CHAPTER FIVE

VOTING COHERENCE OF THE EU AS A GROUP

5.1 Overall Voting Coherence

A mixed picture emerges when looking at the overall voting coherence in the UNGA of all EC/EU\(^1\) MS taken together: on the one hand, coherence has developed quite positively, as its percentage rose from 45.6 to 76.7 per cent from 1988 to 2005 (see figure and table 5.1, pp. 220–221).\(^2\) This is even more remarkable, as EC/EU membership increased in this period, from twelve in 1988 to fifteen in 1995 and to twenty-five in 2004. Particularly between 1990 and 1999 there has been a steady growth in coherence, reaching an all-time high of 85.2 per cent in UNGA session 53. On the other hand, EU voting coherence seems to have reached a plateau of around 75 per cent in recent years. At the moment, this seems to be the maximum coherence achievable.\(^3\) Coherence could only be increased through further institutional adjustments or alterations of national policies.

EU coherence has even experienced a decrease between the years 2000 and 2004. But the trend line suggests that this has only been an interim low: particularly the developments observed in 2004 and 2005 allow a rather optimistic outlook, as the last round of enlargement did not have a negative effect on the overall EU coherence. Quite the contrary, the voting coherence increased during the last two years of the analysis to 76.7 in 2005. This phenomenon had also been visible

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\(^{1}\) As the EU was created only in 1993, but the qualitative analysis comprises also the years 1988 to 1992, it is necessary to talk of EC/EU MS rather than only of EU MS.

\(^{2}\) As the declared aim for the EU is to speak with a single voice, hundred per cent coherence on all votes in the UNGA is the target the voting behaviour of EU MS is judged by in this examination.

Figure 5.1: Coherence of EC/EU Voting in the UN General Assembly, 1988–2005

when Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the Union in 1995: the coherence had not been affected negatively by this accession, but rather continued to grow.4

The effect the TEU with its stipulations for a CFSP has on voting behaviour at the UN is difficult to determine. However, to a certain extent the rise of coherence since 1990 can be attributed to the

4 The low coherence in the 50th UNGA session (1995/1996) cannot be attributed to the previous enlargement. It was due to a split within the Union over one resolution on decolonisation, on which was voted on each individual part (A/Res/50/38A, A/Res/50/38B-I, A/Res/50/38B-II, A/Res/50/38B-III, A/Res/50/38B-IV, A/Res/50/38B-V, A/Res/50/38B-VI, A/Res/50/38B-VII, A/Res/50/38B-VIII, A/Res/50/38B-IX, A/Res/50/38B-X, A/Res/50/38B-XI, A/Res/50/38B-XII), causing an large number of three-way-splits within the Union. This vote was a unusual specific event. Belgium, France, Greece and the UK voted against the EU majority, but not the three new EU MS.