The European Union and the OSCE: Future Roles and Challenges

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Introduction
In the past twenty years the European Union (EU) has played an extremely important role in the development of the OSCE. This influence is likely to increase in the future as a result of the enlargement of the Union and steps to improve its cohesion on foreign and security policy. The fifteen member states of the EU already comprise over a quarter of the OSCE's membership and with enlargement to include the associated states of Central and Eastern Europe in the coming years the EU could soon contain more than 50 per cent of the OSCE's membership. The EU already contributes well over 50 per cent of the OSCE budget, a fact which also brings a certain influence. Inevitably this weight of numbers and financial contribution, combined with the EU's growing political cohesion and economic strength, has led to the EU becoming a principal player at the OSCE table. But the extent of this influence has varied and is likely to continue to vary according to the issues on the table. In matters where the EU has a common position it is often the decisive voice in securing acceptance or rejection of a proposal. It's influence is correspondingly reduced, however, when it fails to speak with a single voice.

The position of the EU within the OSCE thus, to a large extent, reflects its attempts to develop a coherent common foreign and security policy (CFSP). There have also been different perceptions amongst the member states of the OSCE's place in overall European architecture. The United Kingdom, supported by the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal, has tended to view the OSCE through transatlantic spectacles whereas Germany, France and Italy have sought to approach the OSCE from a (Central) European perspective. Spain, meanwhile, has tended to view the OSCE from a Mediterranean perspective. The European Commission has been taken a neutral position largely viewing the OSCE as an umbrella for a future European security system. These differences in approach have narrowed in recent years but they were apparent for much of the OSCE's early history.

As regards the future institutional structure of OSCE there are few differences between EU member states. Clearly Germany and the Netherlands lobbied hard to secure a reasonable job description for their candidates for the post of Secretary-General and CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) respectively, but this lobbying was supported by the EU.

The future roles of the EU and the OSCE are now both under discussion.

1. This article is based on a paper that was presented at a conference of the International Studies Association in Chicago, February 1995.
2. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not commit the European Commission in any way.
The EU faces a number of major decisions at the intergovernmental conference (IGC) in 1996 whilst the OSCE has a daunting agenda post Budapest. Both will have to adapt significantly if they are successfully to meet the challenges of the future.

**History of EU-CSCE Relations**

During the Cold War era the relationship between the European Community (EC) and CSCE reflected progress towards European unification as well as changes in the East-West climate. In particular, the CSCE was an attractive field of cooperation for the EC’s newly established European Political Cooperation (EPC) machinery. European security and cooperation was an area of common interest to all EC countries and satisfied the basic requirements for political cooperation. The civilian character of EC consultations on the CSCE (arms control, disarmament and confidence building measures were to be coordinated within NATO) suited the EC; the CSCE became a regular item on EPC agendas in the preparatory phase for the 1975 Helsinki Conference.

Although the CSCE was based on the principles of sovereignty and equality amongst the participating states, the EC indicated at an early stage that it would act as a group and be bound by CSCE commitments. The Community’s identity was most clearly expressed through Basket II and to a lesser extent in Basket III. There was never a separate EC delegation in the CSCE and the Community as such did not, at that stage, make common proposals. But the negotiations in the second basket, for example, were conducted by Commission officials, who were included in the national delegation of the country holding the Presidency of the Council. The Helsinki Final Act and other CSCE acts and declarations have not only been adopted by individual EC countries but also on behalf of the Community by the Council Presidency. Initially some CSCE participating states, e.g. the Soviet Union, reflecting its policy of non-recognition of the EC, opposed this collective EC behaviour, but gradually the opposition lapsed, partly as a result of perestroika and partly as a result of the Commission’s leading role in managing assistance to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as its close involvement in the Bonn conference on economic cooperation.

The ending of the Cold War also brought new opportunities for the EC and the CSCE. As mentioned above, the EC played an important role before and during Helsinki I. The initial success of the Community’s coordinating machinery, however, was not repeated in all subsequent follow-up meetings. The EC was handicapped by excluding defence questions from EPC — only political and economic aspects of security came within its remit — and thus was unable to coordinate, for example, arms control proposals.

The Community did make an impact at Vienna when the CSCE agreed, *inter alia*, on increased economic and environmental cooperation. The Sofia meeting on the environment saw a further increase in EC cooperation (and the first appearance of the nameplate Presidency/EC) but it was really the Bonn