Organisational challenges and experiences of the Slovene OSCE Chairmanship

Milan Jazbec

Introduction
To assume the OSCE Chairmanship would primarily mean to co-create and bear responsibility for the security and interest management in the Northern Hemisphere in the current calendar year. Furthermore, for the country concerned and its Foreign Ministry it also means a specific test of its organizational flexibility and an ability to provide substance for this co-creation and decision-making process. Additionally, it also includes an active participation in the global security processes, since at least major security players have developed a reasonable degree of cooperation so far.

In this contribution we will try to analyze the organizational challenges and experiences of the Slovene OSCE Chairmanship in 2005. Hence our attention is focused on the organizational management of the process and relations within the Slovene diplomatic organization\(^2\) as well as on those with and within the OSCE structures. This has provided the necessary substantial output for the policy and decision-making process, which has supported the Chairman in Office (CiO). Our thesis would be that only efficient diplomatic machinery, which is capable of ensuring constant, smooth and rich in substance provision of information, could enable an efficient chairmanship of the OSCE as an example of managing a demanding and complex international policy-making process.

While concentrating on the case of Slovenia, a small and still new country in the international community, we will also try to generalize this experience. From one point of view, this could present a comprehensive impression of the concrete chairmanship, and from another point of view, it could add to the institutional memory from which the future chairing countries would draw.

Presentation of Basic Organizational Aspects
Slovenia announced its ambition to host the chairmanship at the Istanbul Summit in December 1999 and was granted it at the Porto Ministerial Meeting in 2003.

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\(^{1}\) Dr Milan Jazbec, Minister Plenipotentiary, employed at the Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is also Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. The views expressed in this article are solely his own and do not represent those of his employer.

\(^{2}\) With the term ‘diplomatic organization’ we understand a permanent body or an institution, consisting of the foreign ministry and the diplomatic consular network (embassies, missions to international organizations and consulates), entrusted with the implementation of a foreign policy through diplomatic activities. More on this in M. Jazbec, The Diplomacies of New Small States: The Case of Slovenia with some comparison from the Baltics, Aldershot, 2001. Jazbec, p.147-150.
Consequently, during 2004 its Mission to the OSCE in Vienna was enlarged with additional diplomats, the OSCE Task Force in the Foreign Ministry was established and other related activities were initiated (like financing of the project etc.\(^3\)). Also a small OSCE Project Group was established towards the end of 2003 at the Ministry of Defence, which kept contacts with the Task Force.

The Task Force consisted of 15 diplomats. Two of them were detached from the Defence Ministry, one from the Ministry of the Interior and one from the Slovene Intelligence Service; four of them were detached from different other divisions of the foreign ministry (one was soon included in the Task Force for the whole year, two for only part of the year). One third of the Task Force consisted of junior diplomats and one fourth of middle-ranking diplomats, the rest were senior ones, among them one former State Secretary\(^4\); almost half the group were women with varied experience. The former Foreign Minister headed the Task Force. As it has transpired later on, this was a highly useful combination of knowledge\(^5\), experience, an eagerness to work and the necessary feeling of contemplation. The Task Force existed from the summer of 2004 up to the end of January 2006. It dealt only with substantial issues; for handling the bureaucratic part of the business, the Division for OSCE was established within the foreign ministry. Its members were only those diplomats from the Task Force, who weren’t detached there to (the so-called core group). The deputy head of the Task Force headed the Division.

The Head of the Task Force was subordinated and directly responsible to the Foreign Minister and the CiO, and was acting also on his behalf, where and when this was necessary and possible. He was also a member of the Board of the Ministry. The Deputy Head of the Task Force (i.e. the Head of the Division) attended all other meetings in the Ministry and accompanied the CiO during all his travelling. The Task Force met regularly twice a week (in principle on Monday and Thursday); the core group also met more frequently. Because of the preparations of the Ministerial Council Meeting, the representatives of the Protocol Division attended meetings of the Task Force from late October 2005.

Members of the Task Force were in daily contact with colleagues at the Slovene Mission to the OSCE, at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna and at various OSCE institutions and bodies, at the OSCE field Missions, with Personal and Special representatives of the CiO, with representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, members of the Panel of Eminent Persons and with other diplomats

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\(^3\) These aspects are not given any attention in this contribution.

\(^4\) The author of this article served one term as a State Secretary at the Defence Ministry (during that time he chaired their OSCE Project Group). During 2005 he was member of the Task Force, in charge of political military issues. He also had the opportunity to follow closely as a Slovene diplomat in Stockholm the Danish (1997) and the Norwegian Chairmanship (1999). Therefore, by preparing this article, he drew heavily from his experience, using the method “observation with one’s own participation”, G.A. Gilli, Come si fa ricerca: guida alla ricerca sociale per non-specialisti, Milano, 1975.

\(^5\) Four diplomats held PhD, three M.A.