

'EC insists on signing its reform on 17 February' from El País

Caption: On 28 January 1986, the Spanish daily newspaper El País emphasises that, despite some reservations, the Twelve are determined to sign the Single European Act as soon as possible.

Source: El País. 28.01.1986. Madrid. "La CE insiste en firmar su reforma el 17 de febrero", auteur:Ortega, Andrés.

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EC insists on signing its reform on 17 February

The Danish Parliament will debate the problem again today

Andrés Ortega — Brussels

The governments of the European Community (EC) will do 'their utmost' to sign the Single European Act on 17 February next, thereby reforming the legal bases of the EC. The Danish Folketing (Parliament) will make an announcement on the issue again today. If the Government does not secure a sufficiently large majority it will call a referendum for the end of February, according to the Danish Foreign Minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, in Brussels yesterday. In that case Denmark will sign the reform after the Eleven.

The text of the Single Act, which includes the reform of the Treaty of Rome and treaty provisions on cooperation in the sphere of foreign policy, was finalised yesterday when the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve in Brussels withdrew all the minor reservations still outstanding. Denmark has added a unilateral declaration stating that, if the EC adopts harmonisation measures that do not safeguard the more stringent Danish standards on working conditions and the environment, Copenhagen could apply national measures without protectionist intent. The declaration has no legal value — otherwise it would have involved renegotiating the reform package, which the Eleven rejected — and simply reflects Danish concerns. Ellemann-Jensen felt that this would make his Government feel stronger in the Folketing today. If the latter, as seems likely, rejects the reform again, the referendum will be called immediately, since this is what the majority wants.

'A narrow majority in Parliament [in favour of the reform] would not be sufficient. We want a clear path for the future,' said the Danish minister, thereby suggesting that if broad support is not secured today, the Government will call the referendum, which Ellemann-Jensen believes it will win. 'We want to be a loyal and genuine member of the EC,' he said, 'and if Denmark says *no* to the reform, this will be interpreted as a *no* to the EC.' Ellemann-Jensen also indicated, however, that he had received assurances from the eleven countries that, if the referendum were lost, 'other means' would be considered whereby the reform might to be applied without threatening Denmark's membership of the EC.

Italy, awaiting its own Parliament's opinion, will not give a definitive 'yes' to signing until 15 February at the very latest. Greece maintained a scrupulous and obscure position on the possibility of signature by the Eleven, which it nevertheless did not retract yesterday, undertaking, like the others, to do its 'utmost' to achieve it. It seems that Greece did not wish to isolate Denmark.

For the Spanish Foreign Minister, Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, the decision to repeat the call for signing intended to indicate that 'the countries of the EC have a clear and determined will to press ahead with the reform'. 'The Danish Government has an interest in this will being expressed,' added Ordóñez.

The reservations raised yesterday include a reference to the minimum standards for guaranteeing workers' safety. A declaration was included stating that the EC does not intend to discriminate unjustifiably against workers in small and medium-sized enterprises.

When the German version of the text on monetary cooperation was being debated, the FRG delegation raised a substantial problem on whether the grammatical gender of the European currency unit (ECU) was feminine or masculine. In German the masculine implies recognition of the ECU not only as a unit of account but almost as a *pre-currency*. According to Fernández Ordóñez, Spain has always supported the masculinity of the ECU.

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