

Address by Frans Andriessen to the European Parliament (19 November 1981)

Caption: On 19 November 1981, Frans Andriessen, Member of the European Commission, welcomes the German-Italian proposals for the establishment of a European political union.

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[...] Europe is suffering from political anemia. What we need is a new political *élan*, at the top as well as at grassroots level. The Commission welcomes the revival of the political awareness of the need for a breakthrough in Europe.[...] The Commission regards the fact that the Governments of two countries ... have produced a joint initiative to revive the process of European integration as a highly positive development. Clearly Europe is on the move again, politically speaking.[...]

The Commission has also made its contribution, for its mandate report sets out the main bases on which the common policies can be strengthened and extended to new fields. Apart from broadening the political consensus and strengthening the institutions, this is an essential element of any attempt to make a new breakthrough on the European front.[...]

The Commission attaches great importance to the fact that the Genscher-Colombo initiative is based on European cooperation as a political principle. What is also important is that the European Community is its centrepiece.

The Italian-German initiative is not based on a treaty, nor is it confined to broadening the EEC decision-making machinery. It may indeed be preferable to make more binding agreements and to instill a little more clarity into the somewhat hybrid character of the decision-making process in the wide range of areas covered by European Union; but the Commission is aware that this would take much longer. It is in any case quite reasonable to regard the proposed Act as a first step on the road towards a fully fledged European Union.

The Commission is also pleased that the Italian-German initiative aims at strengthening political cooperation. It is aware of the need to strengthen and widen the political consensus of European cooperation. Europe must be able to assume its responsibilities, both at home and in the world at large.

Consequently, it is inevitable—and therefore desirable—that the international political dimensions of European security should be brought into the European political cooperation arrangements.

With regard to the institutions, the Commission welcomes the call for more efficient decision-making in the Council and for a more influential European Parliament. These two points were central to the paper on interinstitutional relations. The Commission is particularly impressed by the importance attached to strengthening existing consultation procedures.

The Commission is about to submit proposals for a new interinstitutional agreement on this point (in the form of an amendment to the Joint Declaration of 1975). As we see it, the most efficient way of dealing with such proposals would be to submit them in the first instance to an *ad hoc* committee representing the three institutions.

The passages dealing with the institutions undoubtedly require clarification. This applies in particular to the description of the tasks of the European Council. We should not forget that since it was set up the European Council has met both as the Council of the European Communities and as a political cooperation body. To that extent the institutionalized involvement of the Commission is fully assured. I need hardly say that the Commission should be a full partner in the political cooperation process.[...]

By way of conclusion, the Commission would like to draw your attention to two basic principles which are essential to any discussion about future developments.

The development of the institutions must be accompanied by a development of common policies; you cannot have one without the other.

The Community institutions are at the heart of any progress towards European Union. Strengthening political cooperation is essential if we are to present a more united political front. If the members of the Community are ever to acquire the ability to act together, their institutions will have to acquire the strength

they need. As Europe evolves towards political maturity, the decision-making powers of the institutions must develop likewise. We would do well to bear this in mind now that the political and institutional debate seems to be gaining momentum.