


# The organisation and mode of operation of WEU

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## The organisation and mode of operation of Western European Union

### Statutory bodies

By a rewording of Article VII, which became Article VIII of the modified Brussels Treaty, Western European Union (WEU) made the **Council of WEU** into a more permanent body (rather than a Consultative Council). The Council, a purely intergovernmental body, had, according to the Treaty, been so organised as to be able to exercise its functions continuously, but in reality it did not meet at regular intervals. The objective of the Council, whose decisions were essentially adopted unanimously, was to pursue a policy of peace, strengthen security in Europe, promote European unity and encourage the progressive integration of Europe. As powers were transferred to the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Communities, the Council's activities were considerably reduced. In addition, the Council had been set up mainly to implement the protocols, including that relating to the control of armaments which, in the course of time, lost some of its relevance and its point. It was not until the reactivation of WEU and the Rome Declaration of 1984, the holding of Ministerial Councils bringing together representatives of Foreign and Defence Ministries and then the Europeanisation of security that the Council of WEU acquired greater visibility through a number of external missions and that subsidiary bodies were set up (see below).

The Council, which could meet as a standing body in ministerial format or at the diplomatic level (the Permanent Council), was supported by the Secretariat-General of WEU, which, like the Council, operated in London until the end of 1992. The **Secretariat-General of WEU**, consisting of a small staff, acted as the link between the Council and other agencies and bodies by drawing up reports. It was also the link between the Council and the Parliamentary Assembly of WEU, the Council being required to submit an annual report on its activities to the Assembly (under Article IX of the Treaty).

The **Parliamentary Assembly of WEU** was set up by the modified Brussels Treaty. It was composed of members of the national Parliaments who were members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, it varied as to its composition and the status of its members and it was heavily involved in European security and defence by virtue of the reports which it adopted in plenary session twice a year. The Assembly had its own management bodies and subject-related committees. It ceased operation when WEU was closed, holding its final parliamentary session in Paris on 10 May 2011.

### Subsidiary bodies

As well as these statutory bodies, there were various subsidiary bodies which gradually came into being to supplement the organisation's operational resources. These were the Agency for the Control of Armaments, which was the subject of Protocol No IV of 1954, the Standing Armaments Committee established by decision of 7 May 1955, the Western European Armaments Group <sup>(1)</sup>, the Western European Armaments Organisation, the Planning Cell (1992), the Situation Centre (1996), the Intelligence Section (1996), the Military Committee and the Military Staff (1998), the Institute for Security Studies (1990) and the Torrejón Satellite Centre (1993).

The purpose of the Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA), which ceased operating in 1985, was, firstly, to lay down provisions for the control of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons and, secondly, to prohibit the manufacture of certain categories of so-called conventional weapons; the aim was also to monitor the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The Agency carried out investigations in the establishments concerned (chemical factories, biological laboratories and missile factories) following preliminary studies on the basis of information supplied by the FRG on request. Stock level monitoring involved both paper checks (on documentation and information received) and on-the-spot checks (to verify the validity of data obtained through the replies to ACA questionnaires).

The Standing Armaments Committee (SAC), set up pursuant to Article VIII of the modified Brussels Treaty, was tasked with promoting the joint production of arms within WEU, but the work of this body never went beyond the stage of defining common features. Because of competition with other structures (Eurogroup, IEPG <sup>(2)</sup>, NATO specialist agencies) and duplications of function, it was abolished on 13 November 1989. The SAC did leave a legacy, however, in the work that was subsequently carried out by the European Defence

Agency and the complex debates on the implementation of the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon.

The Western European Armaments Group (WEAG), which ceased operating on 23 May 2005, consisted of three panels. Panel I's main task was to harmonise the armament requirements of the various WEAG Member States and look into opportunities for cooperation in equipment development and production. Panel II's mission was to seek out opportunities for cooperation in the field of research. Panel III was responsible for everything relating to the European defence market (opening the market up to competition and the restructuring and reinforcement of the European industrial base, DTIB or the Defence Technological and Industrial Base).

The Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO), which was set up in November 1996, followed the same course as the WEAG and ceased operating on 31 August 2006, to make way for the European Defence Agency of the European Union (EU). The WEAO was the first European body in the field of armaments which had international legal personality; its task was, through its Research Cell, to promote research and technology (R&T) projects within the WEAO remit and to organise the signing of contracts on behalf of the participating countries.

The Planning Cell (with the Situation Centre and the Intelligence Section), the Military Staff and the Military Committee, all set up in the 1990s, were respectively responsible for drafting contingency plans for the use of forces under WEU auspices, including the drawing up of an inventory of forces, to oversee crisis areas and to provide the Council with military expertise. These subsidiary bodies were gradually disbanded following decisions taken by the EU after the Cologne Council of June 1999 and, lastly, WEU's Marseille decision of November 2000 to transfer WEU responsibilities to the EU.

The WEU Institute for Security Studies, whose mission was to promote the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), was transferred to the EU on 1 January 2002, as was the Torrejón Centre, whose function was to analyse air and satellite images for the participating countries in the field of crisis management, arms control and overall civil and military surveillance.

### **The organisation and mode of operation of Western European Union after the Marseille summit**

Following WEU's Marseille summit of November 2000, the operations of the organisation's bodies were shut down or became residual. While the Council of WEU was able to meet as required, decisions after July 2001 were approved by written procedure and no ministerial Council was convened after the meeting in Marseille. In fact, the ten-member Council (consisting of representatives of the full members) was able to meet to discuss, essentially, management issues, and the Council's working group <sup>(3)</sup> could be reactivated to prepare meetings of the Council. The Permanent Council met at permanent representative level for the last time on 28 May 2002.

The Secretariat-General, with its residual functions — now that the Petersberg tasks were within the EU's remit — became responsible for matters related to Article V (mutual assistance) and Article IX (institutional dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly), for the day-to-day running of the building which WEU owned in Paris <sup>(4)</sup>, and for the administration of its pensioned staff and the reorganisation of its archives.

As for the WEU Assembly, it continued to organise study sessions, symposia and reports submitted to the two annual sittings in Paris, even though its operating budget, allocated entirely by the national governments, had not been index-linked for some years. The future of the Assembly would depend on the Member States and their future attitude to the consequences of EU developments, particularly the entry into force of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, for WEU organisation.

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(1) The Independent European Programme Group (IEPG), a specialist group set up by all the European members of the Atlantic Alliance in 1976 to strengthen technological cooperation and standardisation with respect to armaments, merged with WEU in

1994 as the WEAG.

(2) Independent European Programme Group

(3) Two Council working groups met after July 2001: a special group for administrative questions and internal management, and the budget and organisation committee.

(4) This aspect of management is carried out by the Secretariat-General's Paris Administrative Service.