

## 'Re-launching European Union: already off the ground' from Europe (21 September 1981)

**Source:** Europe. Dir. of publ. Riccardi, Lodovico ; REditor Riccardi, Ferdinando. 21.-22.09.1981, No 3211. Brussels.

**Copyright:** (c) Agence Europe S.A.

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/re\\_launching\\_european\\_union\\_already\\_off\\_the\\_ground\\_from\\_europe\\_21\\_september\\_1981-en-e853cf12-d15d-4592-8026-7f7f0057c805.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/re_launching_european_union_already_off_the_ground_from_europe_21_september_1981-en-e853cf12-d15d-4592-8026-7f7f0057c805.html)

**Publication date:** 16/09/2012

## Re-launching European Union: already off the ground

On Friday, the German government gave the go-ahead for Mr Genscher's plans to give Europe fresh impetus, through what we have called the "Epiphany appeal" and its successive developments.

At the time, we reported on Mr Genscher's ideas, noting that they had obtained the support of some of his colleagues, in particular Mr Colombo. In our Editorial of 10 September, we gave the major points, which have now been confirmed. Through this initiative and by reviewing its responsibilities and place in Europe, Germany will be making its contribution to building up unity in Europe (see Editorials of 17 and 18 September), helping the Community to make choices in the coming months which will determine its future development.

Mr Genscher may now discuss the matter with his colleagues, not only giving his personal views or representing a party, but on behalf of the German government. This should give his move considerable scope. The aim he seems to have set himself at the moment is to obtain sufficient consensus to allow the European Council to take its first decision on 26 and 27 November. This means that discussion with the other ministers must start as soon as possible. They will most likely get off the ground this week, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

According to the information issued in Bonn, the aim of Mr Genscher's move is to get a "fundamental policy statement on European Union" adopted. This will provide a better understanding of the nature and limits of what is to be done. To start with, this statement will not have the force of a Treaty (as Mr Genscher would have liked), but will be seen as a declaration or "Act" (similar to that concluded at the Helsinki conference), constituting a policy commitment which will not be legally binding. We would note, here, that the Community (and/or Heads of government) have issued other "solemn declarations" which have unfortunately gone no further. Secondly, the aim is to get European Union off the ground again. This is a quite vague concept which, despite numerous attempts, has never been very comprehensively defined. Objectively speaking, union could remain within its present limits (which would in effect be a step backwards) or it could go further (as Mr Tindemans said it should in his Reports on the Union and as the European Commission advocated in 1975). Given these limits, the scope of Mr Genscher's initiative will have to be assessed and the possibility of its proving to be a new chance for the Community.

Among the points that are still rather unclear is the question of if and how the changeover from the present system would be made without changing the institutions. The matters taken in hand by the European Council and those dealt with under political cooperation (plus security issues, cultural affairs and legal matters) would have to be merged under the Council's authority.

The statement issued by the German cabinet, however, goes further than merely announcing this initiative, it ties it in with the ideas which the government will be building on during the debates that have just started in the Mandate Group on budget reform and getting integration off the ground again. These debates are to be completed before the end of the year. Unfortunately, the ideas listed tend to confirm, with little ado, the rather reluctant attitude the Germans took during the initial stages of the work, which was that reform should be confined to getting to grips with farm spending, limiting the Community's sources of revenue and "limiting" Germany's contribution — even though Mr Becker did try to reassure himself by pointing out that the German government would support its weaker partners. This support, which should come automatically in a Community, is not the key point. What is important is whether Germany wants to work for an overall, dynamic strategy or whether it wants to put the brakes on.

Be that as it may, a process has been started and it is better than inertia. The fact that Germany is taking the lead is important in itself. Everybody will have to pull together to make sure that the move is channelled in the right direction. The responses there have been from Mr Bangemann (Political Day of 18 September) and the CDU Chairman, Mr Kohl, show that even in Germany, people are aware how important this matter is.

Emanuele Gazzo