

Towards direct elections to the European Parliament (2009)

Caption: On the 30th anniversary of the first direct elections to the European Parliament in June 1979, the European Parliament's Archive and Documentation Centre (CARDOC) produces a paper on the initiatives taken by the European Parliament, and previously by the ECSC Common Assembly, to arrive at the first direct elections to Parliament.

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Paper written to mark the 30th anniversary of direct elections (June 1979)



Towards direct elections to the European Parliament

ARCHIVE AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE (CARDOC)
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR THE PRESIDENCY
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EN

Towards direct elections to the European Parliament

Paper written to mark the 30th anniversary of direct elections (June 1979)

with two essays on:

Press reaction in the Member States

and

The women who have made Europe

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Contents

FOREWORD	5
 Towards direct elections to the European Parliament 	
I THE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE DEBATE IN THE ECSC(1952-1958)	9
1. Universal suffrage in the ECSC Treaty	9
2. Universal suffrage in the work of the Ad Hoc Assembly	9
3. Universal suffrage in the debate on the Rome Treaties	12
II THE 1960 DRAFT CONVENTION	15
1. Universal suffrage in the Rome Treaties	15
2. Working party on European elections	15
3. Early approach to the issue of direct elections	16
4. The working party's final report and the work of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters	18
5. The Draft Convention	18
6. Composition of the Assembly: reasons for the Decision	19
7. The electoral system: reasons for abandoning it	20
8. Informing Citizens	21
9. The plenary Assembly debate	21
10. Resolutions adopted	23
III THE LULL IN THE 1960s	25
1. The Fouchet plan	25
2. Direct elections and the Fouchet Plan	26
3. The direct election issue between 1962 and 1968	27
4. Resolution of 12 March 1969	28
IV TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS	31
1. Meeting with Pierre Harmel, Council President	31
2. Meeting with Walter Scheel, Council President	32
3. Meeting with Gaston Thorn, Council President	33
4. Towards a new Draft Convention	34

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

5.	Draft Convention: the Commission's TEXT and the TEXT adopted	35
6.	Chamber debate: group positions	36
7.	Act concerning the DIRECT election of the European Parliament	37
8.	Towards the first European elections	42
	Resolution on the adoption of a draft convention introducing elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage	41
	Collection of posters from the election campaign, 1979	47

ANNEX I

Press reactions in the Member States

1.	Methodological introduction	61
2.	What the papers were saying	61
3.	Women and Europe	63
4.	Simone Veil's campaign	63
5.	The European campaign – a reflection of national political problems?	66
6.	1979: interest in the environment	68
	Conclusions	70

ANNEX II

The women who have made Europe

	Introduction	75
1.	The direct elections of 1979	77
2.	Activities of women MEPs	78
3.	<i>Ad hoc</i> committee of women's rights	80
4.	Committee of inquiry on the situation of women	82
	Conclusions	84
	Reports drawn up by women 1979-1984	89

Foreword

In 1979 the citizens of the nine countries of the European Community elected for the first time in direct elections their representatives in the European Parliament. Twenty-seven years after the first meeting of the European Coal and Steel Community's Common Assembly, a major step was achieved on the way to democracy in the European Community and later the European Union.

The European Parliament as the only directly elected European institution has always understood its role as the voice of the citizens, strongly defending their interests. The strong democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament constituted the democratic basis of the European Community. It was generally accepted that only a directly elected Parliament could gain itself the democratic powers, and that it would not be possible to confer new competences to the Community unless Europe's citizens regarded it as the expression of their own political will.

In an assembly where only a very small minority was opposed to direct elections, there was a division between those who believed that direct elections should have been accompanied by an extension of Parliament's powers, and those who believed that Parliament's powers would gradually expand as the logical consequence of direct elections. The latter approach won the day due to pragmatic considerations and the need to press ahead regardless of difficulties. The European Parliament, step by step, acquired an increasing and significant number of legislative powers with the Council and secured a considerable expansion of the competences first of the Community, and then of the Union. Today Parliament is co-legislator and budgetary authority with the Council.

Another key issue was the institutional structure of what would eventually become the European Parliament. The original proposal consisted in a bicameral system, with two chambers resembling the traditional parliamentary model used in federal systems. The Peoples' Chamber would represent European citizens through democratic elections and would be based on the principle of proportional representation, while the Senate would represent the Member States. However, the single-chamber model was the solution chosen, and the European Parliament has consistently adhered to it with the only exception of the constitutional convention, the last occasion on which a bicameral system was discussed.

The first European elections also marked a meaningful development in the equal representation of men and women. Under this respect, the European Parliament has been a groundbreaker, with the election of Simone Veil as its first President and the number of female MEPs constantly increasing from one legislative term to the other, reaching 31% of the total number of Members by 2007. The Parliament's commitment to gender issues has been further demonstrated by the creation of the ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights and the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe.

The 1979 elections also significantly boosted the public visibility of environmental issues and obliged national parties to talk about "Europe" with the citizens, which now had an interest in taking part to the debate.

Direct elections were also understood as an opportunity to mobilise public opinion around European issues. In this respect, and as shown by the electoral manifestos exhibited to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the first direct European elections, those elections marked the European Parliament's first serious attempt to communicate with citizens through the full deployment of means of modern mass communication.

Towards direct elections to the European Parliament

Paper written to mark the 30th anniversary of direct elections (June 1979)

Chapter I

The universal suffrage debate in the ECSC (1952-1958)

1. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN THE ECSC TREATY

The Treaty of Paris, which established the European Coal and Steel Community, did not exclude the direct election of members of the Common Assembly, but gave Member States the choice of whether to designate representatives from their own national parliament or to have them directly elected by universal suffrage¹. The second option had been introduced on a proposal from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly².

As we know, no Member State ever exercised this option³. Indeed, in the early years uncertainty was at times tentatively expressed over the expediency of direct elections. The authoritative opinion of a legal expert involved in drafting the Treaty of Paris was symptomatic in this respect: ‘...*the designation* [of members of the Common Assembly] *by national parliaments eliminates the firmest opponents of the Community, but undermines the representative nature of the Assembly*’⁴.

This sums up the fear that was apparent even in some parliamentary speeches. The French and Italian Communist parties were considered staunch opponents of the Community, and, in the Cold War climate of the time, it was hoped that their presence in the Common Assembly would be avoided, as ideologically they were aligned with the Soviet bloc.

2. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN THE WORK OF THE AD HOC ASSEMBLY

Even before the Common Assembly was inaugurated, by the Luxembourg Resolution of 10 September 1952, the Six Ministers for Foreign Affairs entrusted it with the task of forming an Ad Hoc Assembly⁵ responsible for drafting a statute for a new political community by 10 March 1952. This project, which was linked with the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community, would lapse with the non-ratification

¹ Article 21(1) of the Treaty of Paris states: ‘The Assembly shall consist of delegates who shall be designated by the respective Parliaments once a year from among their members, or who shall be elected by direct universal suffrage, in accordance with the procedure laid down by each High Contracting Party’.

² P. Reuter, *La Communauté européenne du charbon et de l’acier*, 1953 (Paris), p. 59.

³ This option remained until the Rome Treaties, which, with regard to the Parliamentary Assembly, which replaced the Common Assembly for the three Communities, made no provision for direct elections. Since delegates of the Common Assembly were re-chosen each year, in theory there were four opportunities to designate them by popular vote, although no State ever considered this.

⁴ P. Reuter, ‘Les institutions de la Communauté à l’épreuve’, in *Droit Social*, October 1954, p. 522.

⁵ This was to have 87 members, 78 from the Common Assembly, nine co-opted from the three largest national delegations, and 13 observers from the Council of Europe: three from the UK, two from Greece, two from Sweden, two from Turkey and one each from Denmark, Ireland, Iceland and Norway. It would essentially function through a constitutional committee of 26 members, in turn split into various bodies, of which, for the purposes of this document, the second Sub-Committee on Political Institutions is of particular importance.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

of the EDC Treaty, although the Ad Hoc Assembly introduced for the first time the idea of universal suffrage in an institutional setting.

Bizarrely, the first political document produced by the Ad Hoc Assembly was rather sceptical about the issue of direct elections. This document was entitled the *Work Programme of the Constitutional Committee*⁶ and, contrary to what the name suggests, was a political strategy paper. The idea was that the new Community should have two chambers, comprising a Peoples' Chamber and a Senate. Of the first, it was stated that *it was recognised that the first chamber could not be elected by universal suffrage. A representative declared that he was prepared to examine a system of weighted representation*, while for the second chamber, a representative called for direct election, which already existed in some federal States.

This was the question that the ECSC Council of Ministers put to the Ad Hoc Assembly to open the direct election debate: *'Does the Ad Hoc Assembly take the view that... it should first of all consider the setting up of a European Assembly elected according to democratic principles...?'*⁷.

The electoral issue was however put on the political agenda by a motion for a resolution presented to the Constitutional Committee by Antonio Azara⁸, proposing to entrust the Working Party with the task of *preparing a constituent instrument for an elected European Assembly, which would represent the people of the Six and establish a European electoral law*, limiting the time available to the Working Party to allow the Ad Hoc Assembly to reach a final decision in January 1953⁹.

Although discussed at great length, the motion for a resolution did not seem to have much impact on the work of the Constitutional Committee, although Pierre-Henri Teitgen mentioned the question of universal suffrage¹⁰ in his *Memorandum on the First Chamber*¹¹, a brief account of 11 different issues, mainly concerning the structure and workings of the chamber; the author was more concerned with presenting the problems than with providing the answers. The first issue was universal suffrage, on which the author simply states that it would be useful to give the Assembly the authority considered necessary by the public, and that this would be the fundamental innovation of the new treaty if there were no significant increases in the powers of the new Community compared with the ECSC and the EDC. Mr Teitgen's opinion, like that of other members of the Ad Hoc Assembly, is based on the assumption that the competences of the Political Community would not be much broader than those provided for by the ECSC and the EDC Treaties and that a directly elected Assembly would not, in this case, lead to deeper European integration than if it had been elected by national parliaments. However, action was needed *'...to reconcile the necessary prudence in the face of all of the obstacles to be overcome, with the need to further the political community...'* In this respect, although the Sub-Committee on Political Institutions was *'...limited to proposing a chamber composed of delegates elected by national parliaments, in other words according to the method used for existing Assemblies, progress would be slight... If the Sub-Committee were to abandon these elections once and for all, it would deprive the future Community of the only real new institution and revert back to an Assembly like the one described in the Schuman Plan'*¹².

⁶ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Work Programme of the Constitutional Committee (Rapporteur: Fernand Dehousse). CARDOC AH AA AH-X002/52 0080.

⁷ ECSC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, Questions relating to the establishment of a European Political Community, 23 October 1952, Annex II, AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Minutes of the session held on 24 October 1952 at the Palais de Luxembourg in Paris. CARDOC AH AA PV/CCON.1952 CCON-19521024 0010.

⁸ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Motion for a resolution for the swift organisation of European elections, 25 October 1952. CARDOC AH AA PR BH-X001/52 0010.

⁹ Mr Azara presented an oral argument for his proposal during the meeting of the Constitutional Committee of 25 October 1952, claiming that a genuine European political authority could only result from the election of an Assembly by direct universal suffrage and that the representatives to that Assembly would be the only people vested with the necessary authority to override national sovereignty, for they would enjoy the wide support of the public, whose ideas they would voice. Doc. 3, p. 7.

¹⁰ Chairman of the Constitutional Committee's Sub-Committee on Political Institutions.

¹¹ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions. CARDOC AH AA PR AH-X006/52 0050.

¹² AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions, Minutes of the meeting of 14 November 1952. CARDOC AH AA PV/SCPO.1952 SCPO-19521114 0020.

The Sub-Committee on Political Institutions¹³ finally announced that it was in favour of direct election on the basis of proportional representation using the list system and with the possibility of forming coalitions according to the procedures laid down in national legislation, which also to a large extent influenced electoral law¹⁴. This solution was strongly defended by the rapporteur of the second sub-committee, Fernand Dehousse, using arguments that would be reprised fully in the Constitutional Committee's report¹⁵.

In the January 1953 session, in which the aim was not to ratify a final draft, but to provide the Committee on Political Matters, tasked with drafting it, with guidelines developed by the Assembly based on the Committee's own report, the direct election of the People's Chamber was generally accepted, although some members proposed that it be deferred until after the first term, during which members would be elected by national parliaments¹⁶, or after a period of adjustment, the duration of which would have to be decided¹⁷. The rapporteur, Mr Dehousse, was firmly opposed to these amendments – which were later rejected¹⁸ – challenging their political basis: the need to prepare citizens for European issues, claiming that a period of adjustment would be only natural, given the diplomatic and parliamentary timetable for signature and ratification¹⁹. Replies to the rapporteur's criticisms came from Mr van der Goes, who did not want to see the adjustment period defined based on the procedural timetable²⁰, and from Mr Wigny, who offered political arguments for the postponement of the direct elections: *'... while it is a good thing to call on the people to express their opinion and to involve them in European life, we must avoid giving the impression initially that elections in which people have no interest will be used to form assemblies which are not representative'*²¹.

During the drafting of the Treaty, the question of elections for the People's Chamber was debated without a great deal of gusto, recycling ideas already discussed before the January plenary and with the ever-present concern of barring entry to the communists²². As had already been discussed in December 1952, the question was postponed to a subsequent electoral law; the first elections would be governed by a national law, an amendment to which introduced the principle of the system of proportional representation²³.

Eventually the draft version of the Treaty was complete. Central to the philosophy that inspired the committee with regard to the institutions was the election by universal suffrage of the People's Chamber. The comments made by Mr Dehousse seemed to reflect the indifference of public opinion which Heinrich von Brentano

¹³ The Constitutional Committee's second sub-committee

¹⁴ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions, Minutes of the meeting of 14 November 1952. CARDOC AH AA PV/SCPO.1952 SCPO-19521114 0020. See also AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, General report on the problems of the Community's political institutions (Dehousse), p. 4. CARDOC AH AA RH/SCPO.1952 AH-X018/52 0010.

¹⁵ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Report of the Constitutional Committee, p. 36. CARDOC AH AA RH/CCON.1952 AH-0001/52 0020.

¹⁶ Amendment 26 by Pierre Wigny, in AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Minutes in extenso, session of 9 January 1953, p. 142.

¹⁷ Amendment 26 by Marinus van der Goes and other Dutch politicians. Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

²¹ Ibid., p. 144.

²² AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions, Analysis from the meeting of 6 February 1953. CARDOC AH AA PV/SCPO.1952 SCPO-19530206 0010. The question would resurface again before the Constitutional Committee, called on to vote on the Debré amendment (Amendment 19), aimed at establishing the electoral system. This amendment was rejected. Even here, concerns were raised about the risk of having communist politicians opposed to the idea of Europe in the European Assembly: only Michel Debré notes the anti-democratic nature of these concerns. AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions, Analysis from the meeting of 6 February 1953. CARDOC AH AA PV/CCON.1952 CCON-19530223 0020.

²³ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, Sub-Committee on Political Institutions, Minutes from the meeting of 6 February 1953. CARDOC AH AA PV/SCPO.1952 SCPO-19530206 0010.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

had noted in his introductory report²⁴: ‘...*The idea that has perhaps dominated the decisions made by the authors of the draft from the very beginning.. is the organisation, as swiftly as possible, in a supranational European Community, of direct elections by universal suffrage of men and women in the various countries and territories of the Community. Politicians who are aware of what Europe needs realise that the time has finally come to provide a popular basis to the creation of an organisation which until now has been carried out at government level and in some ways at parliamentary level. In the mind of the founders, elections on a European scale have a powerful, dynamic value. These are the safest way, given the inherent educational value of each election, of involving the masses directly in Europe’s organisation. As a consequence, the Community can expect from an elected Assembly the impetus needed for its development and guarantees for new and necessary progress*’²⁵.

On 10 March 1953, at the end of a four-day session, the Ad Hoc Assembly adopted the Draft Treaty embodying the Statue of the European Community by 50 votes to 0 with 5 abstentions²⁶, spurred on by the need to meet the deadline for handing the treaty over to the Council of Ministers, which had been set by the Luxembourg Resolution. There was no general discussion and positions were expressed during the discussion on Article 1²⁷. These mainly concerned the nature of the Community and the composition of the chambers. There was no mention of direct elections, since these were taken as read.

3. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN THE DEBATE ON THE ROME TREATIES²⁸

Following the non-ratification of the EDC Treaty by the French National Assembly²⁹ and the resulting collapse of the European Political Community project, the disheartenment of the pro-European forces was short-lived, since an idea was gaining ground that European construction could be achieved through economic integration and the construction of a common market not limited to the coal and steel sector, as had been provided for in the ECSC Treaty. Even before the Foreign Ministers of the Six embarked on negotiations in Messina³⁰ for the treaties that would eventually be signed in Rome in 1957, the Common Assembly reopened the debate on increasing the powers of the parliamentary institution and, in this connection, its election by universal suffrage.

As early as November 1954, the debate on the general policy of the ECSC represented an opportunity to call for the Assembly to be given greater budgetary powers and powers of censure over the executive, as well as for an extension of the Community’s competences. The following December, these demands were presented in a resolution that committed the Assembly to reforms.

²⁴ Heinrich von Brentano, Constitutional Committee chairman, presented an introductory report to the political community project in which he noted certain aspects of the attitude of the most committed members of the Ad Hoc Assembly: the knowledge of being the protagonists of a new decision-making process for international policy, enthusiasm for the political community under construction and awareness of a certain indifference of public opinion, of which Mr von Brentano was perhaps unable to fully gauge the potential risks for the project on which he was working. AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Constitutional Committee, draft European Political Community Treaty (in two volumes, the first containing the reports and the second the text). CARDOC AH AA RH/CCON.1952 AH-0012/52 0010 and 0020.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Debates, Minutes in extenso of the session of 10 March 1953, p. 544.

²⁷ The present Treaty sets up a EUROPEAN COMMUNITY of a supra-national character. The Community is founded upon a union of peoples and States, upon respect for their personality and upon equal rights and duties for all. It shall be indissoluble. AD HOC ASSEMBLY, Debates, Minutes in extenso of the session of 6 March 1953, p. 276.

²⁸ This paragraph picks up a subject already covered more fully in EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (CARDOC), Towards a Single Parliament, 2007 (Luxembourg). The sections in smaller font are quotations from this document.

²⁹ 30 August 1954.

³⁰ June 1955.

On 2 December 1954 the ECSC Common Assembly discussed the report on *The powers of scrutiny of the Common Assembly and their use*³¹ by Pierre-Henri Teitgen, which was the basis for a resolution³² divided into three parts, the first devoted to interinstitutional problems that could be resolved under the existing Treaty, the second calling for ‘constituent power’ to be vested in the Assembly under the existing Treaty, and the third calling for a working party to be set up on election of the Assembly by universal suffrage, the powers of the ECSC and the extension of its competences.

When presenting his report, Mr Teitgen linked the two issues of extending competences and election of the Assembly by universal suffrage: it would be easier to justify the direct election of the Assembly if the Community was not solely concerned with coal and steel, and direct election would make an Assembly with greater powers of scrutiny more influential. However, Mr Teitgen was essentially calling for the Assembly to provide impetus for the European integration process: ‘...we have a duty to examine the course we are taking and where this will lead us. We have this duty because we are the guardians of the Treaty: guardians of the letter and spirit of the Treaty; guardians of the promise and the hope it embodies’³³.

This role of providing parliamentary impetus, to which the Assembly was laying claim, was the trigger for a proposal for its election by universal suffrage, which would give it greater moral and political authority. With this in view, it was proposed that a working party be set up, which would also be responsible for ‘... examining to what extent experience showed that a better definition of certain powers was needed, as well as a possible extension of the Community’s powers’³⁴.

After the Messina Conference organised the negotiations for the future Treaties, not through the setting up of an Ad Hoc Assembly but an intergovernmental body (the Committee of Experts under the chairmanship of Paul-Henri Spaak), the Working Party became the mouthpiece of the Common Assembly. In this context, where the creation of a common market for all economic sectors and of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) had almost exclusively become the dominant issues of the debate, the issue of universal suffrage disappeared and did not reappear until the Working Party’s *Provisional report on certain institutional aspects of European integration*³⁵, which, with regard to the Assembly, mainly focused on its powers.

However, we cannot blame the disappearance of the issue of universal suffrage – from 1955 until the end of the first term – on the debate alone. A clue to the political interpretation comes from Wigny, the outspoken champion of the importance of the Assembly, during the debate on the Messina Conference. Guided by his optimism and sense of pride in belonging to an Assembly which knew more than any other about the workings of a common market, Mr Wigny expressed puzzlement over the helpfulness of general elections in raising public awareness. Conversely, he feared that direct elections would trigger a premature rivalry between the elected European Assembly and national parliaments, and summarised the drawbacks of direct elections thus: ‘If there are no longer personal ties between national parliaments and ourselves; if there is a different mode of suffrage and different results of representation, such that we argue over the representative value, within the nations themselves, of such-and-such an Assembly; if, this unity having been achieved, the Chambers are not re-elected at the same time and the vote of one side can be considered by the other side as involving a necessary change in government, then I fear that, through these highly premature reforms, which try to do too much too soon by endeavouring to guarantee a democratic nature which, I repeat, is indispensable, but already largely accomplished, we will arouse the fears of those who worry about the colossal shadow of a hypothetical Europe which would efface the various differences which exist and which must continue to exist between historic states and ancient nations’³⁶.

³¹ COMMON ASSEMBLY, Report presented on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs on the Powers of scrutiny of the Common Assembly and their use. CARDOC AC AP RP/RELA.1953 AC-0005/54 0010.

³² COMMON ASSEMBLY, Resolution of 2 December 1954 in OJEC, 11.12.1954, pp. 532-533.

³³ COMMON ASSEMBLY, Debates, session of 2 December 1954.

³⁴ COMMON ASSEMBLY, Report on the Powers of scrutiny of the Common Assembly and their use, *ibid.*

³⁵ Rapporteur: Gilles Gozard. CARDOC AC AP RP/GRTR.1955 AC-0028/56-mai-0010.

³⁶ COMMON ASSEMBLY, Debates, session of 24 June 1955, pp. 614-615.

Chapter II

The 1960 draft convention

1. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN THE ROME TREATIES

The option that the ECSC Treaty gave Member States of directly electing their representatives to the Common Assembly was not provided for by the Rome Treaties, which only made provision for the designation of representatives by national parliaments. However, Article 138(3) of the EEC Treaty states that: *‘The Assembly shall draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States’*³⁷.

This provision results from a proposal made by the Italian delegation to the Intergovernmental Conference that drafted the Rome Treaties. In actual fact, the Italians had tabled two separate proposals: the first was for the direct election of the European Parliamentary Assembly, while the second was the one adopted, since the other ministers considered the direct election of the Assembly premature³⁸.

2. WORKING PARTY ON EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The provisions of the Rome Treaties explained in the previous paragraph drew the attention of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters of the European Parliamentary Assembly at the inaugural meeting of 8 March 1958, when, during the discussion on the work programme, Fernand Dehousse, conscious of the precedent set by the Common Assembly Working Party, proposed that a resolution be tabled to create a new Working Party. This was consistent, however, with the position of the chairman, Teresio Guglielmono, whose preference was for a commission Working Party. Although on the agenda of the next sitting, the question would only be addressed several months later when the sub-committee was set up, which opted for the name *Working Party on European Elections*³⁹.

³⁷ The corresponding paragraphs of Article 108 of the Euratom Treaty and of Article 21 of the ECSC Treaty are identical. It was amended by Article 2 of the Convention on certain institutions common to the European Communities, signed at the same time as the Rome Treaties.

³⁸ Extract from the draft minutes of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of ECSC Member States (Brussels 26, 27 and 28 January and 4 February 1957, Annex I to EPA – Working Party on European Elections, Note on the interpretation of the articles of the Treaties which provide for the election of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage, prepared by Parliamentary Studies. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 1570.

³⁹ At the meeting of 12 January 1959.

Initially, the Working Party had 9 members, increased to 13 on 16 March 1959. They were: André Boutemy (Fr, Lib)⁴⁰, Enrico Carboni (It, DC), Edouard Corniglion-Molinier (Fr, Lib)⁴¹, Fernand Dehousse (Be, Soc), Marcel Fischbach (Lu, DC)⁴², Marinus van der Goes van Naters (Nl, Soc), Hermann Kopf (De, DC)⁴³, Jean Legendre (Fr, Lib)⁴⁴, Gaetano Martino (It, Lib)⁴⁵, Ludwig Metzger (De, Soc), Maria Probst (De, DC), Natale Santero (It, DC) and Willem Schuijt (Nl, DC)⁴⁶. Also involved in the sub-committee's work as observers (from July 1959) were the chairman of the Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Legal Affairs, Petitions and Immunity, Georges Bohy (Be, Soc) and the chairman of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Emilio Battista (It, DC). From 9 December 1959, they were joined by the rapporteur of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Alain Poher (Fr, DC)⁴⁷. The Working Party was chaired by Fernand Dehousse and its vice-chairman was Natale Santero⁴⁸.

The Working Party was asked to present a preliminary document to the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, which would discuss it and draw up guidelines for further work⁴⁹. This met 20 times between 22 October 1958 and 7 March 1960; some meetings spanned several days.

3. EARLY APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF DIRECT ELECTIONS

From the very first meetings of the Working Party, it was clear that there were numerous sides to the issue under discussion. Two documents from the Assembly's Parliamentary Studies service provide an annotated list of the topics that were put to the Working Party⁵⁰. Specifically, the second of these documents placed these topics in three categories, according to their relationship with the Rome Treaties: those that were covered by them, those that involved a broad interpretation of them and those that involved an amendment to them.

The debate that took place between the end of 1958 and the beginning of 1959⁵¹ tackled various aspects of the matter, embracing a range of issues which today might seem unrelated to the subject of direct elections, such as the creation of a new chamber. In fact, the discussion revealed an awareness of the problems that had been overcome throughout the history of European integration and since the change in political attitude. Take, for example, the concern to maintain a close link with national parliaments, which was not only behind the bicameral solution, but also the direct election of only three quarters of a single assembly, while the remaining quarter would continue to be elected by national parliaments⁵². This solution, based on a proposal

⁴⁰ He died on 14 July 1959 and was replaced by Jean Filliol in October 1959, and later by Alain Peyrefitte, both French liberals.

⁴¹ He stepped down from office on 9 December 1958. In May 1959 he was replaced by René Pleven and later by Maurice Faure, both French liberals.

⁴² Replaced Nicolas Margue, who resigned from the EPA four days after his appointment to the Working Party on 16 March 1959.

⁴³ Appointed on 16 March 1959.

⁴⁴ Appointed on 16 March 1959.

⁴⁵ Appointed on 16 March 1959.

⁴⁶ EPA, European Parliamentary Assembly Directory 1958-1959, 1959 (Luxembourg).

⁴⁷ Information about the members of the sub-committee is taken from EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party, Reports, draft Convention and related documents. CARDOC PE0 RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 0040.

⁴⁸ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party on European Elections, Minutes of the meeting of 12 January 1959, op. cit.

⁴⁹ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Minutes of the meeting of 22 October 1958, op. cit.

⁵⁰ EPA, Sub-Committee on universal suffrage, List of issues that might be covered by the Sub-Committee on universal suffrage and proposed list of topics that should be covered by the Working Party. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 1680 and 1640.

⁵¹ This refers more specifically to the meetings of 13 December 1958 and 31 January 1959.

⁵² In the final proposal, the proportion of directly elected members to those nominated by national parliaments would be two thirds to one. This concern to maintain the link with national parliaments was also behind the preference of many members for the dual national and Community mandate.

THE 1960 DRAFT CONVENTION

from the European Movement⁵³, was adopted by a majority vote at the sitting of 23 March 1959, which confined it to a transitional period of an unspecified length, although eventually the entire Assembly was to be elected by universal suffrage. However, the solution proposed for the transitional period meant that the number of members of the Assembly would be doubled. This was necessary to allow the distribution of seats by indirect election between the various national groups. The doubling of the number of members was also adopted by a majority vote on 8 March 1959.

The need to maintain the link with national parliaments was also behind the decision on the dual mandate, which won considerable support. Following the decision regarding the composition of the Assembly during the transitional period, it was decided that the dual mandate would be banned for members elected by universal suffrage, but it was not specified whether this decision concerned only the transitional period or also the definitive regime⁵⁴.

The dilemma of whether to provide for a single electoral system for the Community or to leave this up to individual Member States would instead seem to be based on the concern to make the direct election proposal acceptable to national governments. Eventually it was decided to distinguish between national law, which would govern European elections during the transitional period, and a single electoral system, the definitive arrangements for which would be established by a law of the European Parliamentary Assembly. However, general principles were laid down for national laws applicable during the transitional period⁵⁵.

The same concern to make the governments and political parties of the Six amenable to a European electoral law – in other words, a single definitive system – was also behind the debate on the subject: it was in fact believed that political parties tended to prefer whatever granted them authority at national level, which meant that the proportional system would not be acceptable to the French, or the majority system to the Belgians. A different logic was applied by those who, wanting genuine pro-Europe members, called for an electoral system that excluded anti-European parties⁵⁶. The Working Party would meet in various European capitals with national political exponents and experts on the subject⁵⁷.

The approach towards the definition of constituencies, which included a proposal for cross-border constituencies, seems more technical than political: here, the main concern was to ensure a uniform ratio between elected representatives and the electorate. Eventually, the Working Party voted in favour of constituencies that were completely contained within individual Member States, and for simultaneous elections in the six Member States, while allowing a certain flexibility in terms of calendar for religious and geographical reasons, effectively the system in operation today⁵⁸.

⁵³ In a pamphlet often referred to during the Working Party debate, the European Movement proposed that the number of members of the Assembly should be doubled, half of them to be elected by universal suffrage and the other half by national parliaments.

⁵⁴ Minutes of 11 June 1959.

⁵⁵ These decisions were adopted at the meetings of 22 and 23 May 1959. The text adopted was the version submitted to the 1954 Intergovernmental Conference, which had to draft the European Political Community treaty, by its sub-committee on elections by universal suffrage, chaired by Mr van der Bergh, a Dutch legal expert, who addressed the Working Party at these meetings of 22 and 23 May. Mr van der Bergh presented a memorandum to the Working Party on the electoral system. EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party on universal suffrage, Notice to members on the Parliamentary Assembly elections. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLL.1958 A0-0022/60 1530.

⁵⁶ Speech by Enrico Carboni at the sitting of 31 January 1959. At the sitting of 23 March, Mr Carboni explained that he did not want to exclude communist parties from the future Assembly, but only wanted to limit their influence.

⁵⁷ The meetings in European capitals took place between June and November 1959. A full list of these meetings and those who addressed them can be found in EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party, Reports, draft Convention and related documents. Op. cit.

⁵⁸ The decisions mentioned were adopted on 23 March 1959.

4. THE WORKING PARTY'S FINAL REPORT AND THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

The document produced by the Working Party⁵⁹, adopted on 12 January 1960, is complex, consisting of five reports, a draft convention, a proposal for a declaration and a motion for a resolution. The five reports are as follows:

- introductory report by Fernand Dehousse, which, apart from illustrating the activities of the Working Party, provides a political framework for the subsequent proposals;
- on the composition of the elected Assembly (Faure);
- on the issues relating to the choice of electoral system for the future Assembly (Schuijt);
- on the representation of overseas countries and territories within the elected Assembly (Metzger);
- on aspects of an information policy which would prepare the public for the European elections (Carboni).

The document, without the Carboni report, which was presented separately, was adopted, with minor changes and the addition of an introductory report by its chairman, Emilio Battista, by the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters and presented to the Assembly⁶⁰. The adoption in the committee was by majority vote: 20 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions⁶¹. One of those who voted against, Willi Birkelbach, voiced criticisms of the draft Convention during the discussion. The main criticism raised again during the explanations of vote, concerned the lack of integration of the proposal for universal suffrage with the request for an increase in the Assembly's powers, considered necessary to justify the proposals contained in the draft Convention⁶².

5. THE DRAFT CONVENTION

This consisted of a supplementary agreement amending the Treaties, to be signed by the Member States. Meanwhile, the proposal for a declaration concerned the willingness of the Assembly to meet periodically with parliamentary delegations from associated countries. Finally, the motion for a resolution concerned the topics covered in the Carboni report.

The draft Convention made provision for an Assembly of 426 members, three times that provided for by the Treaties in force, elected by universal suffrage for a term of five years. During the transitional period⁶³, one third of members of the Assembly would continue to be designated by national parliaments. The electoral system was established by each Member State during the transitional period and then definitively by the Assembly itself. However, certain fundamental principles were laid down, including the minimum voting age, which could not be below 21 or above 25, the ban on holding other electoral offices at the same time as being a member of the Assembly, combining the mandate of European and national member of parliament, and

⁵⁹ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party, Reports, draft Convention and related documents. CARDOC PE0 RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 0040.

⁶⁰ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Report on the election of the European Parliamentary Assembly by direct suffrage. CARDOC PE0 RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 0010.

⁶¹ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Minutes of the sitting of 4-8 March 1960, p. 16.

⁶² EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Minutes of the sitting of 4-8 March 1960, p. 9. At the meeting of 1 and 2 February 1960 (see Minutes), the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters had decided by majority vote to keep separate the discussion on the matter of increasing the powers of the European Parliamentary Assembly, on which Alain Poher was preparing a report.

⁶³ The transitional period, which began with the entry into force of the Convention, ended on the date set by the Assembly between the end of the third stage of the Common Market and the end of the term in which the third stage ended. In accordance with Article 8 of the EEC Treaty, the third and final stage of the Common Market had to be completed within 12 years of the entry into force of the Treaty itself; in other words, by 31 December 1969.

THE 1960 DRAFT CONVENTION

a series of other incompatible roles. Meanwhile, to accommodate the ban on the Communist Party ordered by the German Constitutional Court, reference was made to national provisions for the admission of parties. Finally, an interim consultative committee was established, composed equally of representatives from the Member States and representatives from the European Parliamentary Assembly. The committee had the task of issuing opinions and recommendations on issues raised by the application of national provisions to the European Parliamentary Assembly elections.

The draft Convention moved away from the initial guidelines in key areas, even when these guidelines became formal decisions, such as the decision to double the number of members of the Assembly. The change in the Working Party's position resulted from a detailed examination of the subject during the long and animated discussions that characterised its work. The final version is logical and coherent, as shown by the reports that make up the final document, in particular those by Maurice Faure and Willem Schuijt.

6. COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY: REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The logical basis of the draft Convention is the tripling of the number of members compared with what had been provided for by the Rome Treaties. In his report, Maurice Faure recalls how he himself, in his previous ministerial roles, had made a declaration on behalf of the French Government on the need to review the composition of the Assembly in case of the adoption of universal suffrage⁶⁴. He notes that the existing number of members did not bear any valid relationship to the population of the Member States, preventing, particularly in the larger countries⁶⁵, a true ratio between representatives and voters which was *essential for real participation of the people in the building of Europe*.

The problem debated within the Working Party was how to increase the number of members. During the debate, it was taken as read that the proportion of seats allocated to each Member State would not change, since this represented a balance which had already been agreed on by the Member States. This meant that the idea that the number of members would be proportional to the population was abandoned, and thus led to the acceptance of the huge difference in the seats/population ratio that the system adopted by the Treaties had created. The question having been raised, it was a case of deciding on a multiplier for the actual number. Despite some estimators within the Working Party, doubling the number seemed to give a population/members ratio that was still too high, with constituencies that were too large. Conversely, increasing it by a factor of four seemed excessive, both because it would give Luxembourg, where the Chamber of Deputies had 52 members, some 24 seats, and due to the criticisms made, even at national level, of assemblies which were too large and unwieldy. In addition, an Assembly of 568 members would seem justified in view of its increased powers, which the Working Party did not propose to extend.

The decision to triple the number of members was not an arithmetic compromise between these two options, but was based on the fact that the number of members – 426 – was comparable with that of the United States, a federal country with a similar position to that of the Six⁶⁶. The figure was lower than that of the chambers of the three largest countries⁶⁷ and meant a ratio of one member for every 400 000 inhabitants of the Six. Once this decision had been made, the decision to increase the number of members designated during the transitional period by national parliaments to one third, instead of the quarter previously suggested, helped maintain the parliamentary nominations provided for by the Rome Treaties.

⁶⁴ Maurice Faure was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when the Rome Treaties were signed.

⁶⁵ The rapporteur gives the example of three major countries which have 36 members each and an electorate of 30 million.

⁶⁶ The United States at that time had 180 million inhabitants, compared with the 165 million inhabitants of the Six.

⁶⁷ At the time, the German Bundestag had 519 Members, the French National Assembly 546 and the Italian Chamber of Deputies 590.

7. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM: REASONS FOR ABANDONING IT

The electoral system question was tackled in the Schuijt report, which had to give an account not so much of a decision, but of the refusal to make one, referring the definition of the electoral system during the transitional period to the Member States; the idea of a single electoral system was thus abandoned, while the definition of more permanent arrangements was postponed to a subsequent resolution of the Assembly itself, when the time came. This position resulted from a lengthy discussion which the Working Party had, with contributions from experts in electoral matters.

The first contribution was from a member of the Working Party itself, Maria Probst, who presented a memorandum⁶⁸ on an electoral system which is now considered German, but which at the time was described as Bavarian: this system gave the voter two votes, one to be used in a uninominal election and the other in a list-based proportional vote in a constituency. Added to this was a similar system presented by the Italian statistician Mr Schepis⁶⁹ and a written contribution from the Dutch legal expert Mr van der Bergh, who had worked with the Intergovernmental Conference following the Ad Hoc Assembly on the creation of the Political Community. Mr Van der Bergh, in a report commissioned by the Working Party, proposed an unusual proportional electoral system, the 'single transferable vote', used in Ireland, Tasmania and some US cities: each voter had as many votes as there were candidates and these votes were weighted depending on the order of preference in which they were placed⁷⁰. This system was not supported by the majority of the Working Party because it was completely unknown to voters in the Six, more accustomed to voting for symbols, and because it was difficult and time-consuming to count. Conversely, the German system found support within the Working Party because it combined the proportional system with the majority system, although some members of the Working Party considered it too complicated.

Although the majority of the Working Party expressed a preference for the proportional system, which was more geared towards the electorate than the majority system, reasons of political expediency, particularly the concern not to alienate governments from the very idea of direct elections, persuaded the group to opt for postponement, to be put forward at the plenary by Emilio Battista, chairman of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters. He explained the reasoning behind the transitional arrangements, which had become the cornerstone of the draft Convention, as the need to avoid an abrupt change, which would have happened if a single electoral system had been adopted straightaway⁷¹.

8. INFORMING CITIZENS

The Convention was accompanied by a resolution on the direct election information policy, pushed for by Mr Carboni, rapporteur for this issue. The proposal was extremely concise, simply asking the Assembly Bureau to provide the competent services of the General Secretariat of the European Parliamentary Assembly with *all the means necessary to prepare the public in the six countries for election by direct universal suffrage*.

The timetable, scope and substance of this strategy was described in the Carboni report. The campaign had to get under way as quickly as possible, targeting all citizens in the Six, while identifying volunteers who would communicate the issues of the campaign to the public, focusing on the Assembly, its role, activities and members, and European issues in general.

⁶⁸ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party, Draft proposal for a ballot system that would combine the principles of a proportional voting system with those of a majority voting system. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 1580.

⁶⁹ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party on universal suffrage, Plans for the election of the European Parliamentary Assembly by direct suffrage. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 1350.

⁷⁰ EPA, Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Working Party on universal suffrage, Notice to members on the elections of members of the Parliamentary Assembly. CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1958 A0-0022/60 1530.

⁷¹ EPA Debates, sitting of 10 May 1960, p. 20.

9. THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY DEBATE

The general debate took place in the chamber on 10 and 11 May 1960, while the discussion of the articles and voting took place on 17 May. There were no speakers opposed to the principle of direct election; on the contrary, the opponents of the draft Convention for the most part would have preferred a more radical approach, without the transitional period or a close link with the increase in the Assembly's powers.

It was Mr Dehousse who suggested this. Taking over from the rapporteur, he did not just describe the document under discussion, but fiercely defended the compromise it represented, anticipating the arguments of his more radical colleagues. The underlying premise developed by the Belgian politician, apart from his position on specific points, was of finding a realistic and acceptable solution, considering the radicalism of the maximalists: *'Of course, the way we looked at it [the speaker was speaking on behalf of the Working Party – editor's note], we had to make a choice which was rather difficult at times and which has earned us criticism from members of the pro-European movements. We have been constantly forced to choose between what is feasible and what is desirable, which has meant, life being what it is, that we have often had to sacrifice the desirable for the feasible. Does this mean that we have become minimalists? Let me just say, Mr Chairman, that I do not think so. We only wanted to do realistic work, we wanted to allow political Europe to realise its full potential. This led us to act as we did'*⁷².

The speaker who explained this position most clearly, perhaps more than other opponents of the transitional arrangements, was Maria Probst, who wanted a single electoral procedure⁷³ from the start of universal suffrage, a 'Community solution', as she called it, carefully designed and prepared together with the Member States⁷⁴. This solution had the advantage of keeping election campaigns on a European footing, preventing them from becoming enslaved by national issues. The German politician gave her speech a legal flavour, explaining how the Treaty of Rome, unlike the ECSC Treaty, had wanted there to be a single electoral procedure for all Six Member States. However, she soon moved on to the political aspects, challenging the arguments of those who supported the proposed solution, who claimed that ministers would not be prepared to accept the direct election of the entire Assembly based on a single procedure. Ms Probst turned this reasoning on its head, arguing that since the Treaty of Rome had been signed by governments and ratified by national parliaments, thereby expressing the choice recommended by her, this choice had already been made at national level. Furthermore, an Assembly of 142 members, in close contact with national parliaments, was able to decide based on a uniform election procedure, more so than an Assembly of 426 members, only one third of whom had been designated by national parliaments.

Mr Dehousse had already implicitly responded to the substance of her speech: the uniformity of the procedure provided for by Article 138 of the ECSC Treaty did not mean identicalness, and the Treaty did not rule out a single procedure from being introduced following a transitional period⁷⁵.

The second question raised by the 'radicals', concerning the simultaneous strengthening of the powers of the Assembly, is well expressed by Mr Metzger⁷⁶: the fear existed that gathering together the citizens of the Member States, kindling enthusiasm for Europe in order to elect a parliament which would prove powerless, could cause disappointment among the electorate and have a negative impact on the concept of Europe. He also challenged the idea of realists that direct elections would make the Assembly more prestigious, enabling it to obtain much greater powers, which for Mr Metzger were the prerequisite for direct elections: there was no reason why governments would give an elected Assembly powers that they were not prepared to give it under the current conditions.

⁷² EPA Debates, sitting of 10 May 1960, p. 25.

⁷³ EPA Debates, sitting of 11 May 1960, pp. 65-70.

⁷⁴ The speaker underlines how, in the eyes of the Working Party, the Community solution was not seen as a detailed procedure, but as a framework of principles for national legislation.

⁷⁵ EPA Debates, sitting of 10 May 1960, p. 24.

⁷⁶ EPA Debates, sitting of 11 May 1960, pp. 46-51.

Mr Dehousse had also already answered Mr Metzger, explicitly quoting him to preserve his good faith, stating that considering the difficulties in which the concept of Europe found itself after the Rome Treaties, many of those who supported the same idea as Mr Metzger were suspected of deviousness and of seeking to prevent new powers from being granted and direct elections from taking place⁷⁷. On this issue, the Assembly voted on a resolution⁷⁸, together with the draft Convention, which confirmed the need for an increase in its powers. This document allowed the German socialists to abstain from the vote on the draft Convention⁷⁹, rather than voting against it.

The two issues described above were the most important, considering the extent of the discussion and the impact on the political equilibrium between the Assembly and the Member States. However, overall the debate was weighed down by a lack of enthusiasm, not for the idea of universal suffrage, which had no actual opponents, but for the text submitted to the Assembly and for the way in which this was decided on, with documents drawn up by a small Working Party which had excluded from the discussion many members of the Assembly who were interested in the problem. By now in fact, this was looking like a hasty decision, in need of further examination⁸⁰. It was probably the idea of a compromise, of a workable text, which, defended by the rapporteurs, failed to arouse enthusiasm. This is clearly shown by the few explanations of vote, such as the one from Mr Metzger mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, the final vote by a show of hands indicated a large majority, some abstentions and no votes against, as declared by the President of the Assembly⁸¹.

One amendment, subsequently withdrawn, deserves to be mentioned: this came from Jacques Vendroux, who wanted to have a public referendum on the Convention. Submitted directly to the Assembly, it immediately aroused uncertainty and even fears, as suggested by the overtures made in private by certain Members, which Mr Vendroux mentioned in his speech, and the speeches of Messrs Dehousse and Martino during the plenary, essentially based on legal considerations. Mr Vendroux's aim was to rouse the masses through propaganda for the referendum, rather than during the electoral campaign of candidates⁸². Mr Dehousse⁸³ and Mr Martino⁸⁴, while expressing sympathy for their colleague's initiative, pointed out the constitutional difficulties that a referendum would create in certain countries, focusing particularly on those that would arise in their own countries, Belgium and Italy.

10. RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Together with the draft Convention, four other resolutions and one declaration were ratified⁸⁵. The draft Convention, formally a resolution, and the resolution relating to the increase in the Assembly's powers have already been mentioned. The other resolutions were as follows:

- the resolution relating to the follow-up to the draft Convention, which combined the rules of procedure with the provision for a delegation tasked with contacting the competent national authorities and the three Councils of Ministers in order to expedite the adoption and implementation of the draft Convention,

⁷⁷ EPA Debates, sitting of 10 May 1960, p. 28.

⁷⁸ This is the fourth resolution relating to the extension of the Assembly's powers contained in documents relating to the European Parliamentary Assembly by direct and universal suffrage, in OJEC, 2.6.60, p. 840.

⁷⁹ Mr Metzger's explanation of vote in EPA Debates, sitting of 17 May 1960, p. 315.

⁸⁰ In this sense see Dore Smets. EPA Debates, sitting of 10 May 1960, pp. 51-56.

⁸¹ EPA Debates, sitting of 17 May 1960, p. 321.

⁸² EPA Debates, sitting of 17 May 1960, pp. 307-308.

⁸³ EPA Debates, sitting of 17 May 1960, pp. 308-309.

⁸⁴ EPA Debates, sitting of 17 May 1960, pp.309-310.

⁸⁵ All six documents were published under the title 'Texts relating to the election of the Members of the European Parliamentary Assembly by direct universal suffrage' in OJEC, 2.6.60, pp. 834-840.

THE 1960 DRAFT CONVENTION

- the resolution relating to the electoral procedure during the transitional period, with which the Assembly proposed to express opinions on national electoral laws required by the Convention and to address recommendations to national parliaments for the harmonisation of the election system for those members designated by national parliaments and those designated by direct suffrage,
- the resolution relating to the preparation of public opinion for the elections by direct universal suffrage, which charged the Bureau with creating publicity for the draft Convention⁸⁶.

Finally, the declaration of intent relating to the involvement of parliamentary representatives from overseas countries and territories in the work of the European Parliamentary Assembly allowed the possibility of joint meetings with parliamentary delegations from associated countries in order to discuss the aspects of their involvement. This was probably the first expression of the idea underpinning the ACP-EEC Assembly.

Based on the resolution relating to the follow-up to the draft Convention, on 28 June 1960 the Bureau appointed the delegation that this made provision for: the President of the European Parliamentary Assembly, Hans Furler, the chairmen of three parliamentary groups, Alain Poher (Christian Democrat), René Pleven (Liberal), Willi Birkelbach (Socialist), the chairman of the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters, Emilio Battista, and the chairman of the Working Party, Fernand Dehousse. The first and second vice-chairmen, Jean Fohrmann and Charles Janssen, would also attend the meetings with the Councils, while the vice-chairmen from each country would take part in the visits to the various countries⁸⁷. The Bureau also issued an instruction to contact the Councils during the October sitting and for missions to the Member States to take place only after this.

No documents have been found in the European Parliament archives concerning the delegation's meetings. The report proposing a resolution on the subject in 1968⁸⁸, describing the follow-up to the resolutions of 17 May 1960, cites the Executive's fourth report, which, in describing the work of the Council, mentions that a meeting would take place with a delegation from the Assembly on the question of direct elections. It does not appear that this meeting ever took place, since Mr Battista complained in the Chamber that the Council had done little or nothing, despite repeated calls from the Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Matters and from the delegation⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ This was the resolution proposed by the Carboni report, which the Political Committee had removed (see Section 4 of this chapter).

⁸⁷ Minutes of the Bureau of 28 June 1960, kept in CARDOC PE0 OD PV/BUREAU-19600628.

⁸⁸ See next chapter.

⁸⁹ EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, p. 112.

Chapter III

The lull in the 1960s

1. THE FOUCHET PLAN⁹⁰

The draft Convention was not the start of a new institutional framework for the Communities, but the end of a decade of great momentum for Europe. In actual fact the draft Convention went no further: a communiqué from the six Foreign Ministers announced that five Member States were willing to take it under consideration, but France did not consider it the right time⁹¹. The communiqué came at a time of a rethink on the very nature of European integration, as a result of a radical shift in French policy, when the country moved from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic, dominated by the powerful historical figure of General de Gaulle and his very specific political ideas, particularly when it came to France's role in Europe.

In reality, the period from July 1960, when a document given to Chancellor Adenauer by General de Gaulle expressed the idea of a Europe based on collaboration between the Member States, to 29 January 1966, when the Luxembourg compromise was signed, saw a flurry of Community activity involving the removal of obstacles and barriers to the free movement of goods and the definition of the common agricultural policy. These activities did not seem to be influenced by the debate and negotiations on the European Political Union, which touched on the nature of the Community, the balance between the institutions, and the balance between the institutions and the Member States. During this period, the United Kingdom made its first application for membership, and France issued its first veto⁹².

General de Gaulle's July 1960 document criticised the institutional model of the Communities, whose bodies were becoming superstates without any of the attendant responsibilities. The system needed to be brought back under the control of the governments, and the Atlantic Alliance also needed to be put on a new basis. *This could be obtained by introducing periodic meetings between Heads of State and Government, prepared by experts studying the issues of political, economic, cultural and defence cooperation*⁹³.

A study committee set up by the Paris Conference in February 1961⁹⁴ was first to work on these ideas, followed by a preparatory committee set up by the Bonn Intergovernmental Conference in July 1961, headed by the French Ambassador Christian Fouchet, who gave his name to the Draft treaty establishing

⁹⁰ The following documents were consulted for this paragraph: De Araujo, *Le plan Fouchet et l'union politique européenne*, Nancy 1967, pp. 55 and XXIX; AAVV, *La Comunità Europea - Storia e problemi*, Florence 1969, p. 256; R. BLOES, *Le 'plan Fouchet' et le problème de l'Europe politique*, Bruges 1970, p. 544; E. Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali 1918-1999*, 2000 Bari, p. 1300.

⁹¹ Communiqué of the Foreign Ministers meeting in Bonn on 10 July 1961, reported in EP, Committee on Legal Affairs, Report on the motion for a resolution (doc. 50/68) presented by Mr Deringer relating to the election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (doc. 214/68), p. 4, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/JURI.1961 A0-0214/68 0010.

⁹² The second request and the second veto were in 1967.

⁹³ E. Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali 1918-1999*, 2000 Bari, p. 881.

⁹⁴ This Conference of Heads of State and Government can be considered the first 'European Council'.

a Union of European Peoples⁹⁵. This adapted the ideas of General de Gaulle with reforms designed to increase the powers of the Community, whose institutions were to function within the framework of intergovernmental political cooperation. In 1962, French diplomacy tried to convince other Member States to accept the Fouchet Plan, but it was scuttled at the Paris Summit in April 1962 by Dutch opposition, which had already been expressed at the first Paris Conference, and by Belgian opposition, criticising it for the absence of supranational elements and asking that the negotiations be shelved until the accession of the United Kingdom, which had asked to join the European Communities and with which talks had already begun on the subject.

Other tensions would explode in 1965 following the executive's proposal on resources for the common agricultural policy. Following a period of tension during which France would adopt its 'empty chair policy', the Luxembourg compromise ensured an institutional balance destined to last until the mid-1990s.

2. DIRECT ELECTIONS AND THE FOUCHET PLAN

The three Councils began examining the draft in October 1960⁹⁶, although following the Paris Conference of 10 and 11 February 1961, it was widely reported in the press that the issue of direct elections would be addressed at the Bonn Conference on 18 July that year⁹⁷. Speaking during the debate on the Paris Conference, Mr Battista raised the issue of the surreptitious transfer of competence in this area from the Councils, which were Community institutions, to an intergovernmental body, such as the Conference. This solution was not in keeping with the Treaty and worried the speaker, conscious of the fact that the adoption of the draft Convention would be delayed⁹⁸.

Pierre Wigny, by now Belgium's Foreign Minister, who in his opening speech during the debate did not address the issue, responded to Mr Battista, defending the solution adopted as being necessary in order to progress the examination of the draft with a political decision of the governments which would smooth the way towards the unanimity required within the Community⁹⁹. In reality, the Bonn Conference would fail to overcome French opposition¹⁰⁰. A few days before, the Parliamentary Assembly, adopting a position on the organisation of periodic meetings between the Heads of State and Government¹⁰¹, which would have been at the centre of the Bonn Conference, made its approval dependent on certain conditions aimed at preserving the Community system and on the fact that the initiative would help implement the draft Convention¹⁰².

⁹⁵ The Fouchet Committee would present two separate drafts, the first on 2 November 1961 with the title indicated in the text, and the second on 18 January 1962, in which the name of the new organisation had been changed to 'European Political Union'. There are significant differences between the two texts. The second version was in fact presented without warning by the French delegation, much to the surprise of the other delegations.

⁹⁶ EP, Committee on Legal Affairs, Report on the motion for a resolution (doc. 50/68) presented by Mr Deringer relating to the election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, op. cit. which cites the fourth report of the executive bodies.

⁹⁷ Mr Battista refers to this. EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, p. 111.

⁹⁸ EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, pp. 111-112. Mr Lasse had already talked about direct elections during the debate, explaining the position of the Dutch Government (EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, pp. 95-97), while Alain Peyrefitte (EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, pp. 108-109) had revived the subject of the referendum, already rejected during the examination of the draft Convention the previous year.

⁹⁹ EPA Debates, sitting of Thursday 9 March 1961, pp. 115-116.

¹⁰⁰ See previous section.

¹⁰¹ See previous section, particularly the passage in italics.

¹⁰² EPA resolution of 29 June 1961 on political cooperation between the Member States of the European Communities, in OJEC, 22.7.61, p. 970.

THE LULL IN THE 1960s

Furthermore, after the Bonn Conference, the Parliamentary Assembly mainly concentrated on the extension of its powers proposed by the Conference¹⁰³ and on the draft treaty establishing a Union of European Peoples, instigated by the Conference and which would finally be withdrawn by the Fouchet Committee¹⁰⁴. The Assembly asked to be involved in the work of the preparatory committee¹⁰⁵ and eventually approved a recommendation¹⁰⁶, the sixth point of which reiterated the request to follow up its draft Convention and proceed with direct elections within three years.

The resolution of the European Parliament¹⁰⁷ that followed the Paris Conference on 17 April 1962¹⁰⁸ made no reference to the issue of elections¹⁰⁹ and not even Mr Battista mentions it in a statement in which the European Parliament recognises the irreversible failure of the European Political Union project¹¹⁰. In fact, it seemed that the issue of direct elections had disappeared from the European Parliament's agenda.

3. THE DIRECT ELECTION ISSUE BETWEEN 1962 AND 1968

The lack of action by the Member States and the Councils on the draft Convention and the new problems that arose to do with European economic integration diverted the attention of the European Parliament to other institutional issues, not least of all the unification of the executive bodies. Nevertheless, the issue of direct elections at times re-emerged, although this remained secondary to other issues.

This was the case with the Illerhaus working paper prepared in view of the interinstitutional colloquys in November 1962¹¹¹. This paper¹¹² consisted of a series of contributions from the various committees involved, with an introduction by Joseph Illerhaus who, on behalf of the Political Committee, tackled the institutional issues with a specific view to establishing the common market. For this, the merger of the executive bodies and the extension of the powers of the European Parliament were necessary. The extension of Parliament's powers confirmed the importance of the direct elections. This is not without significance, since in the preparation of the 1960 draft Convention and the related debate, the issue of direct elections was deliberately kept separate from the issue of extended powers, and in fact the independence of the two

¹⁰³ One of the decisions taken by the Conference was to involve the public more in the efforts being made, inviting the European Parliamentary Assembly, with the collaboration of the governments, to extend the scope of its decisions to new areas. Final communication of the Bonn Conference, in EPA, Political Committee, Interim report on political cooperation between the Member States of the European Communities (doc. 62/61), in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0062/61 0010.

¹⁰⁴ The Fouchet Plan of 2 November 1961 gives the Parliamentary Assembly generic powers relating to matters within the remit of the Union; that of 18 January 1962 provides that the Assembly 'shall deliberate on questions concerning foreign policy, defence and education on which the Council asks its opinion'. Quoted from <http://www.ena.lu>.

¹⁰⁵ See in this respect the following EPA resolutions: resolution of 19 September 1961 on political cooperation between the Member States of the European Communities, in OJEC, 13.10.61, p. 1220, by which it asks to be involved in the work of the Fouchet Committee; resolution of 23 November 1961 on collaboration between the Assembly and the governments of the Member States following the Bonn Statement of 18 July 1961.

¹⁰⁶ EPA recommendation of 21 December 1961 on the draft treaty establishing a Union of European Peoples, in OJEC, 17.1.62, pp. 75-77. A few months later, the European Parliament, which in the meantime had assumed this new name, complained that the Foreign Ministers had not adopted its recommendation and would ask for the negotiations, which in the meantime had been interrupted, to resume. EP resolution of 9 May 1962 on negotiations for the creation of a European Political Union, in OJEC, 26.5.62, p. 1258.

¹⁰⁷ On 30 March 1962, the Parliamentary Assembly decided to adopt this name.

¹⁰⁸ See previous section.

¹⁰⁹ EP resolution of 9 May 1962 on negotiations for the creation of a European Political Union, in OJEC, 26.5.62, pp. 1262-1263.

¹¹⁰ EP Debates, sitting of Tuesday 26 June 1962, p. 80.

¹¹¹ These were, as the name suggests, an exchange of opinions between the European Parliament, the Councils and the Executives on one or more specific subjects. The 1962 negotiations – the fifth colloquy – examined the development of the Community institutions and their cooperation in view of the increasing responsibilities of the Community and on the Community's objectives during the second stage of the transitional period of the common market, points that had to be discussed jointly.

¹¹² EP, Political Committee, working papers on the Community's objectives during the second stage of the transitional period of the common market, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0 0100/62.

issues was explicitly mentioned. The Illerhaus paper called for direct elections to take place by the end of the second stage of the common market.

In the debate in the Chamber, the President-in-Office of the Council, Attilio Piccioni, although the minister of a State which supported direct elections, did not mention these, despite tackling the subject of the European Parliament's role in its (informal) relations with the Council. It was only when replying to certain speakers that he declared: *As for the elections of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, it seems to me that for various reasons, not all of them an excuse, it can at least be said that these do not seem imminent*¹¹³.

The following year, some Members tabled a written question¹¹⁴ asking the Councils when they intended to follow up the 1960 draft Convention, and the answer, which did not enter into the merits of the discussion, was to the point: there was no unanimity on the subject¹¹⁵.

After this question on the 1960 draft Convention, a period of silence followed, at least in the official documents of the European Parliament. The issue of direct elections was only revived in 1969. However, it is worth mentioning some documents which, outside the European Parliament, show how the issue of direct elections had not been forgotten during the 1960s, which were a difficult time for European integration¹¹⁶.

During a press conference, Chancellor Adenauer, in response to two separate questions, declared that Germany could not unilaterally choose to elect its own Members of the European Parliament directly, and that furthermore, a proposal for direct elections in the Six was not politically expedient at a time when there were so many other problems that had to be resolved, such as the accession of the United Kingdom¹¹⁷. Even in the national parliaments, the issue of direct elections was kept alive: in this respect, note the bills submitted to the French National Assembly¹¹⁸ and the Italian Senate¹¹⁹.

4. RESOLUTION OF 12 MARCH 1969

In May 1968, a group of MEPs tabled a motion for a resolution aimed at relaunching the debate over elections to the European Parliament by direct suffrage¹²⁰ at a time when the situation of the European Communities seemed to have improved: the great difficulties of the previous years had been partly overcome and the Merger Treaty was about to come into force.

The motion for a resolution did not simply call on the Council to discuss the issue, but drew its attention to the article of the EEC Treaty which made provision for legal proceedings in the event of the Council's failure to act.

This is probably why the motion for a resolution was assigned to the Committee on Legal Affairs. The scant minutes of the committee meetings prevent an assessment of the internal dynamics, nor can conclusions be drawn from the timetable: after appointing Fernand Dehousse as rapporteur on 27 May 1968, at the next

¹¹³ EP Debates, sitting of Wednesday 21 November 1962, p. 132.

¹¹⁴ EP written question of 7 February 1963 from Messrs Weinkamm, Schuijt, Dehousse, Dichgans, Fischbach, Kreyssig, Lücker, Margulies, Philipp, Starke, Storch and Vals on direct elections to the European Parliament, in CARDOC PE0 AP QP/QE E-0163/63 0010.

¹¹⁵ EP reply of 20 April 1963 to the written question of 7 February 1963, op. cit., in CARDOC PE0 AP QP/QE E-0163/63 0050-0160.

¹¹⁶ These were episodes and acts recorded in the archives of the European Parliament, and specifically in the documents of the Political Committee. These testify to the fact that, despite the institution's silence, the issue was still being examined.

¹¹⁷ Press conference of 23 January 1963, an unofficial extract from which can be found in EP – Political Committee, Franco-German Cooperation Treaty, PE 9184, a document not yet classified in the EP's archives.

¹¹⁸ Proposition de loi fixant la date des élections du Parlement Européen au suffrage universel, submitted on 21 June 1963 by André Rossi, reproduced in PE 10.203, a document not yet classified in the EP's archives.

¹¹⁹ Parliamentary bill on the electoral system for the election of Italian representatives to the European Parliament, submitted by Senator Onofrio Jannuzzi, reproduced in PE 12.037, a document not yet classified in the EP's archives.

¹²⁰ EPMotion for a resolution tabled by Messrs Deringer, Dehousse, Merchiers, Scelba, Armengaud, Boertien, Burger, Dittrich, Bech, Lautenschlager, Rossi and Westerterp, Doc. 50/68 in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/JURI.1961 A0-0214/68 0020.

THE LULL IN THE 1960s

meeting on 27 June a brief discussion took place. The motion was finally discussed and adopted on 30 June 1969. Since a broad consensus had existed right from the start, it is not clear whether the seven months of inactivity between the first discussion and the approval were solely due to parliamentary commitments or to a search for a consensus, even outside the committee. The motion for a resolution was unanimously adopted, with a single abstention, which Mr Ribière explains with reference to the 1960 draft Convention, which he considered inadequate. This statement gave the rapporteur a chance to clarify the aim of the proposal: to reopen the issue of direct elections.

In reality, this was more than just a political relaunch: as the parliamentary report explains¹²¹, it paved the way for legal proceedings on the grounds of failure to act, which, according to Article 175 of the EEC Treaty, was admissible only if the institution concerned – in this case the Council – had been asked to act and this request had been followed by a two-month silence. However, for there to be a failure to act, there had to be an obligation to adopt a decision. This was inferred from Article 138 of the Treaty which, considering the designation of members of the European Parliament by national governments as inherently provisional, stipulated that the Council, acting by means of a unanimous vote, would determine the provisions which it would recommend to Member States for adoption. Therefore, there was a clearly established legal obligation and, while it is true that the Council occupied itself with the matter, its failure to act consists in failing to reach a decision: in other words, being incapable of reaching a unanimous agreement¹²². On the political expediency of direct elections, apart from the fact that the European Economic Community would henceforth take decisions formerly reserved for national parliaments, the report mentions the parliamentary resources that would replace national contributions, control of which required Parliament to have an authentic democratic mandate¹²³.

The motion for a resolution was discussed and adopted by the Assembly on 12 March 1969 during a sitting that was interrupted by a student protest, which, although irregular, as Dehousse describes it, at least had the merit of making up for Europe's absence from the May and June demonstrations. The rapporteur was particularly pleased to have heard a demonstrator call for the right to vote in future European elections¹²⁴.

The debate did not indicate any fundamental dissent, although some is in fact perceived, for example from Rosario Romeo¹²⁵, who challenged the legal basis of proceedings for failure to act where a unanimous decision was required. This controversial issue did not seem to be strictly related to the motion for a resolution, which was not concerned with the merits of the provisions on direct elections, but the need to adopt them. The Gaullists raised this issue with regard to election procedures, and specifically the unfair ratio between the population and the number of Members¹²⁶, which would lead to an amendment aimed at introducing the 'one person, one vote' principle. On this amendment, later rejected, an animated discussion took place, particularly between Michel Habib-Deloncle¹²⁷, who supported it, and Fernand Dehousse¹²⁸, who was concerned that the resolution did not enter into the merits of the issue, but simply urged that a decision should be taken.

¹²¹ EP, Committee on Legal Affairs, Report on the motion for a resolution (doc 50/68) tabled by... relating to the election of Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/JURI.1961 A0-0214/68 0010.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ EP sitting of Wednesday 12 March 1969 in OJEC ANN. 113/69, pp. 43-44.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

¹²⁶ Speech by Mr Ribière. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 56-58.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

Chapter IV

Towards direct elections

1. MEETING WITH PIERRE HARMEL, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The veiled threat contained in the Resolution of 12 March 1969 had immediate results: a few days later¹²⁹, the Council of Ministers appointed permanent representatives to report on the subject and the Conference of Foreign Ministers, meeting in The Hague on 1 and 2 December, decided that the Council of Ministers would again look into the matter¹³⁰. The European Parliament noted that the Conference had not drawn up a timetable, and asked the Council to conclude its work as soon as possible, asking for a suitable channel of communication to be established between the Parliament and the Council¹³¹. Fernand Dehousse, rapporteur, had already presented the proposal orally to Parliament, emphasising both its procedural nature and its aim of keeping Members of the European Parliament informed about plans for the direct election of this body¹³². Michele Cifarelli had instead entered into the merits of the issue by linking the motion for a resolution with that day's political debates¹³³, which highlighted how important topics were being examined by an indirectly elected parliamentary body with only advisory powers¹³⁴.

On 26 June 1970, a meeting took place between a delegation from the European Parliament¹³⁵ and Council President Pierre Harmel. In reconstructing the Council's activities during the previous year, Mr Harmel observed that the issue of elections *'has not significantly progressed, because we find ourselves in a "transitional phase" in which we must take account of the fact that negotiations on the "enlargement" of the Community will begin very shortly, as well as the fact that there is a commitment to examine new proposals concerning Parliament's powers within two years'*.

The Council President asked the parliamentary delegation five questions:

- Did Parliament still consider its 1960 draft valid, or should it be amended, and if so, how?
- In the event of an enlargement of the Community, would Parliament maintain its initial proposal of tripling the number of members?

¹²⁹ 25 and 26 March.

¹³⁰ EP, Political Committee, Memorandum from the Secretariat of 25.11.1970 on the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, a document which has not yet been classified in the EP's archives.

¹³¹ EP Resolution of 3 February 1970 on the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, in OJEC C 25, 28.2.1970, p. 28.

¹³² EP Debates, sitting of 3 February 1970, p. 11. The resolution of 3 February forms part of a wider context of consultations with the Council and the foreign ministers on the follow-up to the Hague Conference, which began in December 1969 and which would lead to a report on the Political Future of the Community (CARDOG PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0118/70) in Annex to OJEC 121.

¹³³ Negotiations with Greece and own resources.

¹³⁴ EP Debates, sitting of 3 February 1970, pp. 119-120 in Annex to OJEC 121.

¹³⁵ The European Parliament Delegation was composed of its Chairman Mario Scelba, the chairman of the Political Committee, Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza and Fernand Dehousse. Parliament's archives contain minutes of the meeting of 26 June 1970 (PE 25.169 of 14.7.70), not yet classified, and a communication from the chairman of the Political Committee in the minutes of its meeting of 30 June 1970. The first document was used as a basis of the account that follows in the text.

- Would the transitional period be maintained or reviewed and adapted to the current situation?
- Would Parliament maintain its 1960 position on the plurality of offices?
- What was Parliament's position on the bills on the direct election of representatives at national level submitted in some Member States?

The three members of the delegation, responding separately, gave more or less the same answers to the questions: the 1960 draft was still essentially valid, albeit with the necessary adjustments; and the national bills made sense until the Community announced otherwise; the transitional period would be reconsidered in the light of the new situation; the position on the plurality of offices was out of date. Some differences can be seen between the replies given by Mr Scelba and Mr Dehousse¹³⁶ on the question of the number of members: the former declined to comment, while the latter believed that in a Community of 10 Member States, this number should be doubled.

Both Mr Scelba and Mr Dehousse raised the issue of the distribution of seats between Member States, which Mr Harmel had not mentioned. Mr Scelba asked whether the Council had discussed the issue and simply hoped for a fair solution, even if the proportional representation had to be adjusted. Mr Dehousse feared that if the powers of the European Parliament were increased, the distribution of seats would favour the larger countries. He relaunched the idea of a bicameral system, with a Senate constituted on a national or regional basis alongside a chamber composed based on a proportion of the population of the Member States.

Mr Scarascia Mugnozza mainly tackled the subject of relations between Parliament and the Council, putting forward three suggestions: the Council Working Party would finish its research and send this to Parliament, or Parliament would present a new document, or each institution would set up its own working parties instructed to work on the new version together. Mr Scarascia Mugnozza admitted a preference for the third option, which also won the backing of both Mr Dehousse and Mr Harmel, who asked Parliament not to persist in asking the Council for an immediate response on specific points¹³⁷.

2. MEETING WITH WALTER SCHEEL, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

At its meeting of 29 September 1970, the Council decided to resume its examination of the issue of direct elections and appointed its own president, the chairman of Coreper and the chairman of the Working Party, which was specifically responsible for the issue, to maintain regular contact with the President of the European Parliament. Mr Scelba, in a letter sent to Mr Scarascia Mugnozza¹³⁸, observed that the procedure decided on by the Council was not the one proposed at the meeting with Mr Harmel, but was however still a channel of communication. The President of the European Parliament identified five topics for discussion with the Council: the transitional period, the electoral system, the increase in the number of members, the plurality of offices and the implications of the accession of new Member States.

At the meeting of 29 October, the Political Committee, following a debate (the various positions expressed during this debate are not documented in the minutes) adopted the point of view of Mr Scelba, who urged it to ask the Council whether or not it agreed with the five points and, based on the answers given by ministers, proposed presenting a new report. The Political Committee held an internal debate on the issue of direct

¹³⁶ Mr Scarascia Mugnozza referred to the statements made by Mr Scelba.

¹³⁷ The minutes of the meeting of the Political Committee of 30 June 1970 were too concise regarding contributions from members who were not present at the meeting and make it impossible to identify original contributions, other than general support for the positions expressed by the delegation.

¹³⁸ Letter of 16 October 1970, which constitutes Annex I to the minutes of the Political Committee meeting of 29 October 1970. The information about the Council's decisions contained in the text is taken from this letter.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS

elections a month later¹³⁹, in view of the second meeting with the Council Presidency. During this debate, guidelines were defined for the positions to be presented to the Council by the EP delegation.

The meeting between the Council President, Mr Scheel, and Messrs Scelba and Dehousse, from Parliament, took place on 8 December. During the meeting¹⁴⁰, the representatives of the European Parliament, mentioning the possibility of legal proceedings for failure to act, as provided for by the resolution of 12 March 1969, insisted that a procedure be adopted based on the model proposed on 26 June and that the Council make some fundamental decisions: an agreement in principle on the direct elections with an indication of the election deadline and whether there was a need to wait until the accession of those Member States for which negotiations were already under way. The latter decision produced two different options: if it was decided to wait for these countries to join, then the candidate countries would need to be sounded out, if not then would need specific aspects of Community legislation to be addressed.

Mr Dehousse in particular focused on the substantive issues, based on the guidelines of the Political Committee. He again confirmed the need for a transitional period, but believed that, in terms of the electoral system, it would be better to move gradually towards a uniform regime; with regard to the number of Members, the new preference was for the number to be doubled. Partly to overcome the difficulties of the distribution of seats, an issue on which France was sensitive, he again argued for the bicameral system, which, just like the hostility to the dual mandate, was essentially one of his own ideas rather than of the Committee for which he was rapporteur.

For his part, Mr Scheel had no mandate to examine the substantive issues and spoke personally, agreeing with the need for closer contact between the Council and Parliament and expressing his preference for the direct election of half of the Members, the number of which would be decided during the accession negotiations. In this respect, he emphasised that candidate countries were in favour of Community institutions which were truly democratic; in terms of the dual mandate, this was not a problem if it was limited to a reasonable number of Members.

3. MEETING WITH GASTON THORN, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Following the meeting with Mr Scheel, contact between the two institutions was suspended during the French and Italian presidencies, although the issue was apparently raised during a meeting between the presidents of the two institutions, Walter Behrendt and Robert Schuman. However, as Chairman Scarascia Mugnozza observed to the Committee at its meeting of 1 July 1971, the outcome of this discussion was not known.

In 1971, the Political Committee¹⁴¹ discussed the issue off and on, without really offering any new ideas. However, the hearing with the authors of national bills on European elections is recalled¹⁴².

The Luxembourg Presidency, at the invitation of the President of the European Parliament, resumed contact in March 1972, when the Foreign Minister Gaston Thorn had an exchange of views with the Political Committee¹⁴³. He confirmed that the Working Party would continue its research into the technical problems, but that the most important issues were political. A directly elected European Parliament would have greater political influence, raising the issue of its powers and thus the balance between the institutions. Consequently, the Council, in unanimous agreement over the principle of direct elections, could not examine the issue in

¹³⁹ 30 November 1970.

¹⁴⁰ EP, Political Committee, Minutes of the meeting of 8 December 1970 with Walter Scheel, President-in-Office of the Council, in CARDOC PE0 AP PV/POLI.1961 POLI-19701208.

¹⁴¹ In the meantime, Mr Lautenschlager had been appointed as rapporteur for this issue, replacing Fernand Dehousse, who had been appointed a minister in the Belgian Government.

¹⁴² EP, Political Committee, Minutes of the meeting of 6 October 1971.

¹⁴³ EP, Political Committee, Minutes of the meeting of 2 March 1972.

isolation from the resulting institutional framework, and more importantly, also had to take account of the opinions of the four candidate countries¹⁴⁴.

4. TOWARDS A NEW DRAFT CONVENTION

The Paris Summit in October 1972 launched the project to create a European Union by the end of the decade. The final communiqué¹⁴⁵ hoped for an extension of the budgetary powers of the European Parliament through the full implementation of the 1970 Treaty, which had already extended them, regardless of whether the direct elections were introduced as hoped.

While examining a series of issues linked with the European Union project, the Political Committee considered the time had come to revive the idea of direct elections with a new report¹⁴⁶ and requested authorisation from the Bureau, which agreed. The reasons for this initiative can be inferred, in the absence of other sources, from the report itself¹⁴⁷: the 1960 draft had by now lapsed, since the transitional period had expired, the Community having three new members and taking account of the fact that the goal of constructing the European Union by 1980 '*meant the swift implementation of measures aimed at allowing greater participation of the people in the unification of Europe*'.

The Political Committee began by sending out a questionnaire¹⁴⁸ to Members of the European Parliament and national parliaments. The questions, preceded by a brief introduction by the rapporteur, concerned the electoral system, the dual mandate, conflicts of interest of Members of the European Parliament and their term of office, the number of Members and the distribution of seats between the nine Member States, as well as the expediency of a transitional period, as proposed by the 1960 draft. However, in his introduction, the rapporteur, Mr Patijn, proposed allowing Member States the freedom to decide on the date of the elections, provided that this fell during the three-year period 1979-1982.

5. DRAFT CONVENTION: THE COMMISSION'S TEXT AND THE TEXT ADOPTED

The Political Committee spent almost a year on the discussion of the report, from 29 November 1973 until 7 November 1974, when it adopted it unanimously with only three abstentions. On 14 January 1975, the Assembly adopted an almost identical version of the report¹⁴⁹ by 106 votes to 2 with 17 abstentions¹⁵⁰.

During the initial phase of the work carried out by the Political Committee, which lasted until March 1974, the questions in the questionnaire were discussed and, from what can be inferred from the scant minutes, there was a discussion in which each member of the committee took part; unfortunately however, the minutes do not provide details of this discussion.

¹⁴⁴ Denmark, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

¹⁴⁵ For this CARDOC Journal, the Internet version is used, taken from the website <http://www.ena.lu/>.

¹⁴⁶ EP, Political Committee, Minutes of the meeting of 18 May 1973. The minutes do not document the discussion.

¹⁴⁷ EP, Political Committee, Report concerning the adoption of the draft Convention on the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, rapporteur Schelto Patijn, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0368/74 0010.

¹⁴⁸ EP, Political Committee, Preliminary draft report in the form of a questionnaire on the issue of the election by direct suffrage of Members of the European Parliament, in CARDOC PE0 OD PV/BURE BUEL-19731213 0830.

¹⁴⁹ The amendments to the Commission's text concerned the recitals, which were considerably simplified, the number of Members of Parliament, which was reduced, and the date of the first elections, which was brought forward by two years.

¹⁵⁰ EP Debates, European Parliament, sitting of Tuesday 14 January 1975, in OJEC, Annex to 185/January 1975. The two votes against were those of the two Danish socialists, the abstaining members were from the Group of European Progressive Democrats and the communists, and also related to non-attached French representatives.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS

The second phase, between March and November 1974, was concerned with the report itself. The 1974 draft Convention essentially tackled the same issues as those 14 years previously, updating the solutions to reflect the new political situation, and specifically the accession of three new Member States (Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom), following which the number of Members of Parliament rose from 142 to 198.

The draft, which was politically realistic, was based on the principle of not proposing a regulation until this was necessary and feasible. This principle was first applied in the difficult matter of the electoral system. A system common to the nine Member States, six of which¹⁵¹ had a proportional system, two¹⁵² a majority system and one¹⁵³ a mixed system, seemed premature. Once the political conditions were established, a common procedure would be adopted; the draft predicted that these conditions would materialise in 1980, the date by which Parliament had to prepare a uniform electoral system. Until that time, the elections would take place based on national provisions, as had always been the case.

With regard to the date of the elections, the draft proposed a solution which is still the one adopted today: each Member State announced the date within a timescale defined at Community level and could make it coincide with other domestic elections. The draft indicated that the first elections would take place by the first Sunday in May 1978, the Parliament being required to draw up a proposal for a uniform electoral system by 1980 at the latest.

It also referred to national laws for the minimum voting age and minimum age for candidates, as well as for the eligibility of parties. Conversely, the term of office (five years) was determined at Community level.

With regard to the dual European and national mandate, despite continued opposition, this was maintained. However, the rapporteur was at pains to underline that it was no longer compulsory, as in the system of designation by national parliaments, but merely possible; in other words, it was left up to individual members.

The number of Members was set at 550, based on a calculation method strictly pegged to the population of each Member State: six representatives for the first million inhabitants and one representative for every 500 000 inhabitants thereafter. Based on this criterion, the nine Member States had the following number of representatives: Belgium 24, Denmark 14, Germany 128, France 108, Ireland 10, Italy 113, Luxembourg 6, Netherlands 31 and the United Kingdom 116. This assumed a total of 550 seats, which the Political Committee had wanted subject to certain criteria: adequate representation of all peoples, balanced representation of Community citizens, representation of all political groups present in each Member State, representation, wherever possible, of national minorities and the harmonious functioning of the European Parliament¹⁵⁴. As well as these criteria there were political considerations, such as not reducing the existing number of representatives of each Member State.

The Assembly, accepting an amendment from the Committee on Legal Affairs, reduced the number of members to 355 based on an argument explained in the Chamber by Hans Lautenschlager¹⁵⁵, as rapporteur for the Committee on Legal Affairs, which the Political Committee had asked for an opinion. The speaker used mathematical principles to explain how the proposed distribution of 355 seats would be the best option for minimising the weighted advantage of smaller countries and the disadvantage of larger countries; with fewer seats, the former had an additional advantage, while a higher number of seats favoured the larger countries. The underlying philosophy was to *establish a Parliament which, overall, created a European policy without*

¹⁵¹ Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

¹⁵² France and the United Kingdom.

¹⁵³ Germany.

¹⁵⁴ The report does not provide any further explanation of these criteria and how they were coordinated: in particular, the distinction between the balanced representation of citizens and the adequate representation of peoples is not clear, particularly as the latter are simply the sum of the former.

¹⁵⁵ EP, Debates of the European Parliament, sitting of Tuesday 14 January 1975, Annex to OJEC 185, January 1975, p.83.

giving the impression that some countries had to keep other countries at bay by offering 'rewards'. The distribution of the 355 seats was as follows: Belgium 23, Denmark 17, Germany 71, France 65, Ireland 13, Italy 66, Luxembourg 6, Netherlands 27 and the United Kingdom 67¹⁵⁶.

6. CHAMBER DEBATE: GROUP POSITIONS

The Assembly debate took place during the single sitting of 14 January 1975, but was animated: 25 speakers in fact took part. The draft received the support of the majority of the groups: Christian Democrats¹⁵⁷, Socialist¹⁵⁸, Liberals¹⁵⁹, and European Conservatives¹⁶⁰.

The European Progressive Democrats, while agreeing with the principle of direct elections, did not give their consent at first because they believed that the issue of direct elections could not be separated from that of the powers of the Assembly; secondly, they disagreed with the electoral procedure described in the draft, which was not uniform; thirdly, they did not agree with the distribution proposed by the Political Committee. The European Progressive Democrats, as moreover indicated by the amendment proposed by them and rejected by the Chamber, wanted absolute proportionality of seats in relation to the size of the population¹⁶¹.

Even the Communists declared their support for the principle of direct elections, even in a Parliament without powers, but expressed confusion on three points. First of all, they criticised the electoral procedure, which was not uniform during the first phase, but was left up to national laws; secondly, they criticised the referral to national legislation of the eligibility of political parties, fearing discrimination in some countries towards parties which were already represented in Parliament¹⁶²; finally, they called for the adoption of the proportional electoral system as being the very essence of democratic elections¹⁶³.

Aside from the positions in favour or against, the subjects most discussed were the number and distribution of seats and the dual mandate.

7. ACT CONCERNING THE DIRECT ELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Council of Ministers instructed its own Working Party to examine the draft Convention and decide whether the elections would take place in May/June 1978. A European Parliament delegation made contact and from the scant information obtained from the minutes of the Political Committee, an impression is formed of spirited yet discreet confrontation between the two institutions¹⁶⁴. In a letter to the President of the European Parliament, Georges Spénale, the committee chairman, Giovanni Boano, expressed the committee's view that the elections would take place in 1978 with a number of seats and a distribution essentially in line with the criteria of the draft Convention¹⁶⁵. In fact, the question of the number of seats

¹⁵⁶ Note that the amendment from the Committee on Legal Affairs is identical to the personal position that the rapporteur, Schelto Patijn, expressed in the report, except for an error which makes the total number of seats allocated to individual Member States 354 (the rapporteur had in fact allocated 65 seats).

¹⁵⁷ Speech by Egon Klepsch. EP Debates of the European Parliament, sitting of Tuesday 14 January 1975, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁵⁸ Speech by Helmut Schmidt. Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁵⁹ Speech by Léon Jozeau-Marigné. Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁶⁰ Speech by Peter Kirk. Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁶¹ Speech by Christian de la Malène. Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁶² Clearly referring to the ban on the Communist Party in Germany.

¹⁶³ Speech by Francesco Paolo D'Angelosante. EP Debates of the European Parliament, sitting of Tuesday 14 January 1975, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of the meetings of 2 March and 21 April 1976.

¹⁶⁵ Letter annexed to the minutes of 21 April 1976.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS

seems to have been one of the most difficult, and Mr Patijn in particular refers to this at the meeting of 21 April, explaining the three projects placed on the table by the Council.

This led to the declaration of 15 September 1976¹⁶⁶ in which the President-in-Office of the Council, Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, solemnly announced to Parliament that, in a few days' time, on 20 September, the Nine would announce the Act concerning the election of representatives to the Assembly by direct universal suffrage, originally planned for the end of July¹⁶⁷. An impassioned debate followed, in the knowledge that all of the details of the Act had been finalised and that therefore any specific complaints only amounted to political posturing. The resolution that concluded the debate would seal the agreement of the European Parliament on the number of seats and their distribution between the Member States, and hoped for swift ratification of the Act¹⁶⁸.

This¹⁶⁹ is essentially identical to the 1975 Draft Convention, except for the composition of the European Parliament and for the fact that it leaves it up to the Council to decide the date of the first elections. Under the Act, Parliament had 410 members, distributed between the Member States as follows: 81 each to the four largest countries¹⁷⁰, 25 to the Netherlands, 24 to Belgium, 16 to Denmark, 15 to Ireland and 6 to Luxembourg. This distribution differed from the proportional system for the four largest countries, recognising their equal political dignity, and for Luxembourg on account of its smaller size.

Mr Patijn, speaking before the Assembly¹⁷¹, complained of the attitude of governments that were less advanced than the European Parliament towards the way in which the proportional distribution was decided. However, he expressed his satisfaction with the final result, since the total number of members (410) was close to that proposed by Parliament itself.

8. TOWARDS THE FIRST EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The matter was not brought to a close with the signing of the Act, since ratification and implementing acts needed to follow. Parliament diligently continued the process with a series of resolutions and some questions.

An important resolution, connected with a proposal for an amendment and withdrawn for reasons of expediency, was the resolution of 15 September 1976 on the voting rights of migrants¹⁷². In it the European Parliament recommended that Member States should grant the right to vote in European elections to citizens who satisfied the criteria (other than the residency criteria), and that these citizens should therefore be allowed to vote for candidates running for office in their country of origin, from the country in which they resided at the time of the election. This issue, as indicated in the report by the Political Committee accompanying the proposal¹⁷³, forms part of a wider movement for the recognition of voting rights for Community citizens residing in a Member State other than their own.

¹⁶⁶ EP Debates, sitting of 15 January 1976, Annex to OJEC 206/1976.

¹⁶⁷ The delay was due to the need for a British cabinet meeting and Danish reservations over the date of the elections, which Copenhagen wanted to be held on the same day as those of the Volketing, a matter which was subsequently resolved for practical purposes. Alfred Bertrand, speaking on behalf of the Christian Democrats, thanked Parliament's President, Georges Spénale, for putting firm pressure on governments to commit to signing the Act on 20 September. EP Debates, sitting of 15 January 1976, Annex to OJEC 206/1976.

¹⁶⁸ EP Resolution of 15 September 1976 on the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, OJEC C 238, 11.10.76, p. 25.

¹⁶⁹ The Act concerning the election of representatives to the Assembly by direct universal suffrage was published in OJEC L 278, 8.10.76, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

¹⁷¹ EP Debates, sitting of 15 January 1976, op. cit.

¹⁷² EP Resolution of 15 June 1977 on voting rights in elections by direct universal suffrage, in OJEC C 163, 11.7.77, p. 39.

¹⁷³ EP, Political Committee, Report on voting rights in elections by direct suffrage, rapporteur Schelto Patijn, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0043/77 0010.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament also issued an opinion on the matter of the date for the elections. By this time, the delays of some Member States in adopting the relevant electoral laws meant that it would be impossible for the elections to take place in May or June 1978, as promised by the Council, despite the fact that unlike the EP draft, the Act of 20 September 1976 did not stipulate an election date. By the end of 1977, the European Parliament had already adopted a resolution¹⁷⁴ in which it asked the Council to present proposals as soon as possible regarding the timing of the first European elections. This was an attempt to galvanise the Council into action, even though the debate, in which only British MEPs took part, was essentially a debate over the House of Commons vote on the electoral law¹⁷⁵.

Two months later, Mr Patijn¹⁷⁶, tabling a motion for a resolution of the Political Committee¹⁷⁷ orally to Parliament, complained of how the European elections could no longer be held on the planned date due to the failure of some Member States to adopt the relevant electoral laws. In February 1978, in fact, only four countries – France, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, which it was feared would cause the elections to be delayed – were ready to ratify and implement the Act of 20 September 1976, while the other Member States, generally considered the pioneers of European integration, were still far from making this decision. However, a debate was stirring within the United Kingdom, conscious of the political implications of the European elections. Finally, the EP resolution criticised the failure of the Council to honour its commitment to set the date of the elections in May/June that year and asked the Copenhagen Summit of 7-8 April 1978 to finalise this¹⁷⁸.

The Danish summit finally announced the much-awaited decision, setting the date of the European elections for 7 to 10 June 1979. The European Parliament welcomed the decision, asking those Member States which had not already done so to proceed with the ratification without delay¹⁷⁹.

To complete the overview of Parliament's preparations for the direct elections, two resolutions should be mentioned in relation to the information campaign, a constant concern of Parliament from the start of its campaign for elections by universal suffrage.

In 1977 the European Parliament adopted two resolutions on this particular subject in the space of three months. With the first resolution¹⁸⁰, it asked the Executive to present it with an information programme for the elections by universal suffrage by 30 March 1977. It also invited its Political Committee to submit a report, by the May sitting, on how this programme related to the committee's general programme, and how it would be coordinated with the programme of the European Parliament. As the rapporteur Mr Schuijt explained to the Chamber, the millions of units of account set aside in the Commission's 1977 budget would have to be used for this purpose, although it would be frozen until Parliament had approved the detailed programme¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁴ EP resolution of 16 December 1977 on elections by direct universal suffrage, OJEC C 6, 6.1.78. The resolution followed a proposal from Cornelis Berkhouwer on behalf of the Liberal, Democratic and Reformist Group with the same title, in CARDOC PE0 AP PR B0-0449/77 0010.

¹⁷⁵ EP Debates, sitting of 16 December 1977, Annex to OJEC 224/1977.

¹⁷⁶ EP Debates, sitting of 15 February 1978, Annex to OJEC 226/1978.

¹⁷⁷ EP, Political Committee, Report on the date of the direct elections to the European Parliament, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0537/77 0010.

¹⁷⁸ EP, resolution of 16 February 1978 on the date of the direct elections to the European Parliament, OJEC C 63, 13.3.78.

¹⁷⁹ EP Resolution of 11 May 1978 on the decision of the European Council of 7 and 8 April 1978 to hold the elections of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage during the period from 7 to 10 June 1979, in OJEC C 131, 5.6.78. This resolution follows from EP, Political Committee, report with the same title, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0065/78 0010.

¹⁸⁰ EP, Resolution of 8 February 1977 on the European Community's information policy with regard to preparations for the first direct elections to the European Parliament, in OJEC C 57, 7.3.77. This resolution follows from EP, Political Committee, report with the same title, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0526/76 0010.

¹⁸¹ EP Debates, sitting of 8 February 1977, Annex to OJEC 212/1977.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS

At the following sitting on 11 May 1977¹⁸² Mr Schuijt presented a report on the programme. This reserved 65% of the budget for the Commission's information policy specifically for the elections and millions of units of account would be added to this, mainly earmarked for public information and education. Despite this, the resolution eventually adopted¹⁸³ considered the appropriations insufficient, and called for a more detailed overall programme, which would also contain forecasts for the 1978 financial year and indicate a point of contact between Parliament and the Commission for the coordination of their respective actions.

When the citizens of nine European countries inaugurated two years later, in June 1979, the first international elected assembly, it signified the end of a quarter of a century long road towards the democratic legitimacy of a Parliament, which had understood from the beginning that stabilizing its democratic legitimacy was a prerequisite for the evolution of European integration towards a status of Union.

¹⁸² EP Debates, sitting of 11 May 1977, Annex to QJEC 217/1977.

¹⁸³ EP resolution of 11 May 1977 on the European Community's information policy with particular reference to the Commission Information Programme in preparation for direct elections to the European Parliament, in QJEC C 133, 6.6.1977. This resolution follows from EP, Political Committee, report with the same title, in CARDOC PE0 AP RP/POLI.1961 A0-0093/77 0010.

**Resolution on the adoption of a draft convention
introducing elections to the European Parliament
by direct universal suffrage**

RESOLUTION

on the adoption of a draft convention introducing elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage

1

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the report of its Political Affairs Committee (Doc. 168/74),
- reaffirms its conviction that the process of European unification cannot succeed without the direct participation of the peoples affected, therefore considers a European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage as an indispensable element in achieving further progress towards integration and establishing a better equilibrium between the Community institutions on a democratic basis,
- in pursuance of the task assigned to it by the Treaties establishing the European Communities,
- having regard to the need to adapt the draft convention of 1960 to the changed circumstances as they now exist,
- replaces the draft convention it adopted on 17 May 1960 (1) by the following:

DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BY DIRECT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

- resolved to take the freely expressed will of the peoples of the Member States of the European Communities as the justification for the mission entrusted to the European Parliament;
- anxious to emphasize the representative character of the European Parliament by the election of its members by direct universal suffrage,
- having regard to Articles 21 (3) and 96 of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community;
- having regard to Articles 158 (5) and 256 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community;
- having regard to Articles 108(3) and 204 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community;
- having regard to the draft prepared by the European Parliament and adopted by it on 14 January 1975:

has drawn up the following provisions which it recommends the Member States to adopt:

CHAPTER I

General provisions

Article 1

The representatives of the peoples in the European Parliament shall be elected by direct universal suffrage.

Article 2

1. The number of representatives elected in each Member State shall be as follows:

Belgium	23
Denmark	17
Germany	71
France	65
Ireland	13
Italy	66
Luxembourg	6
Netherlands	27
United Kingdom	67
	355

(1) OJ No 37, 2. 6. 1960, p. 834-60.

2. The Parliament, the Commission or the Government of any Member State may propose to the Council changes in the number of members provided for in paragraph 1.

Amendments to this convention shall be made pursuant to the procedure provided for in Article 14 of this convention.

Article 3

1. Representatives shall be elected for a term of five years.

2. The five-year legislative period shall begin at the opening of the first session following each election.

Article 4

1. Representatives shall vote on an individual and personal basis. They shall accept neither instructions nor any binding mandate.

2. National legislation shall ensure that the representatives receive the same guarantees as to independence, indemnity and immunity as their counterparts in the national Parliaments.

Article 5

Membership of the European Parliament shall be compatible with membership of a Parliament of a Member State.

Article 6

1. The office of representative in the European Parliament shall be incompatible with that of:

- member of the Government of a Member State;
- member of the Commission of the European Communities;
- judge, advocate-general or registrar at the Court of Justice of the European Communities;
- member of the Unit of Auditors of the European Communities;
- member of the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community or member of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Economic Community and of the European Atomic Energy Community;
- member of committees or other bodies set up in pursuance of the Treaties establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, the

European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community for the purpose of managing the Communities' funds or carrying out a permanent and direct administrative task;

— member of the Board of Directors, Management Committee or staff of the European Investment Bank;

— active official or servant of the institutions of the European Communities or of the specialized bodies attached to them.

2. Subject to the entry into force of special rules pursuant to Article 7 (1) of this Convention, the provisions of each Member State relating to incompatibility with a national parliamentary mandate shall be applied.

3. Representatives of the European Parliament appointed, in the course of a legislative period, to any of the offices mentioned above shall be replaced under the terms of Article 12.

CHAPTER II

Electoral system

Article 7

1. The European Parliament shall draw up a proposal for a uniform electoral system by 1980 at the latest. The Council shall unanimously lay down the appropriate provisions, which it shall recommend to the Member States for adoption in accordance with their constitutional requirements.

2. Pending the entry into force of this uniform electoral system and subject to the other provisions of this convention, the electoral system shall fall within the competence of each Member State.

Article 8

The provisions governing the admission of political parties to elections in each Member State shall apply to elections to the European Parliament.

Article 9

1. Elections to the European Parliament shall be held on the same day in all Member States.

2. Any Member State may, however, decide to hold the elections one day earlier or later than the fixed date or to spread them over two consecutive days including that day.

3. The Council shall make arrangements in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 14, to ensure that the election results are declared at one and the same time.

Article 10

1. Elections to the European Parliament shall be held not later than one month before the end of each legislative period.

2. The European Parliament shall sit automatically on the first Tuesday following an interval of one month from the last day of the elections.

3. The outgoing European Parliament shall remain in office until the first sitting of the new Parliament.

Article 11

Pending the entry into force of the uniform electoral system to be adopted in accordance with Article 7 (1), the European Parliament shall verify the credentials of representatives and rule on any disputes that may arise in this connection.

Article 12

Pending the entry into force of the uniform electoral system to be adopted in accordance with Article 7 (1), and subject to the other provisions of this convention, the Member States shall lay down appropriate procedures for filling any seat which falls vacant during a legislative period.

CHAPTER III

Transitional and final provisions

Article 13

1. Subject to the provisions of Article 9, the first elections to the European Parliament shall be held not later than the first Sunday of May, 1978.

2. The date of subsequent elections shall be fixed, taking account of Articles 3, 9 and 10, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 14.

Article 14

Should reference be made to the procedure laid down in this Article or should it appear that further measures are required to implement direct elections to the European Parliament in accordance with this convention and if the necessary powers are not provided, the Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the European Parliament and with its approval, make the appropriate provisions. The Council shall consult the Commission before making its decision.

Article 15

1. The following provisions stand repealed by the present convention: Article 21 (3) of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, Article 118 (1) of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and Article 108 (1) of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community.

2. Article 21 (1) and 2 of the ECSC Treaty, Article 108 (1) and 3 of the EEC Treaty, and Article 108 (1) and 2 of the EAEC Treaty shall be repealed on the date fixed in Article 10 (2).

Article 16

This convention is drawn up in the Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Irish and Italian languages, all seven texts being equally authentic.

Article 17

1. This convention shall be ratified by the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

2. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of the Italian Republic, which shall inform the signatory States and the institutions of the European Communities when this has been done.

3. This convention shall enter into force on the day the instrument of ratification is deposited by the last signatory State to carry out this formality.

31

The European Parliament,

- instructs its Political Affairs Committee to establish appropriate contacts with the Council and the Member States with a view to securing the early adoption of the draft convention,
- urges the Council to establish the appropriate contacts with the European Parliament immediately if, in its opinion, changes should be made to the draft convention,
- instructs its Political Affairs Committee to bring forward a supplementary report when modifications of the draft convention appear to be necessary,
- instructs its Political Affairs Committee immediately to carry out the necessary preliminary work for the introduction of a European electoral system,
- instructs its President to forward this resolution, together with the draft convention and the report of its committee, to the Council and Commission of the European Communities and to the Parliaments and Governments of the Member States.

Change in agenda

At the request of Mr Spinelli, *Member of the Commission of the European Communities*, Parliament decided that the joint debate on the two oral questions on the Community's attitude to South Africa (Doc. 422/74 and Doc. 421/74) should be held during the sitting of Wednesday, 15 January 1975, as the fourth item on the agenda following consideration of the oral question with debate put by the Committee on Public Health and the Environment (Doc. 417/74).

Agenda for next sitting

The President announced the following agenda for the next sitting on Wednesday, 15 January 1975:

12 noon and 3 p.m.

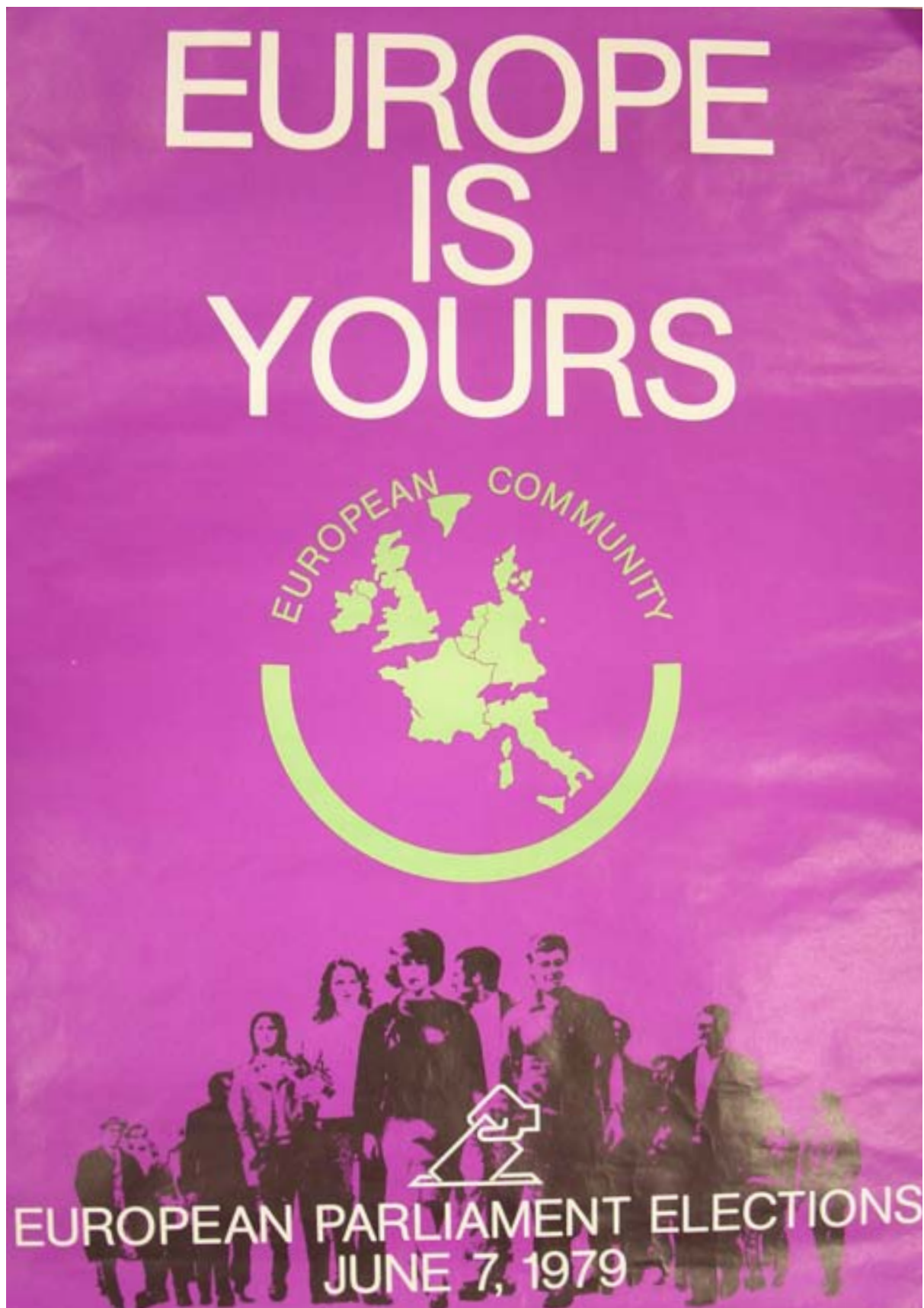
- Question Time;
- report by Mr Badoux on the results of the Paris summit conference;
- oral question with debate on the Committees on Implementing Provisions;
- joint debate on:
 - oral question to the Council on the Community's attitude to South Africa;
 - oral question to the Commission on the Community's attitude to South Africa;
- oral question with debate on the code of conduct for maritime transport conferences;
- oral question with debate on the status of women.

The sitting was closed at 8.10 p.m.

H. R. NORD
Secretary-General

Cornelis BERSKOU WIER
President

**Posters used during the information campaign
promoted by the European Parliament and
the European Commission for the first elections by
direct universal suffrage in June 1979**









L'EUROPE PREND UN NOUVEL ENVOL
10 juin 1979 : élection du PARLEMENT EUROPEEN 







Annex I



The 1979 European elections: Press reactions in the Member States

by Marie-Anne Louise Van Peene

1. METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubt that the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage were an unprecedented, historic event in the construction of the European Union. They were the first *multinational* democratic elections. In other words, the European Parliament became, as a result, the only *international* institution democratically elected by the citizens of more than one sovereign state ...

Of course, the idea was not new: the principle of a European Assembly elected by direct universal suffrage had already been agreed upon when the Treaty of Rome was drawn up, in 1957, and featured in Article 138 of the Treaty. But despite numerous campaigns in favour of such an assembly, it was not until December 1974, and the Treaty of Paris, that things began to take shape.

This study will focus on the first European elections and, in particular, on the way in which the event was treated by the press in the nine EEC Member States in 1979.¹ The collection of press cuttings, put together initially by the European Parliament's archive service and later transferred to the historical archives of the EU at the European University Institute in Florence, will form the basis of our reflections.

In order to carry out this work, which lays no claim to being anything more than the beginnings of what would be a vast undertaking, choices had to be made.

In the initial stage, given the enormous number of press cuttings, we thought it best to concentrate mainly on articles covering the period when the campaign was at its height, which extended, roughly, from April to July 1979. The choice of newspapers was guided by the desire to offer a sampling of all the various political tendencies. Finally, in order to avoid 'overloading', the articles selected were chosen mainly from among those where value judgments or stances that reflect public opinion were in evidence.

2. WHAT THE PAPERS WERE SAYING

One initial comment concerns the subjects dealt with by the press: the European elections were often looked at in terms of domestic politics and the relative strengths of the political parties. This has, incidentally, been a constant feature of coverage of the European elections, right up to the present day. We also noted a growing interest in the campaigns taking place in other Member States. Readers are beginning to be aware of the issues that concern other nations, and the way in which they approach things.

The column space devoted to European issues is very small, and the discussion centres mainly around national concerns. The French newspaper *Le Figaro* reports on the disenchantment with the common agricultural policy². On the same subject, the Italian magazine *Il Ponte* strongly criticises the common agricultural policy because of the burden it imposes on the Community budget and its adverse effects on surpluses and retail prices. The article advocates shifting the appropriations from the 'guarantee' to the 'guidance' section.³

Le Monde devotes an article to the suggestion made by a French party to reduce the working week to 35 hours within the European framework,⁴ a suggestion that was still being discussed, to no practical effect, twenty years later.

Three thematic strands will be addressed here: the question of women, the knock-on effects of national political issues, and the emergence of the environmental movement. Was there a genuine debate on Europe? Did the campaign succeed in mobilising public opinion? What are the links between national and European history? What is the experience of belonging to a number of different things – a country, or sometimes a

¹ The six founder members (Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands), to which were added, on 1 January 1973, Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

² *Agriculture: un avenir incertain*, date unknown, probably in May or June 1979.

³ G. Terranova *Comunità europea: il bilancio controverso* in 'Il Ponte', March 1980.

⁴ *The MRG came out in favour of reducing working hours to 35 within 5 years*, 25 May 1979.

region, and Europe? Finally, can one already begin to talk about the arrival of a potential European public forum?

In studying these themes, it will be seen that those first elections undeniably offer a unique observation point for anyone who wishes to try and understand what the idea of Europe and European integration represented in the eyes of Europeans at the time. Also, the reader will be amazed to see how many of the subjects that were addressed in 1979 are still burning issues today, 30 years later!

3. WOMEN AND EUROPE

In mythology, Europa was a woman. She was the daughter of the Phoenician king Agenor of Tyre, and was abducted by Zeus in the guise of a bull, who carried her off to Crete.

In reality, there were 130 million women in the Europe of 1979 (51.6% of the Community's population), some of whom were actively engaged in asserting their rights and making their contribution to the great European venture.⁵

At the end of the 1970s, women had gained full political rights in most countries of the world. Nevertheless, their real level of participation in political life was relatively low, and many inequalities persisted.

As one might expect, the European project was part of this 'march towards equality' as early as 1957, with the article in the Treaty of Rome that advocates equal pay. A legal provision which would, indeed, be taken up in a Council Directive in 1976.

But what was the situation in practice? An article in *L'Aurore* dated 2 June 1979⁶ gives us valuable information on this. It shows us that, as far as applying European legislation in day-to-day life was concerned, there was still a long way to go and, above all, that the elections offered a good opportunity to address these sensitive questions. The journalist tells us that, the 1976 Council Directive notwithstanding, a Commission report came to the negative conclusion that "this principle of equal pay has not been fully applied in any of the Member States".⁷

The journalist also deplores the results of a study carried out in February 1979 which shows that "in France the wage gap between men and women is 24.2%, in Germany 29.3% and in Luxembourg 37.5%" – this even though the principle of equal pay existed in all of the 'Nine'.⁸

She also tells us that legal remedies are available, but that many women are unaware of them or are afraid of being dismissed if they claim their rights. The conclusion is: "no cases have been brought in Denmark or Luxembourg. Three have been brought in the German Federal Republic, and three in France. Four in the Netherlands. Some ten judgments have been delivered in Italy. Women in the United Kingdom have proved to be the most litigious: they have brought some 2 500 cases!"⁹

In reply to this article the *Luxemburger Wort* journalist could have retorted that, despite everything, "women trust Europe. A survey carried out in the nine Community countries¹⁰ in International Women's Year showed that 64% of them were in favour of European unification and 32% believed that the development of the EEC could have a good influence on women's lives".¹¹

⁵ As reported in articles in the *Luxemburger Wort*, "Les femmes - une majorité dans l'Europe nouvelle", 29 March 1979, and *L'Aurore*, "130 millions de citoyennes...mais pas encore à part entière!", Sophie Huet, 2 June 1979.

⁶ *L'Aurore*, *L'Aurore*, "130 millions de citoyennes...mais pas encore à part entière!", Sophie Huet, 2 June 1979.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Sondage-Sofres, May 1978.

¹¹ *Luxemburger Wort*, "Les femmes - une majorité dans l'Europe nouvelle", 29 March 1979.

PRESS REACTIONS IN THE MEMBER STATES

The same journalist added that European directives were a driving force in fighting inequalities and that they had led to “*harmonisation of laws and raised awareness in all the Member States*”. He ends his article by saying that the European Parliament, now that it was elected by universal suffrage, would certainly play “*a more stimulating, more dynamic role*”.¹²

In total, some thirty articles in the press across the Member States address the question of women in the context of the first elections more or less directly.

Some, starting in March 1979, comment on the many meetings of women (feminist groups of all kinds) that were held all around Europe in the hope of raising awareness on what was at stake in the first elections. Others stressed that these elections offered women a unique opportunity to claim their right to greater equality and even – why not? – to stand as candidates.¹³

The article in *Le Monde* is a good example. It reports that 600 women met on 26 March in Paris, in response to an initiative by the European Communities’ Information Directorate-General. He comments on the event in these words: “*on the eve of an important election, the only demand that was unanimously adopted by all participants was the demand for women to have access to the lists of candidates*”. A few lines further on he adds: “*forcing open the doors of the job market and having the same rights there as men – that is the demand that could convince women that there is a point to Europe. All the participants agreed that this was the area where the Community must act with the most determination*”.¹⁴

In Brussels, on the other hand, a great “Europe-Femmes” day was held on the initiative of the Cercles Populaires Européens¹⁵ a few weeks later. The article tells us that “*it is urgently necessary, given the imminence of the elections, to give women the opportunity to discuss with specialists the questions that concern them directly*”¹⁶.

The Irish Times also reports in an article that women “*should be a decisive factor in the building of a new Europe*”. It adds that “*it will be possible to achieve the goal of equal rights for men and women by reforming and harmonising education systems in Europe and having working women participate in all areas of vocational training*”.¹⁷

Let us stop for a few moments now to look at the career of an exceptional woman who undeniably stands out as one of the great female political figures in the first elections. An eloquent symbol, she was appointed President of the elected Parliament. I am talking, of course, about Simone Veil ...

4. SIMONE VEIL’S CAMPAIGN

She was, by far, one of the most widely reported candidates in the press. In France, naturally, but also in the other Member States.

The article that painted the most laudatory picture of Simone Veil was certainly that which appeared in *Le Monde* shortly after the elections under the title “*Authenticity*”.

Here is an extract:

“When Simone Veil was appointed Minister of Health in May 1974, very few French people had heard of her. It took only a few months for her to become the most popular politician in France, the one whom the greatest number of French people (including a not inconsiderable number of electors on the Left) would like to see given major responsibility in the future.”

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ One example among many is the article by Bob Groen in the *Volkscrant*, “Vrouwen willen leidende rollen in Europa”, 4 May 1979.

¹⁴ *Le Monde*, “Les femmes et l’Europe: forcer les portes du pouvoir”, Bruno Frappat, 29 March 1979.

¹⁵ These circles, which were created in December 1977, are not a political formation. Their function is to allow opposing points of view to be discussed and alternative proposals to be made.

¹⁶ *La Libre Belgique*, “Bientôt, la journée ‘Europe-Femme’...”, 8 May 1979.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, “Women issue European manifesto”, John Cooney, 28 March 1979.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

*Her clear, vigorous defence of the bill liberalising contraception and then of that on abortion showed the widest possible public the courage, firmness, clear-headedness and judgment of the woman whom one Member of Parliament accused of 'preparing the way for a genocide of French fetuses worthy of Auschwitz'.*¹⁸

The leader writer Albert du Roy devotes a long article to the French campaign in *L'Express* of 5 May 1979. He says: “*Simone Veil began her campaign on the ground almost exclusively on the theme of Europe, which over the past twenty years, she believes, has enabled the tragedies suffered by her generation and herself to be overcome; and she believes Europe must be strengthened to face the new challenge*”. “*Europe is not a remedy, but a marvellous hope*” is probably the slogan that best sums up her campaign.¹⁹

He tells us that “*a meeting is an ordeal for a woman like her*”. But “*the exceptional level of popularity she enjoys in the polls and the impossibility of finding another unifier like her in the UDF convinced Giscard that, despite her political inexperience, Simone Veil was the only possible choice to head the list*”.²⁰

Impervious to the tensions of internal politics, Simone Veil pursued her “thematic campaign” all over France. From Marseille to Nancy, via Toulouse, Vitré, Lille and Lyon, she never changed register, whatever the tone of the arguments rolled out by her competitors. “*She is not campaigning against other lists, she is campaigning for Europe*”, we are told by Daniel Seguin of *Le Figaro*.²¹

So, after enlargement and agriculture, in Lille she took as her main theme “social Europe”. “*After the Europe of the merchants, we must make a Europe of men*”, she said.

The journalist saw Simone Veil as someone who was interested in tangible things rather than institutional debates or grand theories. “*It is the sum of little things that makes life real*”, she said elsewhere. In Lille, therefore, she spoke about the Europe of the 35-hour week, part-time work and early retirement.

In order to attain these goals, she looked upon Europe “*not as a panacea, but as an accelerator*”. Harmonisation of European laws therefore seemed to her a *sine qua non* for social progress.²²

Unlike the rest of the European campaign in France, Simone Veil’s had the incontestable merit of trying constantly to put the debate on European terrain. She showed what the campaign meant when she said that the representatives on her list “*have always stressed that it was a European debate and not an internal political debate*”.²³ As proof of this she made it known that, unlike the candidates at the head of the other lists, she intended to make the Parliamentary Assembly the main focus of her activities.

This is why a journalist from *Le Monde* did not hesitate to describe her as “*a personality of the first rank with firmly held and incontrovertible views*” and, a few paragraphs further on, said in connection with the question of multiple mandates: “*a more honest attitude is held by Simone Veil, who, refusing a multiple mandate, will, as we know, be relieved of her ministerial duties after her probable election*”.²⁴

For Simone Veil, “*10 June will continue to be remembered as a great day, which will be recorded in the history books. Good sense reminds us that there is strength in unity, that an isolated France could not take on the modern world*”.²⁵

On the subject of women’s issues, an article from *Le Figaro* dated 16 June tells us that Simone Veil plans to set up a “women’s intergroup in Strasbourg”. The ex-Minister of Health had noticed that women were “isolated” in the national parliaments, which did not make for effectiveness.

¹⁸ *Le Monde*, “Authenticité”, Dr Escoffier-Lambiotte, 12 June 1979.

¹⁹ *L'Express*, “Europe: la grande bagarre”, Albert du Roy, 5 May 1979.

²⁰ *L'Express*, “Europe: la grande bagarre”, Albert du Roy, 5 May 1979.

²¹ *Le Figaro*, “Simone Veil visite la maison de Robert Schuman”, Daniel Seguin, 3 June 1979.

²² *Le Figaro*, “Simone Veil: une certaine idée de l’homme européen”, Daniel Seguin, 29 May 1979.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Le Monde*, “L’oubliée”, Jean-Marie Benoist, 5 May 1979.

²⁵ *France-Soir*, “Les 4 grands ont terminé en beauté”, Jean Brigouleix, 11 June 1979.

PRESS REACTIONS IN THE MEMBER STATES

“There will be a lot of us in Strasbourg,²⁶ she said, and “there is a great demand from women in Europe. This intergroup should cut across party and national divisions and devote itself to studying specific issues”.

Simone Veil also said that *“Europe will make no progress if it tries to impose supranational rules. A better approach is to try to harmonise national laws and lead the countries down the same path”.* The journalist concludes his article by saying that *“the female representatives in the new Assembly, who account for 16%, could be a force to be reckoned with”.*²⁷

We will end our presentation of this great lady by quoting the tribute paid by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing at Simone Veil’s last Council of Ministers before she gave up governmental office: *“Simone Veil has symbolised access by women to the highest responsibilities in French society. With her simplicity, dignity and competence she has illustrated the essential contribution of women to public life”.*

The article is illustrated by a large photograph of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing accompanying Simone Veil back to the steps of the Elysée. *“Madame, we shall miss your smile”*, he said.²⁸



Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 09.06.1979, n° 132, p. 3. © Fritz Behrendt.
Image available from www.ena.lu, European Navigator

²⁶ 16% of the elected European Parliament.

²⁷ *Le Figaro*, “Projet de Simone Veil: créer un intergroupe féminin à Strasbourg”, M.J., 16 June 1979.

²⁸ *Le Figaro*, “Giscard à Simone Veil: ‘nous regretterons votre sourire’”, 6 July 1979.

5. THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN – A REFLECTION OF NATIONAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS?²⁹

If there is one subject that runs like a *leitmotiv* through the press of all the Member States, it is undoubtedly the fact that the European campaigns were used for the benefit of domestic politics.

A journalist from *La Libre Belgique* expresses this general tendency particularly well. The European elections are “so many national trees hiding the European wood. So many constraints that reduce to party politics lofty ideas on the need to manage rationally and democratically a world that has had no choice but to become a world of solidarity”.³⁰

Even in the United States it was said, on the subject of the European elections, that “no real European debate has been developed, even on matters such as nuclear policy, energy, agriculture and employment”.³¹

The elections, in order to be authentically European, should have tried to break through national borders to the greatest possible extent, rather than espousing them, as they did. “But could it be any different?”, the political analyst Pascal Perrineau rightly asked.³²

For there to be authentic European elections there would have had to be, for example, “a common electoral system, the possibility for nationals of one Member State to stand for election in another, cross-border constituencies that broke through national frontiers, the right to vote and to stand for election opened up fully to migrant workers, etc.”.³³

Let us try, as Jean-Pierre Gouzy suggested in the federalist review *L'Europe en formation*, to “return things to their correct proportions”. The deliberate misinterpretation of the European elections used by some as a spectacular way of settling domestic quarrels did not reach the same levels in all the States of the Community. According to Jean-Pierre Gouzy, it depended upon “the level of commitment by the political class in each one of them to European objectives”.³⁴

He sees two groups of countries. One is made up of the German Federal Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg.³⁵ The other of Denmark, the United Kingdom and France, where the situation is not the same because, he says, the latter three countries have “major currents of opinion that are hostile to the policy of delegating or transferring sovereignty which is the philosophy that underlies the Community system”.³⁶

In the first group of countries, the choice is therefore between a socialist, a liberal and Christian Democrat Europe, etc., but “within an accepted Community framework, the rightness of which only a few marginal voices dispute”.³⁷

In the second group, there exists at the level of the political parties or of certain national political leaders a phenomenon of rejection of the then European construction, or of certain aspects of it. In the case of the United Kingdom, Jean-Pierre Gouzy speaks of “a phenomenon of rejection vis-à-vis Community legislation, the breakdown of the budget, the common agricultural policy”, while in France “there is the idea of extending to include the Mediterranean, of a European monetary system (and the transfer of resources that that presupposes), of the regions, of possible extensions of Community measures in the areas of general foreign policy and defence”.³⁸

²⁹ Title borrowed from the *International Herald Tribune*, “European Campaign Reflecting National Political Problems”, Flora Lewis, 23 February 1979.

³⁰ *La Libre Belgique*, “Entre l’enthousiasme et le scepticisme”, 26 March 1979.

³¹ *International Herald Tribune*, “European Campaign Reflecting National Political Problems”, Flora Lewis, 23 February 1979.

³² Perrineau, Pascal, “Elections européennes (1979-99)”, in Déloye, Yves (under the direction of) *Dictionnaire des Elections Européennes*, Collection Etudes Politiques, Paris, Ed. Economica, 2005, p.207.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *L'Europe en formation*, “L’heure de vérité”, Jean-Pierre Gouzy, May 1979, No 230, p.1-2.

³⁵ Despite the coinciding of European and national elections in the latter two cases.

³⁶ *L'Europe en formation*, “L’heure de vérité”, Jean-Pierre Gouzy, May 1979, No 230, p.1-2.

³⁷ *L'Europe en formation*, “L’heure de vérité”, Jean-Pierre Gouzy, May 1979, No 230, p.1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

PRESS REACTIONS IN THE MEMBER STATES

Let us look, for example, at the case of Germany and let us try to see whether, above and beyond a broad consensus in favour of the elections and of European integration, there was a real debate on Europe.

The weekly *Der Spiegel* speaks of “*pro-European*” propaganda orchestrated by all the parties in the FRG, the ultimate goal of which would be a European federation. It notes that all the candidates “*speak of the European idea in fashionable phrases and believe that one should hope for a federation of nations to be formed in western Europe*”.³⁹

In addition, the major German parties all came down in favour of an extension of the powers of the European Parliament. The most striking example was the statement to the foreign press by the Social-Democrat Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in November 1978: “*I do not believe that the elected Parliament will be satisfied the relatively restricted powers it has at present*”.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, as Alfred Frisch said in *Documents*, “*while there is unanimity on Europe, it is, when all is said and done, domestic policy considerations that remain predominant*”.⁴¹

The German press regrets this politicking. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* notes that “*the major political parties in the FRG already know what the problems and pitfalls of a European electoral campaign are, before it has even begun*”.⁴²

In the case of Belgium, the press welcomed the fact that the subject of Europe, hardly referred to at all in the general election campaign – which preceded the European elections by six months – could finally be addressed in an election campaign.

Before the European elections, the political parties never needed to take up a position on the EEC. So it is not surprising that the public, even the militants among them, were not accustomed to discussing specifically European issues.⁴³

Le Soir recognised, following a survey carried out by the Commission in early 1979, that “*the public is not yet sufficiently aware of the European project, and that there still needs to be a major information campaign*”.⁴⁴

A few weeks later, *La Libre Belgique* added to these thoughts: “*Europe is still not a tangible enough reality for Europeans to be able to form an opinion about it*”. The writer adds, a few lines further on, that “*the greatest merit of the election campaign that has just begun will probably be that it will make Europe better known and its influence on our day-to-day lives more appreciated*”.⁴⁵

It is true that the press devoted a number of articles to the elections, some restricting themselves to what the elected Members would earn, others focusing on the history of Europe and the European institutions. But in 12 dailies analysed, only 36 editorials dealt with the European elections, as against twice that number on the general elections in 1978.⁴⁶

We can add that only one tenth of the matters reported in connection with the election campaign were in any way controversial. The vast majority, therefore, were simply conveying information.⁴⁷

³⁹ *Der Spiegel*, “Kommt Europas Einheit nun von selbst?”, 4 June 1979.

⁴⁰ Quoted by *Le Monde*, 15 November 1978.

⁴¹ *Documents*, “Le rêve et la réalité”, Alfred Frisch, 1979, pp. 102-103.

⁴² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 February 1979

⁴³ *La Libre Belgique*, “Entre l’enthousiasme et le scepticisme”, 26 March 1979.

⁴⁴ *Le Soir*, “Les Belges vont voter sous peine d’amende”, 22 January 1979.

⁴⁵ *La Libre Belgique*, “Que pense l’opinion publique des élections européennes?”, 14 February 1979.

⁴⁶ Gabriel Thoveron, “Elections et médias: 1978”, in: *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No856, 1979, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

So the 1979 elections kept a strong national connotation, even though certain subjects (the economy, ethical issues, employment policy, etc.) were sometimes addressed simultaneously from both the national and the European angle.⁴⁸

In France the debate on Europe was lively and heated. It divided the parties and set them against each other, with the result that a large number of lists were formed, campaigning for or against Europe, or for Europe subject to certain conditions.⁴⁹

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing said in 1979: “*These European elections should be an opportunity to choose how France will be represented externally and not how it will be divided internally*”.⁵⁰ According to a survey carried out by *Le Figaro*, Europe was not a priority interest, since “*only 25% of those surveyed said they would vote on the basis of the decisions taken by the parties on European integration, while 59% said they would vote on the basis of the difficulties France faced in terms of economic and social policy*”.⁵¹

As to the British, according to *The Daily Telegraph*, the Conservatives had chosen to play the elections down, for the excellent reason that “*any serious discussion could cause disagreements among the electors*”.⁵²

As far as ‘disagreements’ were concerned, the main topics addressed by the two large parties were the same: the UK contribution to the Community budget, which was thought to be too high, and the need to review European agriculture policy: “*it is a nonsense that three quarters of the budget should be devoted to agriculture*”, was what they were saying in the oldest of the industrialised countries.⁵³

The Observer and *The Daily Telegraph* noted that the apathy on the subject of the elections was largely a result of public ignorance. Most of them did not seem to know whether it was a kind of referendum or an exercise to choose their representatives. Apart from that, by and large, with the press not talking very much about the elections, it would have needed a campaign by the Commission for 40% of the people questioned at the end of May to be in a position to say that there were going to be elections and for 19% of them to know the date of the elections.⁵⁴

Il Corriere della Sera did, however, report certain reservations on the part of Italy vis-à-vis the common agricultural policy. According to a study by the CNEL, it had caused a transfer of income from the Community’s poorest to its richest regions. So, instead of narrowing, the north-south gap had widened.⁵⁵

6. 1979: INTEREST IN THE ENVIRONMENT

The historical context of the first European election is notable for a growing interest in the environment, an area where public opinion was focused on the new continental Parliament. A catalogue of environmental issues whose solution was to be found at the supranational level was contained in the article entitled *L’Europa si occupa dell’aria e dell’acqua*⁵⁶ (Europe is worried about our air and our water) by Antonio Cederna, a journalist who was also one of the pioneers of the Italian environmental movement. Urban and industrial waste management, atmospheric pollution and the pollution of the Rhine, which was already an open drain for Swiss, German and French effluents, were the fundamental problems, for which the author saw the following solution:

⁴⁸ *Le Soir*, “Heureusement pour l’idée ‘européenne’ que la campagne électorale ne fait que commencer!”, 28 March 1979.

⁴⁹ *Le Monde*, “Division en France: entre slogans et confusion”, 8 June 1979.

⁵⁰ *Le Monde*, 17 May 1979.

⁵¹ *Le Figaro* Sofres, 31 mai 1979.

⁵² *Daily Telegraph*, “European poll ‘may be declared invalid’”, 3 May 1979.

⁵³ *The Guardian*, “The European dream that turned into a yawn”, John Palmer, 11 May 1979.

⁵⁴ *The Observer*, “Europe isn’t a yawn”, 10 June 1979 ; *The Daily Telegraph*, “How much power to Europe’s elbow?”, Stephen Gloves, 29 May 1979.

⁵⁵ *Il Corriere della Sera*, “L’agricoltura è la meno favorita del rapporto dell’Italia con la CEE”, Gianfranco Ballardini, 10 June 1979.

⁵⁶ *Il Corriere della Sera*, 5 April 1979.

PRESS REACTIONS IN THE MEMBER STATES

“It is a question, when all is said and done, of equipping ourselves with the economic and legal instruments we need in order to have a real European environmental policy that will address the major causes of environmental decline, promote cooperation among States and, ultimately, harmonise the different national legislations in accordance with common principles with a view to containing, stemming and putting an end to the waste, the discomforts and the social costs produced up to now by the illusion of purely quantitative economic development, and which we regularly disregard in our day-to-day lives”.

The wishes expressed here, which became the founding principles of the Union’s environmental policy, were militantly supported in 1979 in the environmentalists’ election manifesto:

*“The philosophical model of environmental democracy revolves around the concepts of environmental protection, decentralisation of decision making, and freedom from violence. Under the manifesto, Nature is to be made the determining factor for a stable society that is nevertheless capable of development”.*⁵⁷

Over and above their own demands at the political level, the environmentalists were defined first and foremost by the trait of reacting against the traditional parties. This feeling is apparent in the programmes of all the different national movements. The Flemings⁵⁸ and the radical Dutch party wanted to put spokes in the wheels of the “arrogant” major parties.⁵⁹

The first concern of the British, French and Germans was to condemn their national electoral systems, which more or less guaranteed that they would be defeated.⁶⁰ But nothing daunted, they fought to remove from the minds of politicians and the public what they called ‘*the obsession with growth*’.⁶¹

The French and the Walloons wanted, first and foremost, to give a voice to those who had never had one: the Fourth World, the regional minorities (Alsations, Occitans etc.) and women.⁶² The Italians went even further down this road, making themselves the defenders of the Third World. They wanted the Europe of tomorrow to shift the debate among nations from an east-west to a north-south direction. In addition, they came out in favour of a federal Europe and against nationalisms.⁶³

In short, the ‘greens’ wanted their competitors, in all areas that affect the quality of life, to look carefully at their attitudes and – daring thought – to change them. Change them how? Above all, towards a less centralised, more liveable society that has no nuclear energy, is more respectful of nature, more aware of the tragedy of poverty and a great deal less highly militarised.⁶⁴

We can see, however, from the remnants of their electoral campaigns, that the environmentalists did not have a unified strategy. While some of them, the hardliners, appeared under their own banner, in order to avoid any confusion with traditional politics, others, such as the radical Dutch and Italian parties, chose a more conventional, less ‘green’ name. Others again decided to add their names to more traditional lists which were nevertheless willing to give a small part of the platform to environmental arguments. This was true of several regionalist parties, such as those in Brittany and Wallonia, for example.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ *EG-Direktwahl der Ökologen, Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 10 May 1979.

⁵⁸ *De Standaard*, “M. Dubrulle lijsttrekker van Agalev voor Europese verkiezingen”, 16 April 1979.

⁵⁹ *De Volkskrant*, “Milieubeschermers dienen zich aan Eucropa: meer democratie”, Kees Sikkink, 8 May 1979.

⁶⁰ For information, the United Kingdom is the only country to use the first-past-the-post system, which has traditionally been justified on the grounds that the winning party should be allowed to have a comfortable majority in government. At European level, it means that the wishes of the electorate are translated in a particularly distorted and inaccurate manner.

In France and Germany, on the other hand, lists that did not win at least 5% of the votes cast are not included in the distribution of seats and do not have their deposits or campaign costs reimbursed.

⁶¹ *La Repubblica*, “In Germania la legge elettorale ha lasciato al palo gli ecologi”, Vera Vincenti, 12 June 1979.

⁶² *Le Monde*, “Les comités quart-monde soutiendront les candidats d’Europe-Ecologie”, 9 February 1979.

⁶³ *Corriere Della Sera*, “Gli ecologi preannunciano un’offensiva ‘europea’”, Arturo Guatelli, 4 April 1979.

⁶⁴ *Le Soir*, “L’Allemagne et l’énergie nucléaire, bêtes noires des écologistes”, Jacques Poncin, 3 May 1979.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, something that unshakeably united the ‘nature lovers’ was their condemnation of what happened at 4 o’clock in the morning on 28 March 1979 at a nuclear power station in Pennsylvania. In tactical terms, the accident at Three Mile Island⁶⁶ came a little too early. But the environmentalists swore they would refresh people’s memories, if need be, in time for 10 June. They planned to make the European elections into a kind of referendum on this highly controversial form of energy, public support for which was, in their view, rapidly diminishing. The Dutch environmentalists, indeed, succeeded in halting the nuclear programme in their country.⁶⁷

So hostility to nuclear power was the main point of convergence among the various European environmental lists. It would also, with other disasters such as the oil tanker leaks that polluted the Breton coast, play a ‘catalysing role’.⁶⁸

Because of the youthfulness of the environmental movement, the ‘greens’ tried initially to use the resources of the Italian and Dutch ‘radical’ parties in order to coordinate their activities.

Despite their widely differing ideological origins and operating modes, common characteristics other than the consensus on nuclear energy can be traced in the various environmental programmes. The British, French, Danish⁶⁹ and German⁷⁰ press all mention, with the same enthusiasm, the environmentalists’ stance “*in favour of a Europe of the regions rather than a Europe of nation states*”.⁷¹

Another characteristic is the “*cross-border dimension of environmental problems, of which European public opinion seems to be aware*”, we are told by the socialist Member Philippe Busquin. He adds that, for many people, the EEC was an appropriate level of action at which to seek political solutions to environmental problems. In addition, it could also “*play a pioneering role on the international stage*”.⁷²

CONCLUSIONS

Now that we have come to the end of this study, let us try to retrace the thread of our arguments.

The European elections had an effect that was both beneficial and significant on two of the thematic areas chosen. First, they represented clear progress in terms of equal representation of men and women in the Parliament.

Second, they had a profound influence on the rapid rise of the environmental movement in that they developed a major forum where environmental topics were given appropriate public exposure.⁷³

In addition, a number of themes of the election campaign, although seen as typically matters for national politics, began to take on a European dimension.

Finally, the European elections served to force Europeans to inform themselves at last on European issues and to talk about the purpose of Europe. They also obliged the political parties to talk about Europe rather than, as had hitherto been the case, pursuing their activities within a mainly national framework.

⁶⁶ Three Mile Island is an island situated near Harrisburg. The nuclear accident occurred when Reactor No 2 went into partial meltdown. Despite the extreme gravity of the accident, release of radioactive material into the atmosphere was relatively low.

⁶⁷ *Irish Times*, “Ecologists to fight on Harrisburg issues”, John Cooney, 17 April 1979.

⁶⁸ *Le Monde*, “L’énergie nucléaire sera au cœur de la campagne d’Europe-Ecologie”, 14 April 1979.

⁶⁹ *Jyllands-Posten*, “26 danske EF-Kandidater støtter økologi-deklaration”, 8 May 1979.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, “Ecologists to fight on Harrisburg issues”, John Cooney, 17 April 1979.

⁷¹ *The Guardian*, “Ecologists warn of basic changes ahead”, Julia Langdon, 31 May 1979.

⁷² *Le Peuple*, “L’Europe et l’environnement”, Philippe Busquin, 22 May 1979.

⁷³ Faucher-King, Florence, “Ecologie”, in Déloye, Yves (under the direction of) *Dictionnaire des Elections Européennes*, Collection Etudes Politiques, Paris, Ed. Economica, 2005, pp.184-188.

Annex II

The women who have made Europe



Women members of the first European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage (1979-1984)

Claudia Florentina Dobre

«DONNE VOTIAMO PER L'EUROPA»

Poster by Kathleen Ramboer. Published by the European Commission

Authorised reproduction from the book “Cinquante ans d’Europe, Images et Réflexions” by Jean-Pierre Malivoir, Alpina Srl, 6 Via P. Giuria, 10125 TORINO (Italy).

INTRODUCTION

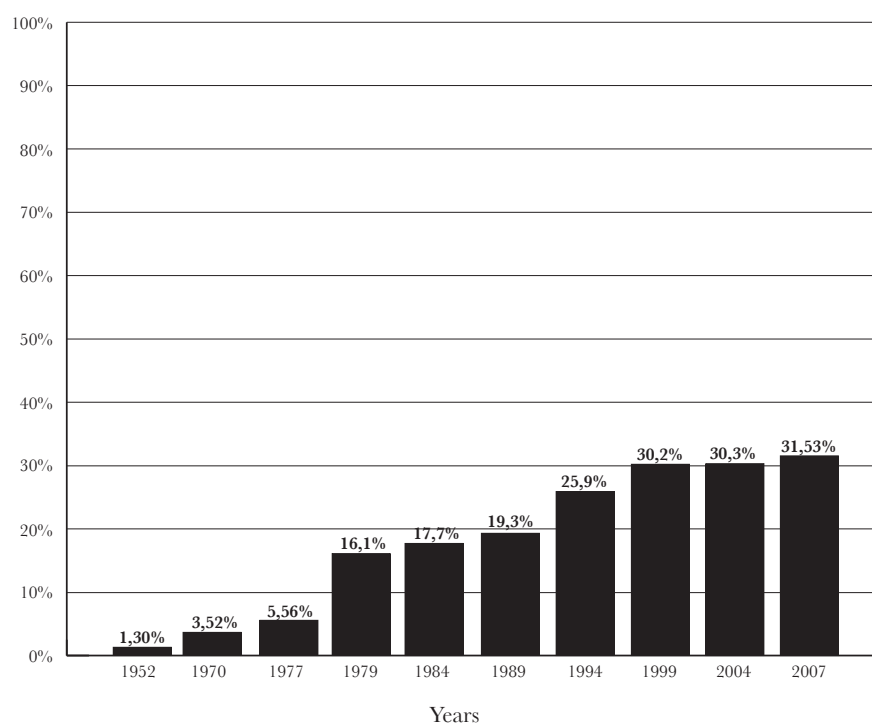
‘Women should know what they owe to the much-maligned European Parliament as well as to the Commission in Brussels.’

Simone Veil¹

Consigning ‘men to politics, history or war and women to the household, novels and psychology’,² European society has long kept the doors of its parliaments closed to female representatives. The presence of women in political assemblies was insignificant until fairly recent times, particularly in national parliaments. In this respect, the European Parliament has been a trailblazer in terms of the political representation of women.

From one legislative term to the next, the number of women Members just keeps increasing. This growth has been constant, with peaks in 1979 and 1994; in 2007, after the fifth wave of accessions to the European Union, the percentage of women MEPs exceeded 31%.

Time series: percentage of women in the European Parliament



¹ Contribution by Simone Veil to the national Unesco conference of 9 January 1996 on women in decision-making, organised by the *Demain la parité* network; reproduced in Françoise Gaspard (ed.), *Les femmes dans la prise de décision en France et en Europe*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 198.

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1980, p. 131

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

This presence seems to be the culmination of a process of integration of the female sex into the political, cultural and social life of Europe. The creation of the European Communities has helped to change the status of women in the West, as rights equal to those enjoyed by men have been granted to them with regard to pay, social protection,³ health care and justice.

Nevertheless, this has proved to be a slow process, even within the European institutions. The first assemblies of the three Communities contained a very small number of women Members. During the part-session of May 1952, there was only one, Margaretha A. M. Klompé, representing the Netherlands. She was not content just to be a token presence, as is testified by her report on the role of the Council of Europe in the new organisation of Europe.⁴

In 1970, four out of a total of 142 Members were women. Luxembourg enjoyed the distinction of having two women – Colette Flesch and Astrid Lulling⁵ – among its six representatives. The other two women Members of the European Parliament were Leonilde Iotti⁶ and Elisabeth Orth.⁷ A few months later, these four female Members were joined by a fifth – Tullia Caretoni Romagnoli.⁸

A rather rare phenomenon at that stage, women MEPs remained a small minority right up to the first direct elections. In 1978, only 11 out of 198 Members were women.⁹ Despite their small number, they were highly active, two women chairing committees and three others being vice-chairs. In March 1977, Hanna Walz was chair of the Committee on Energy and Research, while Colette Flesch chaired the Committee on Development and Cooperation.¹⁰ These were prominent figures on the continental political scene who helped to build a united Europe.

³ It all began with the Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, signed in Rome on 25 March 1957. Article 119 of the Treaty stipulated that 'Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. [...] Equal pay without discrimination based on sex means: (a) that pay for the same work at piece rates shall be calculated on the basis of the same unit of measurement; (b) that pay for work at time rates shall be the same for the same job'.

This article of the Treaty was implemented by means of several European directives: Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women, Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions and Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.

⁴ Fabrice Langrognet, *Influences fédéralistes et Communauté politique européenne (1948-1954)*, Master's thesis, 2005-2006, on web page <http://www.memoireonline.com/05/07/439/l-europe-a-l-heure-du-grand-saut-1948-1954.html>, last visited by the author on 25 February 2008.

⁵ Walter S. G. Kohn, 'Women in the European Parliament', in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 34, No 2, 1981 (hereinafter cited as Walter S. G. Kohn, 'Women in the European Parliament'), p. 218.

⁶ Mrs Leonilde Iotti represented Italy in the European Parliament from 1969 to 1979. See European Parliament, *Forging ahead, 1952-1982: Thirty years of the European Parliament*, Directorate-General for Research and Documentation, p. 95.

⁷ Mrs Elisabeth Orth represented the Federal Republic of Germany from 1970 to 1976. See European Parliament, *Forging ahead, 1952-1982: Thirty years of the European Parliament*, Directorate-General for Research and Documentation, p. 105.

⁸ Mrs Tullia Caretoni Romagnoli, representing Italy, sat in Parliament from 1971.

⁹ Elizabeth Vallance and Elizabeth Davies, *Women of Europe. Women MEPs and Equality Policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986 (referred to hereafter as Elizabeth Vallance and Elizabeth Davies, *Women of Europe*), p. 6.

¹⁰ Bulletin of the European Parliament, 1977-1978, list of Members in the edition dated 11 March 1977, p. 33.

1. THE DIRECT ELECTIONS OF 1979

The ‘election of the century’,¹¹ as the first European elections by direct universal suffrage are often termed, made significant changes to the life of the continent.¹² Not only did it mark the democratisation of the political life of the European Communities; it also lent the requisite legitimacy to the pursuit of a difficult and uncharted process. Women were called to join in that constructive and innovative effort. For the first time in a parliamentary assembly on the European continent, women Members were sufficiently numerous to influence decisions taken by the representative institution. In the Parliament that was returned in those first direct elections, 16.3% of the Members were women, nine of them being sitting Members who now had a direct popular mandate.¹³

So it was that, on 17 July 1979, when the new Parliament was invested, 67 of the Members preparing to work and legislate for Europe were women.¹⁴

In the course of the first parliamentary term, the number of women rose steadily, from 66 in July 1979 to 83 at the start of 1984. Changes also occurred in the composition of the parliamentary committees and delegations. These changes are visible evidence of a shift in the popular image and perception of European women in politics.

Whereas the women Members belonged to committees dealing with subjects considered to be of most interest to women during the first few months of the legislative term, almost five years later it was observable that a degree of balance had been established with regard to the female membership of committees, subcommittees and delegations and in women Members’ involvement in parliamentary life in general. While a seat on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection remained the most coveted by women Members, women also served on other committees. For example, the Committee on Transport and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, which still had no female members in December 1979, had an influx of women, and by March 1984 there were two women on the Committee on Transport and four on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

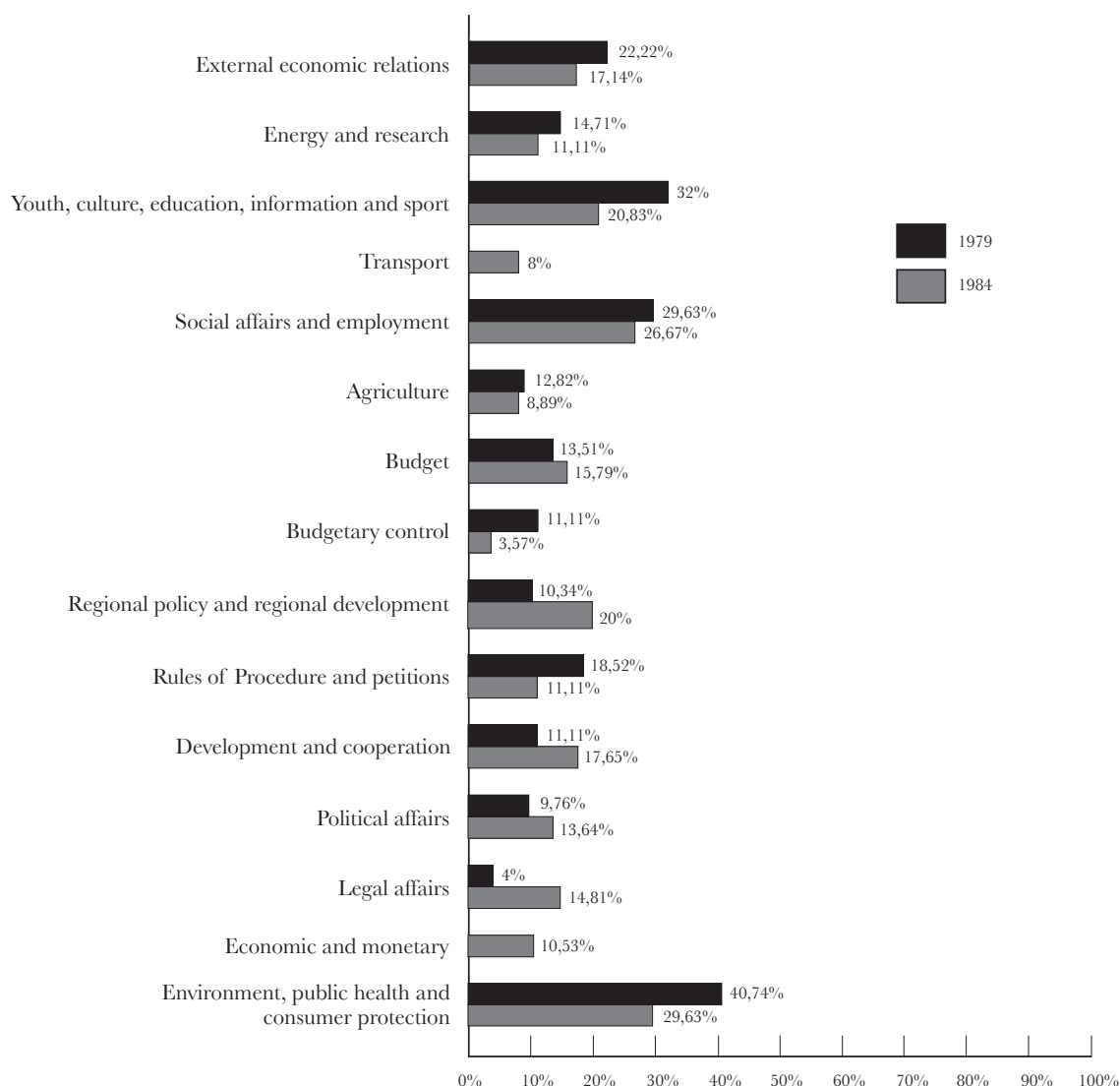
¹¹ Yves Déloye, ‘Suffrage Universel’, in Yves Déloye (ed.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes*. Economica, 2005, p. 643.

¹² The average turnout across the Member States was 62.3%. There were, however, wide divergences from one country to another. Turnout was high in Belgium and Luxembourg, where voting was compulsory (91.4% and 88.9% respectively), but also in Italy, where 85.5% voted, probably because of a very targeted voting campaign conducted by the Commission. In the countries where membership of the European Communities was contested, turnout was rather low, with 32.8% of the British electorate and 47.7% of the Danish electorate going to the polls. See *Europe Votes 2, European Parliamentary election results 1979-1984*, compiled and edited by T. T. Mackie and F. W. S. Craig. Parliamentary Research Services, table 4, p. 234.

¹³ There were four sitting Members from Italy – Maria Cassamagnago Cerretti, Tullia Caretoni Romagnoli, Leonilde Iotti and Vera Squarzialupi – as well as Helen Kellet-Bowman and Baroness Diana Elles from the United Kingdom, Collette Flesch from Luxembourg, Annie Krouwel-Vlam from the Netherlands and Hanna Walz from the Federal Republic of Germany.

¹⁴ In fact, however, only 66 women were present, because Leonilde Iotti, who had previously represented Italy in the European Parliament, did not go to Strasbourg, having been appointed speaker of the Chamber of Deputies in her own country. See Walter S.G. Kohn, ‘Women in the European Parliament’, p. 214.

Changing numbers of women in the EP's committees



2. ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN MEPs

Women are the authors of some 15% of committee reports.¹⁵ Their reports cover a wide range of matters pertaining to the Communities and reveal political rather than gender-related concerns.¹⁶ Women Members of Parliament are as keenly interested in the location of nuclear facilities in border regions as in family policy in the Community or in fares on scheduled flights between Member States. The subjects of their reports depend on both the political balance within committees and on the strength of the female presence on a given committee.

¹⁵ This percentage is my own estimate, based on the number of reports in the ArcDoc database of the European Parliament's Archives and Documentation Centre.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Vallance and Elizabeth Davies, *Women of Europe*, pp. 67-68.

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

The painstaking efforts of women MEPs on committees and parliamentary delegations finally seem to have won them political recognition. Whereas only one woman chaired a committee and three were vice-chairs at the start of the first legislative term of the directly elected Parliament, as the term drew to a close three committees had chairwomen and 13 had vice-chairwomen.¹⁷ The same trend was observable in the delegations,¹⁸ with seven women heading delegations towards the end of that first term.

The influence of women MEPs within the political groups still depended on the role they played in national politics. For example, Barbara Castle,¹⁹ who was elected vice-chair of the Socialist Group in 1979 and served in that capacity until 1986, was a very prominent political personality in the United Kingdom. Dame Shelagh Roberts, vice-chair of the European Democrats, and Simone Veil, vice-chair of the Liberal Group, were also leading figures in national politics.



The election of Simone Veil to the position of president of the European Parliament, 18th July 1979

This female presence in the European Parliament reflected a degree of political will to involve the 'second sex'²⁰ in the European integration process. It was symptomatic of the gradual integration of half the population into the economic life of the European continent. Moreover, women's rights had featured as

¹⁷ There were 15 permanent committees in 1979 as well as two special committees, namely the *Ad hoc* Committee on Women's Rights and the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe.

¹⁸ There were 22 delegations.

¹⁹ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PRcastleB.htm>, last visited by the author on 8 April 2008.

²⁰ The term 'second sex' was coined by Simone de Beauvoir in the title of her treatise *Le deuxième sexe* (Gallimard, Paris, 1947).

a Community priority since the adoption of the EEC Treaty in 1957 and remained a constant concern of the players involved in the European integration process. The 1970s were marked by particularly keen awareness of the need for the representation of women, and the European institutions were in the vanguard of the drive for the integration of women into the social, cultural and political life of the continent.

This Community vision largely explains why one of the first decisions taken by the elected Parliament was the establishment of a committee to look into the situation of women in the nine countries of the Community.

3. *AD HOC* COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The *ad hoc* Committee on Women's Rights was created during the sitting of 26 October 1979, following a number of debates on the subject. The committee was given the task of preparing a report in cooperation with the Commission of the European Communities and then initiating a parliamentary debate on the situation of women in Europe and the world.²¹ The committee comprised 35 full members, the initial breakdown by sex being 10 men and 25 women. The constitutive meeting, held on 13 December 1979, elected Yvette Roudy to chair the committee and Shelagh Roberts, Mechthild von Alemann and Vera Squarcialupi to assist her as vice-chairwomen. The committee's mandate expired on 11 February 1981, the date on which the resolution on the situation of women was adopted. At its meeting that day, the committee decided to entrust Johanna Maij-Weggen with the task of drafting a report. The meetings of the *ad hoc* committee were originally held behind closed doors, but on 21 February 1980, the committee decided to open them to the public. In this way, the press and feminist organisations were able to follow the work of the committee and play an active part in the legislative debates.²²

The 160-page report was drafted on the basis of opinion polls, questionnaires and public debates as well as studies conducted by committee members on various issues relating to the situation of women in the countries of Europe.²³ The report began by portraying conditions for women from the Middle Ages to modern times, emphasising the precarious situation of female workers. The report focused particularly on the situation of women in the nine countries of the Community, enumerating the measures taken by the Commission in pursuance of United Nations resolutions concerning women.²⁴

A large part of the report was devoted to a number of measures designed to improve conditions for women in the countries of the European Communities. The first proposals related to improvement of the socio-economic status of housewives but also that of working women. Other proposals related to education and training tailored to the labour market for girls and young women, particularly those looking for work. A number of measures were proposed to improve conditions for women with regard to health care and to improve the legal position of women. One chapter was devoted to the situation of women in countries applying for membership of the Communities and in developing countries. The report concluded with a number of proposals regarding the instruments required for the implementation of a European policy for the improvement of women's social, economic and cultural situation.

²¹ 'Situation of women in the Community' in European Parliament, *Debates of the European Parliament*. Directorate-General for Research and Documentation, June 1981 (hereinafter referred to as 'Situation of women in the Community'), p. 19.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁴ The *ad hoc* committee also took part in the work of the UN conference in Copenhagen in 1980, which reviewed the achievements of the first five years of the Decade for Women initiated by the UN in 1975. European Parliament, *Report drawn up on behalf of the ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights on the situation of women in the Community*. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1 AP RP/FEMM.1979 A1-0829/80.

3.1 Resolution on the situation of women in the Community

The members of the *ad hoc* committee worked on the formulation of a draft resolution, which was adopted at its meeting of 19 and 20 January 1981. The plenary debate took place on 10 February 1981, and the resolution was adopted with several amendments on the following day. Comprising 59 paragraphs, it marked the end of the work of the *ad hoc* committee, but it provided for the establishment of a new committee within two years for the purpose of assessing the extent to which its proposals were being implemented.²⁵

In the preamble to the resolution, the inferior position of women in society was demonstrated and was judged unacceptable, not only because it limited the individual rights of women but also because of its adverse effect on the overall balance of society in terms of the relationship between the community and the individual.²⁶ Considering that the elimination of all forms of discrimination and oppression to the detriment of women was the *sine qua non* for the construction of a fairer and more advanced social order,²⁷ the resolution proposed a number of measures intended to improve existing Community action.

Recognising the efforts that the Commission had made to improve the situation of women and to inform Parliament of progress towards that goal, particularly at the time of the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, the resolution recommended a revision of the directives relating to equal pay and equal treatment with a view to introducing an obligation on the Member States of the Communities to harmonise their legislation and to present reports to the Commission at two-yearly intervals on measures taken and results achieved. The resolution asked the Commission to make implementation of the directives on equal pay and treatment, to which the Directive on equal treatment in matters of social security was added in 1984, a prerequisite for the granting of Community regional and social funds.²⁸

The resolution expressed the need to inform women, through press campaigns, of the content of European directives and of other measures taken by the Commission to improve their situation. Informing women of their rights and responsibilities was seen by the *ad hoc* committee as an essential priority. At several points in the report, its authors referred to the urgent need to make women aware of the changes that were taking place within society. For example, it was deemed necessary to educate and inform women about health care, especially as regards reproduction and methods of birth control.²⁹

The resolution also proposed a number of measures relating to the struggle against female unemployment, such as a reduction of daily working hours without loss of welfare benefits and a fairer division of labour between spouses. The text of the resolution emphasised that part-time work should not be earmarked for women but reserved for particular situations and called for a directive from the Commission granting women equality of opportunity and the right to receive training similar to that given to men. Emphasis was placed on the need for continuing vocational training for girls and women and on the launching of a plan for the development of training programmes for unemployed women.

Another component of the resolution concerned the provision of proper social protection of women and the elderly. It encouraged Member States to set up a network of social services intended for children, the elderly and people with impaired mobility.³⁰ Measures relating to action in favour of particular categories and regions, particularly immigrant women, women working in family businesses and women living in sparsely populated rural areas, were also proposed.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 246.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 248.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 258.

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 246-255.

As for women in developing countries, the resolution proposed the promotion of a policy designed to combat illiteracy, to provide aid for the creation of medical support services and to contribute to the abolition of customary practices that are detrimental to women, such as genital mutilation. The Brussels Commission was also requested to conduct an investigation into trafficking in human beings, of which women were often the main victims.

The resolution concluded that men and women were not equally represented in the European institutions and called for an improvement; expressing the wish that universities would focus on the role of women in their research programmes, it asked the Commission to find a swift and effective response to the current problems and to present proposals for the establishment of a long-term policy in this domain.³¹

4. COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN

The resolution adopted on 11 February 1981 was intended for implementation by both the European institutions and the Member States. In June 1981, following a request submitted by Anne-Marie Lizin and 109 other signatories, the European Parliament decided to appoint a Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe in order to monitor how the resolution was being implemented and to check on the progress that had been achieved. At its meeting on 23 November 1981, the committee of inquiry decided to draft a report covering 17 different subjects,³² namely the three directives – on equal treatment, equal pay and equality in the realm of social security – as well as the situation of women in Greece, the organisation of working time, vocational training, new technology, the European Social Fund, health problems, migrant women and wives of migrants, family businesses, officials of the Community institutions, the developing world, information problems, parental leave, social and other services, taxation, regional action and education.

The Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women very quickly established itself in the structure of the European institutions. When the Commission decided to launch a new action programme for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and the Council consulted Parliament on the matter, the President of Parliament referred the proposal to the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe for detailed examination and asked the Committee on Budgets for its opinion.³³

The Committee of Inquiry acted on the President's request and appointed Marie-Claude Vayssade as rapporteur at its meeting of 28 and 29 January 1982. The committee also decided to seek the opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment and the Committee on Agriculture.³⁴

Mrs Vayssade presented her report at the committee meetings of 23/24 February, 18/19 March and 29/30 March 1982. At the last of these meetings the report was adopted and referred for consideration by a plenary sitting of Parliament.³⁵ In the explanatory statement, the report stressed that the new action programme presented by the Council and examined in committee, being designed to strengthen the role of the Community as a driving force for the improvement of the situation of women in the Member States,³⁶

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 259-263.

³² *Interim report, drawn up on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe, on the situation of women in less-favoured areas of the Community in the framework of the revision of the Regulation establishing the European Regional Development Fund.* Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1 AP RP/ FEMM. 1979 A1-0102/82.

³³ *Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe*, 15 April 1982. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1 AP RP/ FEMM. 1979 A1-0101/82.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ The Committee on Budgets indicated that it would present its opinion at the plenary sitting, while the Committee on Agriculture cited lack of time as the reason for the absence of a response and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment did not act on the request from the Committee of Inquiry. *Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe*, 15 April 1982. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1 AP RP/ FEMM. 1979 A1-0101/82.

³⁶ Working paper of 12 February 1982, drawn up by the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1 AP RP/FEMM. 1979 A1-0101/82.

was both welcome and useful. The Committee of Inquiry communicated its views, particularly on the scope for implementation of the programme which the Commission's draft had left to the Member States in several areas, such as health and education.³⁷ It proposed a number of amendments designed to fill gaps in the draft.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Inquiry was continuing its own parallel work on the situation of women in Europe and beyond. By the end of 1983, a complete picture of the feminine side of life had been sketched out. The report was placed on the parliamentary agenda. On 5 January 1984, a draft resolution was presented; in 99 paragraphs, it set out proposals to improve the situation of women in the Community, indicating precise measures to be taken by the Council and the Commission.

4.1 Resolution on the situation of women in Europe

By way of a preamble, the draft resolution emphasised that, in spite of the growing number of women in the labour market, unemployment among women, especially young women, was rising faster than employment. The Committee of Inquiry deemed it necessary that the Community and the Member States should pursue the following objectives: (a) to defend the progress made towards equality and to establish genuine equality of opportunity, (b) to safeguard women's employment and the supply of jobs for women in the new areas of economic activity, and (c) to foster equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in political, cultural, social and family life.³⁸

The draft referred to the need to create, in each Member State, equal-opportunities bodies, services or committees vested with real powers³⁹ and asked the Commission to present a report to Parliament on the situation of women in Spain and Portugal since those countries were prospective members of the EEC.

The draft resolution went on to ask the Commission to step up positive action for women and to strengthen social-assistance services with a view to ensuring genuine equality of opportunity. Emphasis was placed on the urgent need for coordinated intervention in the realm of training in order to guarantee access to education for girls and to eliminate disparities in training levels between the sexes as well as on the need to train girls and women in new technological fields. Still in the domain of education, the competent authorities were called upon to review educational material, particularly school textbooks, with a view to eliminating undesirable sexist stereotypes.⁴⁰

The draft resolution also dwelt on the need to initiate specific measures to bolster the employment and social protection of women, such as cut-rate loans, assistance for cooperatives set up by women, subsidies for the development of the social infrastructure and services required by women and a reduction of weekly working hours. In particular, it suggested that grants from the Social Fund be distributed equally between men and women.

The draft resolution strongly emphasised the need for a change in attitudes regarding both the role and the identity of women. To this end, the committee announced the intention of publishing its report on the situation of women in the form of a brochure in the official languages of the Community. It also suggested a number of measures designed to change attitudes: maternity, it said, should not be used as a pretext for social discrimination; in particular, there was a need to raise public awareness of women's rights, while special attention had to be devoted to migrant women to prevent them from being marginalised in host countries.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *Report on the situation of women in Europe*, presented on 5 January 1984 by the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1APRP/FEMM.1979 A1-1229/83.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

The Committee of Inquiry asked the Community institutions to set an example in terms of positive action to promote equal opportunities for women, calling on them to appoint from within their ranks an officer responsible for overseeing the application of measures taken to guarantee equal opportunities'.⁴¹

Finally, the report called on all the women of the Community to address, through their representatives, the issue of peace in both the European and the international context and to conduct a Europe-wide campaign to pursue an international peace dialogue with a view to saving the world's most precious asset, namely the human race.⁴²

The adoption of an action programme based on the report was not to prove easy, as Mrs Vayssade testified. 'The battle for the first action programme', she said, 'was fierce. It was necessary to convince people of its political value and of the need for a sustained budget. [...] Without the existence of this parliamentary committee, it is far from certain that the programme would have matched our wishes.'⁴³

Having experienced the meagre results achieved in the wake of the report by the *ad hoc* committee and anxious to ensure that this action programme did not meet with the same fate, the Committee of Inquiry expressed the wish that the Parliament to be elected in June 1984 would establish a permanent committee on women's rights with a view to guaranteeing that the established law and practice of the Community and the progress made towards equal opportunities would be safeguarded.⁴⁴

This last wish was to be granted. In July 1984, at the start of its second legislative term, the European Parliament did indeed approve the creation of the Committee on Women's Rights, which has striven hard to reinforce the legal provisions on equal opportunities and non-discrimination, to apply the principle of mainstreaming and to adopt positive action measures and have them enshrined in the Treaties establishing the European Communities.

CONCLUSIONS

The existence of two special committees responsible for matters relating to women is evidence of both the commitment of the European Communities to a genuine policy of equality between men and women and the significant presence of women MEPs who constituted the critical mass required for the emergence of a gender policy within the European Parliament.⁴⁵

The first years of the 1979-1984 term saw the birth of the *ad hoc* Committee on Women's Rights and the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe, reflecting a growing interest on the part of MEPs in a number of gender-related issues. Between 1979 and 1981, some 93 parliamentary questions, oral or written, on matters relating to women were addressed to the Commission or the Council. A large number of these questions – 59 in all – were submitted by women MEPs and concerned night work by women, discrimination in the education system, risks associated with the contraceptive pill, equality between men and women in the workplace and unequal treatment in matters of social security and female employment, women officials in the EEC, homeworking, exploitation of women in advertising, etc.⁴⁶ During the same

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Contribution by Marie-Claude Vayssade to the national Unesco conference of 9 January 1996 on women in decision-making, organised by the *Demain la parité* network; reproduced in Françoise Gaspard (ed.), *Les femmes dans la prise de décision en France et en Europe*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁴ *Report on the situation of women in Europe*, presented on 5 January 1984 by the Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe. Archives and Documentation Centre of the European Parliament, ArcDoc database, PE1APRP/FEMM.1979 A1-1229/83.

⁴⁵ Jane Freedman, 'Women in the European Parliament', in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 55, No 1, January 2002, p. 184.

⁴⁶ The situation of women in the Community, pp. 277-284.

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

period, women Members also asked oral questions on legislation relating to abortion, on social-security provisions and on maternity protection within the EEC.⁴⁷

All of this work undertaken by the committees and female MEPs on the situation of women in Europe was made possible, according to Mrs Vayssade, by the solidarity of women Members of Parliament. Even though 'some women were subjected to vehement attacks in their political groups',⁴⁸ they showed unfailing solidarity, she stressed. The atmosphere described by Joyce Quin as 'women-friendly'⁴⁹ also contributed to the success of programmes designed to improve conditions for women.

The impact of the female presence in Europe's highest political forum was not confined to the treatment of women's issues. The female MEPs played an active part in parliamentary life in its entirety. They drafted reports, sat on all the committees and belonged to the various parliamentary delegations. Some women played a leading political role as presidents or vice-presidents of Parliament or as chairwomen or vice-chairs of political groups. It says much about the importance attached to women by the European institutions that the first President of the directly elected European Parliament was a woman of high renown, Simone Veil. Another *grande dame* of European politics, Louise Weiss, presided over the first sitting of the elected assembly in her capacity as oldest Member. The 'President for a day', as she called herself in her investiture address, told her fellow Members that the greatest joy a creature could experience in the eventide of its existence was that of miraculously fulfilling a youthful dream.⁵⁰

The women who sat in Parliament in that first legislative term were strong personalities imbued with real European political awareness, women who believed in the idea of a Europe united in diversity. Some of those *grandes dames* of Europe were among the politicians who devoted themselves to the task of building Europe. Others were activists in the cause of women's rights and/or senior members of their national administrations. Many were mothers who successfully combined a parliamentary career with family life.⁵¹

Educated and cultivated, most of them having studied law, economics, science, art or literature, they had started out as solicitors, lecturers, journalists, teachers or businesswomen before entering the European Parliament.⁵² Their diverse experiences enabled them to propose solutions to crucial problems relating to the construction of the European Communities.

The election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage marked the first step forward for women MEPs. Having become a critical mass, they were able to establish the condition of women as a European priority. Giving of themselves without counting the cost so that women would be fully recognised and find their rightful place in the political, social and cultural life of our continent, women Members of the European Parliament have played an active part in adding new chapters to the history of Europe.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 285.

⁴⁸ Contribution by Marie-Claude Vayssade to the national Unesco conference of 9 January 1996 on women in decision-making, organised by the *Demain la parité* network. Reproduced in Françoise Gaspard (ed.), *Les femmes dans la prise de décision en France et en Europe*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Joyce Quin in *Memories of the first elected European Parliament*, collected by Bill Newton Dunn. Allendale Publishing, London, 2007, p. 78.

⁵⁰ Louise Weiss, address delivered as President of the European Parliament, cited in the book *Louise Weiss l'Européenne*, published by the Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe and Centre for European Research, Lausanne, 1994, p. 483.

⁵¹ 71% of the women MEPs in the first directly elected Parliament were married, and 53% had children (Elizabeth Vallance and Elizabeth Davies, *Women of Europe*, p. 41).

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 42.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Women in the European Parliament		in 1978		11-Mar-77			
Country	Number Members	Women	% Women Members	Committees	Members	Women	% Women
Belgium	14	0	0	Political affairs	35	0	0
Denmark	10	1	10	Legal affairs	35	3	8.57%
France	36	0	0	Economic and monetary affairs	35	0	0
Germany	36	1	2.7	Budget	35	0	0
Ireland	10	0	0	Social affairs and employment	35	5	14.29%
Italy	36	3	8.3	Agriculture	35	1	2.86%
Luxembourg	6	1	16.8	Regional policy and transport	35	2	5.71%
Netherlands	14	1	7.5	Environment and public health	35	4	11.43%
United Kingdom	36	4	11.1	Energy and research	35	1	2.86%
				External economic relations	35	1	2.86%
				Development and cooperation	35	5	14.29%
Total	198	11	5.6	Rules of Procedure and petitions	18	0	0
Source, European Parliament, Vademecum, 1978.							
Committee			11-Mar-77	No of women			
Chairwomen				2			
Committee				3			
Vice-chairwomen							
Chairwomen of political groups				0			
Vice-chairwomen of political groups				1			

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

Women in the European Parliament, 1979-2004							
Country	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2007
Austria					38.1	38.8	
Belgium	8.3	16.7	16.7	32	28	29.1	
Bulgaria							44.5
Cyprus						0	
Czech Republic						20.8	
Denmark	31.2	37.5	37.5	43.8	37.5	35.7	
Estonia						33.3	
Finland					43.7	35.7	
France	22.2	20.9	23.5	29.9	40.2	43.5	
Germany	14.8	19.7	30.9	35.4	37.4	31.3	
Greece		8.3	4.2	16	16	29.1	
Hungary						33.3	
Ireland	13.3	13.3	6.7	26.7	33.3	38.5	
Italy	13.6	9.9	12.4	12.6	11.5	19.2	
Latvia						22.2	
Lithuania						38.5	
Luxembourg	16.7	50	50	50	33.3	50	
Malta						0	
Netherlands	20	28	28	32.2	35.5	44.4	
Poland						13	
Portugal		4	12.5	8	20	25	
Romania							31.4
Slovakia						35.7	
Slovenia						42.9	
Spain		10	15	32.8	34.4	33.3	
Sweden					40.9	57.9	
United Kingdom	13.6	14.8	14.8	18.4	24.1	24.3	
Average	16.3	17.7	19.3	25.9	30.2	30.3	31.53

Source: European Parliament, Mariette Sineau, "Femmes", in Yves Déloye, ed., *Dictionnaire des élections européennes*, Economica, 2005, p. 307.
<http://www.elections2004.eu.int/ep-election/sites/fr/index.html>

Percentage of women representatives in the European Parliament	1979	Percentage of women in national parliament	1979
Country			
Belgium	8.3		8
Denmark	31.2		23
France	22.2		4
Germany	14.8		8
Ireland	13.3		4
Italy	13.6		8
Luxembourg	16.7		10
Netherlands	20		14
United Kingdom	13.6		3

Source, Elisabeth Vallance, Elisabeth Davies, *Women of Europe, Women MEPs and equality policy* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 7.

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Women in the European Parliament		Number of women on 10 December 1979	Number of women on 12 March 1984
Chairwomen of Committees		1	3
Vice-chairwomen of Committees		5	13
Chairwomen of Delegations		0	7
Vice-Chairwomen of Delegations		0	3
Chairwomen of Political Groups		0	0
Vice-chairwomen of Political Groups		7	6
Members of the Administrative Bureau		3	6
Treasurers		1	1
Presidents of the European Parliament	Louise Weiss		
		17-Jul-79	
	Simone Veil		
		17 July 1979-18 January 1982	
Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament	Danielle de March		
		17 July 1979-19 January 1982	
		20 January 1982-23 July 1984	
	Baroness Diane Elles		
		20 January 1982-23 July 1984	
	Maria Luisa		
	Cassanmagnago-Cerretti		
		14 October 1982-23 July 1984	

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

Reports drawn up by women 1979-1984¹

<i>Rapporteur</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>File number</i>
AGNELLI, Susanna	Prélèvements applicables aux importations de certains gros bovins et de leur viande en provenance de Yougoslavie	A1-0622/79
ALEMANN, Mechthild von	Implantation de centrales nucléaires dans les régions frontalières	A1-0442/80
ALEMANN, Mechthild von	Uniformisation de certaines règles d'autorisation pour les transports intracommunautaires de marchandises par route	A1-0465/83
ALEMANN, Mechthild von	Règles communes pour certains transports combinés rail/route de marchandises	A1-0835/81
ALEMANN, Mechthild von	Stratégies transfrontalières en matière de transports dans les régions frontalières	A1-1205/82
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Relations économiques et commerciales entre la CEE et Malte	A1-0059/84
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Relations PE-CES	A1-0226/81
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Modification de la directive 79/695/CEE: Harmonisation des procédures de mise en libre pratique des marchandises	A1-0258/81
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Régime d'importation applicable en 1982 aux produits de la sous-position 07.06 A du tarif douanier commun	A1-0435/82
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Fermeture des aciéries de Consett	A1-0463/80
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Relations économiques et commerciales entre la CEE et Chypre	A1-0501/83
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Passage à la seconde étape de l'accord d'association entre la CEE et la République de Chypre	A1-0978/83
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Régime à l'importation applicable pour les années 1983 à 1986 aux produits de la sous-position 07.06 A du TDC	A1-1201/82
BADUEL GLORIOSO, Maria Fabrizia	Coopération technique et financière entre la CEE et la République de Chypre	A1-1337/83
BARBARELLA, Carla	Avant-projet de budget supplémentaire et rectificatif no 1 pour l'exercice 1982	A1-0477/82
BARBARELLA, Carla	Développement agricole des oeufs, de la viande, des céréales, etc. en Irlande du Nord	A1-0492/80
BARBARELLA, Carla	Refus du Conseil d'établir un projet de budget rectificatif et supplémentaire visant à affecter à la lutte contre le chômage et la faim dans le monde des crédits économisés dans le secteur agricole	A1-0613/82
BARBARELLA, Carla	Modernisation des exploitations agricoles	A1-0719/79
BARBARELLA, Carla	Politique des structures agricoles	A1-0824/79
BARBARELLA, Carla	Projet de budget rectificatif et supplémentaire no 1 des Communautés européennes pour l'exercice 1982	A1-0991/82
BARBARELLA, Carla	Programme spécial de développement énergétique	A1-0998/82
BARBARELLA, Carla	Mesures supplémentaires en faveur du Royaume-Uni	A1-1004/82
BOOT, Elise C.A.M.	Renforcement de la coopération transfrontalière	A1-1404/83
CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Crise du bois de feu en Afrique sahélienne et ses graves conséquences pour le Tiers Monde	A1-0211/84
CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Importations d'huile d'olive de Tunisie, d'Algérie et du Maroc et de produits agricoles de Turquie pour 1979/1980	A1-0546/79
CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Suspension totale ou partielle des droits du Tarif Douanier Commun pour certains produits agricoles de Turquie	A1-0562/79
CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Industrie de la chaussure en Europe	A1-0640/81

¹ Individual reports can be drawn from the CARDoc database in their original language upon request

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Association Internationale de Développement	A1-0933/83
CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI, Tullia	Orientations générales pour 1983 en matière d'aide financière et technique en faveur des pays en développement non associés	A1-0963/82
CASSANMAGNAGO CERRETTI, Maria Luisa	Programme spécial de lutte contre la faim dans le monde	A1-0114/83
CASSANMAGNAGO CERRETTI, Maria Luisa	Résultats des travaux du Comité paritaire et de l'Assemblée consultative ACP-CEE	A1-0975/82
CASSANMAGNAGO CERRETTI, Maria Luisa	Politique familiale dans la Communauté	A1-1196/82
CASTELLINA, Luciana	Financement de projets destinés à assurer la formation des femmes présentés par l'ANC et la SWAPO	A1-0081/84
CASTELLINA, Luciana	Code international de commercialisation des substituts du lait maternel adopté par l'OMS	A1-0541/81
CASTELLINA, Luciana	Fonctionnement pour 1977 et 1978 du STABEX et rapport de la Cour des Comptes sur le STABEX	A1-0698/80
CASTELLINA, Luciana	Code international de commercialisation des substituts du lait maternel	A1-0962/82
CINCIARI RODANO, Maria Lisa	Discriminations en matière de filiation entre mères célibataires et femmes mariées dans certains États membres	A1-0861/82
CINCIARI RODANO, Maria Lisa	Discriminations en matière de transmission de la nationalité	A1-1166/83
CINCIARI RODANO, Maria Lisa	Situation de la femme en Europe	A1-1229/83
CLWYD, Ann	Intégration économique, professionnelle, sociale des handicapés dans la Communauté en 1981, année internationale des handicapés	A1-0868/80
CRESSON, Edith	Développement de l'agriculture dans les départements français d'Outre-mer	A1-0489/80
CRESSON, Edith	Mesures de conservation et de gestion des ressources de pêche dans une zone à 800 milles de la Guyane	A1-0537/80
CRESSON, Edith	Rendre et maintenir le territoire de la Communauté indemne de peste porcine classique	A1-0571/79
CRESSON, Edith	Dérogations accordées au Danemark, à l'Irlande et au Royaume-Uni en matière de peste porcine	A1-0620/79
DE VALERA, Sile	Situation de la femme dans les régions défavorisées de la Communauté européenne, dans le cadre de la révision du règlement du FEDER	A1-0102/82
DE VALERA, Sile	Principes d'une politique communautaire de l'âge de la retraite	A1-0212/82
DEKKER, Suzanne	Condition féminine dans la Communauté européenne	A1-0078/80
DESOUCHES, Marie-Jacqueline	Accession à la Convention sur la pêche et la conservation des ressources vivantes de la mer Baltique et des Belts	A1-0473/83
DESOUCHES, Marie-Jacqueline	Trafic frontalier	A1-0641/82
DESOUCHES, Marie-Jacqueline	Aides à la construction navale	A1-0958/82
DESOUCHES, Marie-Jacqueline	Politique des investissements dans la Communauté	A1-1264/83
DESOUCHES, Marie-Jacqueline	Actions générales dans le domaine de l'informatique	A1-1472/83
DUPORT, Paule	Bilans sociaux dans les entreprises de la Communauté européenne	A1-X012/82
DURY, Raymonde M.E.A.	Convention CEE-UNRWA relative à l'assistance aux réfugiés dans les pays du Proche-Orient	A1-0218/84
DURY, Raymonde M.E.A.	Assistance aux réfugiés dans les pays en voie de développement	A1-0929/83
ELLES, Baroness Diana	Coopération politique européenne et rôle du PE	A1-0335/81
ELLES, Baroness Diana	Problème des personnes disparues à Chypre	A1-0977/82

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

FOCKE, Katharina	Mise en oeuvre des actions de substitution aux livraisons d'aide alimentaire dans le domaine de l'alimentation	A1-0116/84
FORSTER, Norvela	Tarifs des transports aériens réguliers entre Etats membres	A1-0454/83
FORSTER, Norvela	Tarifs des transports aériens réguliers entre Etats membres	A1-0847/82
FOURCADE, Marie-Madeleine	Définition du territoire douanier de la CE	A1-0234/81
FUILLET, Yvette M.	Rejets de mercure dans le milieu aquatique par le secteur de l'électrolyse des chlorures alcalins	A1-0055/80
FUILLET, Yvette M.	Action spécifique en faveur de l'habitat en Irlande du Nord dans le cadre d'une opération intégrée à Belfast	A1-0181/82
GAIOTTI DE BIASE, Paola	Programme communautaire dans le secteur de l'éducation	A1-0845/81
GASPARD, Françoise	Levée de l'immunité parlementaire d'un membre (Gouthier)	A1-0072/81
GREDAL, Eva Wilhelmsson	Aspects politiques des relations entre la Communauté et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique	A1-0300/82
HERKLOTZ, Luise	Transport des chevaux destinés à l'abattage	A1-0229/83
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Pollution à l'intérieur des bâtiments	A1-0241/84
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Emballages pour liquides alimentaires	A1-0371/83
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Emballages pour liquides alimentaires	A1-0476/83
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Récupération et réutilisation des vieux papiers et cartons	A1-0659/80
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Carte de santé européenne	A1-0960/80
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Régime de perfectionnement actif	A1-1005/82
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Emballages pour liquides alimentaires	A1-1187/82
HOOPER, Gloria D.	Préconditionnement en volume de certains liquides en préemballages	A1-1485/83
KROUWEL-VLAM, J. (Annie) B.	Viandes fraîches	A1-0049/82
KROUWEL-VLAM, J. (Annie) B.	Classification, emballage et étiquetage des peintures, vernis, encres d'imprimerie, colles et produits connexes	A1-0107/82
KROUWEL-VLAM, J. (Annie) B.	Bruit aérien émis par les appareils domestiques	A1-0495/83
LE ROUX, Sylvie	Accord de pêche entre la CEE et la Guinée-Bissau	A1-1333/82
LENTZ-CORNETTE, Marcelle	Limitation de la mise sur le marché et de l'emploi de certaines substances et préparations dangereuses	A1-0106/82
LENTZ-CORNETTE, Marcelle	Critères microbiologiques concernant les denrées alimentaires et aliments pour animaux	A1-0977/81
LENTZ-CORNETTE, Marcelle	Valeurs limites et objectifs de qualité pour les rejets de mercure des secteurs autres que celui de l'électrolyse des chlorures alcalins	A1-1142/83
LENTZ-CORNETTE, Marcelle	Sécurité des installations nucléaires, protection sanitaire des populations et problèmes radiologiques transfrontaliers.	A1-1491/83
LENZ, Marlene	Situation en Amérique centrale	A1-0056/84
LENZ, Marlene	Remboursement ou remise des droits à l'importation ou à l'exportation	A1-0320/82
LENZ, Marlene	Relations et accord entre la CEE et la Roumanie	A1-0678/80
LIZIN, Anne-Marie A.	Sécurité nucléaire européenne	A1-0852/81
MACCIOCCHI, Maria Antonietta	Droit de vote et éligibilité au niveau local des citoyens résidant dans un Etat membre autre que le leur	A1-0121/83
MACCIOCCHI, Maria Antonietta	Objection de conscience	A1-0546/82
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Problèmes de sécurité sociale (document de la Commission) - Rapport intérimaire	A1-0045/84
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Application du principe de l'égalité de traitement entre hommes et femmes exerçant une activité indépendante	A1-0214/84
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Prévention de catastrophes dans les gisements marins de pétrole et de gaz naturel au Nord-Ouest de l'Europe	A1-0473/80

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Plan de lutte contre la pollution des mers par les hydrocarbures	A1-0709/80
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Commerce communautaire de produits dérivés du phoque	A1-0738/81
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Situation de la femme dans la Communauté européenne	A1-0829/80
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Matières colorantes pouvant être employées dans les denrées destinées à l'alimentation humaine	A1-0834/79
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Commerce communautaire de produits dérivés du phoque	A1-0984/81
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Lutte contre la pollution de la mer du Nord	A1-1173/83
MAIJ-WEGGEN, Johanna R.H.	Egalité de traitement des veuves et des veufs en matière de sécurité sociale	A1-1506/83
MARTIN, Simone M.M.	Politique régionale de la CE et Irlande du Nord	A1-0177/81
MARTIN, Simone M.M.	Cinquième rapport annuel (1979) sur le FEDER	A1-0181/81
MARTIN, Simone M.M.	Restructuration de la viticulture dans certaines régions méditerranéennes françaises (prime spéciale)	A1-0809/81
MARTIN, Simone M.M.	Installation des jeunes agriculteurs dans la Communauté	A1-0922/83
MOREAU, Louise	Bilan et perspectives d'approvisionnement en matières premières minérales et végétales	A1-0873/81
MOREAU, Louise	Règles d'origine	A1-1500/83
NIELSEN, Tove	Problème des travailleurs migrants	A1-0811/83
NIELSEN, Tove	Nouvelles technologies et formation professionnelle et politiques de formation professionnelle pour les années 1980	A1-1363/82
NIKOLAOU, Kalliopi	Protocole additionnel à l'accord de coopération entre la CEE et la Yougoslavie à la suite de l'adhésion de la Grèce	A1-0441/82
PAUWELYN, Jeanne M.	Quotas de capture pour 1983 pour navires d'un des EM pêchant dans la zone de réglementation définie par la convention NAFO	A1-1178/82
PAUWELYN, Jeanne M.	Accord de pêche dans le Skagerrak et le Kattegat en 1983 entre la CEE, la Norvège et la Suède	A1-1334/82
PERY, Nicole	Droits applicables aux filets de poisson obtenus à bord des bateaux communautaires à partir de poissons originaires de pays tiers	A1-0089/83
PERY, Nicole	Conservation et gestion des ressources de pêche pour les navires espagnols, 1982	A1-0090/82
PERY, Nicole	Conservation et gestion des ressources de pêche pour navires de pays tiers dans une zone de 200 milles de la Guyane	A1-0091/82
PERY, Nicole	Coordination des opérations d'inspection et de surveillance maritimes	A1-0183/82
PERY, Nicole	Participation financière de la CE aux opérations d'inspection et de surveillance des eaux maritimes du Danemark et de l'Irlande	A1-0527/82
PERY, Nicole	Pêche espagnole dans les eaux communautaires de l'Atlantique, dans le cadre actuel et dans la perspective de l'élargissement	A1-1119/83
PERY, Nicole	Enseignement supérieur et développement de la coopération universitaire dans la Communauté européenne	A1-1351/83
PERY, Nicole	Problèmes de la pêche portugaise dans le cadre de l'élargissement de la Communauté	A1-X054/84
PHLIX, Alphonsine M.J.	Contrôles des marchandises aux frontières et régime de perfectionnement passif	A1-1153/83
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Traitement des substances toxiques et dangereuses par les Communautés européennes et leurs Etats membres	A1-0109/84
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Jouets de guerre	A1-0288/82
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Maroc et Syrie: protocole à l'accord de coopération suite à l'adhésion de la Grèce	A1-0327/82
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Protocole à l'accord entre la CEE et l'Etat d'Israël, suite à l'adhésion de la Grèce	A1-0328/82
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Programme sectoriel de recherche et de développement dans le domaine de la recherche en médecine et santé publique - (1982-1986)	A1-0423/82
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Droits de douane japonais frappant la confiserie de chocolat	A1-0438/82

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Promotion du cinéma des pays de la Communauté	A1-0504/83
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Situation sociale des travailleurs du secteur culturel	A1-0558/80
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Gavage des oies pour la fabrication du foie gras	A1-0686/82
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Activités de la jeunesse	A1-0826/80
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Charte européenne du patient	A1-0970/83
PRUVOT, Marie-Jane	Relations économiques et commerciales entre la CEE et l'AELE	A1-1496/83
QUIN, Joyce G.	Accord entre la CEE, la Norvège et la Suède sur la réglementation de la pêche dans le Skagerrak et le Kattegat en 1982	A1-0186/82
QUIN, Joyce G.	Restructuration du secteur de la pêche côtière	A1-0267/81
QUIN, Joyce G.	Coopération multilatérale dans les pêches de l'Atlantique du Nord-Ouest: programme international d'inspection mutuelle	A1-0477/79
QUIN, Joyce G.	Importation de beurre de Nouvelle-Zélande au Royaume-Uni et dans des conditions particulières dans la Communauté	A1-0594/80
QUIN, Joyce G.	Taxe sur les captures de saumon en Mer Baltique par des navires de la Communauté	A1-0658/80
QUIN, Joyce G.	Mesures de conservation et de gestion des ressources de pêche pour la Suède, l'Islande et la Norvège	A1-0665/80
QUIN, Joyce G.	Redevance sur les licences autorisant la pêche au saumon en Suède	A1-0717/79
QUIN, Joyce G.	Répartition entre les Etats membres des possibilités de capture pour 1981	A1-0763/81
RABBETHGE, Renate-Charlotte	Programme de R&D dans le domaine de la science et de la technique au service du développement (1982-1985)	A1-0202/82
RABBETHGE, Renate-Charlotte	Fourniture de produits autres que céréales, lait écrémé en poudre et butteroil à certains PVD et à certains organismes spécialisés	A1-0551/80
RABBETHGE, Renate-Charlotte	Programme d'aide au développement des capacités endogènes de recherche scientifique et technique des PVD (1984-1987)	A1-1006/83
RABBETHGE, Renate-Charlotte	Programme d'aide au développement des capacités endogènes de recherche scientifique et technique des PVD (1984-1987)	A1-1141/83
ROBERTS, Dame Shelagh	Action limitée dans le domaine des infrastructures de transport	A1-0651/82
ROBERTS, Dame Shelagh	Congés parentaux et congés pour raisons familiales	A1-1528/83
ROUDY, Yvette	Risques d'accidents majeurs de certaines activités industrielles	A1-0220/80
SALISCH, Heinke	Action communautaire pour combattre le chômage - Initiatives locales de création d'emplois	A1-0035/84
SALISCH, Heinke	Problème du chômage des jeunes	A1-0086/83
SALISCH, Heinke	Répercussions des problèmes énergétiques et de l'évolution technologique sur le niveau de l'emploi dans la CE	A1-0164/81
SALISCH, Heinke	Actions visant à combattre le chômage des femmes	A1-0170/84
SALISCH, Heinke	Programme de promotion de l'emploi des jeunes assorti d'un projet de résolution du Conseil	A1-0754/83
SALISCH, Heinke	Harmonisation des dispositions relatives à l'imposition des revenus en relation avec la libre circulation des travailleurs	A1-1095/81
SCAMARONI, Marie-Claire	Rationnement de carburant pour les transports utilitaires entre Etats membres	A1-1332/83
SCHLEICHER, Ursula	Directive 76/768/CEE sur les produits cosmétiques	A1-0145/80
SCHLEICHER, Ursula	Limitation des expériences sur les animaux et protection des animaux de laboratoire	A1-0213/84
SCHLEICHER, Ursula	Limitation de la mise sur le marché et de l'emploi de certaines substances et préparations dangereuses	A1-0903/81
SCHLEICHER, Ursula	Publicité, étiquetage et présentation de denrées alimentaires	A1-1207/82
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Orientations de politique budgétaire des Communautés pour 1985	A1-0079/84
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Mesures pour la couverture des besoins de l'exercice 1984, compte tenu de l'épuisement des ressources propres	A1-0322/84

TOWARDS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

SCRIVENER, Christiane	Projet de budget général 1984, Section 'III-Commission'	A1-0900/83
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Protection des travailleurs contre les risques dus à l'exposition à l'amiante	A1-0916/81
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Chlorofluorocarbones dans l'environnement	A1-0976/81
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Lutte contre la drogue	A1-1079/81
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Deuxième programme d'action des CE en matière de sécurité et santé sur le lieu de travail	A1-1082/83
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Projet de budget général pour 1984, Section 'III-Commission' dans sa version modifiée par le Conseil	A1-1165/83
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Orientations de la politique budgétaire des Communautés pour 1984	A1-1321/82
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Mesures d'intérêt communautaire dans le domaine de l'emploi, des infrastructures de transport, de la stratégie énergétique	A1-1353/83
SCRIVENER, Christiane	Mesures particulières d'intérêt communautaire dans le domaine de l'emploi, des infrastructures de transport et de la stratégie énergétique	A1-1476/83
SEIBEL-EMMERLING, Lieselotte	Système d'information sur les dangers découlant de l'utilisation de produits de consommation	A1-0070/81
SEIBEL-EMMERLING, Lieselotte	Effet des traitements et de la distribution sur la qualité et la valeur nutritionnelle des denrées alimentaires	A1-0108/84
SEIBEL-EMMERLING, Lieselotte	Système communautaire d'échange rapide d'informations sur les dangers découlant de l'utilisation de produits de consommation	A1-0207/82
SEIBEL-EMMERLING, Lieselotte	Code européen des produits alimentaires	A1-X014/84
SPAACK, Antoinette	Lutte contre les catastrophes ayant engendré une pollution marine ou côtière par les hydrocarbures	A1-0467/80
SPAACK, Antoinette	Exploitation des grands fonds marins et du milieu marin	A1-0688/82
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Fabrication, mise sur le marché et délivrance des aliments médicamenteux pour animaux dans la Communauté	A1-0079/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Protection des consommateurs européens contre l'importation de produits déclarés impropres à la consommation par la législation des USA	A1-0091/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Eaux de baignade	A1-0194/84
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Rapprochement des législations concernant les solvants d'extraction utilisés dans les denrées alimentaires	A1-0243/84
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Limitation des émissions sonores des avions	A1-0294/82
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Limitation des émissions sonores des hélicoptères	A1-0424/82
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Exportation de diverses substances et préparations dangereuses: protection du consommateur	A1-0458/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Pollution atmosphérique transfrontière à longue distance	A1-0635/79
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Rapprochement des législations des Etats membres relatives aux produits cosmétiques	A1-0770/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Situation et problèmes des personnes âgées dans la Communauté	A1-0848/81
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Limitation des émissions sonores des hélicoptères	A1-0982/82
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique en provenance des installations industrielles	A1-0992/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Problèmes de l'alcoolisme dans les Pays de la Communauté	A1-1012/81
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Discriminations sexuelles sur le lieu de travail	A1-1358/83
SQUARCIALUPI, Vera	Déchets	A1-1376/83
THÉOBALD-PAOLI, Yvonne	Plan de développement transnational de l'infrastructure d'assistance à l'innovation et au transfert des technologies (1983-1985)	A1-1313/82
THÉOBALD-PAOLI, Yvonne	Industrie navale dans la Communauté	A1-1492/83
VAN HEMELDONCK, Marijke J.H.	Surveillance et contrôle des transferts transfrontaliers de déchets dangereux dans la Communauté européenne	A1-0370/83
VAN HEMELDONCK, Marijke J.H.	Fermetures de sécurité pour les enfants	A1-0795/83

THE WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE EUROPE

VAYSSADE, Marie-Claude	Abolition de la peine de mort dans la CE	A1-0065/81
VAYSSADE, Marie-Claude	Nouveau programme d'action communautaire sur la promotion de l'égalité des chances pour les femmes	A1-0101/82
VAYSSADE, Marie-Claude	Comptes annuels des banques et autres établissements financiers	A1-0117/83
VAYSSADE, Marie-Claude	Garde et enlèvements d'enfants au-delà des frontières nationales	A1-1396/83
VAYSSADE, Marie-Claude	Situation des Tziganes dans la Communauté	A1-1544/83
VEIL, Simone	Accès à la profession de transporteur de marchandises par voie navigable	A1-0105/84
WALZ, Hanna	Perspectives et limites de la décentralisation dans la production d'énergie (technologies douces)	A1-0696/80
WALZ, Hanna	Emprunts Euratom pour le financement des centrales nucléaires	A1-0709/81
WALZ, Hanna	Stockage final des déchets radioactifs et retraitement des combustibles nucléaires irradiés	A1-1129/83
WALZ, Hanna	Modification de la décision 82/402/CEE: programme de recherche et développement, secteur des matières premières 1982-1985	A1-X035/83
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