

THE TRILATERAL COMMISSION (EUROPE)

Session on Europe on Saturday 19 October 2002 in Prague

<p style="text-align: center;">THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF THE EUROPEAN MEMBERS GIVEN TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE PREPARED & ANALYZED BY GEORGE VASSILIOU</p>

Within the ongoing discussions held in and outside the European Convention, the European Members of the Trilateral Commission clearly favour -- when looking at the Unions' future institutional structures -- progress of the *Community Method* when compared to the *inter-governmental approach* prevalent over the past years. Adopting this stance, Trilateral Europe would like to further positive discrimination i.e. *Qualified Majority Voting* on an increasing number of issues such as tax policy, the environment, governance of the Eurozone and on defence and home and justice affairs, all areas of benefit to a strengthened European Union.

The European Members also favour the elaboration of a written Constitution to be prepared in such a way that the current Treaties are drastically simplified.

The current political, economic and psychological context is such within Europe that citizens feel increasingly alienated from "Brussels". *Why and what can be done ?* Initial answers call for more transparency in Brussels, simplification of procedures as well as a greater role to be played by the European Parliament. But, responsibilities also rest within the member countries which need to change their attitudes toward the Brussels institutions: The EU must be seen as *adding value* instead as of a source of bureaucratic paralysis. In order to bridge this growing divide between the Europeans and their common institutions, the member countries and their national Parliaments must become increasingly involved in European affairs.

Turning to the Presidency and the role of the Council, Trilateral members from Europe unanimously recognize that the EU's enlargement to 25 members creates a need for a change in the presidency system but are not unanimous on the modus operandi of this change: some favour an extension of the Presidency to twelve months, others propose the creation of a collective presidency for a two-years period, yet others would prefer its abolition. However, creating a President of the EU Council other than the President of the Commission was not accepted as a way forward. Furthermore, the Council must restrain its agenda and concentrate its work in the fields of foreign and security policy as well as on important economic decisions where QMV should be excluded. In sum, the Council should focus on issues enhancing Europe's identity as well as on new areas of cooperation. As to the General Affairs Council, it is currently dealing with too many issues and should likewise focus its agenda on foreign and security matters.

In areas devoted to foreign and security policy, the European members -- by clear majority -- would like to see the role of the High Representative strengthened, with a marginal majority preferring that the Secretary-General's function be incorporated in the European Commission.

QMV should be extended to foreign affairs matters; The EU should aim at seating permanently on the UN Security Council. But, in order to have a stronger foreign and security policy, a greater defence budget is the prerequisite.

Turning to the European Commission, European Trilateral members support a stronger Commission and – in the wake of EU enlargement – are against the idea of one Commissioner per country. Members of the Commission should be confirmed by the European Parliament. As to its President, the days are over when he/she was appointed by the Council: the President should be elected by the European Parliament on proposal by the Council (not by Pan-European political parties). The President's powers must also be reinforced.

When looking at the respective roles of the European and National Parliaments, the European Trilateralists are not enthusiastic as to a substantial increase in the involvement of National Parliaments in EU affairs. In order to clarify *who does what* ? the principle of *subsidiarity* needs to be better defined i.e. specifying the exclusive responsibility of the Union, those responsibilities which are concurrent and those remaining within national states. To note is a relative majority who consider the need for an increasing number of exclusive powers being given to the Commission.

The initial conclusions of this Summer survey within the European Group of the Trilateral Commission would seem for your Rapporteur to be as follows:

- Trilateral Europe clearly marks its favour of maintaining and strengthening the Community Method: Inter-governmentalism has shown its limits in the 1990s and will worsen the effective functioning of an enlarged European Union;
- While being consistent with the above, members strive for a strong Commission representing the overall European interest with at its helm a strong President henceforth democratically legitimized by the European Parliament;
- However, members remain in the current context of play between the European institutions -- which includes the Council – realists i.e. recognizing that member states continue to have a major role to play (in the absence of a European “constituency”), a role that needs to be substantiated: its agenda should be focused on foreign and security issues on the condition that the member countries pick up their responsibilities to the full such as by increasing their defence budgets. Only then, would Europe be able to speak with “one voice” and pretend to a seat on the UNSC;
- In order to clarify *who does what in the Union* ? the principle of subsidiarity needs to be better spelt out, such as within a Constitutional Treaty to be drafted by the Convention.

In sum, the European Members remain faithful to their European commitment as has been the case since the inception of the Trilateral Commission, recognizing that within the trilateral/global framework only an enhanced European identity with corresponding institutions will be able to further Europe's role in world affairs.

The time has come with the Convention to make this choice in favour of a real *Community* of shared values and principles.