Amendment of the Treaty on European Union: convening an intergovernmental conference under art. N of the TUE

1996/2013(COS) - 13/03/1996 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Raymonde DURY and Mrs Johanna MAIJ WEGGEN by 267 votes to 120 with 71 abstentions, the European Parliament laid down the eight priorities to be tackled to at the conference opening in Turin on 29 March: 1. An improved definition of European citizenship and enhanced respect for human rights. A full guarantee of legal protection by the European Court of Justice. The cultural dimension should be taken into account. 2. A more effective response to the concerns of the public over internal security in the form of a policy on visas, asylum, immigration and a policy to combat drug trafficking and through judicial cooperation (civil and criminal). 3. Development of the social and ecological dimension and of employment policy and the strengthening of economic and social cohesion. 4. Reinforcing the European Union's external role, notably in safeguarding peace and security by developing a common policy, particularly through greater use of qualified majority voting, the establishment of a Common Analysis and Planning Unit and the integration of the WEU in the Treaty. 5. Increased openness and transparency by means of a reduction in EU decision-making procedures and easier access to Council documents and decisions relating to legislation. 6. Decisive progress towards a more democratic and more efficient Europe by introducing qualified majority voting and a simplified codecision procedure. The European Parliament should be involved in the decision concerning the choice of its seat. 7. Efficient action against the fraudulent use of financial resources at all levels. 8. A simplified, codified and more comprehensible Treaty. Parliament considered that a system of own resources should be established by 1999, but that this should not involve any extra financial burden for the citizens. In particular, Parliament formulated the following demands: * European citizenship: - the EU should accede to the European Convention on Human Rights; - the Treaty should include a list of fundamental rights, a special chapter on equal treatment and non-discrimination, regardless in particular of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability; specific reference should be made to the abolition of capital punishment and the punishment of all acts of racial or anti-Semitic violence, harassment and abuse; - equal treatment of men and women should be recognized as a fundamental right and Article 19 should be extended to all areas, notably economic, social and family life, with explicit reference to affirmative action; - the list of fundamental rights should contain a section on European political rights, especially the adoption of a uniform electoral system; - Parliament proposed that a Voluntary European Peace Corps be set up in order to carry out humanitarian missions within and beyond the EU in order to encourage a feeling of belonging to the Union and of solidarity between Member States; - the Union should support the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity and protection of traditional national minorities. It should take joint measures to promote cultural and linguistic understanding, exchanges and networks of institutions, the protection of cultural assets and the harmonization of legislation on copyright and support the translation, free circulation and dissemination of cultural works and information; - European citizens must under no circumstances be treated as foreigners within the Union; - the Treaty should give third country nationals legally resident in the Union guarantees regarding respect for human rights, equality of treatment and non-discrimination with regard to social, economic and cultural rights and the right to vote in local elections; - sport should be included in the Treaty, in the context of education, and employment policy as well as cultural policy. * Internal security: asylum policy, rules on crossing external borders and action to combat drug trafficking, international fraud and organized crime should be Communitized. Other "pillar three" issues should be dealt with through greater recourse to Community procedures and institutions, taking account of the fact that: the powers of the Commission (right of initiative) and of the European Parliament (codecision) should be strengthened; the competence of the Court of Justice should be recognized; protection of human rights should be reinforced; greater use should be made of qualified majority voting; there should be greater transparency and use of legal instruments not provided for in the Treaty

(resolutions, recommendations and conventions) should be ended. The Member States should undertake through a specific Treaty obligation to amend their national legislation in order to strengthen the fight against terrorism. * A far-reaching social union and a pro-active employment policy: common policies should be adopted in the social spheres, employment, the environment and certain forms of taxation and majority voting and codecision should become the general rule in these areas. Agreement on social policy should be integrated into the Treaty, as should the principles of the Community charter of fundamental social rights. The Treaty should include an obligation for the Union to develop a policy to overcome social injustice, exclusion, discrimination and poverty and give Commission the necessary powers to implement it. Employment should be the focus of all Community policies and a new chapter establishing a "Union for employment" and specifying the common objectives and procedures should be inserted in the Treaty. A Committee on Employment (with a similar status to the monetary committee) should be set up in order to promote the coordination of the Member States' and the Community's employment policies. * Public services: the fundamental principles of accessibility, universality, equality, continuity, quality, transparency and participation within a single market should be written into the Treaty. * Economic and social cohesion: this should form the basis of all Union actions and policies. Provision should be made for different, specific treatment for extremely remote regions. * Environment: the environment should be included in the Treaty as one of the objectives of the Union. Environment policy should be an integral feature of all Union policies which affect the environment (industrial policy, agricultural policy, transport policy, policy on trans-European networks, energy and research policy, regional and structural policy and commercial and economic policy). Member States should be able to lay down more stringent environmental standards than those of the Community. Animal welfare should be included as a new Title XVI/B in the Treaty. * Energy/tourism: these two sectors should also be included in the Treaty. * Fisheries: assent should be applied to all international fisheries agreements. * The external role of the Union: - the Union should be recognized as a legal personality at international level; - the Union should guarantee its territorial integrity and the security of its external frontiers; - all external policy decisions should be taken by qualified majority; - codecision should be introduced for article 113 (common commercial policy) and assent should apply to all international agreements and measures to be taken in the area of economic sanctions (article 228a); - any Member State which is not in agreement with a common position of a military nature should have a dispensation facility but should not be able to veto the common position or joint action. Parliament rejected the Reflection Group's idea of creating a "high representative" for the CFSP and preferred that this representative function be exercised by a Commissioner, appointed in accordance with the procedure for the President of the Commission. The CFSP should be financed on a Community basis but Member States which make use of the dispensation clause should not be able to withdraw from Community financing. Parliamentary monitoring of the CFSP should be the responsibility of the European Parliament in cooperation, where appropriate, with the national parliaments. * Security and defence policy: the WEU should be integrated into the Union and operate as the European pillar of NATO; traditionally neutral countries would not need to join in its establishment. In the event of military action, no Member State should be obliged to take part in or finance such action but should not be able to prevent a majority of Member States from carrying out such action. Article 223 of the EC Treaty, which obstructs the monitoring of arms sales to third countries and the establishment of a genuine common arms policy should be deleted. * In the institutions: the European Parliament should be given a reinforced role, with assents as regards nominations to the Court of Auditors and the Court of Justice. - Court of Auditors: provisions concerning the power of the Court of Auditors should be revised so as to create an obligation for national administrations and national audit offices to cooperate with the Court of Auditors, particularly with regard to the statement of assurance. The Court should be endowed with judicial powers, including powers of initiative, in order to punish Member States and Community bodies in breach of Community law affecting its financial interests. - Commission: at the present stage, it was essential to maintain the principle of at least one Commissioner per Member State. The president of the Commission should be directly elected by the European Parliament on the basis of names provided by the European Council. The independence of the Commission must be safeguarded and its right of initiative strengthened with a view to enlargement. - Re-weighting: this question should be explored in greater depth but the IGC should at least lay down the basic rules to be applied to the weighting of votes for future accessions. The idea of a "super-qualified" majority should be explored. *

Improved legislative and budgetary procedures: Qualified majority voting should become the general rule, although unanimity would still be required in certain particularly sensitive areas such as amendments to the Treaty and constitutional decisions (enlargement, own resources, article 235). The legislative procedures of the EU should be reformed. There should be one general procedure for legislation, namely codecision, which should be extended to all legislation and be dealt with by a qualified majority. Codecision should be simplified by dropping the phase of intention to reject and ending the procedure either when there was agreement between the Council and Parliament at first reading stage or, when there was no agreement between the Council and Parliament, in a conciliation committee. Budgetary procedures should be revised. The distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure should be removed and the budget should be unified. Parliament called on the IGC to begin reforming the own resources system, which should be ready by 1999. * Revision of the Treaty: Parliament considered that the IGC could not open properly until Council has decided on Parliament's participation concerning the presence of observers, the functioning of the interinstitutional conference and the role of the European Parliament in the ratification of the new Treaty.