has full responsibility for the practical and financial organisation. However, the Protocol/Conferences Directorate can provide some limited services, namely: advice and expertise (for example, regarding the choice of the most appropriate site or logistics to ensure the event runs smoothly), interpreting teams, etc.

INFORMAL MEETINGS

Informal meetings of ministers are designed to permit as free as possible an exchange of views on topics of a general nature. They are not Council meetings as such and cannot replace the Council's normal activities.

12. Are there specific rules for informal meetings?

The Helsinki European Council Conclusions (1999) set out the rules governing informal meetings:

- A maximum of five informal ministerial meetings may be held during any Presidency;
- There is no official agenda;
- The presence of assistants is limited to two per minister;
- The GSC cannot be required to produce any documents, whether preparatory documents before the meeting or conclusions afterwards;
- Meetings cannot arrive at formal conclusions or decisions; any press release must make this point explicitly clear.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the rotating Presidency is under no obligation to organise informal meetings and that the GSC does not provide a budget for the purpose (with the exception of a maximum of 15 meetings in the Presidency's home country (list approved by Coreper), for which the GSC only covers delegates' travel expenses (see question 47)).

13. What assistance can the Protocol/Conferences Directorate provide at informal meetings?

The Protocol/Conferences Directorate can provide technical advice on the smooth running of the meeting, but the Presidency is solely responsible for its organisation.

CATERING: ARRANGEMENTS FOR OFFICIAL MEALS, WORKING MEALS OR BREAKFASTS, AND OTHER EVENTS

To facilitate the processing of orders, the Presidency is asked to appoint one or two coordinators to act as the only points of contact with the GSC (the GSC will not accept any requests that come directly from the Permanent Representation, a national administration or capital, ministries, or chairs of groups, unless confirmed by a coordinator).

14. What is the procedure for placing catering orders?

Furthermore, the GSC can only have one financial point of contact, who is responsible for passing on invoices for certain services within their administration where necessary (for example, if the national administration has a highly decentralised structure).

In Brussels

Orders are dealt with by the Catering Unit (Orders team) in cooperation with the Protocol Unit (Official Meals team). The Orders team is therefore the Presidency's primary contact point for catering orders.

However, for official meals at meetings of the Council of Ministers (official lunches or breakfasts requiring someone to welcome participants, a seating plan or any other form of protocol related support), the Protocol Unit (Official Meals team) receives and coordinates the information about participants via its contacts at the Permanent Representations (including special dietary and medical requirements, which are notified to the relevant departments in strict confidentiality).

Contact:

Catering Unit (Orders team):

protocole.restauration@consilium.europa.eu

Protocol Unit (Official Meals sector):

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

In Luxembourg

Council of Ministers' meetings in April, June and October are held at the KCC and the Protocol Unit handles catering (including the preparation of the order form and on-site follow-up).

Contact:

Protocol Unit (Official Meals sector):

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

In principle, official meals take the form of lunches. There are strict rules on the number of official meals covered by the GSC, as well as the number of participants, set out in the *Standing Instructions on European Council and Council-related meetings*.

15. What arrangements are in place for official meals? Are there specific rules?

The table below shows the number of meals permitted:

	Number of meals per meeting	Maximum number of meals
GAC	1 per meeting	—
FAC	1 per meeting	—
FAC (Defence)	1 per meeting	max. 2 meals per year
FAC (Trade)	1 per meeting	max. 2 meals per year
FAC (Development)	1 per meeting	max. 2 meals per year
ECOFIN	1 per meeting	—
ECOFIN-Budget (Conciliation)	1 per meeting	—
ECOFIN (breakfasts)	covered by the Presidency	—
JHA	1 per meeting (1 for Home Affairs and 1 for Justice, separately)	—
Councils prepared by Coreper I (TTE, EPSCO, Competitiveness, AGRI)	1 per meeting	max. 3 meals per Presidency
Councils prepared by Coreper I (Environment) (EYCS)	1 per meeting	max. 2 meals per Presidency
Eurogroup	1 per meeting (cold meal in meeting room)	—

NB: In April, June and October, the Council meets in Luxembourg.

Contact:

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

16. How do you deal with high demand for interpreting during an official meal?

In Brussels, on level 80, the interpreting service is limited by the number of booths available (six) and the number of whisper interpreters at the table (three maximum), and by the fact that there is no possibility of remote interpreting. If there is

high demand for interpreting the best option is to arrange for a cold meal in the meeting room on level 50 (or 35). This means that interpreting can then be provided (from booths) in accordance with actual requirements. The decision is taken by the Protocol Service, which also places the catering order with the Catering Unit.

In this case, the rules for official meals still apply (the number of people attending a meal in the meeting room is the same as for a meal on level 80).

The same rules and arrangements apply in Luxembourg except that each of the two ministerial dining rooms has eight interpreting booths.

17. Can breakfasts be arranged?

Yes, the Presidency can organise working breakfasts, but at its own expense. Working breakfasts can be served between 8.30 and 10.00, or a little earlier on an exceptional basis, subject to an extra charge for providing the service outside the contractor's normal working hours.

Orders for (informal) working lunches and breakfasts on level 80 are dealt with by the Catering Unit (Orders team)

Contact:

In Brussels informal lunches or breakfasts

protocole.restauration@consilium.europa.eu

protocole.commandes@consilium.europa.eu

In Brussels, official breakfasts

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

In Luxembourg: protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

18. Can the rotating Presidency organise other events, such as cocktail parties, buffets, etc.?

In Brussels the Catering Unit can advise the Presidency on arranging cocktail parties or receptions. The cost of this type of event is borne to the Presidency, together with any additional costs (such as security) that may arise. The dates of these events – even provisional – must be submitted as early as possible, to ensure they are properly organised.

Decisions as to who may use the function rooms are taken either by Mr Marro, Director, or by Mr Radauer, Deputy Director General (or if necessary, by the Secretary General).

Contact in Brussels:

Mr Olivier RESMINI: protocole.restauration@consilium.europa.eu

Any service provided after 16.15 (outside normal working hours) is charged at a higher rate.

Furthermore, the GSC reserves the right to postpone or cancel an event when European Councils, euro area summits (or similar events) are taking place.

In Luxembourg the arrangements are the same, except that the Protocol Unit is responsible for events.

Contact in Luxembourg:

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

Wines produced in a country can be served by the GSC during the country's Presidency.

If the country has no wine growing tradition, the GSC will provide a representative range of wines (including sparkling wines) from the wine producing countries of the European Union. The GSC is responsible for choosing and buying wines that complement the menus (through a tendering procedure).

However, the Presidency can also choose to supply some or all of the wine for official meals. The GSC may still wish to check that the quality of the wines offered corresponds to the standards expected for high level meals.

If the Presidency has lists of importers, suppliers or national wines, it can inform the GSC, which will ascertain whether the importers or suppliers can be used under the purchasing procedure in force for public procurement.

In Luxembourg, because the logistics are complex, the wine is either provided by the GSC or is purchased from the catering contractor.

19. Is it possible to serve wine from the country of the Presidency?

20. What are the arrangements if the Presidency decides to organise drinks to mark special occasions?

Drinks are sometimes offered in the meeting rooms at the beginning or end of a Presidency. The GSC can serve sparkling wine, champagne or any other national drink chosen by the Presidency.

If Presidency so wishes, it may supply its own drinks, provided that their quality meets the expected standard.

If the drinks are supplied by the Presidency or the GSC, the Presidency will have to pay a fixed amount for the contractor's services.

If they are ordered from the catering contractor, the price will include service.

Since the Treaty of Lisbon came into force the Heads of State or Government are received at meetings of the European Council by the President of the European Council. The menus chosen by the GSC for these events represent the diversity of European cuisine and do not vary with the Presidencies.

21. Can the menus be given a «national touch»?

However, a gastronomic touch specific to the country of the Presidency may from time to time be added to high level official meals, working meals, and meals served in the canteen.

The Presidency may pass on any information to the GSC in the form of recipes or by organising a placement for a chef who will try out the recipes, the menu choices and the ingredients with the contractor's team. The contractor remains responsible for food safety, under GSC supervision.

Contact:

Ms Graziella SCEBBA: graziella.scebba@consilium.europa.eu

22. Coffee service

In Brussels

Coffee is always provided:

- on level 50,
- in meeting room 35.4 during meetings of ministers or ambassadors (or equivalent),
- in meeting room 70.5.

On level 70, the Presidency can place orders (at its own expense) for its delegation's office.

Contacts:

protocole.restauration@consilium.europa.eu

protocole.commandes@consilium.europa.eu

For all the other meeting rooms (levels 20 and 35) there are self service coffee machines available (price EUR 0.20).

In Luxembourg

Here too, coffee is always provided in the ministerial/ambassadorial meeting rooms. The service is run by the Protocol Unit (Official Meals) at the GSC's expense.

The GSC teams are not involved in any other coffee/drinks services outside the conference rooms (for example, in the delegations' offices). The Presidency and the delegations should apply directly to the catering contractor (Sodexo Luxembourg SA).

In Brussels the Presidency may choose to supply mineral water from its own country (0.5 l) and make it available to participants on level 50 and in meeting room 35.4.

The GSC can give the Presidency any information on the number of bottles to be supplied and the projected quantities for a six month period, and the arrangements and place of delivery for the bottles (any bottles left over are of course returned to the Presidency on request at the end of its term).

Contact:

Mr Marek MIKULA: protocole.controlesgestion@consilium.europa.eu

In Luxembourg, given the complex logistics relating to the temporary occupation of the premises, the water served during meetings is supplied by the catering contractor.

23. Does the Presidency have to pay for the supply of bottled water in meeting rooms?

24. Can sandwiches be made available during late night working sessions?

In Brussels, when a ministerial or high-level meeting (Council or Coreper meetings) is scheduled to go on beyond 21.00, the Presidency coordinator checks with the coordinator in the relevant Directorate-General that the Orders team, which organises the supply of sandwiches, has been notified.

The cost of sandwiches delivered after 21.00 is borne by the GSC.

The Presidency can also have sandwiches delivered before 21.00 for these meetings (Council or Coreper), or other meetings (PSC and SCA), but it must pay the cost itself (except in exceptional circumstances).

For logistical reasons, orders must be placed before 15.30. They must specify the building (JL or Lex), the meeting room, the time when the service is required, the number of people, the drinks required (wine, beer, orange juice or water) and who will be paying.

Contact:

Mr Olivier RESMINI: protocole.restauration@consilium.europa.eu

In Luxembourg, sandwiches can be provided in all the conference rooms for ministers and delegations at any Council meeting. Depending on the quantities required, the time needed by the catering contractor varies between 15 minutes and 4 hours. The request must be sent to the Protocol Unit (Official Meals) which will then place the order (chargeable to the GSC).

The same rules apply as in Brussels concerning charges: for deliveries after 21.00, the cost of providing sandwiches is borne by the GSC, and for deliveries before 21.00 the cost is borne by the Presidency.

Contact:

protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu

Where the Presidency wishes to distribute edible gifts, these must comply with European health requirements from production to distribution. They must also be able to be kept at room temperature.

They must display the consumer information required by EU legislation and their packaging must be such as to prevent contamination.

The Presidency must ensure that they are traceable.

There is a need for extreme vigilance in the interests of food safety.

Contact:

Mr Arnaud ROULET: arnaud.roulet@consilium.europa.eu

Food gifts are distributed by the room messengers.

Contact (distribution):

conferences.logistique@consilium.eu

25. What are the procedures for distributing edible gifts in the national tradition of the Presidency?

PROTOCOL GIFTS AND OTHER GIFTS

26. Can the GSC help the Presidency to distribute protocol gifts or other presents (pens, paper, etc.)?

The Operations/Technical Unit can help the Presidency to distribute official gifts, via the room messengers. However, the ordering and preparation of gifts remain the responsibility of the Presidency.

The Presidency must deliver the gifts pre wrapped in bags ready for distribution.

They can be stored in the warehouse at Overijse. Depending on the Presidency's requirements, they are gradually taken to the JL building (storage on level 70) for the meetings or other events at which the Presidency wants to distribute them. Before 16.00 on the previous day, the Presidency should give precise instructions for distribution (quantities, recipients, etc.) to the Conferences/Dispatching and Conferences/Logistics teams.

Contacts:

conferences.dispatching@consilium.eu

conferences.logistique@consilium.eu

INTERPRETING

27. Who provides the interpreting service at the GSC?

Interpreting is provided by the European Commission's DG Interpretation (SCIC), with which the GSC has concluded a service agreement.

Each day the GSC makes 11 teams of interpreters available to the Presidency (officials, temporary staff or freelancers) who are provided by the SCIC. Two of these teams are able to provide interpreting into the 23 official languages of the EU (in addition, a third team offering full language cover may be made available on up to 50 days per year).

28. How many interpreters are available to the Presidency each day?

Requests for interpreting must be sent eight full weeks before the week in which the service is required. After this deadline, the service provided will depend on the resources available.

29. What is an i-slot?

An "i slot" is an interpreting time slot. It is the individual accounting unit for interpreting services. An "i-slot" corresponds to the services of an

interpreter for half a day. One i-slot cost EUR 442 in 2012⁽¹⁾.

(1) All the amounts given are based on 2012 prices.

The total cost is EUR 60 996. Furthermore, going beyond this time could greatly increase the cost (see question 31).

30. What is the cost of a day of full regime interpretation (23/23) between 8.30 and 18.30?

31. Can late sessions be held? What do they cost?

Working Party meetings should be planned and held between 9.00 and 18.30.

However, Council, Coreper (I and II), SCA and PSC meetings (ministerial or ambassador-level meetings) can continue beyond 18.30, until 21.00.

Councils and Coreper (I and II) can continue beyond 21.00, as long as they were planned for in advance.

Any i-slot is chargeable once it has begun.

Please note that any request for extra language cover made after the eight week deadline (see question 32) will be met only as far as the languages available allow (see question 28).

The deadline for orders (planning) for meetings and interpreting services is at least eight weeks in advance.

The deadline for cancelling meetings is at least two weeks in advance.

32. What are the time limits for booking an interpreting service? And for cancellations?

What will happen if these deadlines are not met?

- interpreting services are not guaranteed (meetings requested after the deadline),
- the cost of interpreting is invoiced (meetings cancelled after the deadline).

NB: The financial implications of cancelling meetings after the deadline are reduced when they are replaced by other meetings.

33. What does it cost to cancel a request for interpreting?

The cost depends on the number of languages requested. For example, the daily cost of an active language⁽²⁾ is EUR 2 652. Cancelling a full interpreting team (23/23 languages) for one day costs the GSC EUR 60 996.

34. Is the price for interpreting in another capital the same as for Brussels?

All missions within the EU are charged at the Brussels rate. For missions outside the EU the cost is increased by the number of i-slots corresponding to the actual days spent travelling between Brussels and the location of the meeting.

(2) Interpreters speak of “active” and “passive” languages. “Active” refers to a language spoken by the interpreters for the participants at the meeting. “Passive” means a language spoken by the participants which is understood by the interpreters.

The interpreters apply strict rules:

- Duration: Interpreters cannot work more than four hours in the morning, which must be followed by a break of at least one and a half hours for lunch; they cannot work more than 10 hours per day.
- Timetable: Working Party meetings take place between 9.00 and 18.30. Nevertheless, some meetings can go on beyond 18.30, and others beyond 21.00 (see question 31). If work continues no later than 21.00, the team stays. If meetings continue beyond 21.00, a new team must be arranged (to take over at 18.30).
- Rest time: A team cannot be required to work in the evening (after 18.30) more than once a week. If a team works beyond 21.00, without going beyond 24.00, it has time off the next morning (unless it started work at 18.30). If it works at night (beyond 24.00), it has the following day off. Furthermore, if a night session is scheduled⁽³⁾, the team has the previous day off and, if the meeting continues beyond 24.00, the following day off.

35. What are the main rules on interpreters' working conditions?

36. Why is it necessary to ensure that meetings are not held after 21.00?

Under the rules on rest time after work (see question 35), teams that work beyond 21.00 are not available for other meetings on the same day or the day after⁽⁴⁾ (for the morning or the whole day, depending on when the meeting finished).

(3) A night session begins at 18.30 and can last until 8.00 the next morning.

(4) Unless they started at 18.30.

There are therefore fewer interpreting teams available to the Presidency on these days (the number of teams resting being subtracted from the 11 teams available and dedicated to the Presidency for interpreting at meetings).

Therefore, when planning meetings, it is important to ensure that meetings do not overrun in such a way that teams become unavailable.

Proper planning of meetings should take account of all the points mentioned above and be geared to actual requirements to avoid wasting Council resources, which impairs the Council's efficiency in general.

The GSC has found that the main causes of wastage in connection with interpreting are:

- poor planning of meetings in general (overestimated duration, etc.),
- late cancellation of a meeting with interpreting services (not keeping to the two-week deadline),
- unnecessary booking of night teams.

37. How can wastage of interpreting resources be avoided?

BUDGETARY MATTERS

38. How can the financial implications of cancelling services be avoided?

All financial commitments must comply with the current financial regulation.

It is therefore very important that you inform your contact in the Protocol/Conferences Directorate (see Annex I - Contacts) of any situation or alteration

that might have financial implications for the Council budget.

The relevant departments should be informed of all cancellations (of food orders, for example) as soon as possible so as to avoid extra costs.

Services requested by the Permanent Representations for which the cost is not borne by the GSC (in most cases this means meals, drinks or coffees) are re-invoiced by sending debit notes after the relevant bills have been received from the supplier(s).

39. How are bills settled where services are charged to the Permanent Representations or the rotating Presidencies?

The Financial Cell in the Protocol/Conferences Directorate checks whether any extra costs need to be added (such as wine served at meals not paid for by the GSC) and sends the debit note for payment by the Permanent Representation that requested the service.

Where the Presidency has requested interpreting services for meetings not covered by the GSC, DG SCIC bills the Presidency directly.

DELEGATES' TRAVEL EXPENSES

40. How does the Delegates' Expenses Office work?

The Delegates' Expenses Office pays a biannual financial allocation to cover the travel expenses of delegates attending meetings held by the Council and its preparatory bodies, and other meetings described in Decision N° 30/2013.

It manages the budget granted to each Member State, receives the annual declarations of expenses, audits those expenses and checks delegates' attendance at meetings.

41. Does the Member State holding the Presidency receive an extra financial allocation to cover its delegates' travel expenses?

Yes. Decision No 30/2013 provides for a 50 % increase in the annual budget for Member States holding the Presidency in a given year.

No. Travel expenses are reimbursed only for meetings convened by the Council or listed in Annex I to Decision N° 30/2013.

42. Are travel expenses reimbursed for delegates attending meetings convened by the other institutions?

The attendance forms (known as “yellow forms” because of their colour) provide proof of attendance when it comes to checking delegates’ declarations. These documents, which are required for processing reimbursements, do not count as applications for reimbursement and do not guarantee that travel expenses will be covered by the Council (NB: financial allocations are managed nationally, see question 46).

43. What are the «yellow forms» distributed at meetings?

44. Are the yellow forms necessary if a meeting is held in a third country?

Yes. Documentary proof of delegates’ attendance at eligible meetings must always be provided, irrespective of where the meetings are held. The GSC department which convened the meeting will be able to provide these forms. In any case, they may be obtained by delegates from Dispatching.

Contact:
conferences.dispatching@consilium.europa.eu

No. There is no limit on the number of delegates.

The composition of the delegation depends on various factors, such as the political agenda, the size of the meeting rooms, etc.

One delegation may therefore sign several forms.

45. The «yellow forms» only allow the names of three delegates to be entered (there are only three boxes). Does that mean that only three delegates can be declared per meeting?

46. Are delegates reimbursed directly by the Council for their travel expenses?

No. Travel expenses are reimbursed by the national administrations and all documents must be sent to the relevant national authorities (the system is different from that at the Commission). Each Member State has a department

responsible for managing the funds and laying down rules for allocation and reimbursement. The Delegates' Expenses Office can provide you with the contact details of your national officer.

Contact:

conferences.fraisdel@consilium.europa.eu

47. When a Member State holds the Presidency, are expenses refunded only for the 15 meetings held in that country?

Yes. Before the start of its Presidency, the Member State provides the Delegates' Expenses Office with a list of meetings (no more than 15) which it wishes to hold in its country. The office ensures that the list goes through the relevant administrative channels so that it can be submitted for validation by the first Coreper I meeting held at the start of the Presidency.

Contact:

conferences.fraisdel@consilium.europa.eu

48. Is the Presidency required to defray the travel expenses of the other delegations for the 15 meetings held in its country?

No. Each Member State receives information as to whether these meetings give rise to entitlement to reimbursement of travel expenses. It is therefore up to each Member State to defray the travel expenses for such meetings from its own financial allocation.

The payments are made twice a year: the first instalment (40 %) is paid on 15 January and the second (60 %) no later than 15 July.

49. When are the financial allocations paid to the Member States?

DECORATION⁽⁵⁾

50. What are the general rules applicable to works of art and the organisation of exhibitions in the buildings of the General Secretariat of the Council?

The Protocol/Conferences Directorate is responsible for managing areas available in the various buildings of the GSC. Any suggestion for the use of those areas must be submitted for prior authorisation by the Deputy Director General of the Protocol/Conferences Directorate. Depending

on the nature of the project, the authorisation is granted by the latter, by the Director-General for Administration (DG A) or by the Secretary-General.

The approval of the various plans, whether originating from the Directorates-General or from the Presidencies, or any other stakeholder, is the responsibility of the Protocol/Conferences Directorate, in particular its Director and the Director of the Buildings/Logistics Directorate.

No structural modifications to the buildings are allowed. Information concerning technical restrictions on the use of the different areas of the buildings (maximum floor loads, for example) is available from the Buildings Unit.

Projects must be in keeping with the aesthetic appearance of the GSC buildings.

For more information, please consult the *Internal Rules on Organising European Council and Council related meetings* (Chapter I).

Contact:

Mr Eric THORAVAL: eric.thoraval@consilium.europa.eu

(5) See Annex II - Decorative installations chosen by rotating Presidencies - Practical arrangements for installing decorations.

ANNEX I

Contacts

Deputy Director-General and Head of Protocol

Mr Leopold RADAUER

✉ leopold.radauer@consilium.europa.eu

Secretariat: Ms Ekaterini SEVDALI STAMATIADIS

☎ +32 22816927

Director and Deputy Head of Protocol

Mr Dominique MARRO

✉ dominique.marro@consilium.europa.eu

Secretariat: Ms Vanessa JADOULLE

☎ +32 22813789

Protocol Unit

☎ +32 22815432

✉ service.protocole@consilium.europa.eu

✉ protocole.repasofficiels@consilium.europa.eu


Conferences Unit


☎ +3222817177

✉ conferences.programmation@consilium.europa.eu

✉ conferences.fraisdel@consilium.europa.eu


Operations/Technical Unit

 +32 22818877

 conferences.ops-tech-srt@consilium.europa.eu


Catering Unit

 +32 22815389

 protocole.commandes@consilium.europa.eu

Financial Cell

 +32 22814925

 conf.celfin@consilium.europa.eu

ANNEX II

Decorative installations chosen by rotating Presidencies

Practical arrangements for installing decorations

CONTENTS

1. Applications for access:
 - 1.1. Application for access for a visit
 - 1.2. Application for access for work
2. Sites which may be decorated and technical data
 - 2.1. Atrium
 - 2.2. Lobby corridor 00 CD
 - 2.3. Floor 50 corridor CD
 - 2.4. Floor 50, Presidency rooms
 - 2.5. Logo banner on the Rue de la Loi side of the façade
 - 2.6. VIP entrance
 - 2.6.1. Interior
 - 2.6.2. Exterior
3. Related expenses
4. Insurance

1. Applications for access:

1.1. Application for access for a visit:

Applications should be made by the Presidency

- either via Domus (to be made online by the delegation), if the application for access is just for a visit,
- or to the building manager Mr Marc Delveaux (marc.delveaux@consilium.europa.eu), if the application for access concerns a technical issue.

Applications should be made at least 72 working hours before the date requested.

Applications via Domus will be dealt with automatically.

For an application for technical access, you should check with the building manager that the request has been dealt with.

“Visitor” access is by the Rue de la Loi entrance during normal working hours (7.30 to 19.00).

“Technical visitor” access is by the Chaussée d’Etterbeek entrance during the opening hours of the Dispatching section of the Technical Management and Refurbishment department, i.e. from 6.00 to 18.00.

1.2. Application for access for work:

Applications should be made in two stages.

First stage – planning

Owing to the need to set up a system of supervision by security guards, the Presidency must inform the head of the General Maintenance Office, Mr Vincent Bouillez, of the provisional schedule for the works and the places where they will be carried out. The schedule must be forwarded as early as possible, preferably one month and at the latest two working weeks before the work is due to begin.

Second stage – production of badges

In order for badges to be issued for each person carrying out the work, a summary giving the following details for each person (in an Excel type format) should be forwarded:

- surname,
- first name,
- nationality;
- identity card or passport number,
- date of birth.

This document should be sent by email to Mr Vincent Bouillez, the head of the General Maintenance office, at least 72 working hours before the works commence.

Contact:

Mr Vincent BOUILLEZ: vincent.bouillez@consilium.europa.eu

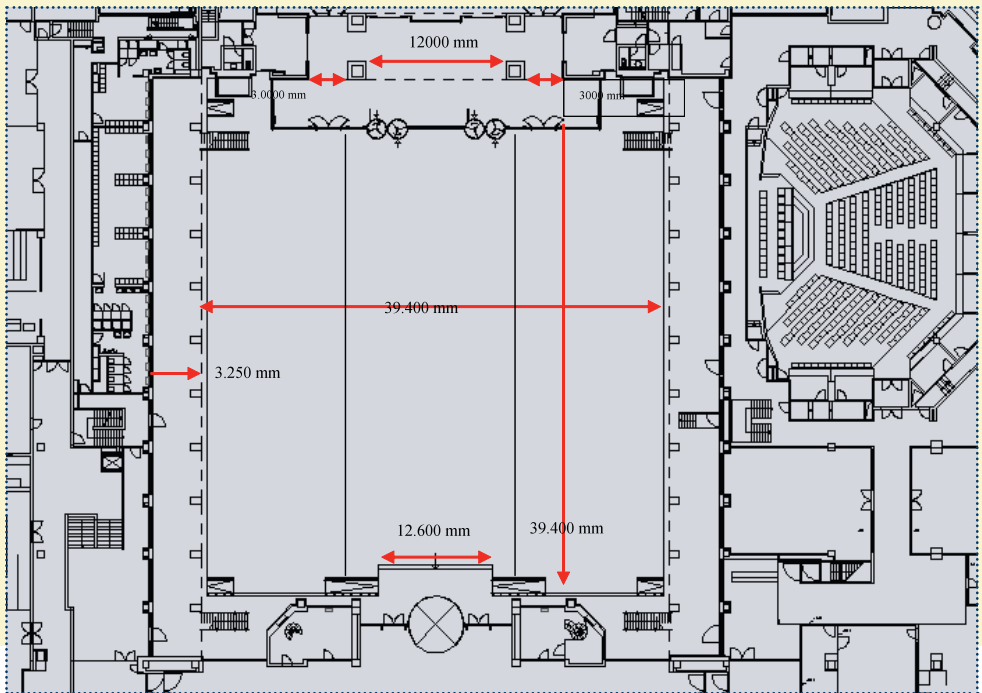
2. Sites which may be decorated and technical data

2.1. Atrium

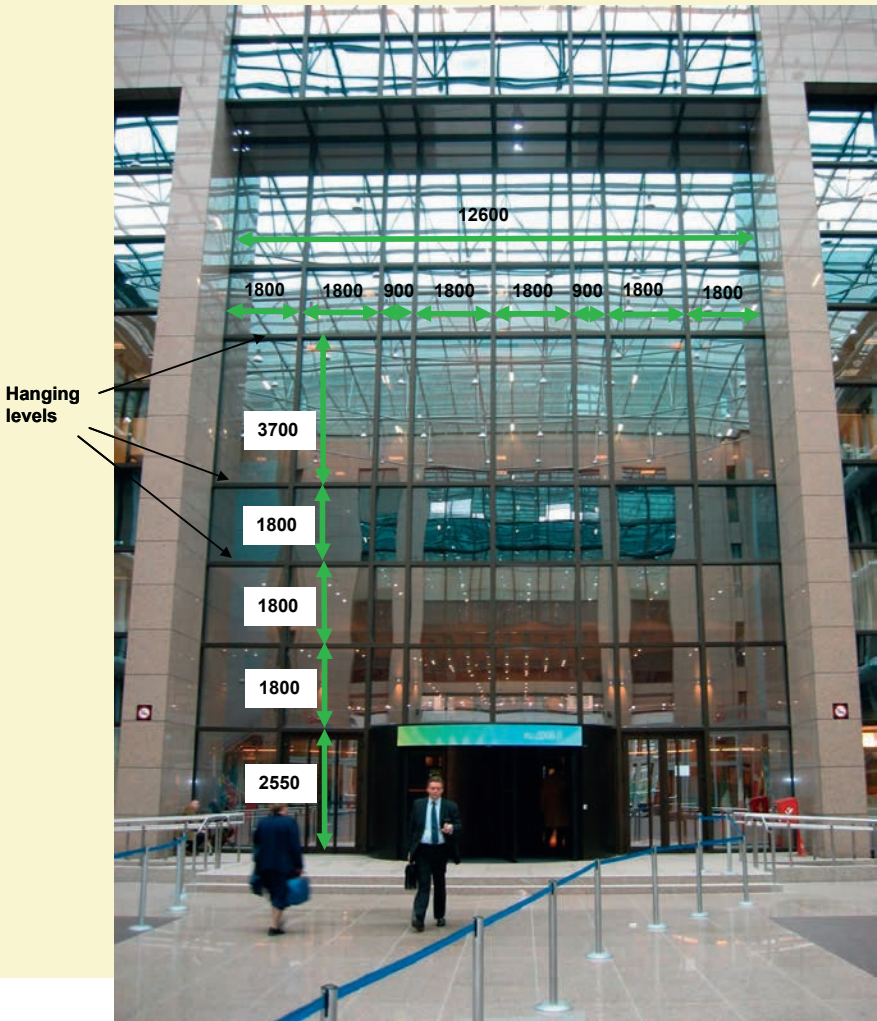
The marble central part must be kept clear, as it must remain accessible to fire engines at all times.

The banners on the sides of the mezzanines are 3 500 mm wide and 1 200 mm high. There are five banners of this type on the left hand side and five others on the right hand side of the Atrium.

The banner on the Rue de la Loi side is 24 000 mm wide and 1 200 mm high.



The size of the banner hung above the large revolving door on the lobby side may vary. However, it must be attached to the jambs of the window frames (see photo below). The banner is usually approximately 9 000 mm wide and 5 500 mm high.



2.2. Lobby corridor 00 CD

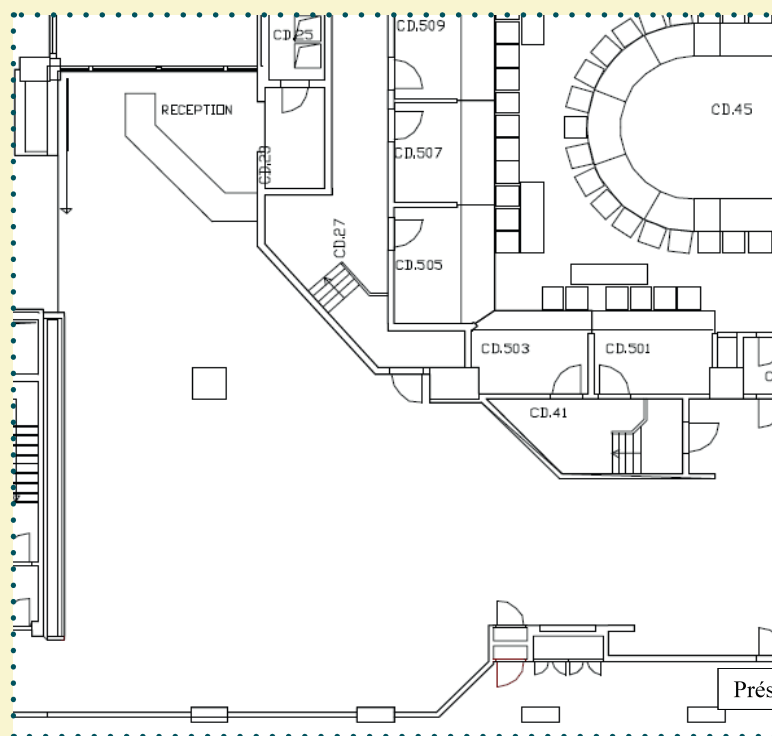
The space behind the revolving doors can be used provided that the field of vision of the CCTV cameras on the side walls is not obstructed and the revolving entrance and exit doors can still be monitored.

The usable floor area is 12 600 mm wide and 7 000 mm long.

Movement in the corridor should not be restricted.

2.3. Floor 50 corridor CD

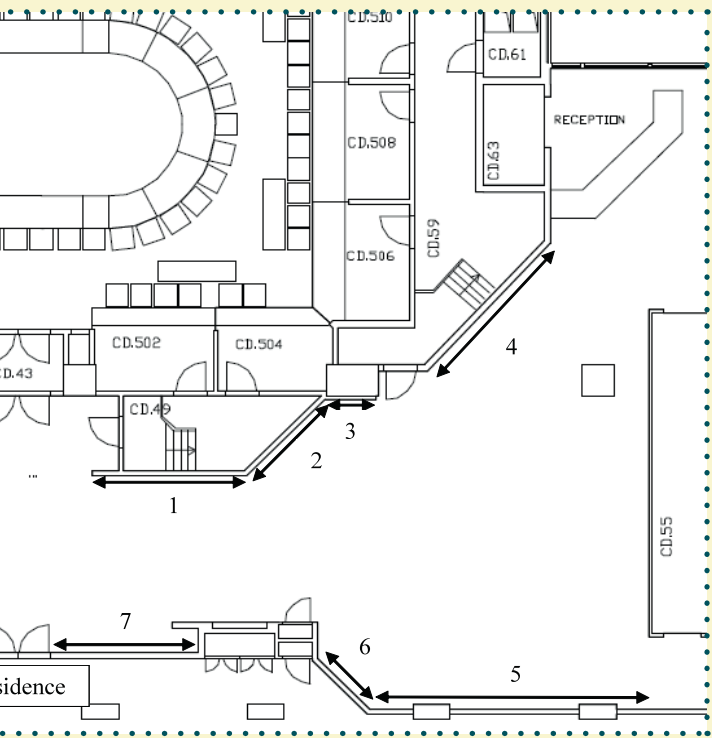
Works of art can be displayed on the walls on the right hand side.



Dimensions :

Number	Width in mm	Height in mm
1	3 600	3 800
2	3 000	3 800
3	1 800	3 800
4	4 100	3 800
5	9 800	2 200
6	2 200	2 200
7	3 700	2 200

The works of art are hung using transparent cords and hooks attached to the picture rails on the ceiling. The cords and hooks are supplied by the Technical Management and Refurbishment department.



2.4. Floor 50, Presidency rooms

The reception room is equipped with removable wall panels. The fabric on the walls can be changed. The waiting room lobby is not equipped with such panels. The carpet may also be removed, but only in the area of the lobby and the Presidency reception room.





2.5. Logo banner on the Rue de la Loi side of the façade

A cradle which can hold two people (200 kg) is available for hanging from the roof to install the logo on the Rue de la Loi façade. The dimensions for the logo are 3 710 mm wide and 10 800 mm high.



External logo, Loi entrance façade

2.6. VIP entrance

2.6.1. Interior

The logo should be sent in electronic form to the Press Office.

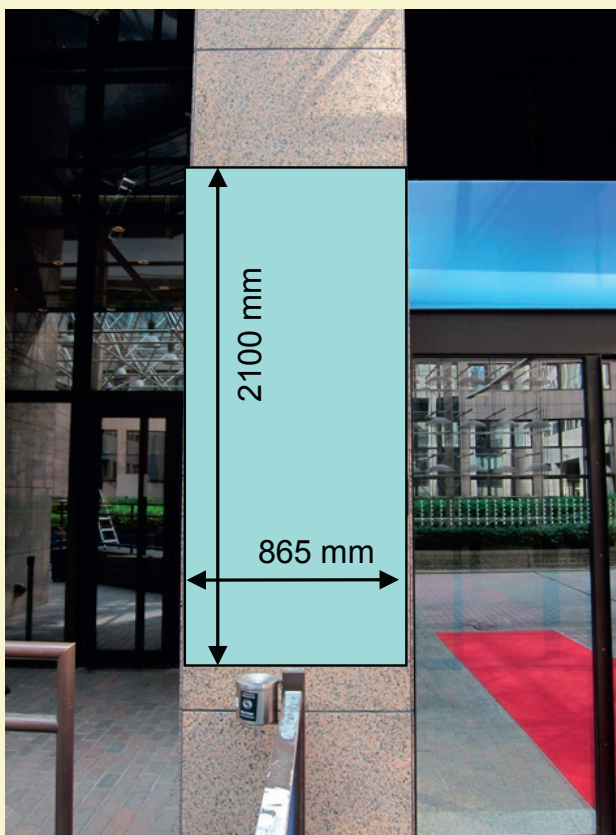
Contact:

Ms Isabelle BRUSSELMANS: isabelle.brusselmans@consilium.europa.eu

2.6.2. Exterior

The Presidency logo can be affixed to the left hand side of the entrance column.

The dimensions for the logo are 2 100 mm high x 865 mm wide.



3. Related expenses

The cost of security staff to supervise contractors carrying out work is borne by the rotating Presidency. The cost varies between EUR 30/h during normal working hours and EUR 50/h on Sundays and national holidays, and at night.

A security guard must be present in each area where work is being carried out for the duration of the work (for example, if work is being carried out in the Presidency rooms on level CO 50 and in the lobby on CO 00 CD, there must be two security guards).

These prices are indexed and are given for guidance only.

4. Insurance

The rotating Presidency is responsible for the cost of insuring works of art which it installs in GSC buildings.