

European Parliament press release on the codecision procedure (20 March 2000)

Caption: With a view to the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union, made by Nicole Fontaine, President of the European Parliament, calls for wider use of the codecision procedure, emphasising its democratic nature and its efficiency.

Source: The President of the European Parliament: Press Releases. Lanvert, H  l  ne. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: European Parliament, [21.09.2007]. Disponible sur http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/Presidents_old/president_fontaine/president/press/en/cp0065.htm.

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IGC: Nicole Fontaine calls for codecision to become the general rule for legislative measures and for a simple and effective judicial system

Addressing the Foreign Ministers of the Fifteen meeting for the IGC on 20 March 2000, the President of the European Parliament called for codecision to become the general rule. There were two reasons for this - firstly, codecision is an expression of Union citizenship and of the Union's democratic nature and, secondly, codecision has worked well so far.

In response to those Member States that fear such a move, Mrs Fontaine cited figures proving the success of the codecision procedure: in the first five years of the application of the Maastricht Treaty, all but three of 160 measures under the codecision procedure had had a positive outcome. The three were rejected because of their highly specific institutional nature. With a view to speeding up the process, Nicole Fontaine - who stressed the climate of mutual confidence that had been established between the European Parliament and the Council, and within the Conciliation Committee - advocated closer cooperation between the two institutions in the period between Parliament's first reading and the adoption of the Council's common position so that agreement might be reached as soon as possible.

To facilitate this, the President hoped that the IGC would establish a 'method' for the change to majority voting. As unanimity should remain the exception, a restricted list of duly substantiated exceptions should be compiled. In this context, Nicole Fontaine said it was clear that completion of the internal market required qualified majority voting in the areas of taxation that fall within the EU's jurisdiction and on the free movement of persons.

Turning to the important role played by the Court of Justice, the President warned of the risk to citizens of making the European judicial system over-complicated. It was in this concern to establish a simpler and more effective judicial system that informed the current work of Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee, on which Parliament would be delivering an opinion in April. In Nicole Fontaine's view, the prospect of enlargement made this reform even more urgent if the Court and the Court of First Instance were to be able to give their rulings within a reasonable time. She said that EU citizens must not be discouraged by excessive delays and complex procedures.

Moreover, when it came to drawing up the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which Parliament wanted to be binding, as it had proposed in its resolution of 16 March, the negotiators should bear in mind this new challenge to the Community judicial system. The Charter, which must have constitutional status, should be accompanied by the legal means to enforce it. This would be a new task for the EU, and it was vital that the links between the Charter and the judicial system should be established in good time, i.e. before the Convention had completed its work.