

Conclusions of the Commission's Opinion on the applications for accession received from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway (29 September 1967)

Caption: On 29 September 1967, the European Commission, without actually being able to deliver a definitive Opinion, recommends that the Council open negotiations, in the appropriate manner, with the countries seeking to accede to the European Communities, namely the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway.

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Opinion on the Applications for Membership received from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway for Submission to the Council: the Commission's Conclusions (29 September 1967)

[...]

Analysis of the chief problems involved in the extension of the Community reveals that the accession of new members such as Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark and Norway, whose political and economic structures and level of development are very close to those of the present Member States, could both strengthen the Community and afford it an opportunity for further progress, provided the new members accept the provisions of the Treaties and the decisions taken subsequently — and this they have said they are disposed to do. Their accession, although it would bring great changes with it, would not then be likely to modify the fundamental objectives and individual features of the European Communities or the methods they use.

The Commission wishes to restate the conditions which would have to be fulfilled if extension is to take place in a satisfactory manner.

First, the new members would, as a general rule, have to accept the arrangements adopted by the founder members before extension, subject to any exceptional adjustments that may be made. In particular, they would have to accept:

- (i) The Community customs tariffs as they emerge from the recent multilateral negotiations in GATT, and their gradual application to all non-member countries, along with all the rules necessary for the proper functioning of the customs union.
- (ii) The basic principles of the common policies with the provisions for their implementation, particularly in the economic, financial, social and agricultural fields, and their gradual application.
- (iii) The contractual obligations of the Communities towards non-member countries (association agreements, trade agreements, etc.).
- (iv) The institutional machinery of the Communities as established by the Treaties and the decisions taken in application of the Treaties, subject only to those adjustments rendered necessary by the accession of new States; these adjustments will have to be designed so that the institutions shall continue to be sufficiently effective and that a suitable balance is maintained in the representation of the various Member States.

In addition, the new members, especially the main one, the United Kingdom, would have to agree with founder members on the solution of a number of problems which would be of vital importance for the harmonious development of an enlarged Community:

- (i) Restoration of lasting equilibrium in the British economy and its balance of payments, entailing concerted action between Great Britain and the member countries of the Community, and examination of ways and means of adjusting the present international role of sterling so that the pound could be fitted, together with the currencies of the other countries, into a Community monetary system.
- (ii) The principle of a common policy in the field of research and technology, including atomic energy, and the general lines such a policy should follow;
- (iii) Financing of the Community's overall activities, including the agricultural policy;
- (iv) The relations to be established with those European countries — notably any EFTA countries which do not join the Community — and with the less developed countries, particularly the Commonwealth countries (these are urgent problems which would assume new forms through the very fact of extension of the Community).

To sum up, the new membership applications are impelling the Community to tackle at one and the same time the problems involved in its development and those involved in its extension. Opinions differ as to the priority to be given to the one or the other of these objectives. The best way of overcoming the difficulty would be to try to attain them both simultaneously. But, if this difficult operation is to be successfully concluded, it is essential that extension should not hamper the pursuit of the normal activities of the Communities and should not subsequently entail weakening of their cohesion or their dynamism, especially where the establishment of economic union, the requisite measures of harmonization and the functioning of the institutional machinery are concerned.

The Commission is well aware that the cohesion and dynamism of the Communities depend to a great extent on the convergence of national policies in the essential fields. If full advantage is to be taken of the opportunities which extension opens up for the Community, it is apparent that Member States should within a reasonable period be in a position to make progress along the road to political union.

It follows from all the considerations set forth in this document that the Commission is not at present in possession of all the information needed to give in final form the Opinion requested by the Council under Article 98 of the Treaty of Paris and under Articles 237 and 205 of the Treaties of Rome. Choices of considerable importance for any appraisal of the impact which the new members would have on the Community are still to be made. The general conclusions which would enable the Commission to give a final Opinion can not be drawn until it knows the position of the candidate States on a number of essential problems, the attitudes which will in consequence be adopted by the present Member States, and the solutions which may be adopted to the main problems discussed in this document.

It is the Commission's opinion that, in order to dispel the uncertainty which still attaches in particular to certain fundamental points, negotiations should be opened in the most appropriate forms with the States which have applied for membership, in order to examine in more detail, as is indeed necessary, the problems brought out in this document and to see whether arrangements can be made under which the indispensable cohesion and dynamism will be maintained in an enlarged Community.