

Statement by George Spénale (12 July 1976)

Caption: Statement by the President of the European Parliament, Georges Spénale, following the Brussels European Council of 12 July 1976, concerning direct elections to the European Parliament.

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Statement by Georges Spénale following the Brussels European Council (12 July 1976)

'The twelfth of July 1976 will be an important date in the history of Europe. The Treaties establishing the European Communities make provision for the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage. It has taken a long time to achieve this aim.

The decision of the European Council, which eliminates the last remaining difficulties, represents a victory for parliamentary democracy, and for closer relations and cooperation between the nations of Europe: the "European citizen" is now a potential reality. This is a victory for all the institutions of the Community, particularly Parliament and the Council, which have discharged their individual responsibilities. It is also a victory for the Member States, who have managed to achieve unanimity on an exceptionally important and difficult matter. Above all, it is a victory for the peoples of Europe, who will now bring their influence to bear; it is a victory by Europe over Europe and for Europe. It represents the completion of the Community procedure and as such the end of an era. At the same time, it heralds the opening of the national ratification procedures - and this is where everything begins.

Parliament urges the Council to ensure that the convention on direct elections is submitted to the Member States as soon as possible for constitutional approval, and asks the national parliaments, when the time comes, to speed up the ratification procedures, so that the election can be held in May or June 1978.

Time is pressing and we still have a long way to go. The European activists to whom we owe so much must not relax their efforts. It is the duty of everyone to ensure that the first civic act of the European citizen in two years' time is an overwhelming success, gives promise for the future and represents the first step towards a European renaissance.'