

European Parliament Resolution on preparations for the meeting of the Heads of State and Government on the European Union's political future, to be held in October 1998 (22 October 1998)

Caption: In its resolution of 22 October 1998, the European Parliament emphasises the importance of reviving the debate on the future development of the European Union and affirms that the EU's political future requires institutional reform, which, despite notable progress, has not been achieved by the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Source: European Parliament, Resolution on preparations for the meeting of the heads of state and government on the European Union's political future, to be held in October 1998: B4-0966/98/rév., in Official Journal of the European Communities (OJEC). 09.11.1998, n° C 341, p. 128.

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10. Considers that the ECSC Treaty (Articles 49 to 56) confers major powers on the Commission as regards the establishment of requirements and the management of resources; expects the Commission, therefore, to implement its proposal to enter into the budget part of the surpluses which have accumulated within the provisions (EUR 30 million in 1999) by means of redeployment and conversion measures in the areas of the Union which are affected by restructuring in the sectors concerned; is ready to take the action needed to achieve this objective;
11. Takes the view, with regard to the other planned expenditure, that certain adjustments are required, particularly in respect of the redeployment aid, the social measures for the coal and steel industries and aid for research;
12. Takes the view that, since the ECSC Treaty will expire in 2002, the phasing-in of the ECSC must be dealt with in the context of the enlargement and, in that connection, calls on the Commission to earmark appropriations from the PHARE programme for activities in conjunction with the coal and steel sectors of the applicant countries;
13. Calls on the Commission to reduce administrative expenditure, which has remained at a constant level for 46 years, now that the ECSC has entered the active operational phasing-out period;
14. Points out that, in a statement to Parliament in 1993, the Commission undertook to accept the binding nature of the opinions delivered by Parliament on the ECSC operating budget;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the ECSC Consultative Committee.

2. Preparation of the meeting of heads of state and government in Pörtlach (24-25 October 1998)

B4-0966/98/rev.

Resolution on preparations for the meeting of the heads of state and government on the European Union's political future, to be held in October 1998

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council meeting held in Cardiff on 15 and 16 June 1998,
 - having regard to the Kohl-Chirac letter of 5 June 1998,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 November 1997 on the Treaty of Amsterdam (CONF 4007/97 — C4-0538/97) ⁽¹⁾,
- A. whereas the meeting of the heads of state and government in October 1998 has the task of relaunching the debate on the future of the European Union, with a view to bringing the Union closer to its citizens via the consolidation of democratic legitimacy and the application of the principle of subsidiarity,
- B. whereas the support of the citizens of Europe can only be achieved in the future as well if European integration is pursued on the basis of transparency as regards powers and responsibilities and offers the public direct and genuine rights in a European area of freedom and security,
- C. whereas the seriousness of the economic crises which are destabilising the financial markets, and, consequently, the world economy, points up the need for the EU to assume a higher political profile, more in keeping with its new economic and monetary dimension,
- D. whereas, in order to ensure its political future, the European Union must:
- appear on the international stage as something other than an arbitrary group of more or less discordant voices;
 - go beyond the completion of the internal market and the introduction of the single currency and move towards a real political union;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 371, 8.12.1997, p. 99.

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- successfully achieve enlargement to take in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Malta and Cyprus, which will mean not only opening up new markets but also giving concrete form to our shared destiny;
- have the appropriate powers corresponding to these responsibilities,

The political future of the Union

1. Emphasises that:
 - given its historical and economic importance, the Union must take on a leading political role, both in the service of peace-keeping and global stability, through a genuine common foreign and security policy, and in the major international economic and financial fora, through a commitment to economic and social progress;
 - the ever-closer union of the peoples of Europe requires not only a single market and a single currency but, beyond that, the development of a European social model, full employment and a healthy environment from which the citizens of Europe can derive direct benefit and the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice, and in which fundamental rights are upheld and the structures and procedures of judicial and police cooperation are strengthened;
 - the success of enlargement, which is an historical necessity and must be resolutely taken forward, will depend on practical efforts to create solidarity and maintain cohesion between old and new Member States;
2. Stresses that none of these developments can occur without the institutional reform which the Treaty of Amsterdam, despite achieving notable progress, has not brought about;
3. Considers that the future financing of the Union is a problem which must be dealt with on the basis of the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion laid down by the Treaty; condemns, accordingly, the 'fair return' approach as regards own resources; believes that what should be taken into consideration is the sum total of budgetary and non-budgetary advantages arising from participation in European integration;
4. Calls, in view of the repercussions of economic and monetary union for the institutions and the Member States, for the coordination of economic policies and democratic scrutiny of economic and monetary policy to be challenges of institutional reform;
5. Stresses that the introduction of EMU will mean that satisfactory solutions will have to be found, from the viewpoint of visibility and effectiveness, to the problem of the representation of the Union in international economic and monetary fora; believes, in particular, that the European Council to be held in Vienna in December 1998 should reach an agreement on how the EMU member countries can be represented by a single voice on such international bodies as the G7;
6. Considers that one of the main items on the agenda of the meeting of the heads of state and government should be the relationship between the ends of integration and the institutional and financial means required to attain it;
7. Shares the concern expressed in the conclusions of the Cardiff European Council regarding the need to strengthen the Union's democratic legitimacy and examine in greater detail matters relating to application of the principle of subsidiarity; recalls, however, that the Union must focus its efforts on a thoroughgoing institutional reform;

Respect for the principle of subsidiarity

8. Considers that subsidiarity and solidarity, in an institutional system still taking shape, represent important criteria for the organisation of democracy and the exercise of powers with a view to achieving the Treaty objectives;
9. Considers that the balanced application of subsidiarity and solidarity must seek to create synergies between the different levels of political action with a view to contributing to the development of economic and social cohesion;
10. Warns the European Council against the temptation to use subsidiarity as a pretext for the renationalisation of Community policies; considers that where the activities of the institutions have revealed a failure to respect the principle of subsidiarity, responsibility for this lies with the Member States as a whole and with the institutions which take part in the legislative process;

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11. Underlines that fears of over-centralisation in the European Union are greatly exaggerated, given that the Union may act only in the areas delimited by the Treaties, and even then in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, and with the participation in decision-making of national ministers; notes that only 3% of public expenditure is carried out through the EU budget and that the Commission has a total staff smaller than the administrations of most cities;

12. Notes that a number of appropriate remedies are possible under the existing Treaties, namely:

- increased cooperation with national parliaments;
- rapid forwarding of Commission proposals to the national parliaments, as provided for by the protocol on the role of the national parliaments;
- strict application of the interinstitutional agreement on the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity by the institutions;
- referral to the Court of Justice, by the institutions and Member States, of cases where alleged breaches of the principle of subsidiarity have occurred;

13. Suggests, nonetheless, that a number of amendments should be made to the Treaty with a view to backing up these efforts to improve the application of the principle of subsidiarity:

- establishment of a hierarchy of acts (constitutional, legislative and executive);
- clarification of the division of powers between the legislative bodies (Parliament and the Council) and the executive (the Commission);
- strengthening and improving the consistency of the coordination of employment policies and of economic policies, so as to foster a spirit of solidarity and cooperation *vis-à-vis* social objectives and common developments;
- more effective and rapid judicial control over matters relating to subsidiarity;

14. Advocates that primary responsibility for implementing Community law should be retained by Member States, whilst monitoring by the Commission and the Court of Justice to ensure prompt and complete implementation is stepped up;

15. Undertakes, in the spirit of Protocol 13 to the Treaty of Amsterdam, to engage in political dialogue and close cooperation with the national parliaments concerning the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and, depending on the specific constitutional position of each Member State, with the relevant regional bodies;

16. Rejects the idea of creating another institution or body to take responsibility for subsidiarity, as this would needlessly complicate an institutional system which already provides for draft EU legislation to be examined by national ministers in the Council, by directly elected Members of the European Parliament, by regional and local representatives in the Committee of the Regions and by the social partners and others in the Economic and Social Committee;

Strengthening democratic legitimacy and effectiveness

17. Points out, first of all, that the democratic scrutiny of national authorities exercised by the national parliaments is part and parcel of the democratic process in Europe;

18. Considers that the strengthening of the democratic legitimacy of the Community institutions should be based on the following principles:

- a Council whose meetings held in its legislative capacity are open to the public, which makes decisions by qualified majority, and which publishes the minutes of final sessions;
- a Commission which is genuinely answerable to the European Parliament and which operates transparently;
- a European Parliament which has powers of codecision over all legislative and budgetary acts, which genuinely exercises its power of control over the Commission and which gives its assent to constitutional acts and international agreements;
- a Court of Justice to which access is easier for citizens and whose jurisdiction is extended to all areas of EU competence, particularly to internal affairs and justice;
- a Committee of the Regions and an Economic and Social Committee which represent local authorities and economic and social agents and whose views are genuinely listened to by the European Parliament;

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19. Stresses that the development of European political parties will make a significant contribution to strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the Union;

20. Points out that the further development of the substance of European citizenship is a crucial factor if the public is to be won over to the European project; believes that a declaration of rights of the European citizen should be drawn up;

21. Considers that the institutions could be made to work more effectively if the following improvements were carried out:

as regards the Council:

- the General Affairs Council should become a genuine Council for the coordination and steering of Community policies; a Council with responsibility for foreign affairs, security and defence should be set up;
- the absolute priority for the next amendment of the Treaty should be the extension of qualified majority voting to all legislative acts and appointments: an aspect which is far more important than the weighting of votes or the rotation of the Council Presidency;

as regards the Commission:

- the strengthening of its political powers is essential,
- its pre-eminent role as a policy initiator must be affirmed;
- the principles of genuine independence and collegiate responsibility must be respected;
- the Commission's structure must be reformed so as to obtain a clearer separation between its powers of initiative and its management and supervisory functions;
- there must be a guarantee that the Commission, and especially its President, are more politically representative;
- the proportionality of legislative action in relation to the goals sought must be systematically verified;

as regards the Court of Justice:

- mechanisms should be created to allow rapid decision-making using accelerated procedures, especially concerning compliance with the Treaty by the institutions and the Member States;

as regards the European Parliament:

- priority must be clearly given to all legislative, budgetary and control responsibilities as laid down by the Treaty of Amsterdam;
- an independent expert assessment capability must be established;
- there must be continuous cooperation with national parliaments;
- the adoption of a single statute for its Members is a condition if Parliament is to work more effectively;

22. Considers that the credibility of the Union's external policy requires more effective coordination of the European dimension of defence; calls on the heads of state and government to lay the foundations for integration of the powers of the WEU in the European Union;

23. Calls for the next revision of the Treaties to be prepared using the Community method and for the European Parliament to be fully involved; urges the European Council to call on the Commission to submit a proposal for the reform of the Treaties; on the basis of the resolution of 19 November 1997 referred to above the European Parliament and the national parliaments will debate it with the objective of submitting a joint draft to the governments of the Member States for consideration and, if possible, approval;

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24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council Presidency, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Commission and the other Community institutions.