

## "Amsterdam: a wobbly Union" from Crocodile

**Caption:** In 1997, in the Federalist journal Crocodile, Biagio De Giovanni, Italian Chairman of the European Parliament Institutional Affairs Committee, criticises the shortcomings of the progress made by the Treaty of Amsterdam in meeting the new challenges of the European Union.

**Source:** Crocodile. Letter to the Parliaments of Europe. 1997, n° 5-6. Brussels.

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## Amsterdam: a wobbly Union

The goals laid down in the Turin Summit for the revision of the Maastricht Treaty were clear: on the eve of the enlargement of the Union it was urgent to put in place the necessary adjustments of EU institutions and to strengthen its political dimension, notably through a better definition of European citizenship and above all through an effective common foreign and security policy, which had only been sketched in Maastricht. Furthermore, it was also necessary to strengthen cooperation in justice and Home affairs as well as on immigration and internal security to tackle the growing global character of international crime.

Few of these objectives were reached or even touched lightly by the Treaty of Amsterdam; Europe has still no political dimension: on the contrary, since 1989, growing nationalistic tendencies put more and more obstacles to the European project: divisions and resistances become stronger just when the goal to reach becomes more important.

The new Anglo-German alliance represents certainly one of the negative elements of the new European scenario, even if it will certainly be only provisional.

Before Amsterdam, there was a vision of a weak Europe (the big market - British style) and the strong Europe (strong political institutions, -German style). Today the division is no more along these lines, because the German priority of financial restrictions found an ally in the British flexibility and the two governments are interested in enlargement.

The UK considers enlargement as the indispensable way to realise a non-political Europe and Germany sees enlargement as the essence of its European choice after reunification. The divergent interests among the other states concerning the ponderation of votes and border controls and home affairs, as well as Austrian and Swedish neutrality complete this bleak picture.

The evaluation of the Treaty must be based on the comparison between the objectives of the Union laid down in Turin and the poor results reached.

We are on the eve of the realisation of Monetary Union but Member States were not able to give a political "leg" to the European Union. This is the crucial problem left unsolved by the Draft Treaty of Amsterdam; this empty space is all the more worrying because everybody is aware of the fact that the government of Europe cannot be left to Central Banks.

Who will be the political counterpart of the ECB and its monetary policy? Can it be that only monetary authorities will be the interpreters of the Stability Pact?

If the monetary leg becomes longer than the political one, the strengthening of the monetary powers and the correspondent weakening of the economic and political powers will be the inevitable consequence. This is the central issue facing monetary integration, which was not tackled at all during the Amsterdam summit. It is now difficult to make any forecast; institutions and political forces must still define the elements of the answer to the challenges facing the Union.

"Functionalism" is dead, but European politics is not yet born. This is the hearth of the matter and the Left, almost everywhere in power in Europe, will have to face this very serious problem soon.

Biagio De Giovanni, MEP

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