

The Davignon proposals

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The Davignon proposals

A working group consisting of the political advisers to the Foreign Ministers of the Six, chaired by the Belgian diplomat, Etienne Davignon, was given the task of studying the possibilities of closer European political cooperation in the light of the accession to the Community of new Member States. After an initial approval of principle in July 1970, the Council adopted the final proposals of the working group on 27 October in Luxembourg. Those proposals were, however, less far-reaching than those set out in 1962 in the Fouchet Plan. The Davignon Report, also called the 'Luxembourg Report', provided for consultation among the Six on foreign policy matters and the implementation of joint decisions but made no reference to consultation on matters of external security and defence.

For the authors of the Report, the main objective was to help create a consensus on international issues through a system of regular consultations. The Report proposed half-yearly meetings of Foreign Ministers and quarterly meetings of their political advisers. Preparations for these ministerial meetings were delegated to a policy group authorised to set up working parties on particular topics. The Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament was to be informed of the results of those meetings, and the Commission would be consulted on issues falling within its remit. Finally, the Report provided for the inclusion of the applicant countries in this consultation process.

These proposals met with the overall approval of the six Member States. A diplomatic liaison group, which served as a permanent link, was established to deal with requests for consultation on any foreign policy matter raised by the Member States. However, the French President, Georges Pompidou, was against giving any right to propose legislation to a permanent political secretariat established in Brussels, as suggested by the German Chancellor, Willy Brandt. The idea never came to fruition. Nevertheless, the Davignon Report initiated discussions, beyond any legal constraints, between the Six, later the Nine, on international issues and gave an initial Community dimension to the foreign policy of the Member States. It formed the basis of the forum for European Political Cooperation (EPC) inaugurated in Munich on 19 November 1970 at the first ministerial meeting.

EPC made its mark during the lengthy discussions at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki. Aldo Moro, in his dual capacity as President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers of the Nine and Italian Prime Minister, signed the Helsinki Final Act on 1 August 1975.