

## 'The beginnings of a more integrated Europe that is closer to its citizens' from Le Soir (26 June 1984)

**Caption:** On 26 June 1984, on the occasion of the Fontainebleau European Council, the Belgian newspaper Le Soir considers the efforts being made by the Ten to bring Europe closer to the citizen.

**Source:** Le Soir. 27.06.1984, n° 149; 98e année. Bruxelles: S.A. Rossel. "L'amorce d'une Europe plus intégrée et plus proche des citoyens", auteur:Cordy, Jacques , p. 21.

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## The beginnings of a more integrated Europe that is closer to its citizens

From our permanent special correspondent

Fontainebleau, 26 June.

**Europe is not very well liked. Europeans misunderstand it. The Fontainebleau Summit has expressed its determination to remedy this ridiculous situation. Its objective: to win back the citizens who were more interested in going fishing than in voting at the last European Parliament elections.**

**To do so, Europe needs to be — at the same time — stronger, more consistent, more effective, closer to its people and more practical; in a word, it must appear more human. This idea is hardly new, it has been floating around for some time now. However, it had to drill through the bedrock of the habitual thoughts and lifestyles of very different peoples, and, above all, hack through a jungle thick with the administrative structures of its own creation.**

The Fontainebleau Conference has picked up other initiatives already outlined in the past. However, this time, at the instigation of the French, amongst others, it has clearly stated its aim of taking things further. Particular attention has been paid to the resolute establishment of a European Union, through the study of a draft treaty establishing more complete integration of the countries of Europe at all levels.

This is known as the ‘Spinelli draft’ (named after its rapporteur): it represents a kind of cornerstone for tomorrow’s Europe, a Europe that would no longer be simply about ‘milk’, or ‘wine’, or indeed about food in general.

This Union treaty would not replace the existing treaties. It would, rather, amend them by going even further. It would specify and strengthen the powers of the European Commission and those of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and it would introduce majority voting (in the Council).

This Union would not be imposed: only those countries wishing to join would do so. Those who support this idea, including France, believe that it would extend the Treaty of Rome into all the areas for which no provision has been made: judicial and law enforcement areas, welfare, consumers, health, the environment, education, research, cooperation, culture, etc.

People are also speaking about the creation of a European television channel and of the mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the Community, etc.

### Being specific

In practice, the participants at the Fontainebleau Conference were able to do little more than review the problems to be solved with a view to achieving this ideal Europe. There are no details in these general plans.

The decision was taken to set up an ‘ad hoc committee’ for the creation of a People’s Europe. Personal representatives of the Heads of State or Government will serve on it. This committee will present its findings during the second half of this year.

Nonetheless, headway is being made, even if progress does seem to be agonisingly slow. For example, from 1 July, customs formalities will be abolished at Franco-German borders. This will apply only to persons, not goods, but even so ... It is true that there is still a lot of progress to be made. Take the example of the European passport, which has been talked about for 15 years now. The Italians launched the idea, so as to ‘make a splash’, but the others are dragging their feet. Are people aware that the technocrats, in their wisdom, want to make it subject to a new tax? Or that it might have only symbolic value? This would certainly be an aberration. Take heart, though: an agreement has been reached on the colour — a rather ugly burgundy — and on who gets top billing: ‘European Community’ first, above the name of the bearer’s country of origin.

On all these points, the participants at Fontainebleau have made it known that there would be no dillydallying. In Fontainebleau, it is clear, Europe is being built.

Jacques Cordy