Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1279 (1995)[1]

1996 Intergovernmental Conference of the European Union

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of the European Union, which is to be held in 1996, will have to take important decisions for the revision of the Treaty on European Union.

2. A reflection group was set up on 2 June 1995 to prepare for this conference.

3. Three objectives are on its agenda: to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European Union, to make the Union's policies more consistent and to prepare for enlargement of the Union to include the countries which have applied for membership.

4. The reflection group is to submit its conclusions in December 1995 at the meeting of the European Council in Madrid.

5. The decisions taken on these matters will have implications for the other European institutions. It is therefore proper for the Council of Europe to make its position known straight away, in order to make its contribution to the preparations for the IGC.

6. Relations between the European Community and the Council of Europe are based upon Article 230 of the Treaty of Rome and on the institutional arrangement concluded on 16 June 1987. These provisions should be revised, in particular in the light of the Council of Europe's significant contribution to preparing central and east European countries for European Union membership.

7. There is regular co-operation in several sectors of activity, and the European Community has also acceded to seven Council of Europe conventions.

8. Co-operation on assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe, to which the European Union makes a large contribution, began recently.

9. At this stage, it would be appropriate to take the opportunity of the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference to put practical and more rapidly achievable proposals to the European Union.

10. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

10.1. propose a revision of Article 230 of the Treaty of Rome, so that the European Community recognises therein the Council of Europe's achievements and role in respect of the definition of the rule of law and the monitoring of legal and democratic standards of the pan-European society, and inclusion of membership of the Council of Europe as a condition for accession to the European Union;

10.2. draw the attention of its governments (in particular those of the European Union member states) to:

a. the considerable acquis of the Council of Europe in the fields covered by the European Union's third pillar (justice and home affairs), as well as in the sphere of culture, education and science;

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1. Assembly debate on 27 September 1995 (29th Sitting) (see Doc. 7373, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Masseret; Doc. 7378, contribution from the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mrs Degn; and Doc. 7404, contribution from the Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations, rapporteur: Mrs Ragnarsdóttir). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 September 1995 (29th Sitting).

b. the democratic "oversight" that is being exercised in these areas by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly;

c. the already supranational character of the European Convention on Human Rights;

10.3. propose to the European Union the establishment of appropriate links between its own "political dialogue", and the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including co-operation at secretariat level;

10.4. invite the European Community to open a delegation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg to ensure the regular follow-up of co-operation;

10.5. define the modalities of enabling the Council of Ministers of the European Union to participate on a regular basis in the work of the Ministers' Deputies, and to be associated with their work on questions of mutual interest;

10.6. confirm the practice according to which the President of the European Commission, or his representatives of a senior level, are invited to participate in meetings of the Committee of Ministers at ministerial level;

10.7. strengthen and diversify the co-operation set up by joint programmes with the European Community on assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe;

10.8. set up forthwith a working party to determine the manner of the European Community's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and its practical implications for the Council of Europe;

10.9. invite the European Community to accede to the revised European Social Charter, the European Convention on Transfrontier Television and all the treaties which allow it to accede.