

## Commission Opinion on the applications for membership received from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway (2 April 1968)

**Caption:** On 2 April 1968, in response to applications for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway, the European Commission delivers its opinion on the practicalities of future enlargement of the EEC.

**Source:** Bulletin of the European Communities. Dir. of publ. Commission of the European Communities. 1968, n° Supplement N°4. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

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## Opinion submitted by the Commission to the Council on certain problems resulting from the applications for membership received from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway (2 April 1968)

1. In its Opinion of 29 September 1967, the Commission pointed out the difficulties and risks as well as the advantages which might result from the accession of new members. It laid special stress on Great Britain's need to adapt her economic and monetary position with a view to making her membership possible and beneficial and on the need for the parties concerned to consult each other with regard to the chronological order and scope of the steps to be taken.

With due regard for all the factors of a political or economic nature which are dealt with in detail in the various chapters of its report, the Commission considered that the Community should pursue development and enlargement simultaneously, without trying to determine which of these two aims should take priority. For this reason it declared itself in favour of opening negotiations with the States concerned. These negotiations might from the very outset have been devoted in particular to a thorough examination of Great Britain's economic and financial position and of any measures of adjustment which the British authorities decided to take. The negotiations would also have made it possible to discover whether solutions exist which can satisfy the conditions that have to be met if there are to be the cohesion and vitality which are indispensable in an enlarged Community.

The Commission reserved the right to decide during and at the close of the negotiations whether it would be possible, in the light of the measures taken by the candidate States and also of the measures which Member States had taken to develop and strengthen the Community, to widen its membership without undue risk.

2. As the Council has decided to keep the question of the enlargement of the Community on the agenda, several Member States have submitted proposals in order to facilitate the ultimate entry of the States seeking membership.

These proposals touch on the following points:

- i) A commercial arrangement;
- ii) Co-operation in the field of technology and in the complementary field of patents and the European company;
- iii) Special procedures for co-operation in monetary and economic matters;
- iv) Consultation over other common policies;
- v) Co-operation in the political field.

3. The Commission has noted that all the proposals put forward by the Governments of the Member States reaffirm with one accord the need to continue building the Community and, on a more general plane, to pursue the great task of uniting Europe. It attaches vital importance to this point.

4. On enlargement of the Community, the Member States are evidently not in disagreement over certain fundamental points:

- a) Enlargement of the Community not only evokes no objection in principle but the accession of Great Britain and of the other applicant countries is also to be welcomed;
- b) Restoration of the balance of the British economy is of fundamental importance if Great Britain is to become a member of the Community;
- c) It is therefore essential that Great Britain should strive to adapt itself; it has already set about this task

with courage and determination;

d) All the Member States are prepared to make this adjustment easier;

e) Co-operation with Great Britain and the other States seeking membership can be considered in the field of research and technology. The statement issued in Luxembourg on 31 October 1967 had, moreover, already provided that ways will be sought to bring other European States to share in the work or the co-operation undertaken in the above fields.

5. These various points justify the assumption that within the Council there is a consensus of opinion in favour of an agreement to prepare and facilitate the eventual accession of the States that have applied for membership.

With due regard for the various proposals put forward by the Governments of the Member States as well as for the matters discussed by the Council on 29 February and 9 March 1968, the Commission herewith submits to the Council the broad outline of what it considers an agreement preparatory to membership for the States which have requested it might look like.

6. An agreement of this kind, made against the background of prospective membership, would need to:

a) Be understood as an adjustment stage, serving in particular to render the swift restoration of lasting economic equilibrium in the United Kingdom as easy as is possible;

b) Serve as a framework for an effort to ensure a *rapprochement* between the Community and the applicant States so that the latter should within a reasonable time after be able to assume all the responsibilities and enjoy all the advantages of Member States.

7. The prospect of subsequent membership should be defined on the following lines:

i) The agreement would be in the nature of a preparatory stage of limited duration; it would not be concerned with trade alone, but would also lay down a procedure for consultation and *rapprochement* as well as stipulating co-operation with the States concerned in this field of scientific research and technological development;

ii) At the end of this stage (or earlier, if circumstances allow) the Commission would submit to the Council an Opinion, complementary to that of 29 September 1967, in which the Commission would, in the light of the adaptation measures already taken by the countries seeking membership, state whether the conditions for membership were satisfied. On the basis of this Opinion the Council would follow the procedure in accordance with Article 237 of the Treaty.

8. As pointed out above, the Commission hopes that the Council will also examine the measures which the Community should take in order to prepare itself for enlargement by strengthening its structures, applying common policies and completing its economic unity.

The Commission reaffirms the growing and increasingly urgent need to co-ordinate the economic and monetary policies between the six Member States. Furthermore, of the objects it would be important to reach within the next two to four years, the following appear to be of particular note:

a) Fulfilment of the conditions required to eliminate frontier controls on the movement of goods within the Community;

b) Signing and ratification of conventions instituting a European patent and a European company (including the appropriate fiscal measures);

c) Establishment of a European money market comprising the free movement of capital where the

investment of funds and the granting of credits are concerned.

These steps are mainly required in order that the economy of the Community should benefit more fully from the establishment of the customs union which is now practically complete; they are also desirable for the purpose of making the Community better prepared to enjoy the advantages of extension.

9. The Commission is prepared to submit to the Council at the appropriate time more detailed proposals regarding:

- i) An agreement preparatory to the accession of States which have requested membership;
- ii) The development and strengthening of the Community with the same object in view.

10. The Commission hopes that the Member States can reach an agreement that will enable all the work indispensable for the Community's development to be resumed normally and at the same time be a positive step towards enlargement.