

11 February 2000

**Cyprus's position as regards the forthcoming Intergovernmental
Conference**

Cyprus considers it imperative that the European Union's institutional architecture be reformed, to ensure that the Union functions effectively and efficiently after its next enlargement.

The government of Cyprus wishes to add its voice to those who call for a speedy conclusion of the IGC so that the enlargement process is not delayed: as the Cologne and Helsinki European Councils affirmed, the IGC should complete its work by the end of 2000.

Cyprus intends to adopt an open mind and a flexible position as regards the question of institutional reform.

Nevertheless, we have prepared some positions that act as guidelines as to our stance regarding the main issues to be discussed at the forthcoming IGC.

The Commission

The Commission has a special role in the Union's institutional make-up, as a supranational body charged with promoting the common interest and acting as the motor for European integration. The Commission also performs an important role in maintaining a balance between larger and smaller states.

The Commission's multifaceted role as the instrument of implementing common policies at the European level, the source of policy ideas and as the guardians of the Treaties, should be protected and buttressed.

As a matter of principle, every member state should have a Commissioner and all Commissioners should have equal status.

We believe that the principle of equality of member/states will be affirmed through an equal national representation in the Commission.

It should also be kept in mind that Commissioners can act as intermediaries between the Union and citizens at each member state and thus act as conduits for the two-way transmission of information between this institution of the Union and European citizens. Having a Commissioner from each member state will enable the Commission to take into account the sensitivities of each member state on various issues. This will have the positive effect of increasing the visibility and legitimacy of the Union to its citizens.

Weighting of the votes

Majoritarian and representative principles might lead to some form of re-weighting of the votes in the Council to take into account population size on the grounds of democratic legitimacy. Cyprus would prefer the introduction of a system of dual majority in certain cases or any other objective system rather than a re-weighting of the votes.

Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)

1. The demographic criterion should be used to ensure that QMV represents the majority of the Union's population.
2. We could consider the extension of QMV on a case by case basis in some "non constitutional" areas in parallel with an extension of the "co-decision process".
3. There are certain areas where we believe that the unanimity criterion should be maintained such as:
 - Constitutional provision
 - Own resources and taxation
 - Matters which require ratification by national parliaments

Flexibility

We believe that the idea of "Europe à la carte" or of "variable geometry" where states can opt out and therefore dilute core EU policies should be approached with extreme caution. Institutional reform should aim at maintaining the effective decision-making capacity of the Union but not at the expense of the Union's unique character.

We believe that clear decisions should be taken about which decisions are to be reached at European level and which at national level and subsidiarity should not be used to recover responsibility for areas that are best dealt with at the European level.

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