

Memorandum from the Austrian Mission to the European Communities (16 February 1990)

Caption: On 16 February 1990, the Austrian Mission to the European Communities draws up a memorandum in which it places particular emphasis on Austria's commitment to the ideals of European integration.

Source: Archives historiques de l'Union européenne, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Emanuele Gazzo, EG. Elargissement de la Communauté. Adhésion à la Communauté européenne de l'Autriche, 15/02/1990 - 09/07/1990, EG 129.

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Memorandum from the Austrian Mission to the European Communities

The Austrian applications for membership in the European Communities were presented to the President of the Council of the European Communities on July 17, 1989. On July 28, 1989 the Council of the European Communities requested the Commission to formulate an opinion on these applications according to the usual procedures.

In view of the developments and rapid changes that have occurred in Europe since then, Austria considers it appropriate to restate some basic considerations concerning these applications.

Austria forms part of the very core of Europe; Austria's image of itself has been shaped by history; it is inseparably linked with the idea of transnational European solutions. This background explains the particular commitment of the Austrian people to the ideas and ideals of European integration that have inspired the Treaties establishing the European Communities.

Since the end of the Second World War Austria has consistently participated in efforts towards European cooperation and the integration of Western European democracies, even at a time when such a commitment by a country still under Four-Power occupation required courage and determination.

By virtue of its political, social and economic system Austria has always considered itself an integral part of the family of Western European democracies ever since it regained its freedom after the Second World War.

Based on these considerations, the applications for membership in the European Communities which Austria submitted in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Community Treaties, assert Austria's political claim to become a member of the Community on an equal footing. Austria thereby expressed its readiness to accept the rights and obligations resulting from such a membership.

Austria considers European integration as it is pursued by the European Community to be an evolutionary process of historic dimensions. This process will decisively influence the future of the continent and thus also of Austria. Austria is therefore committed to the guiding objectives of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and the Single European Act. Austria wishes to participate in their realization in the spirit of solidarity and with seat and vote in the decision making process.

In the preamble of the EEC-Treaty the member states express their resolution "by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty" and call "upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts". Austria considers its permanent neutrality, which it declared in 1955, to constitute its specific contribution to the preservation of peace and security in Europe.

At a time when confrontation is being replaced by cooperation, neutral Austria, thanks to its historical experience and its contacts with neighboring countries in Central and Eastern Europe, can give the European Community additional profile and force of gravity and constitute an element of additional strength.

Austria's wish to become a member of the Community is based on a broad political consensus. The Austrian Parliament called upon the Federal Government by an overwhelming majority - in the National Council with a majority of 175 in favour and 7 against, in the Federal Council unanimously - to seek the membership of Austria in the European Community. This objective is actively supported by all Austrian federal provinces and the Social partners (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Austrian Chambers of Labour Conference, Conference of the Presidents of the Austrian Chambers of Agriculture, Austrian Trade Unions Federation).

The position of the Federal Government thus rests on a sound basis and the European Community can be assured that, as a member of the Community, Austria will be a reliable partner and will demonstrate the solidarity required for the accomplishment of European unification.

Due to its economic system and its social structures Austria can be regarded as a factor which will strengthen the Community from a socio-economic point of view. The country fits into the existing structures of the Community harmoniously; already today the Community is a partner for more than 70% of Austria's foreign trade (including trade in services).

The Austrian gross national product per capita is higher than the Community average so that the country will be a net contributor to the EC budget and can thus make an important contribution towards an improved economic and social cohesion of the Community.

Australia's membership in the Community will also improve the Community's "geographical cohesion". The integration of Austria would make it easier to benefit by the advantages and opportunities of the EC-"Internal Market" and a "Citizens' Europe".

On account of its highly developed economy, well balanced social structures, intellectual resources, highly qualified workers and employees, high level of productivity and strong currency Austria can become a partner who will broaden and fortify the basis of the Community's competitiveness in world economy.

Last but not least, Austria's intellectual and cultural heritage is an inseparable component of the history of European culture and thought. Austria sees its own identity as a major element of the European identity which the European Community aims to create.

In the light of the dynamic developments and changes taking place in Europe, Austria particularly hopes that its applications for membership in the European Communities will soon be taken into concrete consideration and that all relevant work will precede rapidly. Austria attaches great importance to an early elaboration of the Commission's "opinion" and is prepared to supply necessary information at any time.

Austria is interested that its desire to become a member of the Community shall be realized as soon as possible. This objective should not be delayed by any new priorities which the Community might set itself.

The experience gained and the success achieved by the European Communities ever since their establishment permit the conclusion that the processes of deepening and enlargement of the Community do not contradict each other.

Brussels, February 16, 1990