

Address given by Helmut Kohl on the outcome of the Maastricht European Council (Bonn, 13 December 1991)

Caption: On 13 December 1991 in the German Bundestag, Chancellor Helmut Kohl summarises the achievements made by the Twelve during the Maastricht European Council of 9 and 10 December 1991.

Source: Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestages. 12. Wahlperiode. 68. Sitzung vom 13. Dezember 1991. Stenographische Berichte. Hrsg. Deutscher Bundestag und Bundesrat. 1991, Nr. 159. Bonn. "Erklärung der Bundesregierung zu den Ergebnissen des Europäischen Rates in Maastricht", p. 5797-5803.

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Last updated: 05/07/2016

Address given by Helmut Kohl to the Bundestag (Bonn, 13 December 1991)

Dr Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor: Madam President, Honourable Members, on the night of 10 December, after more than 30 hours of discussions, the European Council meeting in Maastricht reached agreement on the Treaty on political union and on economic and monetary union. The Treaty, which will be signed in early February 1992, is fundamentally important in signposting the way ahead for Europe.

Firstly, there is no going back on the road to European Union. As they face the future, the Member States of the European Community are now bound together in such a way that neither disintegration nor regression into the old nation-state mindset, with all its negative consequences, can be an option.

This means that we have realised a core aim of Germany's European policy. Maastricht proves that the united Germany is actively taking responsibility in and for Europe and that it stands by what it has always said: that German unity and European unity are two sides of the same coin.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

Secondly, we have achieved workable outcomes at both conferences that protect our key interests and, at the same time, represent a decisive step forward for the Community.

Honourable Members, this result was not handed to us on a plate. It follows a year of intensive and difficult negotiations in which all sides demonstrated that they were prepared to move together down the road to a united Europe and to compromise where necessary in order to do so.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked on the Treaty with such commitment over the last 12 months.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members)

Here, I would single out, among the members of the Government, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Finance Minister Theo Waigel.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

I would also make special mention — and I am particularly pleased to do so because there has been a lot of quite ill-informed comment about public administrative bodies — of the civil servants responsible who went the extra mile here and have done an outstanding job.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD)

Honourable Members, we have achieved an overall outcome that, only a year ago, would have been considered unrealistic, if not utopian, by many people in Europe and further afield. It is now fair to say that, from a historical perspective, Maastricht has certainly been the most important EC summit since the signing of the Rome Treaties.

Thirdly, the fact that we have managed to inject fresh impetus into the process of European unification reflects, in particular, our solidarity with France. German-French partnership and friendship have been, are and remain crucially important to Europe. Above all, we share with France the vision of a Europe growing together not only economically but also politically.

Fourthly, the European Community is now better equipped to meet the difficult challenges of the future. The breakthrough achieved in Maastricht is not only highly significant in terms of the Community growing together but also sends out a clear signal to our European neighbours and, indeed, to our partners throughout the world.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

What we achieved in Maastricht means that the way to completion of European economic and monetary union is clearly signposted and fixed once and for all. The irreversible nature of the process has once again been explicitly underscored by all the Member States in a separate protocol to the Treaty.

The main achievement, Honourable Members, has been to establish the prime importance of monetary stability in a manner so unequivocal — and I say this in the light of the public discussion here in Germany — that the provisions stand comparison with our own Federal Bank Act.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

In fact, I would go further: certain important details have been laid down more clearly and unequivocally in this Treaty than in the Federal Bank Act.

We were, therefore, able to approve the Treaty, recognising that it fully reflects the German experience of the last 40 years with the Deutschmark and the need to ensure its stability.

Many of the people engaged in tub-thumping on this subject ought to ask themselves what end is served by such a campaign.

(Interjection from the CDU/CSU: Selling newspapers!)

For it is worth emphasising today that the Treaty on economic and monetary union, as arrived at after long and intensive negotiation, takes Germany's needs into account in all key areas.

Our tried and tested stability policy has become the leitmotif for future European currency arrangements. A decisive factor in achieving this outcome — and one for which I also want to express my thanks — was our close and confident cooperation with the Bundesbank during the negotiations.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members)

The pivotal requirement under the Treaty for making economic and monetary union a reality is verifiable economic convergence on the part of the Member States.

In other words, those countries that wish to be part of monetary union must meet very specific quality criteria in terms of their key economic data before they are allowed to participate.

The criteria in question are rigorous price stability, absolute budgetary discipline, convergence of long-term interest rates and a stable position in the European currency system in the two years before joining monetary union.

These conditions and hurdles are laid down in the Treaty, or the protocols thereto, with the same kind of clarity that we have found desirable and necessary in our own case with regard to the stability of the Deutschmark.

Take, for example, absolute budgetary discipline, in other words putting an end to excessive budget deficits. One of the provisions here is that annual new public borrowing shall not exceed 3 % of gross domestic product.

In the light of our own experience here in the German Federal Republic, we can agree that this is a reasonable stipulation because, as we digest the exceptional costs of reunification, Honourable Members, it is a condition that we, too, shall have to make an effort to fulfil.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members — Interjection from the SPD: Too right!)

— I had hoped for your support on that point, and I see that I have it.

(Laughter and applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP — Interjection from the SPD: We didn't let you down, then!)

— Honourable Members, this is one area in which you never let me down.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

A further point — and this is something quite new — is that sovereign states are committing themselves under international agreements to restrict their public borrowings and are, moreover, prepared to accept graded sanctions, should they breach that budgetary discipline. Binding rules have thus been agreed under international law to prevent a monetary policy that is geared to price stability from being undermined by a misguided national budgetary policy.

With regard to the timetable for economic and monetary union, it has been agreed that what is referred to as stage two — the preparatory phase for full economic and monetary union — will begin on 1 January 1994.

The point of this stage two is, on the one hand, to allow as many Member States as possible to make the necessary efforts in economic and financial policy to qualify for the final phase of monetary union and, on the other hand, to enable essential preparations to be made for the establishment of the European Central Bank.

It was particularly important to us here in Germany that no grey area should emerge in financial policy in the course of stage two. This means that sovereign responsibility for financial policy will stay firmly and exclusively in the hands of the Bundesbank.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

Transition to stage three and the completion of economic and monetary union will depend on the convergence criteria being met. By the end of 1996, the Heads of State or Government will decide whether a majority of Member States meets the necessary conditions, and an appropriate deadline can then be set. Should this initial attempt prove unsuccessful, the final phase will begin at all events on 1 January 1999. In that event, it will not be necessary to have a minimum number of countries participating.

Honourable Members, the crucial benchmark in this process is and remains the requirement that all participating countries meet in full the quality criteria for monetary union that I have already outlined.

For the future European Central Bank, we have agreed statutes — based on the model of the Bundesbank — that will oblige it to make price stability its first priority and, at the same time, will ensure that it is fully independent.

Member States of the Community that are not ready in time for stage three will obviously have no influence on the European Central Bank's financial policy decisions.

A further important point is that the central banks of other European countries, most of which are not yet independent of their respective governments — and I would ask you to reflect on the implications of that — will become independent at the latest when the European Central Bank is set up. This represents a massive incision into nationally-based thinking and behaviour in many European countries.

It was not possible in Maastricht to decide where the European Central Bank would be based, because other Member States linked the question to that of the seats of other EC bodies and institutions.

You are all familiar with the argument about the seat of the European Parliament and other institutions. I am certain, however, that the timetable that we have now fixed will exert the pressure required to secure progress

with decisions on the seats of these other bodies — including the European Parliament's ultimate location, which is a key question.

I stated our claim to hosting the European Central Bank in no uncertain terms, and I should like to take this opportunity of restating it.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD)

Honourable Members, the overall effect of the Treaty on Economic and Monetary Union has been to extend to European Community level the basic core conditions that have ensured a high degree of currency stability and economic success for us here in Germany over more than 40 years.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this for our country — for Germany — because, more than all the other Members of the Community, we depend for our livelihood on trade with our partners. We currently earn one Deutschmark in three from exports, 60 % of which go to our European neighbours. This means that the maintenance of stable conditions in the other European countries — by which I mean stable currencies and sound government financial policies — is one of the factors determining our own ability to secure growth and employment in the future. Exporting currency stability to the rest of Europe is a decisive step in securing work and jobs here at home and in strengthening social security in the long term. Choosing the path to a community of stability in Europe is, therefore, crucially important to the European Union.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members)

In the section of the Treaty concerned with political union, too, the path to completion of the European Union has been clearly signalled, and we have ensured there can be no turning back.

I should like more definite progress to have been achieved and the range of areas for which the Community is responsible to have been expanded. But we had to make a choice between conflicting claims. This was necessary, and it reflected our determination to achieve a result in Maastricht — something which demanded compromise on all sides.

If we consider the section on political union critically, the wish to achieve still more is understandable, and it is a wish that I share. However, I would ask all those who have criticisms to make here to reflect for a moment on the way that Europe will develop in the coming decade on the basis of the Maastricht decisions. Whatever happens, we shall achieve monetary union in either 1997 or 1999. Within a year, we shall complete the European single market, a market of some 380 million people. This will be an area without internal borders, in which persons and goods will be able to move freely.

If you stop to consider what a historic change this represents for our continent, you will realise that what has been accomplished — hard to believe though it may be — is to initiate developments that are irreversible.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

Much current thinking in official circles in Europe (including Germany) — and I mean here the various forms of resistance to change and the idea that, because something has never existed before, it cannot come into being — will be swept away by these developments. A dynamic process has been initiated, the like of which we have not seen in modern times.

As Germans we have a certain amount of relevant experience from the 19th century, and I am thinking here of Friedrich List who, at that time, had a vision of what dismantling border controls and customs duties could do for German political unity.

In Maastricht, we have broken new ground in various areas. I am thinking specifically of justice and home affairs policy. Policy in other fields, such as foreign affairs and security, will have to be realised step by step over the years ahead.

It is clear to me that political union will rapidly take on substance in every area and that, in a few years' time, the Community domain will be a great deal broader than it is today. Not only the clear deadlines and review clauses enshrined in the Treaty but, most importantly, the dynamic process of Europe's political unification will serve to step up the pressure and keep the whole project moving in the right direction.

I would make the point again that by 1997 or 1999 Europe will have a common currency. We have to stop and think what that means: the same currency from Copenhagen to Madrid and from The Hague to Rome.

Honourable Members, as a first step in the field of justice and home affairs policy we agreed on substantial intensification of what has until now been purely inter-state cooperation. I agreed to this outcome because I felt that it was the only way to achieve rapid practical advances. A decisive consideration for me was the fact that we pushed through a timetable and a set of provisions that open up the possibility of bringing these policies within the Community domain.

This course of action — importantly for Germany — allows us to take a wide range of practical steps, notably in the area of asylum policy but also in relation to immigration policy on the basis of the work programme agreed by the Ministry of the Interior, with a review of full harmonisation by the end of 1994.

We agreed to set up a European Police Office — Europol — by the end of 1993, with the task of combating the international drugs trade and organised crime.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members)

Here, too, Honourable Members, it is clear to me that this is obviously no more than a first step. But anyone with an awareness of the difficulties that this first step entailed and the rethinking process it necessitated — even here in a federal state like Germany — will be aware that something decisive has been accomplished.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

It was particularly important for us to insist on a clearly formulated and legally binding subsidiarity principle, which means that Brussels (that is, the Community) will deal only with those issues that cannot be handled effectively by the Member States and, therefore, because of their extent or implications, are better regulated at Community level. By anchoring the subsidiarity principle within the Treaty, we ensure that the Community will develop in the direction of a federal Europe, even though the wording of the Treaty is not explicit in that regard. The problem here is a familiar one: to our British partners and friends, the term 'federalism' means precisely the opposite of what the rest of us understand by it, and that is why we had to accept that compromise.

We also agreed to set up a Committee of the Regions with an advisory role, thereby giving our Federal Länder, as well as other regions, a direct voice in shaping what the Community wants.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and some SPD Members)

For several of our partner countries, this is also uncharted territory, and I am quite convinced that this institution will produce much that is positive for our future. We Germans can make a particularly important contribution in that respect.

The Federal Government has succeeded in incorporating into this Treaty a number of important goals for the *Bundesländer*. Here again I should like to underscore what I have already said in another context: a year ago, I would not have believed it possible to achieve what we have done. No less a committed European than Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission and a man who not only has much sympathy for German federalism but has also been of particular assistance to us over this period, said as recently as February 1991 in Munich that, while a Committee of the Regions was desirable, it would certainly not be achievable at the Intergovernmental Conference.

I also want to thank the *Bundesländer* for their close cooperation and the high level of confidence that they invested in the process. The fact that, in many respects, we were aiming high is a feature of politics in a federated state. I believe, however, that we can take satisfaction in what we have achieved together. Most importantly, we also want to work as closely as possible as we put the practical arrangements in place. The Federal Government has the political determination, when it comes to the ratification process, to help secure the continued involvement of the *Bundesländer* in European Community issues on a sensible and appropriate basis.

Honourable Members, that we were able to reach the decisions that we did on foreign and security policy was due in large measure — and this is generally recognised — to the initiatives taken by President Mitterrand and myself on 6 December 1990 and 14 October 1991. We committed ourselves to developing an independent European security and defence identity. We are developing Western European Union as an integral part of the European Union and, in so doing, we are also strengthening its role as a bridge between the Atlantic Alliance and the EU. Annexed to the final act of the Treaty is a declaration by the nine Member States of WEU, which, in all its important aspects, incorporates proposals for its further development that are based on the German-French initiative.

In political terms, a key feature here is our intention to tighten coordination between the WEU Member States within NATO. As a result, Europe will be more clearly seen to speak with one voice, in the Alliance as elsewhere.

Furthermore, we shall offer all the EC Member States the option of joining the WEU — such is the logic of our approach. By the end of next year, we shall also create a special status for those European NATO partners that are not members of the EC.

Both the developments that I have outlined — the new article in the Treaty on a common foreign and security policy and the WEU declarations — lend a new and forward-looking dimension to political union. The next crucial step will be the gradual process of implementing the measures set out in the WEU Member States' declaration on the development of the organisation and its relationships with the European Union and the Alliance. We bear particular responsibility here in our capacity as current holders of the WEU Presidency. Our European partners will judge us by how well we translate this particular initiative into reality.

We have also succeeded in injecting a new quality into the area of foreign policy. With the shift to majority decision making and the new structural aspects — especially joint actions — we are moving significantly beyond the bounds of European political cooperation as it has functioned hitherto. This means that we may gradually develop a common foreign policy that is actually worthy of the name.

In this area, too, I should like to make the point that we were prepared to go still further. In the current circumstances, that was not possible. I can say, however, that developments are clearly moving in the direction that all of us in this House would wish.

The Bundestag and the Federal Government of Germany have always shared a desire to see the power of the European Parliament strengthened. This was an area in which we made progress, but we did not achieve everything for which we had hoped. The fact is that there is still considerable resistance to any extension of the European Parliament's powers. It has to be recognised in this respect that the reluctance to allow any progress — at least for the time being — lies not just with governments but also, to a significant extent, with the respective national parliaments. I hope, however, that, because we in Germany speak with one voice on the issue, we may be able to make a more telling contribution to the discussions that will take place between the national parliaments, and we may even be able to show the way.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

At all events, at the next elections in June 1994, the people of Europe will elect a Parliament that has much wider decision-making and supervisory powers than ever before. To give one example: the European

Parliament will, in future, approve the Members of the new Commission. The life of Parliament and the term of office of the Commission are to be brought into line, and, far from being a mere technical adjustment, this is a step of great political importance. Parliament will be empowered to conduct inquiries and to receive petitions. One effect of this will be that it will be able to exercise its supervisory powers over the Commission more effectively. Finally, we succeeded in securing a genuine co-decision role for Parliament in the shaping of Community law, and this applies in important spheres such as the internal market, consumer protection, the environment and the trans-European networks. One need only look closely at the co-decision procedure to see that it represents an empowering of Parliament which is more than a mere right of veto.

One particularly important question for us was that of the number of German seats in the European Parliament. As you are aware, a few weeks ago, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in support of our own position that, following Germany's reunification, our representation should be increased by 18 seats. I should like to take the opportunity here of thanking once again our German colleagues from all the political groups who were particularly helpful in ensuring that that decision was taken.

Again, in Maastricht, no voices were raised against the justification for Germany's position, which is now supported by the European Parliament. In the course of the discussions, however, a whole range of our partners made the point that, ever since the founding of the Community in the 1950s, clear arrangements have existed whereby the larger Member States must enjoy roughly the same weight of representation within the institutions, including the European Parliament.

All I can say is that the current arrangement reflects the period in which it was made. My stance is consistent with that of all previous German governments. It is perfectly clear — despite what we sometimes hear — that more than one country takes the position which I described. Despite that situation, we have stuck to our guns in seeking an increase, and we have put that clearly on record.

(Heidmarie Wieczorek-Zeul [SPD]: In other words, the 18 seats have been dropped!)

— They have certainly not been dropped! There is no question of that.

(Heidmarie Wieczorek-Zeul [SPD]: Of course they have!)

— No, they have not been dropped — no matter how many times you insist that they have been. Perhaps you would be so good as to listen to what I have to say first, and then we could discuss it.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU)

In connection with this issue, another question was also discussed, namely how the number of seats in the European Parliament will be increased when further countries accede to the EC. This is a perfectly legitimate question. It is also a question that arises in national parliaments from time to time in respect of their own numbers of seats.

(Amusement — Heidmarie Wieczorek-Zeul [SPD]: So the 18 seats have definitely been dropped!)

— If the Honourable Member would just listen first, she might learn something! What is the sense in speaking out before you have heard what I have to say?

(Applause from the CDU/CSU)

Surely you are aware from your own previous experience that this is a real problem. What is at stake is the operational capability of the European Parliament.

The reality is that, if we were to continue under the present system, the number of Members of the European Parliament, including the 18 additional Members, would soon reach more than 700 as new Member States joined.

In our discussions in Maastricht, one question addressed to me, and to others who support a greater empowering of Parliament, was whether there was not a risk that a further increase in the number of Members would actually make Parliament weaker. And I have seen such a phenomenon at work in my own experience.

(Ulrich Irmer [FDP]: There are more than 600 of us here in this House!)

— The Honourable Member is at liberty to propose whatever motions he pleases with regard to the Bundestag, but I am talking here about the European Parliament.

I believe that the intelligent thing to do — and it is what we decided to do in Maastricht — is to hold talks over the next few months, up to the end of 1992, between the governments, the national parliaments and the European Parliament, as well as the Commission of course, in order to settle this question once and for all. In the course of those talks, we shall have to see if we can reach agreement on whether, for example, we should fix a ceiling for the number of seats in the European Parliament. That would, of course, affect the level of representation of each Member State.

We have reached a firm agreement that this question will be settled before the EC summit in England — which will take place in December 1992. That will give us almost a year and half to prepare for the European elections and put the necessary national legislation in place.

Here, I want to extend an explicit invitation to the House and to the various political parties represented in it to discuss this question jointly. Our aim is to maintain Germany's share of seats, but, at the same time, we have to take a decision that leaves the European Parliament functional within manageable dimensions.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)

One of the ideas raised in the course of discussions was that, if Germany were to be allocated an additional 18 seats, the other countries should also receive proportional increases. This would rapidly lead to a European Parliament with more than 800 Members, which is surely not what we want to achieve if we want to keep it functional.

Another question on which we touched concerned the number of Members of the European Commission that each country should supply. This, again, is a matter that clearly cannot be seen in isolation from the subject of enlargement.

In relation to these issues, it was clear, however, that the Heads of State or Government are determined — and for me this is the important point — to reach a consensus and to involve the European Parliament in the decision-making as a matter of course. Here, I want to reiterate the suggestion that I made earlier that we in Germany — Parliament and Government — should do our best to establish a common position.

Honourable Members, one of the key themes of our discussions in Maastricht was social policy, and, in the run-up to the summit, it was already clear that there was little chance of agreement being reached with the United Kingdom in that area.

So, after a great deal of debate about the British stance it was decided, on a proposal from President Mitterrand, Jacques Delors and myself, that the 12 Member States should use the Treaty legally to establish what is already possible, namely the arrangements that we have under the Single European Act.

Eleven of the Member States, all except the UK, believed that it was essential to move beyond those provisions, so, on the basis of a considerably wider-ranging draft submitted by the Netherlands on 4 December, we concluded a separate agreement in the form of a Protocol, which is annexed to the Treaty and will also have to be ratified.

In a further Protocol, also accepted by the UK this time, we agreed that the Eleven would follow existing

Community procedure. The 11 countries have thus clearly signalled their intention to implement in full, and at an early date, the measures that were outlined in the European Social Charter — signed by the same 11 states in Strasbourg in 1989.

We had to decide whether we were prepared to let the whole Treaty collapse over this issue — I was not prepared to do so — or whether we would choose the course which I have described. For me and for our other partner states, there could be no question of leaving Maastricht without having initiated a significant further development of the social dimension. For me and for us — I believe that we are of one mind here — development of the European Union without parallel development of its social dimension is not an option.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP as well as some members of the SPD and Bündniss 90/the Greens)

The great majority of Europe's citizens are working people. That is a social reality that obviously must be reflected in the Community. The Community will be able to grow together properly only if we are prepared to involve not only trade unions and employers' associations but also representatives of other social groups in the process of shaping our joint policies.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD)

I am also quite convinced that, at least by the date on which economic and monetary union begins — whether that will now be 1997 or 1999 — not 11 but 12 states will be participating here, too. We have seen similar developments in the past.

(Applause from the CDU/CSU)

Honourable Members, the outcome of both Intergovernmental Conferences, on political union and on economic and monetary union, gives the Community an opportunity to tackle the internal tasks which it now faces with renewed vigour. This applies in relation to the impending reform of the common agricultural policy — and I am thinking here, too, of the need to conclude the GATT negotiations — and also to the review of financing of the Structural Funds, which is due to take place in 1992.

However — and this is a particularly important point — the Maastricht Summit also sends out a signal beyond the borders of the Community. Our partners, in the USA, Japan and the Third World, regard it, and rightly so, as a major success. For our nearest neighbours in central, eastern and southern Europe — who face one of the darkest hours of their history — it offers particular encouragement. Today more than ever, they look with hope towards the European Community.

Maastricht also sends out a clear message to those European countries that currently want to accede to the EC. We agreed in Maastricht that accession negotiations with Austria and Sweden — and, possibly, also with Finland — should begin in early 1993 and be speedily concluded.

Honourable Members, as Europeans and, particularly, as Germans, we have reason to be confident as we approach the end of this century. Yes, we have been told repeatedly, by everyone from Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West* to present-day cultural pessimists, that Europe is on its last legs. But the truth is — and we have proved it once again — that Europe's strength remains unbroken, and our first aim, after the bitter experiences of this century, is to put that strength at the service of peace and freedom in the world.

It was a splendid group of men and women who, as members of the Parliamentary Council, formulated the preamble to the German Constitution in 1949, building on the lessons of our most recent history. They called on the German people to defend the unity of their nation and state and to 'serve world peace as an equal partner in a united Europe'. Having achieved the unity of our fatherland, we now want to complete this further — European — task that our Constitution has set us. I invite you to join us in the endeavour.

(Sustained applause from the CDU/CSU and FDP)