

Reform of the institutions

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Reform of the institutions

The progressive development of common policies and the first enlargement, in 1972, of the European Communities led Europe's leaders to query the need for a reform of the Community institutions and their procedures in order to improve the way they operated, economic and political limitations aside. The implementation of new activities, the increase in the Community's powers and responsibilities and the likelihood of a second enlargement made it more urgent to adapt the institutional machinery of the Nine. Consequently, in June 1975, the European Commission submitted to the Nine a report on the European Union, in which it proposed various methods whereby the Community institutions might be strengthened and the way in which they worked be made more transparent.

The number of Members of the European Commission had increased from nine to 13 in 1973 as a result of a new national allocation scheme. The European Parliament had increased in size from 142 to 198 seats in 1973 and to 410 following the first elections by universal suffrage held in June 1979. Instead of seven Judges and two Advocates-General at the Court of Justice of the European Communities, there were now nine and four respectively. The Economic and Social Committee (ESC), which had 101 members in 1958, had 144 by 1975. The Court of Auditors of the European Communities, established in 1975 to replace the Audit Board, took up its duties in 1977 with the same number of Members as there were Member States. However, the quantitative expansion of the European institutions threatened to reduce their efficiency and decision-making capacity, as well as exacerbate their bureaucratic image in the eyes of the public. The expansion also had significant budgetary repercussions and gave rise to administrative and logistical problems, especially in terms of language combinations and geographical distribution of services between Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, both of which aspects were becoming increasingly difficult to manage.