Amsterdam draft treaty

1997/2237(COS) - 19/11/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Inigo MENDEZ DE VIGO (PPE, E) and Dimitris TSATSOS (PSE, Gr), the European Parliament recommends Member States to ratify the Amsterdam Treaty. However, it regrets that the Treaty does not incorporate the institutional reforms needed for the effective and democratic functioning of an enlarged Union and affirms that these reforms must be completed before enlargement and as soon as possible so as not to delay accessions. Under these circumstances, it calls for the following steps to be taken before any enlargement: - adjustments to be made to the weighting of votes in the Council and to the number of Commission Members, with the Member States retaining equal status with each other; - qualified majority voting to become the general rule in the Council; - the unanimity requirement to be restricted to decisions of a constitutional nature (amendments to the Treaty, accessions, decisions on own resources, electoral procedure, application of Article 308 of the EC Treaty). Generally speaking, Parliament welcomes the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty gives precedence to the Community method. However, it believes that the opportunities afforded by the Treaty will lead to results only if a desire for common action in all areas of the Treaty is generated. It urges Member States to prevent a decision by a majority vote on the grounds of important national interests only in extreme cases. Parliament notes that the Amsterdam Treaty improves the Union's instruments for shaping policy in the interests of its citizens (employment, social issues, environment, health, internal security), but still calls for further improvements, in particular application of the Community method in the field of internal security, and improvement of the employment situation. Parliament calls for the prospect of developing a common defence policy to be strengthened, for the strategic planning and early warning unit to become operational without delay, and for Community competence to be extended to all questions examined in the context of the WTO. In the area of justice and home affairs, it advocates a common approach towards fighting organized and international crime and improving legal protection for Union citizens. On institutional matters, the European Parliament would like the following to be subject to its approval: - important international agreements, - any amendment of the basic Treaties, - the system of own resources. It calls for the codecision procedure to be extended to the following policy areas: agriculture and fisheries, tax and competition, structural policy, tourism, water resources, and legislative acts under the third pillar. It regrets the fact that, in important areas of European citizenship (free movement, right of establishment, mutual recognition of diplomas), the codecision procedure exists alongside unanimous voting within the Council. It advocates extending qualified majority voting to culture. It calls for the Union and the Communities to be merged into a single legal personality, for a specific list of fundamental rights of the Union to be drawn up, and for the commitology procedures to be amended. It advocates urgent revision of the Euratom Treaty in order to remedy the democratic deficit. Regarding transparency and openness, it calls for: - measures which ensure that citizens have effective access to information; - documents which are comprehensible to citizens and which show who bears political responsibility; - codification and simplification of the constituent Treaties. Finally, Parliament requests the Commission to submit to it, before the European Council of December 1998, a report with proposals for a comprehensive reform of the Treaties and asks for the future Treaty to enter into force only with the assent of Parliament. It asks to be associated on an equal footing in any subsequent revision of the Treaties.