

The Commission's opinion on the convening of an intergovernmental conference (22 July 1985)

Caption: On 22 July 1985, the European Commission delivers a favourable opinion on plans to hold an intergovernmental conference in order to amend and complete the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC).

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The Commission of the European Communities,

Having regard to Article 236 of the EEC Treaty,

Having regard to the proposal for amendments to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community presented by the Luxembourg Government to the Council of the European Communities by letter dated 2 July 1985,

hereby delivers the following opinion:

1. The European Council in Milan on 28 and 29 June 1985 decided to convene a conference of representatives of the Governments of the Member States to draft the provisions needed to achieve concrete progress on European Union with regard to a common foreign and security policy, changes to be made to the decision-making process and the inclusion of new spheres of activity in Community competence.

Following this decision the Luxembourg Government presented a proposal for amendments to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community to the Council of the European Communities.

2. The Commission naturally supports the convening of an intergovernmental conference. This initiative is a logical extension of the process set in train many years ago which prompted production by the European Parliament of its draft Treaty establishing the European Union and presentation of a report by the *ad hoc* Committee for Institutional Affairs set up by the European Council at Fontainebleau in June 1984. As agreed by the European Council in Milan it is necessary, in the general context of transition to European Union, to make fresh progress not only on economic and social integration but also on foreign policy. Indeed, the fact that the two form an indivisible whole should be recognized by incorporating the proposed new provisions in a single framework.

3. The proposed institutional changes should strengthen the democratic base of the European venture through increased involvement of the European Parliament, using procedures designed to facilitate rather than complicate decision making. This was the tenor of the suggestion the Commission made to the European Council in Milan.

A second series of amendments should concentrate on the Council and the Commission. The Community today finds it difficult to take decisions or takes them too late. If it is to face up to the challenges of the modern world the Community, as proposed by the Luxembourg Government, must improve decision making within the Council (notably by extending majority voting) and give the Commission increased executive powers.

The years have also revealed the need for reform in another area: if the Community is to achieve its allotted aims and live up to the expectations of the people of Europe, Community competence must be defined and, in certain instances, extended. Firstly, the Community should be in a position to press ahead with implementation of the policies provided for by the Treaties even if the aims of action taken are not exclusively economic (the obstacles to the creation of a people's Europe could, for instance, be removed). Secondly, the Community should be in a position to promote — in areas such as human rights, education and the arts — the shared values which are an essential ingredient of European identity.

4. Efforts to consolidate, strengthen and widen cooperation between the Member States on common foreign and security policy (the expression used in the Milan communiqué) must draw on the experience of fifteen years of political cooperation.

5. If there is a genuine desire to move towards European Union, it is imperative that the two areas of activity be combined. Otherwise fresh obstacles will be created, multiplying possible sources of conflict and

weakening the potential and dynamism of the Community established by the Treaties of Paris and Rome. Realistic conditions for osmosis between economic, social, financial, and monetary affairs on the one hand and foreign policy on the other must be established.

At the end of the day only unified institutions — one Council, one Parliament, one Commission — will prove effective and speed progress towards European Union.

6. The step-by-step approach adopted to establish the common market should be emulated by those drafting the proposed new provisions. What is essential, however, is that the conference should define objectives with the clarity and courage the current situation requires in the interests of European integration.

7. The objectives and principles endorsed by the Commission colour its view of how the conference should conduct its business.

If Community and political cooperation activities are to remain within a single institutional framework, it is essential that a single conference deal with both.

If the objectives set in Milan are not to be compromised, discussions must proceed at a steady pace and representatives of the Governments of the Member States attending the conference must be in a position to devote the necessary time and energy to the exercise. A time limit must be put on discussions so that the European Council in Luxembourg can debate the findings of the conference and take decisions.

Finally, the European Parliament should be closely involved in the work of the conference and consulted on the outcome.

8. In conclusion, the Commission, subject to the observations set out above, hereby delivers a favourable opinion on the convening of a conference of representatives of the Governments of the Member States with a view to amending and expanding the Treaties establishing the European Communities. Only if the conference completes its business rapidly can the Community, without more ado, channel all its energies into accomplishing the priority tasks it has assigned itself.

9. The Commission will present proposals on all areas covered by the conference in due course.