

European Parliament resolution on the method and timetable of the forthcoming institutional reform (6 May 1999)

Caption: In its resolution of 6 May 1999, the European Parliament sets out its views on the method to be applied for the forthcoming institutional reform. It also provides a timetable for the preparations and arrangements for the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference.

Source: European Parliament, Resolution on the method and timetable of the forthcoming institutional reform: B4-0428/99/, in Official Journal of the European Communities (JOCE). 01.10.1999, No C 279, p. 416.

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On the debt burden of developing countries

14. Calls on the European Council to implement a global strategy in the international financial institutions in order to obtain the cancellation of the debt of the poorest developing countries; in this context calls for the relaxation of the criteria of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPIC) initiative launched by the IMF and the World Bank in 1996, and for its extension to all candidate countries, especially those recovering from a grave crisis or internal conflict;

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15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council, the Commission and the parliaments of the Member States.

(b) B4-0428/99

Resolution on the method and timetable of the forthcoming institutional reform

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty of Amsterdam signed on 2 October 1997 and the Protocol on the institutions with the prospect of enlargement of the European Union,
- having regard to the indication given by the German Presidency that the European Council meeting in Cologne would re-launch the process of institutional reform by first addressing the method and timetable of the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference (IGC),
- having regard to the political priorities and objectives set out in its resolutions of 13 March 1996 ⁽¹⁾, 19 November 1997 ⁽²⁾, 22 October 1998 ⁽³⁾, 13 January 1999 ⁽⁴⁾ and 11 February 1999 ⁽⁵⁾,

- A. whereas the European Parliament must adopt a position on this subject, as important changes are taking place in the balance between the various institutions,
- B. having regard in particular to the current weakening of the Commission's political role which has been called into question by a number of important political authorities,
- C. noting that the political calendar of the Union over the next few months and during the preparations for the IGC and the IGC itself contains a number of political deadlines linked to the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty and enlargement, notably:
 - the conclusion of the Agenda 2000 negotiations, notably as regards the new financial perspectives beyond 1999 and the revision of the decision on own resources;
 - the investiture of the President of the Commission and members of the College of Commissioners in 1999;
 - the specification of the role allocated to the High Representative for the CFSP who should be appointed by the Member States at the meeting of the European Council in Cologne, in accordance with the Treaty of Amsterdam;
 - the establishment of an appropriate balance in institutional relations between the ECB, the Ecofin Council and the European Parliament;
 - the adoption of measures regarding the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice;
- D. whereas the fact that these events coincide with preparations for the IGC and the IGC itself will necessarily influence the political calendar of the latter,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 96, 1.4.1996, p. 77.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 371, 8.12.1997, p. 99.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 341, 9.11.1998, p. 128.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 104, 14.4.1999, p. 59.

⁽⁵⁾ Minutes of that sitting, Part II, Item 4.

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- E. stressing that, under these conditions, the next IGC will not be able to confine itself to adopting a number of reforms that were unable to be adopted at Amsterdam, and will have to undertake far-reaching reforms,

Objectives and timetable

1. Considers that the forthcoming institutional reform must make it possible to strengthen democracy in the Union and render more effective the decision-taking mechanisms ahead of enlargement;
2. Considers that, under these conditions, the timetable of preparations for the IGC and for the IGC itself could be as follows:
 - preparatory work to begin and be carried out during the year 2000,
 - the IGC to be convened in 2001,
 - the Conference to finish before the end of 2001, so that the new Treaty can enter into effect before the first wave of enlargement;

The investiture of the Commission

3. Stresses that the investiture of the Commission will be a key moment for the future of Europe; in particular, the priorities of the programme submitted for the approval of the European Parliament should include a commitment to make a decisive contribution towards institutional reform and to propose such changes as are necessary;
4. Reiterates the view urged in its abovementioned resolution of 13 January 1999 that Parliament's vote of approval of the Commission should be based also on commitments made by the President-designate concerning the political programme of his term of office, the quality of interinstitutional relations, the criteria used for designating Members of the Commission and the timetable and method for achieving institutional reform ahead of enlargement;
5. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to act as a powerful political driving force and to ensure the consistency of the European political project — a role which it alone can play — with the aim of giving it a new equilibrium in institutional terms;

The method

6. Considers that the shortcomings of institutional reform in Amsterdam clearly highlight the inadequacy of the intergovernmental method as followed in preparing this IGC and in the IGC itself; deplores the very marked diplomatic nature of the entire process and notes that several Member States have drawn attention to the obvious limits of this method;
7. Considers in particular that the fact that any amendment to the Treaty must be unanimously approved is one of the main reasons why the results of the IGC in Amsterdam were so modest; considers therefore that, until Article 48 (former Article N) of the EU Treaty is amended, the need for a unanimous consensus should be maintained only in respect of the final results of negotiations;
8. Notes that the drafting of the Treaty must throw into relief the dual nature of European integration as a union of both peoples and states, thus involving, on the one hand, the Member States and, on the other, the product of universal suffrage, thereby establishing a specific constituent authority;
9. Is convinced, as it has already stressed in its abovementioned resolution of 19 November 1997, that, as regards the application of Article 48 (former Article N) of the Treaty, even with the maintenance of unanimity, the use of the Community method during preparations for the IGC can ensure, even before the Treaty is amended accordingly, more far-reaching reforms and that this method is in line with the letter and spirit of the existing Treaty;
10. Considers for this reason that it is incumbent upon the Commission to launch this process and that it should therefore draw up an initial preparatory document;
11. Considers that the Commission may have recourse, in accomplishing this task, to a group of independent eminent personalities and experts (a formula used by the Delors Committee) providing it is clear that it retains political responsibility throughout the preparatory process;

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12. Considers that the Community nature of this method implies that the Parliament and Commission in particular will engage in 'institutional consultation' so that the final document is based on an agreement between the two institutions;
13. Is convinced that, in order to ensure the full democratic effectiveness of this preparatory work, it is advisable to organise a broadly based consultation process involving the national parliaments;
14. Considers that, as part of this process, political parties, regional and local authorities, citizens' groups and the European public must be encouraged to give their opinion, notably by means of modern communication technologies;
15. Demands that the President of the Commission regularly inform the Council Presidency and the Member States of the preparatory work being undertaken and that this information serve as a basis for initiating a political dialogue;
16. Demands that these schemes for institutional reform form the basis of IGC negotiations and is convinced that, having been widely debated, these schemes will allow the IGC to be concluded and secure impressive results, and notes that good groundwork will also facilitate the Treaty ratification process;
17. Considers it essential, given the importance of the Union's democratic legitimacy, that a new formula be found for the participation of the European Parliament to allow its representatives to take part in, and address, all meetings, which was not previously the case;
18. Calls for the European Parliament to be accorded the right to ratify any new treaty, and considers that it should be accorded this right, by means of an ad hoc formula, as soon as the forthcoming reform gets under way;
19. Stresses, as the President-in-Office of the Council has already done in his address of 12 January 1999, the political need to initiate at Union level a constitutional-type procedure which includes the establishment of a charter of fundamental rights and freedoms;
20. Considers it therefore indispensable to identify in the Treaties simple principles which are comprehensible to all citizens, so as to mark a significant stage in the process of the constitutionalisation of the Community system, bearing in mind in particular the implications of monetary union and the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice within which citizens enjoy European citizenship subject to full guarantees;

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21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Presidency of the Council, the governments and the parliaments of the Member States and the Commission and the other Community institutions.

24. East Timor

B4-0459, 0467, 0470, 0474, 0478, 0494 and 0510/99

Resolution on the situation in East Timor

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Indonesia and East Timor, particularly those of 14 January 1999 ⁽¹⁾, 11 March 1999 ⁽²⁾ and 15 April 1999 ⁽³⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 104, 14.4.1999, p. 70.

⁽²⁾ Minutes of that sitting, Part II, Item 7(c).

⁽³⁾ Minutes of that sitting, Part II, Item 6.