


The intergovernmental negotiations

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The signing of the Maastricht Treaty on 7 February 1992 marked the culmination of a diplomatic process that had begun barely 20 months before. In fact, the drive towards Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which the Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) had first envisaged in the late 1960s, was revived in earnest in the late 1980s. In April 1989, the Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union, chaired by Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, presented its final report. It recommended a phased introduction of EMU in three stages and the opening of negotiations for a new treaty. During the same period, as the prospect of German reunification suddenly loomed large, the Twelve revealed an appetite for renewal and a wish to overcome the democratic deficit of the Community institutions. The principle of revising the Treaty establishing the EEC was endorsed, while some Member States and the European Parliament also put forward new proposals on political union. Accordingly, on 27 and 28 October 1990, the Rome Summit of the European Council defined the main objectives of a treaty covering EMU and Political Union. On 15 December 1990, the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve, meeting in Rome, inaugurated two parallel Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs) which would take place under the Luxembourg and then the Dutch Presidency. The Foreign Ministers of the Twelve or their personal representatives were to conduct the conference on Political Union, while the Ministers of Economic Affairs and Finance assumed responsibility for the IGC on Economic and Monetary Union. The Member States and the institutions and other bodies of the Community immediately put forward a series of proposals on the most diverse subjects. The monetary negotiations were held in English, whereas the debates on Political Union were conducted in French. The negotiations proved very difficult, however, particularly with regard to the European defence identity, social policy, the economic and social cohesion of the Community and, on the institutional side, codecision rights for the European Parliament and the use of qualified majority voting in the Council. Similarly, some Member States, especially the United Kingdom, continued to advocate a very clear distinction between the Community system and the powers that were to be exercised on a purely cooperative basis. On 17 April 1991, the Luxembourg Presidency presented the negotiators with a draft Treaty on European Union, which introduced a structure divided into three areas of activity known as 'pillars': the first pillar was based on the activity of the European Communities, the second was devoted to the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), and the third covered cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs (JHA). From then on, the negotiations were based on this draft. On 9 and 10 December 1991, the Heads of State or Government settled the outstanding issues and finalised the political and monetary texts. It took another few weeks, however, for the experts to mould the political agreement reached by the Twelve into the legal provisions of a new treaty. The Treaty on European Union was signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992 by the Foreign Ministers and Finance and Economic Affairs Ministers of the Twelve.