

EU before the millennium will have to build up contacts with the new member states in order to increase their possibility to influence EU decisions. The older members will have to seek consultation and co-operation with the newcomers to earn the latter's support for their policy stands in EU negotiations. They will need their support in alliance formation in different EU policy sectors. This is also the case with the new member states. It will be a demanding task for the small member states. The large states should not have much difficulty in engaging in such activity and many of them have already established solid contacts in all the new member states. Then again, the informality and flexibility associated with small administrations should compensate for the lower administrative capacity for coalition-building. The small states are bound to make the most out of their informal ways of handling issues in order to get other states to support their cause.

The small member states of the Union in the 20th century managed to guarantee their key interests within it. They should not have more difficulties in succeeding in the first decades of the 21st century if they can prevent the large states from changing the institutional structure, set up in the Treaties, to their advantage. Institutional arrangements do not simply change with new members. Changes will have to occur in treaty reform for formal decisions to be taken through different methods from those used today. Informal procedures outside the formal EU decision-making structure are of course important and may increase in importance if the present structure encounters difficulties in handling 25 members. However, small states have solid ground to build on. Their flexible decision-making and informal ways of communicating with officials of the EU and of other member states are already a considerable part of their operational tactics.