

PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN

SPEECH

by the President
of the European Parliament

Dr. Egon A. Klepsch

at the European Council

on Friday, 16 October 1992

in Birmingham

Embargo: Time of delivery

Check against delivery

Mr President of the Council,
Mr President,
Chancellor,
Prime Ministers,
Mr President of the Commission,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to have this opportunity to present the European Parliament's views to this extraordinary meeting of the European Council at such a critical period. Answers need to be found to the questions being asked by the general public in Europe and which you, Mr Chairman, have set out in your letter as topics for discussion.

At the very beginning of the British Presidency I called for the holding of a special summit. Even without the problems relating to ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, it was clear that the European Council in Edinburgh in December would have to deal with an excessive amount of outstanding business.

To this extent, the European Parliament particularly welcomes the opportunity to discuss the current urgent issues at the highest political level and to find solutions.

At a special sitting on 14 October the European Parliament discussed in depth the preparations for this European Council. In a resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority, I was expressly instructed to urge the Heads of State or Government gathered here today to improve transparency and democracy within the European Community.

We have all seen - some perhaps with greater surprise than others - that the debate on ratification of the Maastricht Treaty has given rise to a high degree of uncertainty, mistrust and lack of understanding on the part of men and women in Europe.

The lack of information and transparency has been evident. Quite rightly, there is talk of a degree of alienation between politicians and citizens at European level. We must work jointly to ensure that the activities and decisions of all Community bodies are presented in a way that is clearer and easier to understand.

It is not helpful to put the blame for everything that goes wrong on 'those people in Brussels'. We should project a positive image of the European Community.

We should feel an obligation and duty to tackle jointly the obvious shortcomings and inadequacies and declare our support for an approach which is close to the grass roots and transparent.

The European Parliament sees its role as spearheading such a movement. A committed defence of the process of European unification based on openness, subsidiarity and democracy is required to restore trust between the politicians and the people.

In its resolution of 14 October, the European Parliament has given clear signals in this direction.

The European Parliament holds to the Maastricht Treaty as it stands. It will work for the speedy conclusion of the ratification process by all Member States. Any change in the Treaty must be soon as an attempt to turn back the process of integration.

Parliament looks to the European Council for clear assurances in this regard at the conclusion of this meeting.

The European Parliament supports a formal declaration on greater transparency and democracy within the European Community. Such a declaration should be negotiated and adopted by the Council, Commission and Parliament.

In this context, the European Parliament, which in the eyes of the public stands for democratic participation and parliamentary scrutiny, attaches great importance to being involved on an equal footing in the drafting of such a formal declaration.

The European Parliament expressly calls for the principle of subsidiarity, which is anchored in the Maastricht Treaty, to be enshrined in an interinstitutional agreement between the Council, Commission and the European Parliament.

During the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty, Parliament ^{earlier in} discussed the principle of subsidiarity on the basis of the Martin report and the reports by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Emilio Colombo. It welcomes the considerations outlined by the President of the Commission, Mr Delors, during the special session on 14 October as a point of departure for discussions between the three institutions.

In order to ensure that the preparatory work can be concluded in time for the European Council in Edinburgh, the European Parliament calls for the early convening of an interinstitutional conference, on the lines of those held on several occasions during the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty.

Preparations for this conference should begin forthwith within the framework of the Triadialogue or in meetings of the Presidents of the Commission, Council and European Parliament.

The European Parliament is pressing ahead firmly with its own work in connection with implementation of the Maastricht Treaty.

The possibility afforded by the Maastricht Treaty of setting up committees of inquiry and appointing an Ombudsman will provide Parliament with important instruments. They will give it greater opportunity to exercise control and will strengthen the rights of the individual citizen in the labyrinth of bureaucracy. Parliament will have concluded its consultations by October and will immediately begin negotiations with the other institutions concerning the practical arrangements.

As a contribution to reducing the democratic deficit, Parliament is demanding to be put on an equal footing in the legislative process.

It maintains its basic position that the co-decision procedure (pursuant to Article 189b) should be applied in all cases in which the Council acts by majority decision.

This is the only means of ensuring full parliamentary control of Community legislation, which has hitherto been lacking, particularly vis-à-vis the

Council. Our concern is that we should also be able to exercise comprehensive control over the Council bureaucracy.

The European Parliament will shortly be submitting practical proposals relating to the co-decision procedure in the interinstitutional consultations. We are also endeavouring to reach an agreement whereby the provisions of the so-called third reading will be confined to a very small number of exceptional procedures.

It is not in the interests of the Community that full democratic participation should result in the legislative process coming to nothing.

On behalf of the European Parliament, I urge you to give an undertaking that your governments in the Council will not adopt any legislative proposal that has been rejected by Parliament.

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A further important factor in achieving greater transparency and greater democracy is the improvement and stepping up of cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

The debate on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, which also addresses this point, has led to a definite swing in opinion on the issue: All those concerned are now showing interest in greater cooperation.

The European Parliament takes the view that the national parliaments should play a greater role in the transposition of Community law, thereby contributing to greater transparency and democracy in the Community.

The governments of the Member States must involve their parliaments to a greater extent in their European policy decisions. Cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments should be stepped up as a way of exercising control over the Council.

At the same time, the European Parliament proposes the reconvening of a conference of the parliaments of the European Union. Such a conference should meet as soon as possible and would be a further sign of greater transparency and democracy.

In preparation for this conference, which could be held in the first or second half of 1993, I shall shortly be contacting the speakers and presidents of the national parliaments to discuss the date, composition and agenda for the next conference of parliaments.

The European Parliament calls on the European Council to reach agreement on the Delors II package in Edinburgh in December in a spirit of Community solidarity. This is also a vital prerequisite for the successful continuation of the process of integration. Here too, an interinstitutional agreement is urgently required.

The decision on the 1993 Community budget and the future new financial system must not be delayed. I would appeal to the President of the Council to keep this in mind; what is at stake is the future of our Community.

In this connection I should like to give a warning against certain tendencies to misapply the principle of subsidiarity in order to give up or curtail Community policy and to revert to national or intergovernmental policies.

Parliament will act decisively to counter such trends since they are liable to jeopardize everything that has been achieved to date, i.e. the 'acquis communautaire'.

To avoid any risk of being misunderstood, allow me to add that the European Parliament recognizes clearly and unequivocally the basic principles of subsidiarity, namely that decisions should be taken as close to the people as possible and the need to consider whether a decision is required and whether it is commensurate with the aim in view.

The European Parliament stresses the need for Community solidarity, in calling for economic and monetary union to be achieved on the basis of the timetable and on the conditions laid down in the Maastricht Treaty. We must remove the basis for currency speculation. All the conditions must be achieved for completion of the single internal market on schedule. Our parliament opposes any attempts to create a 'two-speed Europe'.

We must do everything possible to achieve the agreed goals together. The pace of progress towards these goals may differ, what is important is that they are achieved jointly. An example of this is the European Monetary System (EMS) set up in 1979. The recent turbulence on the foreign exchange markets shows that the system is still incomplete and that the achievement of economic and monetary union is more urgently required than ever.

The achievement of European solidarity also entails further development with a 'social dimension'. The European Parliament advocates a Community initiative to stimulate the economy. The aim of this initiative should be to promote employment and sustained economic growth which respects the environment, which will allow the criteria of convergence to be met without the risk of recession or inflation.

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On the question of GATT, I should like to confirm very briefly the stance that the European Parliament has consistently adopted.

The European Parliament is calling for the rapid conclusion of the GATT negotiations. Agreement will require balanced concessions by all the parties involved. It is out of the question that the European Community should be required to make unilateral concessions. The United States must also be prepared to accept compromise solutions, particularly in the area of agriculture.

May I also mention the question of the number of Members of the European Parliament, which has yet to be resolved.

The European Council undertook to reach a decision on this issue in Edinburgh, i.e. well in advance of the next direct European elections in June 1994.

The European Parliament has completed the necessary preparatory work in good time. In June of this year it submitted a specific proposal on the number of seats. This should make it easier for you, the Heads of State or Government, to reach a decision.

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Despite the problems referred to and other internal difficulties, the European Community has become not less, but more attractive to those outside it.

This is evidenced by the growing number of applications for entry; seven have already been submitted and a further one or two can be expected before the end of the year. Countries applying for membership must clearly understand that there are three basic preconditions for membership of the European Community, namely:

- freedom within the rule of law,
- a pluralist democracy,
- a social market economy.

Further criteria are the acceptance of the existing body of Community legislation and the provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht with a commitment to the political goal of European Union. The last of these points will require careful consideration, for example by the CFTA countries applying for membership, in view of their existing policy of neutrality. It is necessary to create a new security structure for Europe and the world. The European Community must play an important role here and assume its full responsibility.

For the European Parliament there is no contradiction between the widening and deepening of the European Community. I continue to advocate that both these goals should be pursued and achieved in parallel. In view of the institutional reform required in this connection, we cannot wait for the intergovernmental conference scheduled for 1996. Our institutions must be remodelled to meet the new needs. Potential applicant countries should be involved in the relevant consultations.

The dramatic developments in the former Yugoslavia underline the need for the European Community to be given the necessary instruments to meet its responsibilities. Our Community must be in a position to make its contribution to maintaining peace and defending human rights throughout the world.

The European Parliament renews its support for the peace efforts of the Community of Twelve. It calls for the continuation of humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such aid is all the more urgent in view of the onset of winter.

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May I conclude by saying that in holding its special session the European Parliament has taken a step which has been understood by the general public. The resolution submitted to you contains clear statements. It is now up to you to take in the message and to send out clear signals in the present critical situation.

We cannot allow ourselves to be under any illusions:

We must be fully aware that a gulf has opened up between political action and the citizen.

It is not the people who are responsible for this.

On the contrary, it is up to all of us, the Council, the Member States, the Commission and Parliament to admit that it is we who have allowed this alienation to arise.

The recognition that we are to blame will not change anything. We should formally undertake to use all the available ways and means of making good this lack of information.

We must inform our citizens fully about our intentions and actions and at the same time frame our policies in such a way that people can understand them.

It is only by doing so that we will gain the necessary acceptance, which will enable us to achieve the European Union and thus contribute to peace and freedom in Europe and in the world.