

'Double or quits' from Crocodile (July 1993)

Caption: In its July–August 1993 edition, the Federalist monthly journal Crocodile considers the decisions taken at the Copenhagen European Council held on 21 and 22 June 1993 with regard to future enlargements of the European Union and calls for discussions to be held among the Twelve on the speeds of deepening and widening.

Source: Crocodile. Letter to the Parliaments of Europe. July-August 1993. Brussels.

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Double or quits

The European Council in Copenhagen took a significant step towards defining a European Union enlarged to other European countries. If one has, at the same time, to take into account the wishes of the candidate countries and the views of the European Council, the prospect is now open for a European Union of which the number of participants will be - at the dawn of the 21st century - double the number of the current members of the European Community.

Indeed:

- * the enlargement of the four EFTA countries (Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden) should become a reality before 1 January 1995;
- * enlargement to those countries should not prejudice the position of Malta and Cyprus, which will be soon considered by the Council of Ministers;
- * the European Council in Copenhagen gave its agreement 'in order that the associate countries of Central and Eastern Europe (the 'PECO' countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Rumania, Slovakia) which wish to, should become members of the Union.'

Even if a formal decision on the timetable for the second and third group of new members was not taken in Copenhagen, it is highly significant that there was no indication of the prospect of full participation in the European Union of another candidate country (Turkey) nor of other countries which have also asserted their commitment to membership, in the long term, to the Union (the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Albania, Macedonia, Slovenia).

From the point of view of the conditions required of candidate countries, the Twelve consider that the Maastricht Treaty is an 'acquis' which must be fully accepted by the EFTA four, while the 'PECO' countries must, in addition, attain institutional stability guaranteeing democracy, legality, human rights, respect and protection of the minorities, a market economy, a capacity to respond to competitive pressure and, of course, adhesion to the objectives of a political, economic and monetary Union.

As regards the Union, the Twelve spoke for the first time of the importance of not changing the speed of European integration, while giving to the Union the capacity to absorb new members.

Everyone knows that hiding behind this little phrase is the apparently doctrinaire controversy on the speeds of deepening and enlarging.

The United Kingdom and Denmark, in particular, consider that the date of the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference should not be brought forward, that this Conference should bring together the Sixteen and that its conclusions should be ratified by the Sixteen. Recently, a senior British representative within CO.RE.PER even went further when he asked that the Union enlarged to Sixteen be given a test period and that the 1996 Conference be put forward to 1999. By contrast, Germany and France, in particular, consider that certain institutional changes will be necessary before enlargement to the EFTA can become a reality. Prime Minister Balladur, when presenting his plan for a 'pact for stability in Europe' questioned the capacity of certain 'neutral' countries fully to integrate into a political Union of which the aspect of common defence will be one of the fundamental elements.

The time has come openly to confront the political controversy about the speed of deepening and enlarging and to turn it into the central topic of discussions and decisions at the level of heads of State and government. The occasion of the extraordinary European Council, which should take place in October after the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht seems to us the best for confronting this dispute.